THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN DILEMMA (1944):
THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION, GUNNAR MYRDAL, AND THE UNLIKELY ROOTS OF
MODERN CIVIL RIGHTS DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

In 1937, the Carnegie Corporation of New York commissioned and funded a comprehensive study of African Americans and selected the Swedish economist, Gunnar Myrdal, to direct it. Seven years later, Myrdal’s two-volume 1,483-page treatise in favor of racial integration in the United States appeared. Writing largely to a white liberal American audience whom he perceived to be the dominant group of Americans in the country, the Swedish author argued in *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* that black Americans were just like white Americans and that any differences that existed between these two groups in American society were largely caused by white Americans’ discriminatory behavior. Myrdal noted that if white Americans made their individual behavior and public policies reflect their national egalitarian ideals (the “American Creed”), black Americans would become just like them. Soon after its publication, *An American Dilemma* became central to national race discussions and, since then, has been heralded as a founding text of modern civil rights discourse.

With the intention of placing this postwar American discourse on race in a broader historical and global context, this dissertation manuscript explains why the Carnegie Corporation commissioned, funded, and published Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* and why Myrdal wrote what he did in the two volumes. It argues that *An American Dilemma* should be understood as a successor to the Carnegie Corporation’s two other comprehensive, policy-oriented studies of white-black relations in British Africa and to Gunnar and Alva Myrdal’s analysis of the population problem in 1930s Sweden.
This dissertation manuscript is based on detailed readings of published works and archival material from Princeton University, Columbia University, the Rockefeller Archive Center, the University of Chicago, the University of California in Los Angeles, Harvard University, the American Philosophical Society, the University of Pennsylvania, New York University, and the Labor Movement Archives (Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv) and National Library (Kungliga Biblioteket) in Stockholm, Sweden.

Specifically, the manuscript incorporates English- and Swedish-language correspondence and reports from the papers of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the General Education Board, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, the Russell Sage Foundation, and from the personal papers of Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, and of several American social researchers who were involved in the Corporation’s study of black Americans including: Samuel Stouffer, Dorothy Thomas, Ralph Bunche, Beardsley Ruml, Charles Merriam, Louis Wirth, Frederick Osborn, and Melville Herskovits. Swedish language training was received at New York University, Columbia University, Folkuniversitetet in Stockholm, Sweden, and at Billströmska Folkhögskolan near Gothenburg, Sweden.

The research and writing was conducted between 2007 and 2013 with yearlong fellowships from Princeton University’s Graduate School, History Department, and Fellowship of Woodrow Wilson Scholars; the Swedish-American Fulbright Commission; and, the Samuel I. Golieb Fellowship in Legal History at New York University School of Law. It was also supported by supplemental grants from Princeton University’s Center for African American Studies, Program in American Studies, Institute for International
and Regional Studies, and from the Swedish Institute, American-Scandinavian
Foundation, and the Rockefeller Archive Center.¹

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Lastly, I thank Jason Sanjana for his love, companionship, and adventurous approach to life. J, thank you for sharing this life journey with me. I also thank my parents and brother, Daysi, Jorge, and Anthony Morey for their unconditional support and for reminding me that, however far from Miami my research takes me, I am still rooted at home.

I dedicate this dissertation manuscript to my late grandmother Sabina Alfonso Leal and my great-aunt Marina Suárez Menéndez; two women who have long inspired me to be bold.
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In 1937, the Carnegie Corporation of New York commissioned and funded a comprehensive study of African Americans and selected the Swedish economist, Gunnar Myrdal, to direct it. Seven years later, Myrdal’s two-volume 1,483-page treatise in favor of racial integration in the United States appeared.\(^1\) Writing largely to a white liberal American audience whom he perceived to be the dominant group of Americans in the country, the European author argued in *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* that black Americans were just like white Americans and that any differences that existed between these two groups in American society were largely caused by white Americans’ discriminatory behavior.\(^2\) Myrdal noted that if white Americans made their individual behavior and public policies reflect their national egalitarian ideals (the “American Creed”), black Americans would become just like them.\(^3\) In the process, Myrdal explained that blacks not only could, but should, become like dominant whites in the United States.\(^4\) He furthermore explained that the federal government, which he deduced liberal white Americans controlled, had an important role to play in bringing about this process of assimilation and integration.\(^5\) By changing


\(^2\) Ibid., 108-110, 581.

\(^3\) Ibid, 24.

\(^4\) Ibid., 929.

\(^5\) Ibid., 437, 546, 437.
individual behavior and public policies throughout the country with the goal of integrating and assimilating black Americans into dominant white American life, Myrdal explained that the so-called “Negro problem” in the United States which he had been commissioned to study would disappear.

Soon after its publication, *An American Dilemma* became central to national race discussions. In 1946, United States President Harry S. Truman established a committee to investigate the status of civil rights in the United States; and the following December, the Committee published *To Secure These Rights*. This report “adopted the analytical framework and endorsed [Myrdal’s] conclusions” particularly that segregation and discrimination were barriers that undermined black Americans’ equal rights and that the federal government had a role to play in enforcing these rights. By 1950, the prominent sociologist Louis Wirth concluded that *An American Dilemma* was “leading American social scientists to focus their research on issues of prejudice and attitude formation.”

Four years later, the Supreme Court of the United States relied on Myrdal’s work in order

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Reifying Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma*, the Committee on Civil Rights’ report deplored “a kind of moral dry rot” at the heart of American democracy and called for the abolition of the poll tax, anti-lynching legislation, voting rights statutes, a permanent FEPC, an adequately staffed civil rights division in the Justice Department, and desegregation of the armed forces.


to side with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund’s claim that racially segregated public schools were unconstitutional.⁹

In 1955, the Chicago sociologist Ernest W. Burgess declared that Myrdal’s book had been of “first importance” in recent “epoch-making advances in the field of race

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⁹ The Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education cited social scientific knowledge on African Americans, including Myrdal’s An American Dilemma, to hold that racially segregated public schools necessarily treated black and white Americans unequally and thus violated the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution’s Fourteenth Amendment. The Court reasoned: “Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of Plessy v. Ferguson, this finding is amply supported by modern authority.” Brown v. Board of Education 347 U.S. 483 (1954). This modern authority included: K.B. Clark, Effect of Prejudice and Discrimination on Personality Development (Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, 1950); Witmer and Kotinsky, Personality in the Making (1952), c. VI; Deutscher and Chein, The Psychological Effects of Enforced Segregation: A Survey of Social Science Opinion, 26 J. Psychol. 259 (1948); Chein, What are the Psychological Effects of Segregation Under Conditions of Equal Facilities?, 3 Int. J. Opinion and Attitude Res. 229 (1949); Brameld, Educational Costs, in Discrimination and National Welfare (MacIver, ed., (1949), 44-48; Frazier, The Negro in the United States (1949), 674-681. And see generally Myrdal, An American Dilemma (1944).

Ibid.

This dissertation manuscript on the making of An American Dilemma presents the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment in Brown v. Board of Education as one moment within the history of the social sciences on race in the United States, colonial Africa, and Europe. By doing so, it reflects the efforts of other legal historians such as William E. Nelson to situate equal protection jurisprudence within a broader intellectual context (See, William E. Nelson’s “The Changing Meaning of Equality in Twentieth-Century Constitutional Law,” 52 Wash. & Lee L. Rev. 3 (1995)). However, while Nelson focused on the development of equality jurisprudence over a period of time, this dissertation manuscript goes outside of the courts. It explains how and why the Carnegie Corporation commissioned, funded, and published An American Dilemma (and why Myrdal wrote what he did in the text) as a means of understanding modern civil rights discourse in the postwar United States through a broader historical and global context. The Supreme Court’s decision in Brown was part of this discourse; so in effect, the dissertation presents the Court’s definition of racial equality in Brown within a broader historical and global context. Legal historian Hendrik Hartog explains some of the value of placing the Court’s equality jurisprudence in such a comprehensive frame:

Constitutional historians are used to thinking of the business of constitutional history as explaining the origins of various statements of constitutional law doctrine that it is difficult to even imagine alternatives. To learn to see the constitutional rights consciousness as constitutional output, no less than constitutional input, would require historians to deal with the American Constitution as contested interpretative terrain, as an arena of struggle between contending and changing normative orders. They would have to recognize that constitutional history incorporates many voices, that there has rarely been a monolithic understanding of constitutional meaning, that the position of the United States Supreme Court as our preeminent constitutional interpreter is a problematic feature of our history.

relations.” He considered *An American Dilemma* “the most powerful instrument of action in the field of race relations since Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin.*” Since then, many Americans have remembered how crucial this 1944 study was in shaping their thinking on race relations after the Second World War. United States civil rights historians have echoed this reading of *An American Dilemma* by explaining that the 1944 text was a founding text of modern civil rights discourse.

From this perspective, the historian Mary Dudziak noted: “The war years became an occasion for a serious examination of what was called the ‘Negro problem’ in America. The most detailed treatment of this issue came from the [Swede] Gunnar Myrdal and his team of researchers. In 1944, Myrdal published *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy.*” After the Second World War, the study

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11 Ibid.

12 Among these white Americans, it has seemed to me from anecdotal evidence that the most touched by *An American Dilemma* were men who attended Ivy League and other comparable Northern colleges and universities during the 1950s and 1960s. See e.g., Daniel Horowitz, “Chapter 5: Becoming an Academic Man” (draft with author). Horowitz shared this draft with the author via email on January 20, 2013.


became indispensable to white Americans’ discussions of racial equality. Historian Mark Tushnet concluded that “An American Dilemma said nothing new to the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], but it certified to the general public that people should pay attention to what the NAACP said.”\textsuperscript{15} While the NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund chipped away at the \textit{Plessy} doctrine of “separate but equal” (with \textit{Brown v. Board of Education} being one of its most high-profile victories), \textit{An American Dilemma} played a part in helping many postwar white Americans understand and communicate why racial integration was imperative in the country and why the federal government was an appropriate vehicle for bringing about this process of assimilation and integration.\textsuperscript{16} \textit{An American Dilemma} is applauded in civil rights histories. For the most part, these scholars assume that the Carnegie Corporation commissioned, funded, and published a study of black Americans (and that Gunnar Myrdal argued what he did in \textit{An American Dilemma}) precisely because they were part of this postwar civil rights moment.

For scholars who have written on the African American experience, however, the Carnegie Corporation’s reasons for funding Myrdal’s study and the study itself were part of a much longer and contested history. First, the Carnegie Corporation of New York had funded the Hampton-Tuskegee model of segregated education for black Americans (at the vast exclusion of other forms of education and other types of organizations) since its founding in 1911.\textsuperscript{17} When the organization decided to commission and fund a

\textsuperscript{15} Tushnet, \textit{NAACP’s Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education}, 119.


\textsuperscript{17} See e.g., Eric A. Anderson and Alfred A. Moss Jr., \textit{Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education}, 1902-1930 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999); James D.
comprehensive study of African Americans in the mid-1930s with a Swede as its director, it also simultaneously rejected W.E.B. Du Bois’s long-standing efforts to acquire funding for an Encyclopedia of the Negro.

Making Du Bois’s vision a reality with the publication of an Encyclopedia Africana in 1999, philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah and historian Henry Louis Gates, Jr. took a moment in their encyclopedia’s introduction to look back at these turn of events in the 1930s:

By 1937, Du Bois had secured a pledge of $125,000 from the Phelps-Stokes Fund to proceed with his project—half of the funds needed to complete it. He applied to the Carnegie Corporation for the remaining half of his budget… So convinced was Du Bois that his project would finally be funded, that he invited [his assistant editor for the Encyclopedia] to wait with him for the telephone call that he had been promised immediately following the Carnegie board meeting. A bottle of vintage champagne sat chilling on Du Bois’s desk in a silver bucket, two cut crystal champagne flutes resting nearby. The phone never rang.18

W.E.B. Du Bois was deflated with the news that the Carnegie Corporation would not be funding the Encyclopedia of the Negro. Adding insult to injury, he would soon find out that the Corporation would be going forward with the funding of a comprehensive, policy-oriented social scientific study of African Americans of the size, scope, and budget never before seen. He would also find out that they had chosen a Swede to direct it.

Of this moment at the Carnegie Corporation, the historian David Levering Lewis wrote: “With what seemed a bottomless subvention that would eventually run to 300,000


Carnegie Corporation dollars, Myrdal commanded an empire employing the top tier of American academics in black and white. One by one, the cadre of colored scholars Du Bois had hoped to recruit signed on with what became formally designated as the Carnegie-Myrdal Study.”¹⁹ Instead of funding W.E.B. Du Bois’s encyclopedia, the Carnegie Corporation decided to coordinate its own national policy-oriented social scientific study of African Americans. And instead of selecting Du Bois to direct this comprehensive study, the organization commissioned a Swede for the position. Put differently, the Carnegie Corporation made the active decision to sideline leading African American social researchers like Du Bois (and Ralph Bunche, Charles S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, Abram Harris, etc.) for the directorship of a national policy-oriented social scientific study of African Americans of unprecedented size, scope, and funding.

Even more, historians of the African American experience also have pointed out that Myrdal’s ultimate policy recommendation in An American Dilemma was unique and not by any means the most expansive definition of racial equality for African Americans.²⁰ Reviewing An American Dilemma soon after its publication, the African American novelist Ralph Ellison began: “Gunnar Myrdal’s An American Dilemma is not an easy book for an American Negro to review.”²¹ It was not easy because, while

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Myrdal’s thesis bolstered African Americans’ claims that they were equal human beings to white Americans, the thesis discounted the value of African American identity, institutions, and culture. He continued:

Myrdal sees Negro culture and personality simply as the product of “social pathology.” Thus he assumes that “it is the advantage of American Negroes as individuals and as a group to become assimilated into American culture, to acquire the traits held in esteem by the dominant white Americans.” This, he admits, contains the value premise that “here in America, American culture is ‘highest’ in the pragmatic sense…” Which, aside from implying that Negro culture is not also American, assumes that Negroes should desire nothing better than what whites consider highest. But in the “pragmatic sense” lynching and Hollywood, faddism and radio advertising are products of the “higher” culture, and the Negro might ask, “Why, if my culture is pathological, must I exchange it for these?”

Far from being the only possible definition of racial equality at the time, Myrdal’s policy prescription in An American Dilemma was a particular vision of equality for African Americans. The Swede assumed that black Americans’ identity, institutions, and culture were created in reaction to this group’s exclusion from the white national community and that they should shed these distinctions in order to assimilate and integrate into the community. Put differently, Myrdal’s definition of racial equality required black Americans to cease to exist as a group and to melt into the dominant white majority. To say the least, many leading African American intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson and Ralph Bunche did not share this disparaging view on black life.

22 Ibid.

23 Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 927-930 (Ch. 43 “Institutions,” “Part I. The Negro Community as a Pathological Form of an American Community”).

Among several leading historians of the African American experience, the Carnegie Corporation’s reasons for funding Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* and the study’s thesis itself are part of a rather long history on elite Northern philanthropic organizations’ role in orchestrating the careers of African American leaders and in policing and defining authoritative knowledge on African Americans throughout the first half of the twentieth century.\(^{25}\) This critical reading of Gunnar Myrdal’s thesis in *An American Dilemma* and the Corporation’s intentions when commissioning and funding this project is completely absent in civil rights historiography, which assumes both that the Carnegie Corporation and *An American Dilemma* sprang up during the Second World War as a response to the heightened conversation on race in the United States and that Myrdal’s thesis was the quintessential definition of racial equality.

With the intention of bridging these two conflicting understandings of *An American Dilemma*’s significance in twentieth century U.S. history, I began my dissertation research by asking why the Carnegie Corporation commissioned, funded, and published Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* and why Myrdal wrote what he did in

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the two volumes.\textsuperscript{26} With these two questions in mind, I accessed archival material on both coasts of the United States and in Sweden. I read from the papers of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the General Education Board, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, the Russell Sage Foundation, and from the personal papers of Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, and of several American social researchers who were involved in the Corporation’s study of black Americans including: Samuel Stouffer, Dorothy Thomas, Ralph Bunche, Beardsley Ruml, Charles Merriam, Louis Wirth, Frederick Osborn, and Melville Herskovits. I learned Swedish in order to access Swedish-language correspondence in the Myrdal papers and in order to access published primary and secondary material at Kungliga Biblioteket.

Based on this research, this dissertation manuscript argues that twentieth century U.S. historians (African American and civil rights historians alike) should understand

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Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* as the successor to the Carnegie Corporation’s two other comprehensive, policy-oriented studies of white-black relations in British Africa and to Gunnar and Alva Myrdal’s own work on the population problem in Sweden.

In the mid-1930s, the Carnegie Corporation’s president believed that the organization needed to redirect its (and the country’s) attention away from thinking that segregated vocational and agricultural education for black Americans was the key to addressing the problem of whites’ and blacks’ coexistence. He had confidence that a comprehensive, policy-oriented, empirical study of black Americans with an objective, trustworthy white European director at its head could (like *The Poor White Study* and *An African Survey* that the organization funded in 1920s and 1930s British Africa) help white public policymakers create modern policies that addressed problems in white-black relations. In other words, the Corporation’s decision to depart from the Hampton-Tuskegee model; to bypass Du Bois’s encyclopedia; and, to fund a comprehensive study of African Americans with a Swedish director resulted from the president’s vision during the 1920s and 1930s that comprehensive and policy-oriented empirical studies of whites and blacks (conducted by trusted white European social researchers) were the modern tools for addressing tensions in the governance of coexisting whites and blacks both in British Africa as in the United States, and that the organization had a role in funding these studies.

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Not only a study rooted in the British African experience of the 1920s and 1930s, *An American Dilemma* also reflected its author’s own experience in 1930s Sweden. Like other eugenicists at the time, Gunnar and his wife and collaborator Alva Reimer Myrdal believed that a country was defined by a majority group (*a folk*) and that the state had a role to play in increasing the quantity and quality of this population. While racial biologists in Nazi Germany argued that certain racial, ethnic, and religious groups were biologically incapable of assimilating and integrating into this national community, the Myrdals claimed that they could and that the state could play a central role in bringing about this process of assimilation and integration. In other words, Gunnar Myrdal’s thesis in *An American Dilemma* reflected his and Alva’s population policy in Sweden, which they drafted in dialogue with (and in contrast to) the Nazi German model. In this American study, Myrdal put forward a particular definition of racial equality and one that was not unanimously shared by all leading scholars of race in the United States.

**AFRICAN AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY**

Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Ralph Bunche, and E. Franklin Frazier. More specifically, it illustrates the politics of knowledge in the lives of these African American thinkers; and in the process, helps explain why certain of these men’s ideas on African Americans (and not others) captured the imagination of white philanthropic managers at the Carnegie Corporation from 1911 until its publication of *An American Dilemma*.

It explains why the Carnegie Corporation ever funded Booker T. Washington’s vision for segregated vocational and agricultural education for African Americans; why it bypassed W.E.B. Du Bois’s encyclopedia in favor of a policy-oriented national social scientific study of African Americans; why it selected a Swede and not a leading African American social researcher to direct this study; how this Swede engaged with the ideas and work of leading race scholars such as Ralph Bunche, Melville Herskovits, Donald Young, and E. Franklin Frazier; and, why the organization produced the particular vision of racial equality that it did with Myrdal’s project. Put succinctly, the dissertation provides rationale for the Carnegie Corporation’s seemingly contradictory funding decisions vis-à-vis these African American leaders and intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century.

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Secondly, this narrative on the Carnegie Corporation’s reasons for commissioning, funding, and publishing An American Dilemma and on Gunnar Myrdal’s own reasons for writing what he did contributes to the existing literature on the long (and international) civil rights movement.\textsuperscript{29}

\textbf{THE LONG CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT}

Like Glenda Gilmore’s \textit{Defying Dixie} and Kenneth Mack’s \textit{Representing the Race}, this dissertation connects the postwar civil rights movement with a “long” history in the United States.\textsuperscript{30} By illustrating in step-by-step fashion how the Corporation transitioned away from advocating the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education for African Americans to sponsoring An American Dilemma, a founding text of modern civil rights discourse, this dissertation manuscript connects two periods of U.S. racial politics that are generally treated as distinct and unrelated: the “Age of Booker T. Washington” when leading white Americans advocated segregated vocational and agricultural education for the masses of African Americans and the postwar U.S. civil rights movement when leading white Americans advocated federally enforced racial integration for blacks. In the process of telling this narrative, however, the dissertation distinguishes

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\item \textsuperscript{30} Gilmore, \textit{Defying Dixie}, and Mack, \textit{Representing the Race}.
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itself from this existing literature by explaining (not how committed civil rights actors had been working on the ground decades before leading postwar white Americans came around to racial integration, but rather) how a group of leading white Americans—the philanthropic managers at the Carnegie Corporation—transformed and became part of this postwar civil rights story.

INTERNATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Like Mary Dudziak’s *Cold War Civil Rights*, Thomas Borstelmann’s *Cold War and the Color Line*, and Penny M. Von Eschen’s *Race against Empire*, this project on the intellectual roots of *An American Dilemma* places postwar Americans’ civil rights movement in a global context. Much in line with this literature, this dissertation explains that postwar Americans’ vision for federally enforced racial integration was not an exceptionally American moment; but rather, a moment of political and legal change that was very much in dialogue with the international community. However, while these other transnational civil rights historians have described how postwar Americans’ federal enforcement of racial integration was born out of the Second World War and a global Cold War, this dissertation illustrates how this postwar American moment was part of an even earlier, global history peopled with American philanthropic managers and American and European social researchers and public policymakers in the United States, British Africa, and Sweden during the 1920s and 1930s.

This manuscript begins with a description of the Carnegie Corporation’s practice of funding segregated vocational and agricultural education for African Americans in the 1910s and its decision in 1925 to export this funding practice across the Atlantic to British Africa and apply it to native Africans. Chapters two and three delve into the Corporation’s funding of two policy-oriented comprehensive social scientific studies of white-black relations in British Africa during the 1920s and 1930s, from *The Poor White Study* in South Africa to Lord Hailey’s *An African Survey* throughout the continent. The fourth chapter explores the Corporation’s reasons in the mid-1930s for questioning its funding practice with respect to black Americans in the United States and its decision to change course by importing into the Untied States from British Africa its practice of funding policy-oriented social scientific studies of white-black relations. Imagining that it was organizing a policy-oriented social scientific study of black Americans with a colonial officer such as Lord Hailey to direct it, the Corporation’s president approached the Social Science Research Council for guidance in planning its proposed study of African Americans. It was, after all, the Council which had planned the last (and only) national policy-oriented study in U.S. history, *Recent Social Trends*; completed just five years earlier. Chapters six, seven, and eight detail how the Carnegie Corporation’s president approached the Social Science Research Council for help in organizing a study which he hoped would make a policy impact at the national level. It was this very organization that dissuaded the Corporation’s president away from selecting a colonial officer such as Lord Hailey and toward selecting a Scandinavian for the directorship of the study of black Americans.
After introducing Gunnar Myrdal in chapter nine, chapter ten highlights the novelty of the Swede’s theory of racial equality in *An American Dilemma* by comparing it to those of his principal intellectual influences in the United States: the American social scientists Ralph Bunche, Melville Herskovits, Donald Young, and E. Franklin Frazier. Placing Myrdal’s thesis in some American intellectual context, the next two chapters then situate Myrdal’s approach to the study of black Americans against the backdrop of his and Alva Myrdal’s analysis of the population problem in 1930s Sweden, *Kris i befolkningsfrågan*, and their wartime propaganda book, *Kontakt med Amerika*. After concluding with the publication of *An American Dilemma* in 1944, the epilogue outlines how Americans came to associate *An American Dilemma* and the Corporation’s funding of the study with the postwar moment in the United States; and in the process, how the project’s roots in 1920s and 1930s British Africa and Sweden were largely forgotten and ignored.

**A WORD ON METHOD**

Please note that throughout this narrative, I have discussed policy-oriented, social scientific studies that were funded by American philanthropic managers and conducted by American and European social scientists who were concerned with objectivity. Far from dismissing these individuals’ concerns for funding and authoring objective social scientific research, I have analyzed how they went about defining and negotiating their

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32 Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1934) and *Kontakt med Amerika* (Stockholm: A. Bonnier, 1941). Please note that these books have not yet been translated into English. The English translations of these Swedish texts are the author’s own.
objectivity. I have looked to see how the philanthropic managers re-imagined and re-defined objective sources of knowledge in different moments in time, and I have analyzed how the social scientists defined the societal problem under investigation, their methodology, and their policy recommendations. After unearthing the social theories framing these studies, I have compared these studies across time and space.

Throughout the manuscript, I have discussed terms that might startle the contemporary reader: “colonialism,” “eugenics,” and the “folk.” I have scrutinized these terms, not only in the context of colonial Africa and interwar Europe, but also in the context of the United States in the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, the historical actors mentioned in this dissertation used the word “Negro” for the group of Americans we today would call African Americans or black Americans. I only use the former word in quotations or when referring to the title of a publication that included that word. In my own prose, however, I use “African Americans” or “black Americans.”
PART I.

THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION EXPORTS

THE HAMPTON-TUSKEGEE MODEL OF EDUCATION TO BRITISH AFRICA
In 1907, the seventy-one-year-old Andrew Carnegie was asked to deliver a speech at the Philosophical Institution in Edinburgh, Scotland. The Gilded Age industrialist had been born just thirty kilometers away in 1835, but at the age of thirteen he had immigrated to the United States with the rest of his family. Starting work as a telegraph messenger boy in Pittsburgh, the Scot grew to make a fortune in the steel industry in the United States. By the early 1900s, he had sold Carnegie Steel Company to J.P. Morgan and, in retirement, put his attention on his new self-defined role as a philanthropist.

In his 1889 text, *The Gospel of Wealth*, Carnegie had written that wealthy individuals in a capitalist society had the duty to redistribute their wealth. These wealthy individuals made their fortunes in that society, so the society’s masses should benefit from this accumulation of wealth. Beyond duty, however, Carnegie also acknowledged that capitalist societies needed to respond to the rising critique that this form of economic order produced a few moguls and left the masses destitute. Carnegie noted that Americans needed to confront the question of redistribution in a capitalist society. Otherwise, the masses would vote to redistribute society’s wealth through taxes and a state bureaucracy would take charge of this redistributive project.¹

Carnegie argued that the form of redistribution that he proposed would serve mankind best because it would maintain the capitalist order (which he argued was

necessary for civilization’s progress). According to Carnegie in *The Gospel of Wealth*, his model addressed the problem of unequal distribution of wealth in society, while at the same time keeping intact the incentives to private property that helped civilization progress. This model, of course, was “philanthropy.”

Compared to a state bureaucracy, Carnegie argued that individuals who had proved themselves savvy business people by making their own fortunes were best prepared to redistribute a society’s vast wealth on behalf of their fellow citizens. The idea, of course, was that these individuals knew how to make money, so they would know best how to spend it. Carnegie explained that the man of wealth thus becomes “the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves.” Wealthy individuals knew better than the masses or state bureaucrats on how to allocate excess wealth. Or rather, wealthy individuals should not be taxed heavily: Their vast fortunes should remain in their hands, because they (moreso than the state or democratic institutions) were most qualified to redistribute this wealth for the better of their fellow citizens.

In the spirit of maintaining a capitalist society, Carnegie suggested that “philanthropy” should distinguish itself from “charity” by funding projects, individuals, and ideas that would benefit mankind in the long-term. Unlike charity which sought to solve the immediate needs of people in society (needs such as hunger, housing, etc.),

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2 Ibid., 806-07. “This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of wealth: To set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and, after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds which he is called upon to administer.” Ibid.

3 Ibid.
Carnegie suggested that “philanthropy” should put its fortunes towards the long-term solutions to these immediate needs. Rather, philanthropists could fund universities, free libraries, hospitals, medical colleges, laboratories, “and other institutions connected with the alleviation of human suffering, and especially with the prevention rather than with the cure of human ills.”

Carnegie suggested that parks, meeting halls, swimming-baths, and lastly, churches, were also wise expenditures of excess wealth. He noted that these sorts of projects would serve to redistribute vast fortunes in society, without disincentivizing individuals in the capitalist society from striving and progressing civilization.

Returning his attention to philanthropists such as himself, he noted to his readers that it was important that these tycoons redistribute their wealth before they died. He wrote: “The only point required by the gospel of wealth is that the surplus which accrues from time to time in the hands of a man should be administered by him in his own lifetime for that purpose which is seen by him, as trustee, to be best for the good of the people.” It was this individual, after all, who had amassed the wealth. Since he was the one who knew best how to spend the money he had made in the first place, he should spend all of it during his lifetime (before someone else came to administer it).

During the next decades after writing *The Gospel of Wealth*, Andrew Carnegie busied himself organizing philanthropic organizations with particular missions; funding them; appointing his friends as board members; and, making auxiliary donations from his private funds.

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4 Ibid., 28.
5 Ibid., 37.
6 In 1881, Andrew Carnegie established the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh to manage the civic center he had constructed in the city. Two years later, Carnegie founded the Carnegie Institution of Washington D.C.,
In 1907, the Philosophical Institution in Edinburgh had left it up to Carnegie to choose the topic of his lecture. At that time, the Gilded Age industrialist was particularly interested in the fate of African Americans in the United States and delivered an address on “The Negro in America.” To a contemporary reader, it might not seem obvious why Carnegie would have assumed that a Scottish audience would find this topic relevant to their own lives. However, he imagined that Englishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen, Irishmen, Americans, and Canadians shared common interests as mutual members of the “English-speaking race.” This was not simply a race united by a shared language, but one defined

with the goal that this Institution would produce knowledge that all universities in the United States could use. He endowed the Carnegie Institution with $10 million, thus ensuring the Institution an annual revenue of $500,000. Just a year later, Andrew Carnegie formalized his benevolent giving to his hometown of Dunfermline, Scotland by drawing up the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust to provide the people with Dunfermline with privileges and enjoyments, such as public gardens, parks, golf links, art galleries, public exhibitions of arts, lecturers, public entertainment such as theatrical and musical events, etc. Carnegie endowed the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust with $2.5 million in United States Steel Corporation bonds. In 1905, Carnegie established the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and endowed it with $10 million. The purpose of the Foundation was to provide pensions to older professors in American colleges who otherwise could not retire. In 1912, Carnegie endowed the Carnegie Institute of Technology with “$4 million and an additional grant of $3.25 million for capital ventures”, to administer an institute of higher education and professional training in engineering, fine arts, and home economics.

Aside from setting up these institutions, Carnegie also became a steward for international peace. He founded three organizations with the goal of promoting peace and preventing war. In 1904 he founded the Carnegie Fund Trust for Great Britain with an endowment of $5 million. The purpose of the Carnegie Fund Trust for Great Britain was to award men and women who did heroic acts outside of the battlefield. “Too long, Carnegie felt, had soldiers been decorated, honored, feted and pensioned for killing other men…Now, Carnegie medals in gold or silver or bronze, pensions, and great publicity would go to the Heroes of Peace.” In 1910, he established the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace with an endowment of $10 million and directed the Endowment’s Board of Trustees to spend the annual income from the endowment in ways “to hasten the abolition of war.” Three years later, Carnegie founded the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, which would allow him to entrust a Board of Trustees with the task of promoting the advancement and diffusion of knowledge. In February 1914, he established an organization that brought religious leaders together with the common goal of furthering world peace: This organization was the Carnegie Church Peace Union, and Carnegie endowed it with $2 million. The founding of these organizations evinced Carnegie’s developing definition of philanthropy, which included not only the benevolent giving that he directly administered, but the work also administered by the organizations he founded.


by biology: “In race—and there is a great deal in race—the American remains three-fourths purely British. The mixture of the German, which constitutes substantially all of the remainder, though not strictly British, is yet Germanic.” In a 1893 essay published in *The North American Review*, he had explained: “The Briton of to-day is himself composed in large measure of the Germanic element, and German, Briton and American are all of the Teutonic race.” Though other types of immigrants existed in the United States, Carnegie argued that the “amount of blood other than Anglo-Saxon and Germanic which has entered into the American is almost too trifling to deserve notice, and has been absorbed without changing him in any fundamental trait…Englishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen and Irishmen are all Britons, and the American (a term which of course includes the Canadian) entering among these would be as near the common type resulting from a union of the five as any of the other parts.”

Americans, Canadians and Britons were members of the English-speaking Teutonic race, and thus, formed a natural alliance.

In the future, Andrew Carnegie hoped that this English-speaking race would move beyond their contemporary political fractions and join together on the world stage in an Anglo-American alliance. In particular, he explained that such an alliance would be the “arbiter between nations, and enforce the peaceful settlement of all quarrels.” With this general vision of the commonalities between Anglo-Americans, Carnegie established philanthropic organizations throughout the English-speaking world. And in his selection of a topic for the 1907 lecture, Carnegie probably believed that he had chosen a question that should interest any Anglo-American audience; whether it was located in New York,

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9 Ibid., 691.
10 Ibid., 694.
Boston, Edinburgh, London, or Cardiff. After all, from his perspective, Anglo-Americans were part of a shared community whose problems, issues, and questions should interest the entire community.

**ANDREW CARNEGIE AND THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION’S FUNDING OF THE HAMPTON-TUSKEGEE MODEL FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS**

In “The Negro in America,” Carnegie eagerly discussed the importance of industrial and agricultural education for the masses of African Americans in the United States. Just four years prior, he had donated $600,000 to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, which provided this type of education to blacks.11 Addressing his Scottish audience, Carnegie pronounced in 1907: “like other races that have risen, our own included, the negro is capable of producing at intervals the exceptional man who stimulates his fellows.”12 Those gifted few should have places in all professions, he explained. The rest of the masses should continue to provide the labor that they had provided the Southern United States before the Civil War. He specified this labor as: “[A]mong other things its indispensable supply of cotton and, to no inconsiderable extent, of the products of cotton.”13

The Scot-American explained to his audience at the Philosophical Institution that the key to black Americans’ progress was for this group of Americans to assure

13 Ibid.
themselves of paid employment; irrespective of whether these jobs were at the bottom of the labor market or the very ones that black Americans had been forced to do without compensation under slavery. To his audience that day, Carnegie presented the work of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama and that of Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia as two institutions that prepared the masses of black Americans for these jobs. He explained that these institutes worked to elevate black Americans gradually from slavery to full citizenship with white Americans.¹⁴ Far from being unique, many leading white philanthropists shared Carnegie’s admiration for the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education; an admiration that had only grown among this group ever since former Union General Samuel C. Armstrong had founded Hampton in 1868.

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Before the American Civil War of the 1860s, the vast majority of black Americans lived in the Southern United States where whites had enslaved them; denying them their humanity, dignity, and independence. Among other things, whites also denied black slaves the right to schooling. Little surprise then that literacy and education became important points for many black Americans in the South after they were freed as a consequence of the Civil War.¹⁵ As historian Eric Foner has noted: “Perhaps the most striking illustration of the freedmen’s quest for self-improvement was their seemingly

¹⁴ Ibid.

unquenchable thirst for education. Before the war, every Southern state except Tennessee had prohibited the instruction of slaves, and although many free blacks had attended school and a number of slaves became literate through their own efforts or the aid of sympathetic masters, over ninety percent of the South’s adult black population was illiterate in 1860. Access to education for themselves and their children was, for blacks, central to the meaning of freedom, and white contemporaries were astonished by their ‘avidity for learning.’”¹⁶ In the post-bellum South, missionary societies, black religious organizations, and individual black Americans helped establish schools to expose former slaves to the traditional academic education from which they had previously been shunned. They were taught how to read and write and were equally exposed to arithmetic, literature, and the sciences.

Concomitantly, one white American—the former Union General Samuel C. Armstrong—founded a school in 1868 to educate former slaves to use “the head, the heart and the hands.”¹⁷ Unlike these other schools that provided former slaves with the traditional education that they had been denied under slavery, this school trained black Americans in the South for jobs available to them in the region (In practice, this meant that the school trained black Americans for jobs that they had largely performed as slaves). Like the like-minded Northerner philanthropists and philanthropic managers who followed him, Armstrong believed that black Americans’ hard work and steady employment in the agricultural and industrial trades was key to these Americans’ financial independence and toward the South’s economic recovery.


¹⁷ Ibid.
A year before Armstrong founded Hampton Institute, George Peabody established the Peabody Education Fund. “Convinced that education was instrumental to reconciling the North and South during the Reconstruction period, this New England merchant and banker chartered the fund to encourage ‘intellectual, moral and industrial education’ in the South and Southwest by stabilizing the public education system and fostering the growth of common schools.”\(^\text{18}\) Within ten years of operating the organization, Peabody met Armstrong; was impressed by the former Union General; and, accepted the invitation to join the Hampton Board of Trustees a few years later.\(^\text{19}\)

Following Armstrong’s lead, the Peabody Fund turned toward funding normal schools (which taught vocational and agricultural education) and to teacher training for these schools. “In cooperation with state departments of public instruction, the fund assisted black normal schools and provided scholarships for students enrolled in teacher-training programs at historically black colleges.” It funded the Hampton Institute alongside the Tuskegee Institute, which Booker T. Washington (a former slave and Hampton graduate) had founded in 1881. Much like Hampton, Washington’s Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute trained teachers and taught practical skills that would help its students succeed at farming and in other trades such as construction, agriculture, and domestic work. Unlike Hampton, however, most of the faculty and staff at Tuskegee were black Americans.


The Peabody Fund worked hand-in-hand with yet another philanthropic organization, the John F. Slater Fund, which was established by a textile manufacturer from Connecticut in 1882. “[John Fox] Slater had been encouraged to establish the fund by his neighbor Moses Pierce, a trustee of Hampton Institute. From the outset, the Slater Fund focused exclusively on educational opportunities for blacks.”20 During the 1880s and well into the first decade of the twentieth century, the Slater and Peabody Funds shared a field agent who managed the distribution of funds for teacher training at Hampton Institute; for Tuskegee teachers employed in the fields of teacher training; and, for industrial education and to county training schools training black children in the vocational and agricultural trades. Both the Peabody and Slater Funds also channeled funds to the Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes and other schools that echoed this Hampton-Tuskegee model of education for black Americans in the South.21

Up until the end of the nineteenth century, these philanthropic organizations’ visions for black Americans’ education in the South coexisted with that of missionaries and black religious organizations, but there were real tensions between the groups. Black schools controlled by missionary societies and black religious organizations “were generally indifferent or opposed to the Hampton-Tuskegee model of industrial training,” while schools following the Hampton-Tuskegee model argued that this form of education served former slaves and the region best.22 Then in the 1880s, the Hampton-Tuskegee


model gained momentum.\textsuperscript{23} The public education movement to provide public schooling for Southern children in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries left out black Americans, and thus, left black Americans’ education largely outside the realm of public funding in the South. In response, many black Americans sacrificed parts of their own earnings to build schoolhouses, provide books, supplies, and pay teachers’ salaries, but these were significant costs that required significant funding. Without the local and state governments, the existence of most black schools were at the mercy of private donors; and during this era, private donors who were willing to help black schools in the South almost exclusively sympathized with Armstrong’s and Washington’s efforts to train black Americans in vocational and agricultural trades.\textsuperscript{24}

With the cooperation of local and state school boards throughout the South, wealthy white Northerners in the first three decades of the twentieth century created county training schools that taught black Americans in the South manual skills that they could use to find employment. They also funded institutes such as Hampton and Tuskegee that trained teachers to teach at these county schools. While these Northern philanthropists and philanthropic organizations acknowledged that a small group of black American leaders should receive a higher level of education in academic fields such as history, law, business, and the sciences provided at universities like Fisk and Howard

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid. 57. Schools aiming to teach black children the same curriculum as their white counterparts realized that their public funding was miniscule and that private donors were unwilling to fund them. One scholar explained: “the campaign by local and state governments to improve public schools in the South from 1901 to 1915 was aimed at whites and sharply increased the disparities between the schools the two races attended.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
Universities, they funded programs that herded the vast majority of black Americans toward the Hampton-Tuskegee model of segregated agricultural and vocational training.

Sharing the belief that most black Americans needed to be trained to take on jobs available to them (and that serviced the region), these Northern philanthropists and Southern school board members agreed that the South and black Americans would be best served if these former slaves were educated differently than most white Americans and particularly in the vocational and agricultural trades. Philanthropists and their organizations’ managers fronted the money for these black schools, with the assurance from local school boards that the latter would take on the financial responsibility in due time.

In 1899, the two wealthiest philanthropists in the Northern United States—the oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller Sr. and the steel mogul Andrew Carnegie—donated money to Tuskegee Institute for the first time. “John D. Rockefeller who had long demonstrated an interest in Southern black education through contributions to the Baptist Home Mission Society and to particular black institutions,” donated $10,000 to Tuskegee. Andrew Carnegie donated a twenty thousand dollar library and made similar annual contributions of $10,000 for the next years.25 Then, in 1901, the Rockefeller Foundation wrote directly to Booker T. Washington and asked how the foundation could help in expanding the work of Tuskegee throughout the South; and within a few months, John D. Rockefeller Jr. himself was on a train South to visit Hampton in Virginia and Tuskegee in Alabama. “After visits to Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes and from many discussions with the school campaigners, Rockefeller, Jr., became sufficiently impressed with the Southern

25 Ibid.
education movement to approach his father about establishing a new foundation to reinforce the reformers’ efforts.” These efforts led to the creation of the General Education Board two years later in 1903. Though the organization was initially to be called the “Negro Education Board,” advisors close to the Rockefellers suggested that a name like the “General Education Board” would not alienate white Southerners as much as the former.26

With the stated mission of promoting “education within the United States of America, without distinction of race, sex, or creed,” the Rockefellers’ GEB became a dominant player in the South and gained the cooperation of other philanthropic organizations that were founded around the same time with a similar focus.27 In 1907, for example, a Quaker philanthropist from Philadelphia established the Negro Rural School Fund (also known as the Jeanes Fund). The founder, Anna T. Jeanes, directed that the income from her estate, valued at about one million dollars, be used to assist rural schools for blacks.28 The Fund’s board of trustees funded schoolteachers to travel throughout the South to increase interest in and support of rural schools for southern blacks. They “emphasized industrial arts—such as cooking, sewing, and gardening—suffused with moral values such as cleanliness and orderliness.”29 By visiting black schools throughout the rural South, these Jeanes teachers played an important role in spreading the gospel of


29 Ibid.
the Hampton-Tuskegee model of segregated black education. Even more, as black women themselves, they offered this model a certain level of credibility and sincerity to the communities of black Americans who were being asked to accept it.

Three years later, the GEB gained the cooperation of the Slater Fund and assumed support of the Peabody Education Fund’s various state agents overseeing southern education. Little by little and as more Northern philanthropists interested themselves in supporting the GEB’s vision for black Americans’ uplift, the supremacy of the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education only solidified itself. From the perspective of these Northern philanthropists, this model of education would not only help the majority of black Americans one day reach the standard of living that white Americans enjoyed; but more importantly and more immediately, it would help train black Americans to do the work that white Southerners were not willing to do and that was necessary for the region’s economic recovery after the Civil War. From this perspective, these philanthropists and their staff could believe that they were transforming the lives of African Americans while at the same time not endangering their own economic interests in the country nor their relationships with fellow white Americans in the South.

Reflecting the general popularity of Booker T. Washington and the Hampton-Tuskegee model among leading white philanthropists in the North, Andrew Carnegie made a $600,000 contribution to the Tuskegee Institute in 1903; a contribution inspired by Booker T. Washington’s visit to New York City that year. In a letter to a Tuskegee

30 “Within three years, the “Peabody Fund’s last direct activity in the field of black education occurred in 1914, when it contributed $350,000 to the Slater Fund.” See, Jayne R. Beilke, “Peabody Education Fund,” in Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations, ed. by Nina Mjagkij (Garland Publishing, Inc.: New York, 2001), 553.

Trustee which *The New York Times* published, Carnegie wrote: “I am satisfied that the serious race problem of the South is to be solved wisely only through Mr. Washington’s policy of education—which he seems to have been specially born – a slave among slaves—to establish and in his own day greatly to advance. Glad am I to be able to assist this good work in which you and others so zealously labor.” Andrew Carnegie never created an organization like the GEB to fund black education in the South nor did he play a leading role in this field. However, he was a staunch supporter of the Hampton-Tuskegee model of segregated vocational and agricultural education for black Americans.

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When Andrew Carnegie delivered his 1907 speech on “The Negro in America,” he had already established several philanthropic organizations. With particular mission statements in mind, he had founded the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh, the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Carnegie Institute of Technology, the Carnegie Fund Trust for Great Britain, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, and the Carnegie Church Peace Union. At the same time, Andrew Carnegie maintained a private office from where he wrote checks to institutions, individuals, and causes which he deemed worthy of support. It was from this private office that he made his first contributions to vocational and agricultural education for African Americans.

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32 Ibid.
Then in 1910, an ailing seventy-six year old Carnegie realized that he would not live to see the complete distribution of his fortune, and consequently organized the Carnegie Corporation.\(^{33}\) Founded in 1911 with a capital fund of approximately $135 million, the organization had the general purpose of distributing Carnegie’s fortune toward “the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding among the people” in the United States (and soon also Canada and the British colonies).\(^{34}\) Unlike his other organizations, Carnegie intended to run this foundation as an extension of his private office. He appointed himself president of the Carnegie Corporation, and selected among his closest confidants to serve as board members. These included his bookkeeper, Robert Franks, who became the treasurer and his personal secretary, James Bertram, who served as secretary. The other members of the Board were the presidents of his other American philanthropic organizations, including his lawyer, Elihu Root, who was president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

At the time, it was unprecedented for a philanthropic organization of this size, scope, and wealth to exist, and equally unprecedented to see a Gilded Age industrialist steer this amount of wealth away from his private funds and towards improving the lives of Americans. In response, fellow Americans froze in awe: “The New York Times and papers across the country hailed the latest Carnegie gift on their front pages. John D.

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\(^{33}\) David Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006). Promising himself that he would rid himself of his wealth before he did, Carnegie was anxious to redistribute this wealth. This overall redistribution of his remaining wealth was so very much his vision for this organization that, when the steel tycoon passed away eight years later, there remained but $20 million of stocks and bonds in the Home Trust Company vaults. “In the seventh paragraph of his last will and testament, Carnegie directed that it be bequeathed, in its entirety, to the Carnegie Corporation. And with this he accomplished the final, and to his mind, most important goal he had set himself.” Ibid., 801.

Rockefeller cabled his congratulations. ‘May your life be spared for many years with health and happiness.’” Two years later, John D. Rockefeller followed suit and founded a comparable Rockefeller Foundation with a capital fund of approximately $100 million. As a comparison, Rockefeller had founded the General Education Board with $53 million, and Andrew Carnegie had established the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace with a gift of $10 million; the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching with a $10 million gift; and, the Carnegie Institution of Washington with $22 million. The endowments of the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation were of a scale unprecedented in the United States.

The American public was not only in awe of these two industrialists’ fortunes and their efforts to redistribute this wealth to humanity, but also quite uneasy. Though affluent Americans such as Carnegie and Rockefeller had established smaller philanthropic organizations in the late nineteenth century, the Carnegie Corporation and Rockefeller Foundation seemed more threatening to Americans: No private philanthropic organizations of the size and wealth of the these two had ever existed before in the United States.


Reflecting early twentieth century Americans’ anxieties, the United States Congressional Commission on Industrial Relations called in the oil magnate John D. Rockefeller Sr. and his son in 1915 to defend the independence of the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1914, Rockefeller Sr. had established a division of economic research within the one-year-old foundation, and a few months later, the Ludlow massacre occurred at the Rockefeller’s Colorado Fuel Iron Company where women and children died when the state militia assaulted the strikers’ tent camp. In response, the organization decided to organize a study on industrial relations under this new division and selected a close working friend of John D. Rockefeller Jr. (William Lyon Mackenzie King) to direct it. “Though the object of the appointment had good intentions, it was an unfortunate step for the fledgling foundation. Criticism began to rain on the family and the Foundation from all over the United States impugning their motives and charging that the Foundation was merely a vehicle for the family’s private interests.” From the perspective of the American public, it was hardly easy to trust that these Gilded-Age tycoons who had undermined the rights of workers in the process of accumulating their wealth would have the interests of “the people” in mind when they funded social scientific projects to study the American populace. From this perspective, the Rockefeller Foundation (and its comparable Carnegie Corporation) were the playpens of industrialists who had very

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39 By the late 1910s, John D. Rockefeller Sr. had established one research center and four other philanthropic organizations: the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (now Rockefeller University), the General Education Board, the International Education Board, and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial.

defined interests in society and their policy-oriented social scientific research would be an extension of those interests:

[John D. Rockefeller] Junior’s work with Mackenzie King proved a setback for the family: It fueled popular suspicion of the Rockefeller Foundation. From the outset, the family had insisted that it would be a public trust, not a vehicle to promote Rockefeller causes. Because King’s work was underwritten by the foundation, though, it looked as if the Rockefellers had exploited their philanthropy to lend a veneer of legitimacy to their business activities. After public hearings into the matter, the foundation decided to avoid economic issues and concentrate on public health, medicine, and other safe areas.  

After this assault on its intentions for a study on industrial relations, the Rockefeller Foundation decided to limit its involvement in funding policy-oriented social research.

Comparably wealthy and thus vulnerable to similar attacks in the United States, the Carnegie Corporation also stayed away from funding policy-oriented projects in the United States; a task that was perhaps easier for the Corporation to accomplish since Andrew Carnegie was not too interested in funding policy-oriented social scientific studies. Instead, he was interested in supporting the establishment of libraries and the installation of church organs; two funding practices that he deemed helped individual communities throughout the Anglo-American world. He was also particularly interested

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42 In 1902, Andrew Carnegie had established the Carnegie Institution as an independent research organization to provide basic scientific knowledge in Washington. Carnegie consulted with the then President Theodore Roosevelt; endowed the new institution with $22 million dollars; and placed the U.S. President, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and the President of the National Academy of Sciences as ex officio members of the first Board of Trustees. http://carnegiescience.edu/about/history.

The year of its founding, the Carnegie Institution in Washington attempted to introduce social research to the federal government. In particular, it established a division of economics and sociology to study the effects of social legislation by states. Scholars write that the “project was a total failure, and after the [division director’s] death the department was closed. In 1917 the Carnegie Institution renounced all interest in social science, concentrating thereafter on the natural sciences.” Martin Bulmer and Joan Bulmer, “Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s: Beardsley Ruml and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1922-29.”
in funding vocational and agricultural education for African Americans in the United States; and since he treated the Corporation as an extension of his private offices, the Corporation came to fund these fields throughout its early years.\footnote{Nasaw, \textit{Andrew Carnegie}, 768.}

However, in the spring of 1917, the Carnegie Corporation brought an end to the Corporation’s grants for the building of libraries and the donation of church organs.\footnote{At a meeting on May 3, 1917, the Carnegie Corporation Executive Committee explained why the Corporation would end its donation of church organs: \begin{quote} The great war now raging and the entry of the United States into that war has brought upon the Corporation new demands of great importance and of pressing urgency. It is therefore unlikely that the Corporation will [sic] in the future be able to devote any part of its resources to the purchase [sic] of church organs, except in those cases in which the correspondence has so far advanced as to imply a decision on the merits of the case. \end{quote} Carnegie Corporation Executive Committee Minutes (May 3, 1917), CCNY Records.} By then, the elderly and fragile founder had begun to attend board meetings less religiously; and just over a year later, had stopped attending altogether. Without his presence, the Carnegie Corporation’s Board of Trustees began to develop an identity and opinion distinct from Carnegie himself. The Board was more cautious when it came to the founder’s interest in funding vocational and agricultural education for African Americans. Rather than cancel this funding practice, the trustees decided to hold all applications from all “colored educational institutions in the South” until they received a

\footnote{At a meeting on November 2, 1917, the Carnegie Corporation Board of Trustees explained why the Corporation would end its funding of library buildings: \begin{quote} “Inasmuch as every dollar spent on erecting public buildings or private dwellings, which are not strictly necessary or do not contribute to the efficiency of the country in the prosecution of the war, reduces by the amount of such expenditure the resources of the country in money, in material and in skilled labor, besides tending to enhance the cost of the latter, it was/Resolved, That no new applications for the erection of buildings will be considered and that further allotments for the erection of library buildings while the war lasts will be made only in cases where correspondence has already been advanced so far as to imply a decision on the merits of the case.”\end{quote} Carnegie Corporation Board of Trustees Minutes (Nov. 7, 1917), CCNY Records.}
copy of a report on black Americans’ education in the South sponsored by another philanthropy, the Phelps-Stokes Fund.”

From its founding and up until then, the Carnegie Corporation had dedicated the majority of its allocated funds for African Americans towards institutions and organizations that promoted the Hampton-Tuskegee model of segregated vocational education for black Americans. The Carnegie Corporation granted most to Hampton Institute, largely at “Mr. Carnegie’s request.” From 1911 to 1917, the Corporation granted $77,500 to Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute; $2,500 to Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama; $6,000 to Manassas Industrial School in Virginia; $2,000 to Utica Normal and Industrial Institute in Mississippi; $1,200 for the High Point Normal and Industrial School for Colored Children in North Carolina; and $1,000 to Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in Florida.

Before making similar funding decisions indefinitely into the future, however, the Corporation’s Board of Trustees wanted to confirm that contemporary leading experts condoned the precedent established by Andrew Carnegie. In other words, they wanted to wait and see what the rest of the philanthropic community would do with respect to this field.

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45 Executive Committee Minutes, April 3, 1917, CCNY Records.

46 Executive Committee Minutes, April 28, 1913, CCNY Records: Aside from funding Black vocational education to the exclusion of other Black institutions and organizations, the Corporation did donate $10,000 to the Southern Education Board. Ibid.

Like the Carnegie Corporation, the Phelps-Stokes Fund was established in 1911. Founded by the heiress Caroline Phelps Stokes, the organization began with $800,000 towards improving housing and education for “Negroes, both in Africa and the United States, north American Indians, and needy and deserving white students, through industrial schools, the founding of scholarships, and the erection or endowment of school buildings or chapels.”⁴⁸ Within a year of its founding, however, the founder’s nephew steered the organization to focus more heavily on education than on housing; writing to Booker T. Washington to ask him how he could imagine best using five to ten thousand dollars.⁴⁹ In response, the African American educator noted that “such a sum could be instrumental in accomplishing what he had long regarded as a necessity: distinguishing the worthy from the unworthy small denominational Negro schools.”⁵⁰ The younger Phelps-Stokes took this suggestion to the organization’s trustees; and the following year, the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s Board of Trustees recorded:

The trustees, believing that such a report of existing conditions would prove invaluable to southern educators and legislators, to philanthropists interested in Negro education, to the principals and trustees of schools for colored youth, and to various educational boards, adopted the recommendations and asked the Commissioner of Education if he would accept the cooperation of the Phelps-Stokes Fund in making such a study on condition that the expenses of the agents should be paid by the fund.⁵¹

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⁵⁰ Ibid., 31 (quoting Booker T. Washington to Phelps Stokes, May 15, 1911).

⁵¹ Thomas Jesse Jones, *Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States (prepared in cooperation with the Phelps-Stokes Fund under the Direction of Thomas*
The purpose of such a report was to help educators, legislators, philanthropists, educational boards, principals, and trustees of schools assess the quality of black high schools, colleges, and universities in the South. When Thomas Jesse Jones, who was then specialist in the education of racial groups at the U.S. Office of Education, learned of the Fund’s plans to pay for such a survey, he volunteered himself and his staff for the task of coordinating and directing it.\footnote{Kenneth James King, \textit{Pan-Africanism and Education: A Study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 31.}

At eleven years old, Jones had emigrated from Northern Wales to the United States with the rest of his family. Much like Andrew Carnegie, Thomas Jesse Jones came from a humble background: his grandfather had been a village blacksmith and his father a saddler.\footnote{Ibid., 22.} Unlike Andrew Carnegie, however, Jones would not become an industrialist. Rather, he would become a leading expert of African and African American education.

Reared in Ohio, Jones earned his Bachelor of Divinity at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1899, and three years later, received a doctorate in sociology from Columbia University.\footnote{Donald Johnson, “W.E.B. DuBois, Thomas Jesse Jones and the Struggle for Social Education, 1900-1930,” \textit{The Journal of Negro History}, 85 (Summer 2000), 71-95.} His doctoral thesis investigated Jewish and Italian communities living in a city block in New York City; reflecting his own interest in the question of race and ethnicity in American society.\footnote{Thomas Jesse Jones, \textit{Sociology of a New York City Block} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1904).}  

project, he received an offer to join Hampton Institute as director of the research
department and lecturer in sociology.56

Once at Hampton, Jones began to cultivate his professional identity as an expert
in black education. In 1910, he entered the national stage by temporarily joining the
United States Census Bureau for the year’s census. His task was to get “‘the facts in
regard to the negroes’ where the Census Bureau believed it had so far failed.”57 Two
years later, he joined the U.S. Office of Education as a specialist in the education of racial
groups. During that time, Jones received word of the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s planned
survey and perceived it as an opportunity to define himself as a leading expert in African
American education. The Scot-American successfully convinced the Phelps Stokes Fund
that he (with the help of the Office) could direct this comprehensive survey of black
education. Published in 1917, just two years after Booker T. Washington had passed,
Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the
United States catapulted Thomas Jesse Jones onto worldwide recognition as America’s
expert on black education.58

In the introduction to the Study on Negro Education, Anson Phelps Stokes
explained why the organization had chosen Thomas Jesse Jones to direct this report. He
noted that the trustees had considered Jones the most qualified person in the country to

56 Kenneth James King, Pan-Africanism and Education: A Study of Race Philanthropy and Education in

57 Ibid., 28.

58 Thomas Jesse Jones, Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in
the United States (prepared in cooperation with the Phelps-Stokes Fund under the Direction of Thomas
Jesse Jones, Specialist in the Education of Racial Groups, Bureau of Education) (Government Printing
conduct this investigation mainly because he had both a “detached point of view” and a  
“special familiarity with the conditions of the colored people in this country.” Stokes  
explained that the forty-some year old Jones had immigrated to the United States from  
Wales at the age of eleven and had received his higher education throughout the country  
and in non-denominational and denominational schools. These experiences as an  
outsider and traveler of different worlds added to his “breadth of outlook and  
sympathy.” Jones had a breadth of experience with respect to black Americans that  
could inform his work with the Report. Phelps-Stokes wrote: “Eight years work in the  
research department at Hampton Institute and the experience involved in taking charge of  
the Negro statistics for the census of 1910 gave him a special familiarity with the  
conditions of the colored people in this country.”

With the publication of this two-volume survey of black schools in the United  
States, Thomas Jesse Jones not only established himself as a leading scholar of black  
Americans’ education, but he specifically established himself as a proponent of  
vocational and agricultural education for the masses of black Americans. A former  
researcher at Hampton Institute, he noted the “gifted founder” of Hampton Institute,  
Samuel Chapman Armstrong, and described the “the remarkable service” to education

59 Thomas Jesse Jones, Negro Education, xii-xiii.

60 “His Welsh birth gives him a certain detached point of view; while his education at a southern university (Washington and Lee), a mid-western college (Marietta), an undenominational theological school (Union), and a northern university (Columbia), where he took his doctorate of philosophy in sociology, combined with work as principal of a public school, all added to his breadth of outlook and sympathy.” Ibid., xii-xiii.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid., xiii.

63 Thomas Jesse Jones, Negro Education, 256.
of Tuskegee Institute’s founder, Booker T. Washington.\textsuperscript{64} He quoted both Washington and Armstrong throughout the two volumes and emphasized the value of vocational education over the study of the literary subjects, or rather of “book learning,” for the majority of black Americans.\textsuperscript{65}

According to Jones, vocational training taught the masses of black Americans “sound habits of hand and head,” and even more critically, prepared them for employment which the region very much needed them do. Such education would not only help African Americans gain financial independence, but help the Southern economy.\textsuperscript{66} Jones did not state this explicitly in his report, but this model of education was not only good for the individual African American and the Southern economy, but also for the entire United States economy which would benefit from a stronger Southern economy. This thought must not have been far from his mind in Washington D.C., nor from the minds of the gilded age industrialists such as Rockefeller and Carnegie who earlier had supported the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education for the masses of black Americans.

In the report, Jones was clearly forthright about his preference for vocational institutions for the masses of black Americans in the South, and noted that he judged the value of the black schools he visited throughout the region with this preference in mind: “In making these recommendations only the promotion of the cause of the best and most practical education of all colored people for better living, civic righteousness, and

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 81.

\textsuperscript{66} Jones noted that “[t]hough the Negroes have made striking progress in the acquisition of property, they are still a poor people.” Ibid., 84.
industrial and economic efficiency has been kept in mind.” Aside from praising certain “university-grade” institutions such as Fisk and Howard Universities, Jones graded the vast majority of the schools he visited in the South on the merits of their vocational training.

From the moment of its publication in 1917, the Jones Report guided local and state school boards and northern philanthropists and their staff in their funding and support of black schools throughout the region. Local and state school boards along with the staff of philanthropic organizations read this report and received the report’s message that “schools that had successfully followed the Hampton model” were most deserving of funding support. Even more, the report recommended that philanthropic boards working for black education should unite as much as possible toward one common policy. The Rockefeller’s General Education Board would take on this leadership role, but first it is important to update the list of leading philanthropic organizations supporting the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education for African Americans.

The same year of the Jones study’s publication, a new philanthropic organization joined the team of Americans furthering vocational and agricultural education for black Americans in the South. In 1917, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, Julius Rosenwald, established a fund for “the well-being of mankind” and quickly got to work building schoolhouses for rural southern blacks. Not surprisingly, “Rosenwald’s interest

67 Ibid., 6-7.


in black education stemmed from his affinity for the self-help philosophy of Booker T. Washington. Rosenwald served as a trustee and patron of Tuskegee Institute and supported the Hampton-Tuskegee program of industrial training for blacks.\textsuperscript{70} The fund offered southern communities one-third of the funds necessary to construct school buildings, with the local communities and local and state boards providing the rest. The Rosenwald Fund worked alongside the General Education Board, the Jeans Fund, and the Phelps-Stokes Fund to construct and fund public schools for black Americans that they and local and state boards condoned. This latter point was important because, while the private philanthropic organizations fronted the funds for the construction of schoolhouses, school materials, and teachers’ salaries at these schools, they expected the local and state school boards to include these schools within their districts; to assume partial costs in the immediate future; and, to assume the total cost within three to five years.\textsuperscript{71}

Much in line with Jones’ recommendations in \textit{Negro Education}, the GEB guided the other philanthropic organizations under a common policy of funding vocational and agricultural education for black Americans (at the great expense of liberal arts or civic-minded education) throughout the South.\textsuperscript{72} Within three years, the GEB acquired “virtual monopolistic control of educational philanthropy for the South and the Negro”;\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.


coordinating with the Slater, Jeanes, Rosenwald, and Phelps-Stokes Funds and local and state school boards to establish education for black Americans that was both useful for this group of Americans and for the region. Each of these organizations’ different foci complemented each other in the formation of a well-coordinated and well-funded web of vocational and agricultural schools for black Americans.

Taking a critical lens to this funding practice, one scholar has asserted that the GEB’s and its associate foundations’ “policies and programs were designed primarily to develop an economically efficient and politically stable Southern agricultural economy by training efficient and contented black laborers while leaving the Southern racial hierarchy intact.”74 This form of education for black Americans appealed to so many wealthy philanthropists and their managers precisely because it fed into several of their perspectives on black Americans and the South. They all vaguely wanted to help address the problem of racial inequality in the Southern United States, and reasoned that black Americans had a significant role to play in addressing this problem. These Northerners seemed to think that these former slaves’ lower level of humanity and civilization prevented white Southerners from seeing them as equals. With vocational and agricultural training, black Americans could become financially independent and prove to their communities that they were (unlike stereotypes of them suggested) hardworking, clean, and morally upright Americans. This form of education not only would help black Americans solve the problem of racial inequality in the South, but also the Southern economy. For many of these Northerners who were concerned both with the fate of black

74 Ibid., 392.
Americans and the fate of the Southern and national economies, channeling the vast majority of Southern black Americans toward the industrial arts seemed reasonable.

At the same time, some Americans spoke out against the Jones Report and philanthropic organizations’ blanket support of vocational education for black Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most famously among these critics were the black scholars W.E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson.75

A historian with a doctorate from Harvard and with graduate training from the University of Berlin, Du Bois was then editor of the NAACP’s The Crisis. In the February 1918 issue of The Crisis, Du Bois reviewed Thomas Jesse Jones’ report on black education and did not hide his disapproval.76 He wrote: “The casual reader has greeted this study of Negro education with pleasure. It is the first attempt to cover the field of secondary and higher education among colored Americans with anything like completeness… Thinking Negroes, however, and other persons who know the problem of educating the American Negro will regard the Jones’ report, despite its many praiseworthy features, as a dangerous and in many respects unfortunate publication.”77 It was an unfortunate publication, he explained, because it further cemented the already-dominant insistence “on manual training, industrial education, and agricultural training” among black Americans in the region.78

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77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.
In particular, Du Bois sensed that Jones’ suggestion that philanthropic organizations funding black education in the South should unite under one common policy was dangerous. He wrote: “Here, then, is the weakness and sinister danger of Mr. Jones’ report. It calls for a union of philanthropic effort with no attempt to make sure of the proper and just lines along which this united effort should work. It calls for cooperation with the white South without insisting on the Negro being represented by voice and vote in such ‘cooperation,’ and it calls for a recasting of the educational program for Negroes without insisting on leaving the door of opportunity open for the development of a thoroughly trained class of leaders at the bottom, in the very beginnings of education, as well as at the top.” Du Bois claimed that Northern philanthropic organizations bowed to the concerns of fellow leading whites.

From his perspective, these philanthropic groups in the North were cautious institutions that were fearful of doing anything with respect to African Americans that might place them in the outskirts of mainstream white American thought. This would not only lead them to fund the Hampton-Tuskegee model that the Jones Report suggested, but also to follow the Jones Report’s suggestion that all the organizations should follow the GEB’s lead in this field. Speaking of this policy, he wrote: “This is an unfortunate and dangerous proposal for the simple reason that the great dominating philanthropic agency, the General Education Board, long ago surrendered to the white South by practically saying that the educational needs of the white South must be attended to before any attention should be paid to the education of Negroes: that the Negro must be trained according to the will of the white South and not as the Negro desires to be trained.

79 Ibid.
It is this board that is spending more money today in helping Negroes learn how to can vegetables than in helping them to go through college.”

Under such a likely policy, Du Bois predicted that black Americans would have few options in traditional, liberal arts, and civic-minded education. Even when a few black Americans could amass the funds to establish such a school, Du Bois also noted that a Jeanes Teacher was probably not far away trying to change its curriculum. Du Bois very well predicted that the Jones Report’s recommendations would lead to a further entrenchment of the dominant theory that vocational and agricultural education for black Americans was the key to improving the condition of black Americans in the South, and particularly, to improving the economic strength of the region.

Like Du Bois, Woodson saw the 1917 Jones Report as a menacing tool that undermined the proper education of black Americans in the South. Woodson acknowledged that some Americans received the report with open arms; noting that in “1917 assembled in Washington the outstanding Negro educators to discuss the two-volume report of a study of Negro education made by the Phelps-Stokes Fund under the direction of Thomas Jesse Jones. Some of the educators assembled who had given their approval of this study took pride in defending it as a great achievement.”

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80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.


however, he argued that this study created more harm than good: “The worst of all the results of his biased report was that the system of education which it endorsed produced a mis-educated class of Negroes who are the greatest liability of the race.”84 Years later, Woodson would go even further than Du Bois in his criticism of the project by calling Thomas Jesse Jones “that evil genius of the Negro race.”85

As Woodson and W.E.B. Du Bois imagined, the Jones Report would only cement and strengthen leading philanthropists’ and philanthropic managers’ perceptions that the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education was worth advocating and supporting for the masses of black Americans. The historian Carter G. Woodson wrote: “Jones’s judgment led most Negroes to consider him an evil in the life of the Negro; but he was nevertheless, catapulted into fame among the capitalists and government officials supporting the education of Negroes. They made Jones the almoner of the despised race with the title of Educational Director of the Phelps Stokes Fund which he served from 1913 to 1946. When he said do not give here and do not help yonder the ‘philanthropic’ element heeded his biddings.”86 The recommendations of the Jones Report gave legitimacy to the recommendations of an earlier generation of advocates of the Hampton-Tuskegee model such as Samuel C. Armstrong, Booker T. Washington, John D. Rockefeller Sr., and Andrew Carnegie.

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
By 1920, all southern states had supervisors of black rural schools and the GEB had appointed general field agents to coordinate the supervisors’ work.\(^{87}\) The supervisors had the task of organizing black industrial training at the state level, while the Jeanes Teachers were “expected to assist local superintendents in making schools conform to the industrial curriculum... It was the duty of these teachers to visit as many schools in their county as possible.”\(^{88}\) A decade later, 426 Jeanes teachers with degrees from Hampton Institute and other comparable institutions traveled throughout the South teaching the industrial and agricultural arts to black Americans in county training schools.\(^{89}\) Equally so, 4,977 public schoolhouses for black Americans existed and “217 teachers’ homes had been built in fifteen southern states.”\(^{90}\) When leading northern philanthropic organizations and state and local governments during the 1920s thought about offering education to African Americans, they primarily (and almost exclusively) thought of funding, offering, and supporting segregated vocational and agricultural education.

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After the publication of the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s Jones Report and under the leadership of the GEB, the Carnegie Corporation continued to fund vocational education


\(^{88}\) Ibid.


for black Americans in much the same way as it had done during Andrew Carnegie’s lifetime.91

Well in line with Andrew Carnegie’s funding practice, Thomas Jesse Jones’ recommendations, and the GEB’s subsequent leadership in the field, the Carnegie Corporation funded vocational education for black Americans (at the exclusion of other black institutions and organizations) during the first three decades of the twentieth century. This precedent was first established by Andrew Carnegie, condoned by the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s Jones Report, and reinforced by the subsequent leadership of the GEB in the field. Even more, the Carnegie Corporation would follow the Phelps-Stokes Fund and Thomas Jesse Jones as they went to export this model of education across the Atlantic and apply it to native Africans.

91 Total: $1,171,700, 74.88% of the funds the Corporation granted to Black institutions and organizations, from 1920- October 1935: Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute $497,200; Fisk University, for current expenses, $346,500; Tuskegee Institute, $125,000 endowment, endowment “the income to be used for the general support and maintenance of instruction in the industrial and applied arts.”; Berry School $100,000; John F. Slater Fund, $50,000 to be used for establishing country training schools for Black children in the South (final contribution, 4 may 1926 Executive Committee); Fort Valley High and Industrial School, $25,000 “to be used for a building to contain a library, reading rooms, offices, and an assembly room.”; Calhoun Colored School (Ala.), $12,500; Penn Normal Industrial and Agricultural School $12,500; Manassas Industrial School, $3,000.

Total: $393,000, 25.12% of the funds the Corporation granted to Black institutions and organizations, from 1920- October 1935: Atlanta University, $100,000 for endowment of a professorship in the School of Business (19 January 1932 Board); Rosenwald Fund, $100,000 toward the support of the regional demonstrations in library service in the Southern States; Howard University, $5,000 for the purchase of art teaching equipment; Study of methods aiding education in the south—and particularly rural education-- $2,500; Association for Study of Negro Life and History, $25,000; National Urban League, $61,500; Atlanta University, $5,000 for maintenance expense; NAACP: $2,500; Commission on Inter-Racial Cooperation, $91,500 toward the general expenses of the Commission.
THE PHELPS-STOKES FUND, THOMAS JESSE JONES, AND ESTABLISHING THE HAMPTON-TUSKEGEE MODEL FOR NATIVE AFRICANS

In the same year as Thomas Jesse Jones’s report had come out in print, the secretary of the International Missionary Council (IMC) J. H. Oldham reviewed his book alongside that of Charles T. Loram, the white South African education expert who was suggesting the value of applying the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education for native Africans.92

Oxford-educated, the Scot Oldham had studied theology at New College in Edinburgh in the early 1900s and had published the well-received Studies in the Teaching of Jesus in 1903.93 He subsequently became secretary of several religious groups; and in 1908, was appointed as a full-time secretary of the committee preparing for the international missionary conference in Edinburgh. The purpose of this 1910 conference was to bring together the major Protestant missionary societies together with the goal of addressing common concerns together. As one scholar has noted: “The times were seen as ones of crisis and opportunity; crisis because of the ‘astonishing awakening of national consciousness; in the peoples of Asia and Africa which was causing increasing rejection of western imperialism—cultural and economic as well as political—and was thus calling in question the motives and aims of western missionaries.”94 In particular, missionary

societies were becoming critical of the education that they provided so-called “backward people” in the colonies, including native Africans.95

Some white Europeans were critical that this form of education forced the African population to assimilate into European culture. By contrast, an education tailored for native Africans would challenge the assumption that European norms were necessarily superior to native Americans’ own, and in the process, preserve native Africans’ culture and institutions. Others found fault with the “bookish” focus of European education for native Africans. Among those critics, some believed that this form of education encouraged natives to believe that they could (and should) receive educated jobs. Some argued that such educated jobs should not be available to native Africans, because this social mobility would disrupt the racial hierarchy and peace in colonial Africa. Instead, the African population should be trained to service the lower echelons of the social and economic ladders in colonial African society.96

During the first World Missionary Conference in 1910, a commission was given the task of arriving at some holistic policy on education in the colonies. Among those whom the Commission consulted for advice was Thomas Jesse Jones, who was then still at Hampton and rising in stature among Anglo-Americans as a leading expert on African Americans’ education. By the end of the session, the participants concurred that the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education seemed most appropriate in the colonies, and specifically in Africa. “In Africa the commission was thus mainly concerned to correct the absence of industrial and agricultural instruction; and, in no less than three


96 Ibid., 44-47.
conspicuous places, missions were reminded that ‘the value of industrial and agricultural training for the negro race is abundantly proved by the experience of the Normal and Agricultural Institute at Hampton, Virginia, and the Normal and Industrial School at Tuskegee, Alabama.”\textsuperscript{97} During the meeting, leaders of these missionary societies were arriving at the consensus that the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education would be equally appropriate for native Africans.

From his end, Oldham decided to take a trip to Hampton the following year to see first-hand how this model of education worked and how it could be exported to British Africa. As one colleague later remembered: “Africa was to him the emerging continent, its future still open to the right as well as to the wrong influences and, compared with India or China, underdeveloped in its education, government policy, Church and State relations.”\textsuperscript{98} Once back in Scotland, Oldham continued thinking about this topic; however, the First World War soon followed. At the war’s conclusion in 1918, Oldham presented the learned readership of the International Review of Missions with his review of Thomas Jesse Jones’s 1917 \textit{Negro Education} alongside Charles T. Loram’s \textit{Education of the South African Native}.\textsuperscript{99}


Five years Oldham’s junior, Loram was a South African (likely of British descent) who had studied at Cambridge University and then in 1906 had returned to the dominion to become assistant inspector of schools in Natal.\footnote{The author has tried to determine whether Charles T. Loram was a white South African of Afrikaner or British (or other) descent, since this would be relevant in illustrating his intentions for this study and why General Hertzog was later dismissed from his professional post in the 1930s. She is still determining this point.} Much like the missionaries at the Edinburgh Conference in 1910, Loram had sought to define a distinct form of education for native Africans and looked to the United States for answers. At the break of the First World War in 1914, Loram took a leave of absence from his post and traveled across the Atlantic to study at Columbia University’s Teacher’s College.\footnote{R. Hunt Davis, Jr., “Charles T. Loram and an American Model for African Education in South Africa,” \textit{African Studies Review}, 19 (Sep., 1976), 87-99.} For his doctoral research on African American education, Loram visited Tuskegee, Hampton, and several other small schools for African Americans in Alabama, Maryland, and Virginia. His final manuscript, \textit{The Education of the South African Native} was published by a London-based press in 1917: The same year as Thomas Jesse Jones’s \textit{Negro Education}.\footnote{Charles T. Loram, \textit{The Education of the South African Native} (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917) and Thomas Jesse Jones, \textit{Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States} (prepared in cooperation with the Phelps-Stokes Fund under the Direction of Thomas Jesse Jones, Specialist in the Education of Racial Groups, Bureau of Education) (Government Printing Office: Washington, 1917).}

In these two 1917 publications, Oldham found support for his (and his fellow missionaries’) vision that the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education could be transported to colonial Africa and applied to natives. More specifically, Thomas Jesse Jones’s two-volume report lent support to the importance and validity of the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education for the masses of black Americans, while Loram’s dissertation manuscript described its relevance in the African context. Oldham noted in
his review that he simply wanted to call attention to the importance of these two studies “in relation to missionary policy.”\textsuperscript{103}

In particular, he noted that missionary societies needed to update their pedagogy to reflect the most modern tools in educational thought and practice. “What then are the educational principles to which special prominence is given in the volumes before us? It is insisted that education must be closely related to the actual life of those who have to be taught. It must take account of their instincts, experiences and interests as distinct from those of people living in quite different conditions.”\textsuperscript{104} Oldham echoed the sentiments of the attendants at the Edinburgh Conference eight years earlier, who had vocalized growing concern that missionaries’ form of educating the natives in Africa was stripping natives of their own cultures and identities and preparing them for jobs that were not available to them. He continued: The aim of education for native Africans “must be to equip them for the life which they have to live. Hence the main emphasis must be not on a purely literary curriculum, such as still prevails in many schools, but on training in such necessities of actual life as health, hygiene, the making and keeping of a home, the earning of a livelihood, and civic knowledge and spirit.”\textsuperscript{105} This form of practical education would respond to critics’ arguments that education in colonial Africa was Europeanizing natives. It would also prepare native Africans for entry-level jobs in the colonial African economies, and in the process, leave undisturbed the racial hierarchy of white dominance and native African submission.


\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 245.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
Specifically, Oldham found that both industrial and agricultural education would help native Africans “build character” and find work with white employers.\textsuperscript{106} He concluded the review by noting to his readers that these two volumes should be available in the library of each mission. “They also deserve the attention of missionary administrators and missionary committees at home, who desire that Christian education in the mission field should maintain the position it has held in the past and bear yet larger fruit in years to come.”\textsuperscript{107} In reality, Oldham would not have to rely simply on these two 1917 reports to make his case that the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education should be exported and applied to natives in Africa. Just a year after Oldham’s review, the American Baptist Missionary Society independently “channeled a request through the Committee of Reference and Counsel of the Foreign Mission Conference of North America for an African education survey.”\textsuperscript{108} The Society’s members believed that they could come to a common policy on education that would meet the needs of all Africans under European colonial control. “Not surprisingly this latter group turned to the Phelps-Stokes Fund which, as a result of its recently published Negro education survey [in the United States], was considered the outstanding authority on the educational problems of the under-developed peoples.”\textsuperscript{109} The Phelps-Stokes Fund, whose charter allowed the organization to fund projects that furthered “the education of negroes, both in Africa and the United

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 246.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
States,” agreed to the proposal.110 Even more, the Fund agreed to the Society’s request to invite Thomas Jesse Jones to direct the survey.

Joining Jones on this Phelps-Stokes Education Commission were, among others, Charles T. Loram and J.H. Oldham. The South African Loram served as a traveling companion to the Scot-American, while the Scot Oldham ensured the cooperation of European mission societies and governments on the European and African continents. Since the end of the Great War, European governments had become increasingly interested in engaging more directly with the question of native education and Oldham was there to help coordinate the British Government’s involvement in this report.

The recently formed League of Nations reasoned that one of the causes of the Great War had been the competition for colonies, and that world peace required these colonies to become independent some day. Even more, the League calculated that member nations could help indigenous peoples in colonial dependencies reach this goal if they provided education for them. Subsequently, it “brought pressure on member nations to show planning and educational progress for indigenous peoples in colonial dependencies.”111 With this in mind, European governments were rather eager to collaborate on this first Jones Report on Africa, which would survey education in West, South, and Equatorial Africa. From August of 1919 until March of 1921, the Commission visited Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Cameroons, the Belgian Congo, Angola, and South


And the following year, the Phelps-Stokes Fund published Thomas Jesse Jones’ report, *Education in Africa: A Study of West, South and Equatorial Africa*.113

Much as he had recommended for black Americans in 1917, Jones recommended in *Education in Africa* (1922) that the masses of native Africans should receive agricultural and industrial training. Discussing this 1922 report, the scholar Edward H. Berman noted: “Education for the African masses—as for the Negro masses—was to be simple, utilitarian, and rooted to a strong agricultural bias. For the native leadership there would be, first, training for teachers and religious workers; second, instruction for those who would specialize in agriculture and industry; and third, training for those who would enter the professions of medicine, theology, engineering, and law.”114 Even for the elite natives, however, “there would be a strong emphasis on agricultural and simple industrial subjects, hygiene and sanitation, gardening and rural economics before the professional training commenced.”115 This form of education for the masses of native Africans, Jones reasoned in 1922, would help natives develop their moral character and establish some financial independence as they secured agricultural and simple industrial jobs.

Jones explained that colonial officers, like leading white Americans in the United States, would benefit from having access to a relatively well-trained class of manual laborers. This form of education would not only help colonial powers provide native


114 Ibid.

Africans with “educational progress” (as the League of Nations encouraged), but also help their own economies in the colonies and in Europe. In response, Jones’ report was well received by the Colonial Office in London. In particular, it helped to “crystallize the thinking of the Colonial Office and most British missionary societies around a common program, one whose efficacy had already been demonstrated in the American South.”

In fact, the Colonial Office in London was so enthusiastic about Jones’s *Education in Africa* that it asked the Phelps-Stokes Fund to send Jones again to survey native Africans’ education in East and Central Africa.

During this time, “an educational policy considered appropriate to Africans had begun to evolve, which commanded the support of leading missionaries, colonial educationists, and even the Colonial Office itself.” As the historian Kenneth James King has argued, “[t]his had been quite largely due to the very wide appeal in post-war Africa of Jones’s formula for adapted Negro education.” Just as this common vision for native Africans’ education was taking hold among these white experts and officials, Jones began his second survey. Just a year after he had published the first survey on West, South and Equatorial Africa, Jones began his survey of East, Central and South Africa. And one significant reason that Jones was able to complete this second survey


119 Ibid.

120 Ibid., 138.
within two years was that he very much repeated (and copied) statements from his earlier report.

Much like *Education in Africa*, Jones’s 1925 report on *Education in East Africa* recommended that the colonial office and missionary societies coordinate to offer native Africans agricultural and industrial education.\(^{121}\) Though he acknowledged that some native African leaders should receive “professional knowledge of law, medicine, and theology,” he noted that agricultural and industrial education should serve as the basis for the masses of native Africans. Again, the Colonial Office responded favorably to Jones’s recommendations for native education.\(^{122}\) In fact, they were so thrilled that Jones became a celebrity among British colonial officers.

Before Jones returned to the United States in the spring of 1925, the British Government hosted a dinner in his honor in London.\(^{123}\) One of the colonial officers that evening noted the significance of the work conducted by the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s Thomas Jesse Jones, and compared its significance to that of the Rockefeller Foundation in public health. Under Secretary for the Colonies W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore told the other dinner guests: “Just as the great Rockefeller Foundation for the promotion of public health has rendered valuable service to humanity not only in the New World as a whole,


\(^{122}\) “Phelps-Stokes Fund Memorandum,” “Memorandum from Press Association (London) concerning the discussions at the Dinner given by the British Government to Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones on March 26, 1925,” Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archives, Series 3, Box 103, Folder 1033, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter cited as LSRM Archives).

\(^{123}\) Ibid.
but also in the Old, so this Foundation is rendering great service to the problem of education and the wise development of the African peoples, considered as a whole.”

The other dinner guests in London echoed similar accolades to Jones, thanking him for his analysis of the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education in the African context. Such a form of education for native Africans could help the British Colonial Office not only meet its League of Nations mandate, but bolster its economies on both continents by improving agricultural and industrial production on the African continent.

Closing the evening, Sir Michael E. Sadler thanked Jones for the two reports on education for native Africans and particularly for presenting a type of education that was “good not for the individual only but for the community.” Just a few months later, a review of Jones’s book in the *Journal of the Royal African Society* confirmed the British Government’s affinity for Jones’s thinking. After noting that every government official, trader, settler, and missionary should have Jones’s two volumes, the reviewer wrote: “Dr. Jesse Jones will figure as one of the greatest benefactors of the Negro, because he has pointed out unflinchingly the mistakes made hitherto in education and lays down a better plan for the future.” The Phelps-Stokes Fund had just begun to export the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education to Africa, and the British Government seemed to be a happy recipient.

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124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.


The Fund exported this model of education, not only by funding the two reports authored by Thomas Jesse Jones, but also through informal channels. For example, it encouraged the creation of the post of director of native education in several colonies (similar to school supervisors in the Southern Untied States); local advisory committees on native education (much like local school boards); and, schools to train Jeanes teachers.\textsuperscript{128} In fact, it was within this focus on the establishment of Jeanes teacher schools in Africa that the Carnegie Corporation of New York first became involved in funding projects on the continent.

\textbf{THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION AND THE HAMPTON-TUSKEGEE MODEL FOR NATIVE AFRICANS}

When Andrew Carnegie had passed away in 1919, his friend and Carnegie Corporation trustee Elihu Root became an interim president of the organization while the board searched for a permanent president. Within a year, University of Chicago president and head of the psychology department, James R. Angell, accepted the Corporation’s offer to head the Corporation; however, a year later, he left to become president of Yale University. Board member and president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement in Teaching, Henry S. Pritchett, became acting president of the Corporation as the Board once again searched for a more permanent president. The

Carnegie Corporation Board of Trustees elected Frederick P. Keppel to the presidency in December of 1922.¹²⁹

The forty-seven-year-old Keppel hailed from the New York City area. Emigrating from Ireland, his parents had established a comfortable middle class lifestyle for themselves and their two sons in Staten Island. The senior Frederick Keppel had been a rather successful art dealer who had required his two sons, Frederick and David, to apprentice in his business before they headed off to college. The elder of the sons, Frederick P. Keppel attended Columbia College; and within two years after graduation, returned to Columbia in 1900 to serve as assistant secretary, secretary, and then dean of the College. During these years there, he met and married J.P. Morgan’s niece, Helen Tracey Brown, and the two bought a house near other Columbia academics and administrators in the New York City suburb of Montrose. Very much fans of the country life, the Keppels maintained this family home along with a relatively modest flat in New York City.¹³⁰ Though it is difficult to create a deep description of this Irish-American New Yorker, it is suffice to say that his posts at Columbia College and his marriage to J.P. Morgan’s niece were likely the two most significant keys that contributed to Keppel’s social mobility into American elite circles.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Carnegie Corporation Minutes of Meetings of the Board of Trustees (December 22, 1922), CCNY Records.


¹³¹ The author of this dissertation manuscript has read through each folder in the 50 boxes making up the Frederick P. Keppel Papers. When the author read this material, it was uncatalogued and stored within the CCNY Records.
In 1918, Frederick P. Keppel left Columbia College and moved to Washington D.C. to serve as third secretary of war. Once in the War Department, his exposure and networks expanded to a broader international circle. After the war, Helen Keppel and the children joined him and they all moved to Paris for two years, where Frederick P. Keppel worked with the American Red Cross and then became Commissioner of the American Chamber of Commerce there. Back in Montrose, Keppel took on the post as the executive secretary of the Russell Sage Foundation’s New York Project.\(^1\)

Founded in 1907 by the widow Margaret Sage, the New York City-based Russell Sage Foundation was the first philanthropic organization dedicated specifically to making a major contribution to social research and had been the most significant funder of social scientific research in the United States throughout the 1910s.\(^2\) During the First World War, it had provided its tools of scientific data collection (including statistical data analysis) to the federal government. After the war, the Foundation’s trustees decided to fund a survey of New York City itself. In particular, the trustees of the Russell Sage Foundation approved a proposal to create “a Plan of New York bold enough to visualize the commercial, the industrial, the social and the artistic values and the possibilities of our glorious harbor and all of [its] broad and varied environs.”\(^3\) While Keppel served as


the executive secretary of this committee, the American railroad president and uncle of the future U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Frederic A. Delano, served as its chair. Just a year into his posting, however, Keppel left the project to become president of the Carnegie Corporation.

When Frederick P. Keppel took over as Carnegie Corporation president in 1923, the Corporation had assets of $133.66 million and an income of $7.4 million. According to Corporation rules, the income only could be used to “to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding among the peoples of the United States.”135 Separately, the Corporation had ten million dollars of its assets reserved for the “advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding” in Canada and the British colonies.136

These two funds came to exist because Andrew Carnegie had assumed that he could make contributions throughout the world through the Carnegie Corporation’s general funds and found that the organization’s charter prevented him from doing so. When he had incorporated the Carnegie Corporation in 1911, he had specified that the income from his gift should be used “to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding among the peoples of the United States.” In writing this mission statement for the organization, Carnegie had (unbeknownst to him) limited himself to funding projects within the United States. As one Carnegie Corporation employee later recounted: “For some years…Mr. Carnegie had been accustomed to making gifts for specific purposes in other lands. He now found that the terms of the

136 Ibid.
charter would not allow him to make any gifts from this trust outside the United States.”

As a solution, Andrew Carnegie established a smaller fund within the organization for use in Canada and the British colonies. During the first two decades of the organization’s existence, the Corporation’s trustees referred to these ten million as the “Special Fund” and the larger sum appropriated for works in the United States as the “General Fund.”

During Keppel’s first year as president, the Corporation paid out $12.95 million of the General Fund; and of this total, $12.35 million was based upon grants voted by the Corporation in previous years. In other words, previous commitments agreed by the Corporation before Keppel took office as president dominated the General Fund and allowed little if any room for new initiatives in the United States. The smaller fund, which was dedicated to the “advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding” in Canada and the British colonies was available for new projects, and it was through this fund that Keppel began to express his creativity as a philanthropic manager. Before 1925, almost all grants from the Special Fund went to Canada and Newfoundland. The Corporation records explain that these areas were “easily accessible, making it possible for the Corporation to acquire an intimate knowledge of their educational needs.”

In 1925, Keppel looked across the Atlantic to the British colonies in Africa; a region of the world that the Corporation had not yet touched.

For its first contribution in Africa, the Carnegie Corporation selected the British colony of Kenya and offered its government $37,500 for “cooperation with the British

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137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
Government in educational developments in Kenya Colony.\textsuperscript{139} The government used the organization’s money to establish a Jeanes School. Recommended by Jones’s \textit{Education in East Africa} (published that same year), Jeanes Schools would educate instructors on how to teach the agricultural and industrial trades to natives in the rural countryside.\textsuperscript{140} Through this first experience on the continent, the Carnegie Corporation in effect joined the Phelps-Stokes Fund in exporting the Hampton-Tuskegee model that they both advocated so strongly for African Americans in the United States.

A few months later in the fall of 1925, J.H. Oldham (who was secretary of the International Missionary Council and who had helped coordinate the two Jones Reports in Africa) traveled from Edinburgh to New York City in order to meet with American philanthropic managers about the possibility of future funding opportunities in colonial Africa.\textsuperscript{141} Aside from the Hampton-Tuskegee model, Oldham then was interested in exporting the tools of the American social sciences across the Atlantic in order to address problems arising from the coexistence of whites and blacks on the continent. That fall, he found a receptive audience with the Carnegie Corporation’s president.

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\textsuperscript{140} E. Jefferson Murphy, \textit{Carnegie Corporation and Africa: 1953-1973} (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1976) 19. This grant “was the first step in expanding the Special Fund’s coverage to include colonies and dominions other than Canada, and also launched the Corporation’s African program. Soon the Special Fund came to be called the British Dominions and Colonies (BDC) Program, clarifying its broader scope.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{141} Memorandum of Conversations with Colonel Arthur S. Woods and Dr. Ruml of the Laura Spelman Foundation, October 26, 28, and November 5, 1925, CCNY Records, Box 281, Folder 281.1 “Oldham, J.H. 1925-1938.”
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By way of summary, the Carnegie Corporation’s program in British Africa began in 1925 with the organization’s promotion of the Hampton-Tuskegee model for native Africans; a model of education which it and other leading philanthropic organizations had promoted quite extensively among African Americans since these foundations had been established in the early years of the twentieth century. However, as it will become clear in subsequent chapters, the Carnegie Corporation’s African Program in the later half of the 1920s and 1930s would end up providing the Carnegie Corporation’s president with a vision on how to challenge the dominance of the Hampton-Tuskegee model back home. More specifically, the Carnegie Corporation’s experience funding comprehensive policy-oriented social scientific studies of white-black relations under its newly created African Program would inspire its president to export this funding practice from British Africa and into the United States as a means of replacing the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education with a more modern, scientific, and comprehensive approach to the problem of whites’ and blacks’ coexistence.
PART II:

THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION FUNDS POLICY-ORIENTED

STUDIES OF WHITE-BLACK RELATIONS IN BRITISH AFRICA
CHAPTER 2:

WITH *THE POOR WHITE QUESTION* (1932), THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION BEGINS
FUNDING POLICY-ORIENTED EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON BLACKS AND WHITES IN AFRICA

In the fall of 1925 and just months after Thomas Jesse Jones completed his report on East Africa and the Corporation made its contribution to a Jeanes School in Kenya, the missionary and Phelps-Stokes adviser in London, J.H. Oldham, traveled to New York to meet with leading American philanthropic managers.¹

For the last decade, he had been an adviser to the British Government and a leading coordinator of the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s two Jones Reports. As one of Oldham’s colleagues later remembered: “The visits of the two Phelps-Stokes Commissions and their subsequent Reports were all the more effective because they came at the very time when decisions were being taken, agreements made between the parties involved and the lines of future policy laid down.”² During these years, Oldham was appointed a member of the British Government’s Advisory Committee on Education in Tropical Africa, which had an Under-Secretary of State as its chairman.³ The Scot was gaining a deepened appreciation for the needs of the British Government and was eager to make use of his contacts with American philanthropies. On this trip to New York in October of 1925,

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³ Ibid.
Oldham met with the director of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Beardsley Ruml, who was becoming known as a chief supporter of the American social sciences.\textsuperscript{4}

Considered somewhat of a young prodigy, Ruml had earned his doctorate in psychology and education from the University of Chicago when he was twenty-one years old. Ten years later when Oldham met with him in New York City, this psychologist from Iowa had become director of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. Founded by John D. Rockefeller Sr. in 1918 to commemorate the memory of his late wife, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial first funded social welfare organizations and religious organizations. Under Ruml’s leadership, however, the organization that year had begun to focus its efforts on funding the different fields of the social sciences, from anthropology and economics to ethnography, in American and European universities and research institutes.\textsuperscript{5}

One of Ruml’s primary goals as director of the Memorial was to fund the social sciences in the United States and to update these fields in Europe to reflect the advances they had made in the United States during and after the First World War. He aimed to further develop these fields on both sides of the Atlantic, and to bring them in dialogue with each other. In the process, he envisioned that the social sciences across the United States and Europe would become more sophisticated and increasingly scientific and, with

\textsuperscript{4} Memorandum of Conversations with Colonel Arthur S. Woods and Dr. Ruml of the Laura Spelman Foundation,” CCNY Records, Box 281, Folder 281.1 “Oldham, J.H. 1925-1938.”

\textsuperscript{5} “Director’s Reports 1919-25 (Memorandum: The Executive Committee and Director to the Board of Trustees, The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial for the year October 1, 1924 through September 30, 1925,” Laura Spelman Memorial Papers, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 15, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter cited as LSRM Archives); “Social Science Program in Europe,” Rockefeller Foundation Archives, 1.1 Projects, Series 700 Europe, Box 15, Folder 115, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter cited as RF Archives); and, “Additional Details,” LSRM Archives, available at http://www.rocharch.org/collections/rockorgs/lsmadd.php (last visited May 7, 2012);
time and further collaboration between social scientists, would help solve and address practical, social problems. In other words, the Memorial’s director concluded that the development of the different fields in the social sciences would not only lead to more precision in these fields of anthropology, economics, history, sociology, political science, and ethnography, and bring them into dialogue with each other; but, also would provide policy makers with comprehensive analyses of societal problems that would help them to successfully solve these problems.

Oldham targeted Ruml during that fall of 1925, likely because the Scot had a similar vision on the utility of exporting the advances in the American social sciences and their value for public policymaking. Ruml, however, already had in front of him the overwhelming project of funding the social sciences in the United States and throughout Europe. To the extent of the author’s knowledge, Ruml did not consider seriously Oldham’s request to fund the social sciences in Africa.

However, Oldham left a copy of the memorandum of these meetings with Ruml with Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel. Oldham knew of the Carnegie Corporation’s contribution to the colony of Kenya just months before, and perhaps thought that the Corporation—if not the Memorial—would consider his vision for exporting the tools of the American social sciences to the continent.

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During his years with the fund (1922-1929), he began to see society as a constantly changing panoply of interactions. No longer could society be divided according to disciplinary specialties; all these phenomena converged and interacted in specific locations, such as a ‘city’ or a ‘region.’ In order to solve social problems, then, it was necessary to ‘integrate’ the social sciences.
Ibid.
With a lack of budgetary flexibility in the Carnegie Corporation’s General Fund but with funding opportunities through the Special Fund, Keppel read the Scot’s memorandum with interest. In the transcript, Oldham explained to his American philanthropic readers:

The economic problems created by the introduction of western capital are in Africa bound up with the political problems involved in the government of one people by another; by the racial problems which arise when two diverse stocks live side by side in the same geographical area; and by the cultural problems resulting from the impact of a progressive and highly complex civilization on peoples still for the most part in a primitive stage of development…The world thus finds itself confronted, as it were overnight, with a problem of almost unparalleled complexity and difficulty, and all on a gigantic scale.7

Oldham explained that, in their efforts to influence the region’s “primitive” peoples with their “highly complex civilization,” Europeans confronted economic, political and racial problems. He argued that if Europeans sought to help native Africans achieve Europeans’ higher stage of development, Europeans would need to confront, analyze, and solve these problems.

Oldham noted that the Hampton-Tuskegee model of manual and agricultural education for native Africans, though helpful for natives and colonial powers alike, would not solve the problems of adjustment between these two groups of people. He further explained that these problems should not only interest white Europeans, but also white Americans, because growing unrest in white-black relations in Africa could threaten racial hierarchy across the Atlantic. He wrote:

7 Memorandum of Conversations with Colonel Arthur S. Woods and Dr. Ruml of the Laura Spelman Foundation, October 26, 28 and November 5, 1925, CCNY Records, Box 281, Folder 281.1 “Oldham, J.H. 1925-1938.”
[Americans] have within their borders nearly a tenth of the African race. The growth of a racial consciousness among black peoples is likely to result in the American Negro problem coming to be regarded on both sides as only one element in a world problem of the relations between the white and black races. 

Oldham phrased his analysis of race around the idea that there was a “Negro problem” on both sides of the Atlantic. As political theorist Adolph L. Reed Jr. has pointed out, the “initial formulation that ‘America’ has a ‘Negro Problem’ not only reproduces the principle of black marginalization in the national experience; it also implies that the black experience exists insofar as it intersects white American concerns or responds to white initiatives.” By using this term, Oldham implied that the United States and colonial Africa were white civilizations; that blacks were foreigners to these civilizations; and, that they posed a threat to it.

Oldham further explained that white Americans and white Europeans had a shared interest in confronting the problem of native Africans’ so-called “primitiveness” and difference. Without such transatlantic cooperation among white leaders, he feared that blacks on both sides of the Atlantic would unite and pose a significant threat to white dominance on both continents. He noted: One “of the most pressing needs seems to be to obtain through fuller knowledge a better understanding of the real nature of these forces and thereby greater ability to master them. The most effective way of achieving this object would appear to be to concentrate effort in the first instance on a well-considered

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8 Ibid.


10 Memorandum of Conversations with Colonel Arthur S. Woods and Dr. Rumil of the Laura Spelman Foundation, October 26, 28 and November 5, 1925, CCNY Records, Box 281, Folder 281.1 “Oldham, J.H. 1925-1938.
experiment at some one point in the continent.” 11 Oldham suggested that a study taking on particular questions, rather than a comprehensive study, would have the greatest hope of success in colonial Africa. The Scot’s memorandum caught the attention, if not of Ruml, of Keppel at the Carnegie Corporation whose experiences in the past decade made him receptive to Oldham’s claim that white-black relations were a problem worthy of further investigation.

During the First World War, Keppel had served as third assistant secretary of war and had collaborated closely with Booker T. Washington’s advisor, Emmett J. Scott, who had become special adviser for black affairs to the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker. In this post, Keppel was exposed to a national body of African Americans and the subtle dynamics that contributed to their subjugation. Scott remembered that Keppel “was especially charged with the duty of looking after many complaints and matters of vital concern to colored Americans generally, and not only did he manifest a keen interest in their welfare but, in many cases, was successful in translating that interest into remedial action.” 12 Keppel came to appreciate that white-black relations (and the tensions that defined these relations) were not just a regional, but rather, a national problem. Six years later in 1925, Oldham informed the Corporation’s president that problems in white-black relations were not only national issues, but issues of global significance. The Scot further reinforced Keppel’s perception that white-black relations were not just a regional (Southern) issue, but a much broader one that required Americans’ attention. Upon

11 Ibid.

reading this memorandum, Carnegie Corporation’s President Frederick P. Keppel took steps to explore the possibility of funding further projects in Africa.

The following year, the Carnegie Corporation President sent James Earl Russell to East and Southern Africa on a reconnaissance trip. A Montrose neighbor and former colleague of Keppel’s at Columbia, Russell had recently retired from his post as dean of Teachers College just before his wife suddenly passed away. Reaching out to a friend, Keppel had asked him to join him at the Carnegie Corporation as his special assistant. Years later, James Russell’s son, John Russell (who later served as Keppel’s assistant in the 1930s), remembered this moment and noted that “Keppel operated… in a very human way. If he could fit in his humanness with his business activities in the Corporation, he would do this.”

Before Angell traveled across the Atlantic, the Corporation’s trustees defined the geographic limits of the organization’s excursions into Africa and agreed to use the previous Corporation president’s redefinition of the Special Fund to include not only Canada and the British colonies, but the dominions as well. Specifically, President James R. Angell had noted in the 1921 annual report: “We now receive occasional requests for aid from Australia, South Africa, and elsewhere, but we are in no position to pass intelligently on these requests; much less have we taken the initiative, as I am disposed to

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13 John Russell Oral Interview (1968), Carnegie Corporation Project, Columbia University Oral History Research Office, New York (hereafter cited as CCOH Project). In this interview, John Russell mentions that James Russell visited Africa in 1927. In reality, though, Russell visited the prior year in 1926. Seeing that he shared this information during an oral interview conducted in 1968, it is reasonable that he might have confused the years.
think we should. Angell suggested that the Corporation should expand the definition of “British colonies” to include British dominions as well as colonies. On Russell’s exploratory to Africa, he would visit British colonies and also the dominion of South Africa. At the likely insistence of Andrew Carnegie’s former secretary and lifetime trustee of the Corporation, James Bertram, the trip included visits to British dominions and colonies with “communities of whites.”

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Carnegie’s former personal secretary reminded his fellow trustees that Carnegie had created these two funds because he had imagined that the Corporation would serve the “English-speaking race,” or rather, “Anglo-Americans.” In a memorandum to Keppel a few years later, Bertram noted: “Any money which Mr. Carnegie gave to the Colonies was given for the reason that they were communities of whites. Without any documentary line of distinction ever having been drawn Carnegie Corporation has followed this policy in fact.” For this reason, he explained, the Corporation could fund projects in Kenya,


15 Ibid.

16 The document I recovered in which Bertram made this guideline explicit was from 1931. Though I have not found a written document of Bertram making the same statement before this exploratory trip to Africa, the trip’s itinerary and Bertram’s dominant place in the planning stages of this trip suggest that this guideline remained constant. “London Conference 1931: Report to the Trustees (1931),” CCNY Records, I.D. Carnegie Corporation of New York Administrative Records, Policy & Program, Box 6, Folder 6.2.

East Africa, and South Africa, but not in West Africa where there was “not and never [could] be a white community…short of climate changes or the adaptation of Europeans to a tropical environment to an extent not now in sight.”

Clearly, Bertram had a definite reading of Andrew Carnegie’s intention for the Corporation in the British Colonies, which he concluded was to help communities of whites. The founder did not answer this question directly in his papers; however, we know from his own writings that he equated the Anglo-American world with the “English-speaking race,” or rather, the “Teutonic race.” In 1907, for example, he began his Edinburgh lecture on the “Negro in America” by telling his Scottish audience that African Americans were “the very last slaves held by a member of our English-speaking race.” Scots, like Americans, were part of this race, which was distinct from that of African Americans. Moreover, he presented this talk on African Americans in Scotland precisely because he assumed that Anglo-Americans were part of a shared race whose problems, issues, and questions with respect to other races should interest the entire community.

As far as the Carnegie Corporation itself, we know from Andrew Carnegie’s establishment of the Special Fund that he intended the organization to fund projects throughout the Anglo-American world. In this vein, Andrew Carnegie also likely thought (as Bertram suggested) that problems, issues, and questions that concerned the English-

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20 Ibid. From Andrew Carnegie’s perspective in 1907, the problem of African Americans being “called to rise in the scale from slavery to citizenship in the presence of a civilization representative of the highest” was one that should interest Anglo-Americans across the Atlantic.
speaking race in the United States, Canada, and the British Colonies could potentially concern the Corporation.\(^{21}\) And so, while Bertram used the word “whites” when Carnegie likely would have used “Anglo-Americans” or people of the “English-speaking race,” Carnegie’s former personal secretary maintained the spirit of his vision. The Corporation was supposed to be a transnational organization that addressed the problems and questions that Anglo-Americans confronted across the oceans. In this respect, the problems of fellow “communities of whites” throughout the British colonies and dominions in Africa should (or could) potentially interest the Carnegie Corporation.

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In 1926, the senior Russell traveled throughout East Africa and spent a significant amount of time in South Africa where he contacted and met with several alumni from Columbia University’s Teachers College, including Charles T. Loram.\(^{22}\) This was the British South African whose dissertation from Columbia, *The Education of the South African Native*, had been published in 1917 and reviewed by J.H. Oldham alongside Thomas Jesse Jones’s American report.\(^{23}\) In South Africa, he since had caught the attention of the Prime Minister and Afrikaner Jan Smuts, who soon appointed Loram chief inspector of native education in Natal and a member of the Union Native Affairs


Commission. The Prime Minister later sent Loram to accompany Thomas Jesse Jones on the first African report; a gesture that reflected the South African Prime Minister’s continued efforts to maintain alliances between the Union of South Africa and the British Government.

Born to an Afrikaner family in the British Cape Colony, Jan Smuts went on to study at Cambridge and Christ’s College in England and returned to the colony in 1895. Within years, he grew critical of British dominance in the region, and during the Boar War (1899-1902), served in opposition to the British. When the British re-established their supremacy in the region, the Governor the Cape Colony Alfred Milner “was determined to translate the military victory into durable British supremacy throughout Southern Africa. He planned to rule the former republics autocratically, without popular participation, until he had denationalized the Afrikaners and swamped them with British settlers. When that was done, and not before then, it would be safe and expedient to introduce representative institutions.” Milner imagined that, under his control, he could successfully eradicate Afrikaner culture and nationalism. However, Afrikaners represented over half of the white population of Southern Africa and opposition within this group was forming. Just a year after the four colonies of Southern Africa jointed together to form a Union of South Africa, the former Afrikaner generals of the Boer War, Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, won the general elections.

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They were both Afrikaner nationalists to a certain degree; but ever since they had come into power in the Transvaal three years earlier, the two had realized that they needed to secure as many votes as possible within a voting population that was half British and half Afrikaner. Back then, Botha and Smuts had “described their policy as one of ‘conciliation,’ which involved reconciling the differences among Afrikaners and between Afrikaners and British Transvaalers.”\(^27\) Once they became the leaders of the Union in 1910, Prime Minister Botha and deputy Smuts maintained the same strategy of conciliation. In 1919 and after Botha’s passing, Smuts succeeded him as prime minister and continued this general policy.\(^28\) When Prime Minister Smuts in the early 1920s sent Loram to aid Thomas Jesse Jones with the Phelps Stokes Fund’s first African survey, he was acting on the Union of South Africa’s continued policy of collaboration with the British Government.

However, by the time James Russell was traveling through South Africa in 1927, Smuts was no longer prime minister. Botha’s and Smuts’s policy of conciliation throughout the 1910s and first half of the 1920s had likely comforted British officials, but it had been far from unanimously shared among Afrikaners in the Union of South Africa. Among the latter group, this policy became exceptionally controversial during the First World War when “Botha and his colleagues accepted the fact that South Africa, like the other self governing British dominions, was automatically involved, since it was not a sovereign state.”\(^29\) During the war, the Botha government reinforced its ongoing policy of

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 141-53.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 158.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 159.
“conciliation” with English-speakers within the Union and with the British Government. However, other Afrikaners had wanted to use this moment of chaos in the British Empire to reclaim complete Afrikaner control of southern Africa. An armed rebellion ensued, and though the Botha government was able to dominate the uprising, historian Leonard Thompson has explained that this wartime experience decreased the popularity of the Botha-Smuts government.30

In the wake of this rebellion, a fellow Afrikaner in Botha’s cabinet, James Hertzog, founded the Afrikaner National Party. The party gained popularity; and as part of a coalition with the Labour Party, defeated Smuts in 1924.31 “The economy had been in recession for three years, and reports that one half of all white school-leavers were unable to find jobs precipitated a sharp panic around unemployment.”32 The National and Labour parties criticized “the government for promoting ‘big financial’ interests and jeopardizing the future of South Africans ‘as a civilized people.’”33 Noting the white population’s unemployment rates, the two winning parties stressed the existing problem of poverty among white South Africans. Without protecting “civilized labor” for the “civilized races,” they argued that the racial hierarchy in the Union would be threatened.34

30 Ibid.
32 Ibid., “‘Not a Single White Person Should Be Allowed to Go Under,’” 380.
33 Ibid.
Far from being a new concern, the pact parties in the early 1920s mobilized a long-standing anxiety over white poverty in the region. Since the turn of the century, the “presence of white pauperism was viewed as a reproach in terms of the dominant Christian value system. It was also a source of discomfort and distaste to the middle classes wherever physical proximity was unavoidable and above all it was perceived as a ‘weak link’ which enfeebled the white population and threatened its perceived mission as a civilizing agent.”35 For several decades at least, Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking white South Africans had been sensitive to the existence of poverty among whites; seeing it as a threat to their claims of racial superiority over the natives. Clearly, these two groups had separate cultural and linguistic identities, but both were concerned with this same issue. Against the backdrop of an economic recession in the early 1920s, Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking whites’ fear of white poverty and its threats to their claims of natural dominance as a civilized race in southern Africa came to the fore.

Among those in South Africa who reflected this heightened concern for the presence of poverty among whites was Ernest Malherbe, with whom Russell met during his trip through the region. A “tenth-generation Afrikaner and the son of a Dutch Reformed minister,” Malherbe had studied at Columbia University’s Teachers College during the 1920s.36 Like Loram, Malherbe had shared an interest in education and had found much in Americans’ conversations on education from which South Africans could learn. But unlike Loram who was particularly interested in the natives’ education,


Malherbe imagined creating a national education research bureau.\textsuperscript{37} In particular, one model “he had in mind was the United States Bureau of Educational Research, which collected and published educational statistics and initiated original research.”\textsuperscript{38} His vision was to have a centralized national bureau on education in South Africa that collected empirical data on its population; analyzed problems in education empirically; and, from this empirical data and analyses, offered policy solutions to solve the problems. “What South Africa needed, Malherbe believed, was a genuinely ‘scientific’ approach to social policy making.”\textsuperscript{39} To reach this goal, he imagined that he would need the aid of Americans such as Russell and his associates at the Carnegie Corporation.

When Russell met with Malherbe in South Africa, the latter was then teaching at Cape Town’s Faculty of Education and enjoying the critical success of his recently published Columbia dissertation on education policies in South Africa, which was published two years earlier in South Africa: \textit{Education in South Africa: 1652-1922}.\textsuperscript{40} Malherbe made a particularly significant impression on Russell, but the former dean of Teachers College also established contacts with other Teachers College alumni and alerted them that the Corporation’s president would be visiting the following year to discuss further funding opportunities in the region.


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 353.

\textsuperscript{40} E. G. Malherbe, \textit{Education in South Africa (1652-1922): a critical survey of the development of educational administration in the Cape, Natal, Transvaal and the Orange Free State} (Cape Town: Juta & Co., 1925).
In November of 1926, the Carnegie Corporation’s trustees approved the president’s proposed trip to retrace Russell’s steps in Africa and gave him the task of gauging educational opportunities for effective use of the Special Fund. They resolved to send the president and the secretary, James Bertram. Bertram was Andrew Carnegie’s former personal secretary and a lifetime trustee at the Carnegie Corporation who made it difficult for Keppel to shift the organization’s funding practices away from its founder’s explicit intentions. Keppel invited him on the trip likely because he needed his support if he wanted to expand the Corporation’s program into Africa (and particularly into any program that was not blessed by Andrew Carnegie himself). Keppel’s assistant, James Russell, remembered years later that Keppel “felt that Bertram wouldn’t approve of it unless he was asked to go. Bertram was a very difficult person.”

Since the Corporation had made its first contribution in Africa in 1925, Bertram had warned that the board that should only look to areas on the continent where there were “communities of whites.” By asking Carnegie’s former personal secretary to accompany him on this trip, Keppel tried to ensure the allegiance of one of the most


42 John Russell Oral Interview, 1968, CCOH Project.

difficult members of his board. Even more, it also helped that Bertram had lived in South Africa, spoke Zulu, and thus, could facilitate with the more practical aspects of the trip. 44

From June to September of 1927, Keppel and Bertram retraced Russell’s steps and visited British East Africa (the British Colony of Kenya and the British protectorates Uganda, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar); the British colonies of Southern and Northern Rhodesia; and, the British dominion of the Union of South Africa. In particular, they spent time with two former Teachers’ College graduates Loram and Malherbe. Both South Africans became important contacts for the Corporation in Africa throughout the 1920s and 1930s; however, on this particular trip, Malherbe left a particularly lasting impression. For Keppel at least, Malherbe served as an important adviser on potential social scientific studies of race relations on the continent; a topic which Keppel had seen underscored in Oldham’s memorandum just two years prior.

During his time in Cape Town, Keppel heard Malherbe suggest that the Corporation should fund a comprehensive study of white poverty in South Africa: “The proposal was based on an article Malherbe had written on the value of applying scientific methods to the study of the poor white problem.” 45 Much as Oldham had suggested a few years earlier to Keppel and Ruml, Malherbe recommended that a scientific study on a racial problem of relatively small scale should be conducted. In the article, Malherbe had explained: “We shall never solve the Poor White problem adequately until we get


thorough and first-hand knowledge of the causes underlying this malady…Only when we have made a correct diagnosis and are certain of the causes can we remedy them… The results must be published so as to be accessible to the whole of the public.”

The proposed study caught the attention and endorsement of the Carnegie Corporation’s president and secretary.

Upon their return to the Carnegie Corporation of New York offices, Bertram and Keppel suggested several projects for the Board’s consideration and a five-year limit in the Corporation’s involvement in Africa. Aside from supporting scholarly exchanges between African and U.S. scholars, the Corporation encouraged native education and culture through the support of Jeanes Schools, educational research, mental tests, and agencies concerned with interracial relations; improvement of training for other non-Europeans; publications in music and archaeology; development of adult education; and a limited number of social service projects. On the top of the list of recommendations, however, was Malherbe’s recommendation for a scientific study of South Africa’s “poor white problem.”

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46 Zine Magubane, “The American Construction of the Poor White Problem in South Africa,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107 (Fall 2008), 696.


49 By and large, the “African Program” that Keppel and Bertram established extended Andrew Carnegie’s support of the Tuskegee-Hampton model of education for black Americans and applied it to native Africans. E. Jefferson Murphy, *Carnegie Corporation and Africa: 1953-1973* (New York: Carnegie
In light of Keppel and Bertram’s recommendations, the Corporation’s Board of Trustees agreed to fund a study of the “more than 120,000 of the small total of Europeans who ha[d] sunk below the economic level of the more advanced natives” in South Africa. 50 As the president and the secretary had explained to the Board in the last weeks of 1927, this was an important societal problem worthy of the Corporation’s attention because it threatened the racial hierarchy (and thus, stability and peace) in the British dominion. 51 Directly acknowledging that the majority of “poor whites” were members of the Afrikaans-speaking community of South Africans, the Carnegie Corporation’s leadership requested that the Dutch Reformed Church make a formal request for the funds. This way, the study would appear to have been conceived of and requested from within South Africa. 52

The Corporation’s decision to fund a study of the “poor white question” in South Africa through an appeal to the Church clearly fit into the Corporation’s vision of aiding “communities of whites” throughout British Africa. The societal problem at hand clearly related to whites in the dominion. Though the issue was particularly important for

Corporation of New York, 1976), 20: “Carnegie Corporation, like Andrew Carnegie himself, had long exhibited an interest in advancement of blacks through education, and had supported such institutions as Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes. Under Keppel’s direction this interest was extended to African advancement, but it was a relatively minor dimension added to the broader work with the established institutions of the white-settler Dominions.” At the same time, the program also included the scientific studies of racial problems—so long as the problems related (and sought to benefit) white communities in Africa. The first of these scientific studies was this Poor White Study and the second Lord Hailey’s African Survey.


Afrikaans-speaking white south Africans, the study would help both English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking whites in the region confront and solve an issue that was important to both.

By the end of the year, a team of American and South African researchers began work on this comprehensive and empirical study of the poor white problem. Malherbe served as the educational researcher; Stellenbosch University professor J.F. Grosskopf as the economist; Stellenbosch University professor R.W. Wilcocks as the psychologist; the Department of Health’s W.A. Murray as the health researcher; and, the journalist M.E. Rothman (the only woman researcher on the team) provided the “gender component.” Deeming that American sociologists could offer the team of South African researchers some guidance in the study of a societal problem such as the poor white problem, the committee invited the American sociologists K.L. Butterfield and Charles T. Coulter. As Malherbe had imagined would be necessary in the process of importing into South Africa the American tools of the social sciences, American social scientists were invited to join the commission to help with “with the commission’s research design.”

In 1932, these American and South African researchers presented their findings in a five-volume report, Report of the Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question in South Africa. The study included “detailed expositions on


economics, psychology, education, health, and sociology. Each volume incorporated ethnographic methods, surveys, interviews, statistics, and pictures.”⁵⁷ And in the beginning of each volume, the researchers included their Joint Findings. First, they explained the value of analyzing poor Afrikaners: “Even where poor white families live in a preponderantly native environment, cases of their ‘going kaffir’ are undoubtedly quite the exception. But long-continued contact with the inferior coloured races has in some respects had deleterious social effects on the European.”⁵⁸ To preserve white racial dominance in South Africa, the authors explained that policy makers needed to change the environment around Afrikaners so that this group could reach the same standards as the more affluent whites of British-descent.⁵⁹ Citing the results of an intelligence test administered to 3,281 poor white schoolchildren in South Africa, the social researchers “dispelled the possible fears of Afrikaners (if not the prejudices of English-speaking South Africans) that some defect was inherent in the Afrikaner nation.”⁶⁰ The researchers emphasized that there was nothing unique about poor whites’ psychology that predisposed them toward poverty and South Africans of British-descent toward more affluent European standards. Rather, the socio-economic differences were the “result of unfavourable environmental conditions.”⁶¹ With the assistance of public policy measures,


⁵⁹ Ibid., vi.


they noted that Afrikaners could be lifted from poverty; reach the same living standards as South Africans of British descent; and, help sustain white racial dominance in the region.62

As far as possible policies, the Carnegie Commissioners noted that poor whites’ education needed to be customized to practical matters. For farmers, this education could be tailored to help them manage their farms more profitably. For those who were not farmers, this training could be customized to help them gain employment in the labor market. In the meantime and for a temporary period, the Commission also recommended that certain unskilled and semi-skilled jobs should be reserved for poor whites, or at least that the salaries for these jobs should be based on a “white wage” instead of the lower “Native wage.”63 This recommendation complemented the South African white community’s longstanding appeals for “civilized wages” for whites that would distinguish them from native Africans. With this study in hand, poor Afrikaners could show with scientific certainty that they were biologically equal to South Africans of British descent of any social class, and that their equality could be furthered via public policy changes that distinguished them from native Africans.

In making such policy recommendations, one scholar noted that “the Carnegie Corporation set a ‘paradigmatic precedent’ for the relationship between social science and policy making.”64 Another wrote that the “multi-year Poor White Inquiry, begun in 1928, was remarkable for its scale and interdisciplinary approach… viewing social


63 Ibid.

problems analytically and intellectually… while anticipating an institutional solution.”65 The Carnegie Commission’s teams of researchers had collected data on the poor white question across the entire dominion and had analyzed it with an eye toward crafting public policy solutions to cure the societal problem across the region.

Far from ignoring the Commission’s report, South Africans found relevance in its pages. In 1929, the National Party alone (without collaboration with the Labour Party) won the general election and consequently had full reign to emphasize the importance of Afrikanerdom in the dominion. Three years later, the Carnegie Commission’s The Poor White Question was published and the government subsequently convened a Volkskongres (People’s Congress) in order to consider the findings of this report.66 Bringing together white South African leaders and representatives from the Federated Dutch Reformed churches and the government (including the Minister of Labour), the congress considered strategies to alleviate white poverty and its consequences.67 It resolved to “conquer poor-whitism before it conquered the nation,” and organized a Continuation Committee to accomplish just that throughout the dominion.68


68 Ibid., 51.
The *Poor White Question* had explained how poor whites (largely Afrikaners) could achieve the higher standard of living that the rest of the South African white population (largely English-speaking whites) enjoyed in the region. However, instead of emphasizing the ways that this study highlighted the commonalities between English-speaking and Afrikaner-speaking white South Africans, the National Party used the study to emphasize that poor whites (particularly Afrikaners) could be brought together with more affluent whites (specifically those Afrikaners in this group). The party used *The Poor White Question* to buttress its claims that an Afrikaner nation could be built across class lines in South Africa.

Placing this reception in a larger context, one scholar has argued: “The Commission’s report, praised by the media in 1932 and endorsed at national conferences in 1934 and 1936, enabled Afrikaner social activists to use the Poor White Study to consolidate Afrikaner economic and political dominance. ‘The Poor White Study, and the response to it, was widely recognized as an important factor leading to the rise of the Nationalist Party whose slogan in the 1948 general elections which it won, was: The white man must remain master.’”

Formed in reaction to the coalition of Hertzog’s National Party and Smuts’s South African Party in 1933, this Nationalist Party argued for an independent Afrikaner nation. The Carnegie Commission’s study helped legitimize this group’s claims that Afrikaners of all classes—including its poor whites—could come

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together to form one volk (one people).\textsuperscript{70} The Party simply needed to create a welfare system for whites (or rather, a system of apartheid) that lifted the “more than 300,000” whites who lived in poverty in the dominion.\textsuperscript{71}

Another scholar has echoed: “After 1948 the apartheid state…implemented many of the recommendations [of the Carnegie Commission’s report]. The landless African majority could not mount significant opposition.”\textsuperscript{72} Of course, the racial system of apartheid and Afrikaner minority rule went beyond the policy recommendations of the Carnegie Commission’s \textit{Poor White Question}, but the latter helped legitimize the rising popularity of the former nonetheless.\textsuperscript{73}

Seeing the study’s reception among learned people and the ways that it contributed to addressing the problem of poor whites in South Africa, the Carnegie Corporation President wrote in a 1944 publication that the “volumes on the Poor Whites of South Africa, published in 1932 represent[ed] a relatively modest enterprise, but they have largely changed the thinking of the South Africans upon a social question of great importance to them.”\textsuperscript{74} From Keppel’s perspective at the time, \textit{The Poor White Question} had been a success, largely because it had brought together a team of social researchers

\textsuperscript{70} Judith Tayler, “‘Our Poor’: The Politicisation of the Poor White Problem, 1932-1942,” 40-65, 44.


who had studied a societal problem holistically and inspired public policies to solve it. For a man who believed that “science and technology would lead to the alleviation of suffering and disease, and bring about social progress,” Keppel was content to see that the Carnegie Corporation was being legitimated as a producer of modern, empirically-based public policy knowledge.⁷⁵

From a contemporary perspective critical of state-sanctioned racial segregation, it seems odd that the Carnegie Corporation would look at its role in *The Poor White Question* in any positive light. First, the Carnegie Corporation’s president and trustees gauged the value of this project by looking at how contemporary social researchers and government officials in the region responded to the work. Through these contacts in South Africa, the Carnegie Corporation had reason to believe that it had made an important and valuable contribution toward helping white public policymakers govern co-existing whites and blacks: a problem of which Oldham had warned American philanthropic managers in New York City could grow to global significance. From these contacts, Frederick P. Keppel received no formal notification of how the Carnegie Commission’s *Poor White Study* was justifying rising Afrikaner nationalism in the British dominion. Rather, the organization’s leadership remained confident that the study was aiding both English-speaking and Afrikaan-speaking white South Africans address a problem of mutual significance.

Keppel might have remained convinced that the *Poor White Question* was helping English-speaking and Afrikaner-speaking whites alike in South Africa, but he was

hearing about rising Afrikaner nationalism. Charles T. Loram, who had helped export the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education to South Africa since the late 1910s, had become one of the Carnegie Corporation’s key advisers ever since he had accompanied Keppel and Bertram through much of their journey through Africa in 1927. Since then, he had become a trusted confident of the Corporation on African affairs. In particular, the Corporation’s President Frederick P. Keppel considered him “probably the most useful man in South Africa so far as not only the education, but the general cultural conditions, of the natives is concerned.”

Two years before the Carnegie Commission’s report came out in print in 1932, Keppel received word from Loram that the National government’s policies on natives were making his working conditions intolerable. In the climate of increasing Afrikaner nationalism, the English-speaking South Africans’ interests in “expanding African education and his concern for African social and economic conditions placed him increasingly at odds with the leadership of the ruling party.” Loram expressed his concerns to his contacts at the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation; and the following year in 1931, these philanthropic managers helped orchestrate for Loram to transfer to Yale University.

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77 Frederick P. Keppel to James R. Angell, June 5, 1930, CCNY Records, III.A. Grant Files, ca. 1911-1988, Box 206, Folder 206.1 “C.T. Loram 1930-31, 1929-1931.” Angell was the former Carnegie Corporation president and current president of Yale University.


79 Frederick P. Keppel to James R. Angell, CCNY Records, III.A. Grant Files, ca. 1911-1988, Box 206, Folder 206.1 “C.T. Loram 1930-31 1929-1931”; and, Thomas B. Appleget Diary, Feb. 18, 1930 and March 11, 1930, RF Archives, Record Group 12.1 Officer’s Diaries, Appleget, Thomas B. (T.B.A. [initials]). In 1931, Charles T. Loram became Yale’s Sterling Professor of Education. See e.g., Richard D. Heyman, “C.
The Carnegie Corporation’s president was becoming aware that the changing political tide in South Africa might require the organization to consider another location for its next significant venture through the Special Fund. After all, the year before, Loram had informed Keppel that the National government not only had issues with his emphasis on native education, but his “association with overseas (American) bodies which are ‘interfering’ (save the mark!)” in what the government considered “domestic matters.”

The Corporation’s leadership seemed aware that this rising nationalism would make it difficult for the organization to do further work directly in the region.

In the spring of 1931, just a year before The Poor White Question was published, the Corporation’s trustees suggested that Keppel convene with colonial officers in London “for the purpose of obtaining at the center of the British Empire such information as might be available regarding the administration of this Special Fund.” The Carnegie Corporation’s experience funding a comprehensive, empirical study of poor whites in the British dominion of South Africa had encouraged the organization to continue expanding its Special Fund across the Atlantic.

Once again, the only limitation that Andrew Carnegie’s former secretary James Bertram placed on Keppel and the rest of the Board of Trustees was that the Corporation should only fund projects in Africa that would directly benefit or affect “communities of

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whites.” A few weeks before Keppel left for London, Bertram made this unofficial policy explicit, writing to the president: “Any money which Mr. Carnegie gave to the Colonies was given for the reason that they were communities of whites. Without any documentary line of distinction ever having been drawn Carnegie Corporation has followed this policy in fact.” Bertram gave Keppel the green flag to extend the Carnegie Corporation’s program into Africa and beyond Andrew Carnegie’s intentions, so long as these projects remained loyal to his reading of the founder’s intentions.

During these months of preparation, Keppel contacted J.H. Oldham, the Scottish missionary in Edinburgh whose 1925 memorandum had alerted him to the very need of funding empirical studies of whites and blacks in Africa. In 1931, Oldham volunteered to coordinate the Carnegie Corporation president’s visit to the “center of the British Empire British,” London.

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With the trustees’ permission to seek advice in London on how best to use the Corporation’s Special Fund for the “advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding among the people of Canada and the British Colonies,” the Carnegie Corporation’s President Frederick P. Keppel began coordinating the logistics of his upcoming trip across the Atlantic. In the early months of 1931, he wrote to J.H. Oldham with the hopes that this trusted adviser could help guide the organization’s continued use of the fund by convening a group of experts on the British Empire. Keppel wrote to Oldham: “I hate to lay an added burden on your own shoulders, but I have come to the conclusion that our best chance of success is to obtain your good offices as convener. I choose you, rather than my opposite number in the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, and my good friend, Colonel Mitchell, because I assume your work has brought you into closer touch with men in question.”

Oldham, who had cautioned Keppel to the importance of Africa and to the Corporation’s potential role on the continent, was to continue serving a central role in shaping and directing the organization’s use of its funds in the British colonies and dominions. In May, Keppel and two other Carnegie Corporation trustees, President of the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of

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America Henry James and the University of Washington President Henry Suzzallo, traveled together to London.²

In London that spring of 1931, the Scottish missionary arranged a luncheon for the Carnegie Corporation’s representatives at the Royal Institute for International Affairs (Chatham House). Established in 1926, Chatham House was the sister organization of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, which had been founded with the “idea of an Anglo-American institute of international relations, to guide official thinking after the [First World War].”³ Considering its history, this meeting place seemed particularly fitting for this moment of Anglo-American dialogue between American philanthropic managers and British government and colonial officials.

At Chatham House, Keppel met with colonial officers, public officials, and missionaries whom Oldham had helped gather. Among those present for the luncheon was the former Governor of Nigeria, the National Government’s postmaster-general, a member of the research committee of the Colonial Office, the director of the London School of Economics, and a founder of Chatham House.⁴ Though Keppel would meet

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with others during his trip to London that year, he later recalled that “the most important feature of the visit was the informal conference held at Chatham House.”

From his conversations at Chatham House in the spring of 1931, the Carnegie Corporation’s president concluded that the best use of the organization’s Special Fund would be in funding a comprehensive and social scientific study of yet another perceived societal problem among whites and blacks in Africa. Once he had returned to the United States that summer, Keppel noted to the Corporation’s Board of Trustees that the colonies had distinct policies with respect to native Africans. Furthermore, he explained to his fellow trustees that their advisers in London had argued that a comprehensive survey of native policies throughout Africa would help unite white administrators in colonial Africa, and consequently, facilitate white Europeans’ peaceful governance (dominance)


over native Africans on the continent. This was an idea that had been suggested by Jan Smuts two years earlier.

In 1929, Jan Smuts had been in England to deliver the Rhodes Memorial Lectures at Oxford. The following year, Oxford University had published these lectures, which presumably had allowed a wider audience (including those present at Chatham House during Keppel’s visit) to read Smut’s ideas. Much revered in London, many British officials perceived the former Afrikaner General as an expert on African affairs; as someone with specialized and inside knowledge on an important region of the Empire.

In his 1929 Rhodes Lectures, Smuts had told his Oxford audience that he had been able to take up the Rhodes Trustees on their kind offer to deliver these lectures because he was no longer in public office. He explained: “A previous invitation I had felt bound to decline, on the plea of pressing public duty. But when, after my recent defeat in the South African elections, the invitation was so kindly renewed, I was left with no

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7 Ibid.


General Smuts, in the course of the Rhodes Memorial Lecture which he delivered at Oxford in 1929, pointed out that Africa was developing under the control of a number of European powers, that different and often conflicting principles were being applied by them in the administrative, social, educational, and legal fields, and that nowhere was there any survey of what was taking place in Africa as a whole. He pleaded eloquently for the compilation of such a survey, which would include a review of the extent to which modern knowledge was being applied to African problems. As a result of a committee (the names of whose members are given on p. vii) was formed to carry the project into execution. The Carnegie Corporation of New York, with characteristic vision, made its execution possible by a generous grant of funds, which was later supplemented by the Rhodes Trustees; and Lord Hailey, then Governor of the United Provinces in India, agreed to undertake the Directorship of the Survey, on his retirement from India.

Ibid., v.

9 Ibid.
plausible excuse for not accepting the embarrassing honour.” In 1924, Prime Minister Smuts had been defeated in the general elections by a coalition formed by the National and Labour Parties; and in 1929, the National Party had won the general elections entirely alone. Smuts and his party’s policy of conciliation had become increasingly unpopular in an increasingly Afrikaner nationalist South Africa, but it was a sentiment and an inclination that was very much still in vogue in London. There, Smuts found a receptive audience to his idea of furthering cooperation and conciliation among European whites on the African continent.

The Rhodes Lectures of 1929 were comprised of three separate lectures: “African Settlement,” “Native Policy in Africa,” and “World-Peace.” It was the first lecture that had captured the attention of the group gathered at Chatham House in 1931. In “African Settlement,” Smuts had explained that the presence of whites was necessary in Africa, because their presence would advance the continent’s economy and civilization: “The civilization of the African continent will be a vain dream apart from white employment, without the leading hand of the settler and the employer, away from the continuous living contact with the actual example and the actual practice of European industry and agriculture.” Smuts argued that the presence of whites on the continent helped, not only the home countries’ economies in Europe, but native Africans develop into more industrious and ambitious beings. He continued: “From the native point of view, therefore, just as much as from the white or European point of view, nay, even more from

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the native point of view, the policy of African settlement is imperatively important.”11 Smuts established the vital importance of white settlement on the African continent and then continued his speech by noting to his Oxford audience that the British Empire had an important role to play in maintaining and expanding this settlement.12

Smuts explained that the British Government was “in control of a vast portion of the African continent”; and it was, after all, “the greatest colonizing power the world has ever seen.”13 He suggested that government officials from all of the British colonies and dominions on the African continent should realize that they shared common “African problems” as white settlers, and that they should unite for annual conferences that could help them communicate with each other in addressing these shared problems. Moreover, this information could help the European colonies in the northern sections of the continent. Through these shared conversations, many “mistakes made in the south will then be avoided in the north, many new mistakes threatening in the north will appear as such in the light of South African experience,” for example.14 White settlers and their governments would acknowledge the common problems they faced on the continent; help each other by illustrating how they had analyzed and addressed these problems; and in the process, help each other maintain their dominance over natives as white civilizers on the continent. Far from being ignored, those gathered at Chatham House in 1931 had

11 Ibid., 49.
12 Ibid., 63.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 68.
internalized Smuts’s suggestion that further dialogue between European colonial powers in their administration of natives could help maintain white dominance on the continent.

In his memorandum to the trustees, Keppel explained that the Corporation’s advisers in London had in mind a survey of the entire continent:

There was a general feeling upon the part of those consulted that the most important contribution which could be made at the present time would be the financing of a broad study of equatorial and southern Africa, to be conducted under the direction of some man of outstanding distinction. There is at present no specific scheme for such a study, and it would be exceedingly difficult to formulate one or to determine the most favorable auspices under which it could be conducted, in advance of some assurance that funds would be forthcoming whenever a plan satisfactory to all concerned may be evolved.15

The Corporation’s Board of Trustees resolved to allow the president to commit the Corporation to a sum not to exceed seventy-five thousand dollars over a two-year period, “for support of a general study of equatorial and southern Africa, upon submission of a plan of operation satisfactory to the Executive Committee.”16

The Corporation’s trustees decided to fund this project; and in the process, stretched the charter of the Special Fund in new ways. The previous policy-oriented social scientific study of white-black relations, The Poor White Question, had been conducted with an eye toward benefiting “communities of whites” within a British dominion. It thus fit within former Carnegie Corporation president James Angell’s redefinition of the fund to include British dominions as well as colonies and James Bertram’s insistence that projects in Africa benefit “communities of whites.” Bertram’s


16 Ibid.
own focus also had overlapped with Andrew Carnegie’s vision that the Carnegie Corporation should fund projects throughout the English-speaking world for the benefit of Anglo-Americans. Irrespective of how it was later used to justify rising Afrikaner nationalism in the region, the Corporation had funded the poor white study with the very purpose of benefiting a community of whites within the English-speaking world.

By contrast, this next study was projected to include analyses of colonial powers in Africa beyond the British Empire. The French and Belgium colonies in Africa clearly were not part of the British Empire, and yet the Carnegie Corporation decided to fund a policy-oriented social scientific survey that would analyze these colonial administrations. This necessarily moved the Corporation away from Andrew Carnegie’s vision of using the Carnegie Corporation to fund projects within the English-speaking world and even Angell’s broader definition of the charter to include British dominions as well as colonies. Now, the organization was moving forward in funding a project that would benefit “communities of whites” inside and outside the English-speaking world of the United States and the British Empire. However, much as Smuts had argued in his Rhodes Lectures, perhaps the Carnegie Corporation’s trustees imagined that this study would help the British Empire maintain dominance on the African continent. Or, perhaps they imagined that aiding “communities of whites” inside and outside the English-speaking world ultimately benefit the Anglo-American alliance in its overall efforts to maintain white racial dominance across the Atlantic (irrespective of whether or not the whites were exclusively Anglo-Americans).

Two years after the funding for the African survey had been approved by the Carnegie Corporation, Frederick P. Keppel and his group of advisers at Chatham House
decided on a director for the study: Sir Malcolm Hailey who had recently retired as Governor of the United Provinces in British India. At his service was a general committee, which consisted of J. H. Oldham alongside the Marquess of Lothian (and secretary of the Rhodes Trust); the economic adviser to the Bank of England Henry Kay; Oxford professor of colonial history Reginald Coupland; Oxford fellow (and founder of Chatham House) Lionel Curtis; secretary of Chatham House Ivison Macadam; editor of Nature Sir Richard Gregory; secretary of the zoological society Julian Huxley; former governor of Nigeria Lord Lugard; the director of the Scotland’s Rowett Research Institute Sir John Orr; and, Oxford professor of political theory Sir Arthur Salter. The final manuscript of the study was published in 1938.

In the introduction to An African Survey’s 1,837-page volume, Hailey thanked the Carnegie Corporation for supporting the investigation from its beginnings in 1935 until its publication in 1938. Within these eighteen hundred pages, he noted that the “sole object for undertaking the [project] was the hope that it might prove of some service to the Powers which have possession of territories in Africa, and of some benefit to the African people.” However, Hailey noted that the very emphasis and purpose of this project had altered a bit during his directorship. While the initial goal of the survey had been to help all white European colonial powers maintain white settlement on the continent, Hailey explained to his readers that distinctions were then being created among these white settlements. Specifically, at the time Hailey wrote the Survey, Germany was seeking back its colonies in Africa, and other European countries found themselves in the

18 Ibid., xxii.
intellectual conundrum of justifying their own white settlements while denying Germany’s claims for its own. To make sense of these two conflicting claims, Hailey explained that French, Belgian, and British governments would need to prove their white settlements unique; noting that the “nature of the contribution which the European occupation will have made to the future of the African peoples” was important.¹⁹ No longer could these imperial powers assume that white settlements were necessarily beneficial to native Africans. Rather, they would need to explain why certain white settlements (their own) were better than others (such as the potential German ones).

In this vein, Hailey noted that what British, French, and Belgian officials needed in 1938 was a survey that would help them learn how to improve the lives of native Africans. These colonial powers could distinguish themselves by emphasizing—not the unilateral value of white settlement, but—the ways that their unique communities of whites could help and aid native Africans. He wrote: “The special needs of Africa at this stage are for a more comprehensive study of the factors which determine the nature of its social development, and a more scientific approach to the problems of health and material well-being to which its physical characteristics have given rise… Africa presents itself as a living laboratory, in which the reward of study may prove to be not merely the satisfaction of an intellectual impulse, but an effective addition to the welfare of a people.”²⁰ By focusing its policies towards improving the welfare of the natives, Hailey noted that the British, French, and Belgian colonial projects in Africa could distinguish themselves from Germany’s own projected ones.

²⁰ Ibid., xxiv-xxv.
Hailey explained that the approach in the survey was to present a list of problems that impeded African natives’ welfare and to suggest possible solutions.\textsuperscript{21} This new model for colonial governance would not simply assume that white settlement was advantageous for native Africans, but illustrate how particular types of white settlements were beneficial. He and his team of researchers on the continent focused their attention on the Union of South Africa and the British, French, and Belgian colonies and mandated territories,\textsuperscript{22} and aimed to provide their readers with facts on native Africans and native policies in these different parts of the continent. They collected data from the Colonial Office in London, the High Commissioner for South Africa, the Colonial Ministries in Paris, Brussels, and Lisbon; and, from colonial administrations throughout Africa. He also noted that a “full use ha[d] been made of the valuable material contained in Lord Lugard’s classical work, \textit{The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa}, and of Mr. R. L. Buell’s two volumes, \textit{The Native Problem in Africa}.”\textsuperscript{23}

Lord Hailey acknowledged the breadth of empirical data that he and his team of researchers had accumulated on colonial Africa during the previous three years. Almost overwhelmed with the sheer volume of this material and with the task he had in front of him of summarizing and analyzing it, he noted to his readers that in “conditions of such diversity, generalization is more than unusually dangerous, while any endeavor to assess the merits of policy or to judge of the manner of its application is liable to be treated as

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., xxv.


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., xxiii.
an attempt to satisfy one national outlook at the expense of another.” Instead, he wrote that he and his team of researchers and committee members had decided that the purpose of the survey “could best be served by a statement as largely as possible of a factual nature, so arranged as to enable the different administrations to appreciate the extent to which their problems are shared by their neighbors, and to inform themselves of the measures which are being taken to meet them.”

In presenting this survey on the factors relevant to native African development in the British, French, and Belgian territories, Hailey “decided that the treatment adopted should as far as possible be of a factual and objective character.” Hailey described, analyzed, and presented data for native African populations; the development of African languages; population records; systems of government; law and justice; non-European immigrant communities; native administration; and, systems of direct taxation. He also described problems such as labor; the state and the land; agriculture production; forestry; water supply; soil erosion; health; education; the external aspect of African economic development; the internal aspect of African economic development; and, the use of cooperative societies; minerals and mines; transport and communication.

As Hailey’s project was circulated and reviewed throughout Africa and Europe, the Carnegie Corporation quickly considered the study a success. As one scholar explained: “[I]t became essential reading for all Government officers and academic and

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., xxii.
26 Ibid.
scientific workers who were concerned with Africa. There can be no doubt that it
stimulated and influenced a great deal of action and further study.”28 In particular, *An
African Survey* received much praise in London, from Chatham House to the Royal
African Society, and was quickly circulated across British colonial offices.29 Since the
Corporation’s Special Fund was aimed at aiding the British colonies and dominions, this
particular bit of news likely delighted the Corporation’s trustees. “At the Colonial Office
Sir Cosmo Parkinson, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State, impressed upon his staff
that he wished it to be used as a point of departure for a new look at African
problems…Arrangements were made to extract every passage in which Lord Hailey had
given a lead towards action or study, to place it upon an official file as Paper No. 1, and
to set that file off on its travels through the administrative hierarchy.”30 Lord Hailey’s
*African Survey* was positioned to create a public policy impact within the British Empire
and throughout the African continent.

In 1936, Carnegie Corporation Frederick P. Keppel was still three years shy of
being able to read the published *African Survey* and a few years away from being able to
appreciate its reception in Europe and throughout Africa. By then, however, Keppel had
already seen how Lord Hailey was on his way to making a real impact throughout the

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28 Sir Frederick Pedler, “Lord Hailey: His Contribution to Africa,” *Royal Society for the Encouragement of

Affairs*, 88 (Oct., 1989), 481-505: “Lord Hailey’s Survey “became the prevailing ideology of empire during
and after World War II, [and] a weighty contribution, a widely consulted reference work.” Ibid.; and, John

30 Sir Frederick Pedler, “Lord Hailey: His Contribution to Africa,” *Royal Society for the Encouragement of
continent. It was against this backdrop that Keppel was presented with the opportunity to challenge the Carnegie Corporation’s funding practice with respect to black Americans and came to the idea of funding a comparable, empirical and policy-oriented social scientific study of black Americans with someone like Lord Hailey to direct it.\textsuperscript{31}

PART III.

THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION THINKS TO IMPORT THIS FUNDING PRACTICE

FROM BRITISH AFRICA TO THE UNITED STATES
Since 1930, Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel had questioned the Corporation’s logic for channeling the majority of its allocated funds for African Americans towards promoting the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education and had wondered to a fellow trustee whether the organization should move away from this funding precedent.\(^1\) This confidant counseled Keppel not to recommend anything new in “any part of negro education.”\(^2\)

Five years earlier, Keppel had taken J. H. Oldham up on his suggestion that American philanthropic organizations should help fund policy-oriented studies of white-black relations in colonial Africa. Since then, the Scot Oldham—alongside the South Africans Loram, Malherbe, and Smuts—had remained a trusted adviser of Keppel’s on African affairs. Throughout these ongoing conversations, Oldham’s statement that “the American Negro problem” was “only one element in a world problem of the relations between the white and black races” likely had remained in Keppel’s mind.\(^3\)

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2. Ibid.

During those years, the Carnegie Corporation’s president commuted between his suburban home in Westchester County’s Montrose neighborhood and the organization’s offices in Manhattan, near Grand Central Station on Fifth Avenue between forty-third and forty-fourth streets. Since his childhood in Long Island, he had witnessed a changing New York City.

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Born in Long Island in 1875, Keppel had witnessed New York City’s transformation into a modern metropolis. Much like his own Irish parents, masses of other European immigrants had moved to the New York City-area in the late nineteenth century and had seen their new home grow in population and sophistication. New York City’s growth as an industrial center seemed limitless as “skyscrapers, docks, bridges, tunnels, apartment houses, tenements, parks and subways [were] being built at a hectic pace.” Further downtown in Greenwich Village during the late nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century, bohemians were transforming New York City into a culture Mecca. In particular, they were making “modernity local and concrete, tangible to a popular American audience.” To the rest of America, they showcased sexual modernism; images of the New Woman; and, “an unrivaled vision of feminism—with its

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powers to recast men’s and women’s lives—as a critical ingredient of modern culture.”

By the early 1910s, New York City had secured its identity as a modern capital of culture and industry. Against this backdrop, the city underwent yet another significant transformation as hundreds of thousands of African Americans from the South migrated northward.

Since the Civil War, Northern industrialists, American philanthropic organizations, and local school boards had encouraged African Americans in the South to work in the vocational and agricultural trades, as a means of supporting themselves and of improving the Southern and national economies. Historian Cheryl Lynn Greenberg notes that, in reality, “most African Americans seeking to support themselves and their families found few alternatives to agriculture. The Industrial Revolution that had taken hold in the North had barely reached the more economically backward South that still relied on abundant cheap labor and staple crops.” Many African American southerners were discouraged by the economic prospects for themselves and their families in the region. In the 1910s and 1920s, they looked northward (and westward) at opportunities in industry; opportunities that had sprung up in large part because European immigration to the United States then had decreased.

During the turn of the century and into the twentieth century, European immigrants had dominated the industrial workforce in the North. The continuous flow of this immigrant pool, however, was reduced with the advent of the First World War and

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6 Stansell, American Moderns, 3.
7 Ibid., 2-4.
the subsequent immigration acts of 1921 and 1924.9 “Throughout 1920 and 1921, the national press reported that millions more Slavs, Italians, and Russian Jews intended to book passage for Ellis Island now that the war was over.”10 These newspaper accounts fed into white Americans’ fears of cheap labor from Europe, but most critically, into their fear that the white American population stock would be compromised by these Europeans’ stock.11 Historian Edward J. Larson wrote that the “imposition of ethnic restrictions on immigration topped the agenda of the national eugenics movement during the 1920s, and the enactment of the federal Immigration Act of 1924 represented its most notable achievement.”12 Through federally enforced public policies, white Americans hoped to preserve and defend the quality of the white American population pool.

With this Immigration Act of 1921, Americans had applied for the first time a quota for each nationality and “excluding applicants for admission in excess of such quota.” The quota was three percent of the “number of foreign-born persons of such nationality resident in the United States as determined by the United States census of 1910.”13 Replaced by the Immigration Act of 1924, the new law relied on the U.S. Census of 1890 (not of 1910) to determine the total percentage of each nationality to admit and lowered the total amount of each nationality to two percent of the total number

9 Ibid., 8.


11 Ibid.


listed in the census.\(^{14}\) With these immigration restrictions in place and industry jobs to be taken, African Americans moved northward and westward. To give a picture of the extent of the migration: In 1860, American Americans made up 7.7 percent of the Northern population, while in 1930, they had become 20.3 percent of its inhabitants.\(^{15}\)

When he moved back to the New York City area after the Great War, Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel likely noticed this population change around him. An avid supporter of the arts, he probably also noticed the rising cultural significance of Harlem and the cultivation of uniquely black cultural and political identities in this northern section of Manhattan.\(^{16}\) During the 1920s, African American, Afro-Caribbean, and African writers, artists, and politicians nurtured a transnational black identity in Harlem. In the words of the NAACP’s national secretary, James Weldon Johnson: “Harlem [in the 1920s] is indeed the great Mecca for the sight-seer, the pleasure-seeker, the curious, the adventurous, the enterprising, the ambitious and the talented of the whole Negro world; for the lure of it has reached down to every island of the Carib Sea and has penetrated even into Africa.”\(^{17}\) Making up this Harlem Renaissance were African American scholars and writers such as Langston Hughes, Claude McKay,

\(^{14}\) Juan F. Perea et. al., Race and Races: Cases and Resources for a Diverse America (St. Paul, Minn.: West Group, 2000), 369.


Zora Neal Hurston, and Alain Locke.¹⁸ Like the white bohemians in New York City’s Greenwich Village, the writers and intellectuals of New York City’s Harlem were part of a modernizing moment in New York City. While the former advocated sexual modernism and the “New Woman,” the latter put forward in the American imagination the image of the “New Negro” who was urban, learned, and cosmopolitan.¹⁹

This “New Negro” was also engaged in national and international politics. In 1918, for example, the Afro-Jamaican political organizer Marcus Garvey had incorporated the Universal Negro Improvement Association in New York and had established an office in Harlem. He stated the organization’s purpose as “the promotion and practice ‘of Benevolence… protection… and social intercourse of its members,… and their mental and physical culture and developments, and to extend a friendly and constructive hand to the Negroes of the United States’”;²⁰ though this modest purpose showed little signs of the great mass movement that the UNIA would become.

Considered “the first and only real mass movement among Negroes in the history of the United States,”²¹ Garveyism advocated unity among blacks across the world. In 1919, Garvey announced that the UNIA had plans to create the Black Star Line, which would help black Americans in the United States, the West Indies, and Africa trade amongst themselves. Then in 1920, a crowd of 25,000 people in Madison Square

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¹⁹ Christine Stansell, American Moderns, 67.

²⁰ Ibid., 246.

²¹ Ibid., 247.
Gardens elected Garvey the “provisional president of Africa.” In another speech at Madison Square Garden in 1924, Garvey said that what “was needed was a cadre of dedicated ‘American and West Indian Negroes’ who would ‘build up Africa in the interests of our race.’”

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By the late 1920s, Keppel would have been exposed to growing black nationalism in New York City and the ways that it was very much linked to a transatlantic discourse with native Africans. If Oldham had made Keppel sensitive to the particular dangers of a “growth of a racial consciousness among black peoples,” these trends among black Americans in New York City likely alerted him.

Even more, when Keppel voiced to a fellow trustee his reservations about the Corporation’s funding practice with respect to black Americans, it was just a year after the Stock Market Crash of 1929. In 1930, the federal government “estimated that 17 percent of the white population and 38 percent of the black population could not support themselves without assistance.” With any sense of foresight, Keppel could have perceived that this helplessness would continue and that the numbers would worsen. With Oldham’s comments in mind and his own observation of New York City in the late

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22 Ibid., 249.


24 Ibid.

1920s, Keppel perhaps believed that a growing consciousness among blacks and an escalating discontent among black Americans could challenge and threaten white Anglo-Americans’ continued governance over communities of whites and blacks across the Atlantic.

Against this backdrop, Keppel found the Corporation’s (and other philanthropic organization’s) focus on promoting the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education in the South irrelevant in the modern world. From the perspective of many leading white Americans in the postbellum United States, the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education had answered their anxieties about reestablishing racial hierarchy in the South and in reconstructing and strengthening the Southern and national economies. In the 1920s and 1930s, however, Keppel thought that perhaps the Corporation could redirect its funding practices with respect to African Americans to reflect the changing contours of the “Negro problem,” from a regional to a national problem of global significance.

At the time, however, the Corporation’s Board still included four trustees who had known Andrew Carnegie personally and were hesitant to move away from the founder’s vision for the Corporation in any significant ways. The four were James Bertram, John Poynton, Robert A. Franks, and Nicholas M. Butler.

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27 These were four members of the Board of Trustees: James Bertram, John Poynton, Robert A. Franks, and Nicholas M. Butler. Former assistants and close confidants of the founder, Andrew Carnegie appointed his financial agent Franks and his personal secretaries Poynton and Bertram lifetime trustees of the Carnegie Corporation; and years after Carnegie had passed away, these three continued guiding the Corporation and ensured that its program continued in line with its founder’s intentions. Russell Leffingwell to Frederick P. Keppel, February 14, 1929, CCNY Records, I.E.5. Trustee Files, 1915-1981, Box 24, Folder 24.10
Appointed personally by Andrew Carnegie to serve lifetime terms on the Carnegie Corporation Board, Franks had been the founder’s financial agent and Poynton and Bertram had been his personal secretaries. Years after the founder’s death in 1919, these three continued guiding the Carnegie Corporation’s Board of Trustees on Andrew Carnegie’s intentions for the organization. As one could well imagine, this approach did not sit well with all on the Board. One fellow trustee remembered in 1929 that Bertram had an “unfortunate habit of voting no on everything as a matter of constitutional principle.”\(^\text{28}\) He, like Poynton and Franks, rejected trustees’ attempts to create new programs that deviated from Andrew Carnegie’s own practices.

Moreover, these three associates of the Corporation’s founder constantly quarreled; making it difficult for any new programs to pass through the Board. Keppel’s assistant, John Russell, remembered this dynamic quite clearly: “Franks and Bertram would fight. Poynton and Bertram and Franks would all fight.”\(^\text{29}\) The nature of their arguments is unclear. Seeing that all three had been Andrew Carnegie’s confidents, however, it is possible that they were vying for control of whom among them could speak on behalf of (and thus, define) the founder’s wishes.

Even more, Nicholas Butler, who was president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, was known among


\(^{29}\) John Russell Oral Interview, 1968, CCOH Project.
the Corporation trustees for his bullying.30 After a seemingly notorious board meeting in 1929, the same trustee who commented on Bertram’s voting style mentioned to Carnegie Corporation President Keppel that the “discussion between Butler and Bertram yesterday certainly emphasized in my mind one point, and that is that it is extraordinarily important for you and for the Corporation in the future to get on the board somebody we will like and with whom we can work, who won’t let himself be bullied by Butler.”31 Among those that Butler bullied was Keppel, who had been Columbia College Dean during Butler’s reign as Columbia University president. Without mincing words, Keppel’s assistant later remembered: “Nicholas Murray Butler was awful. Keppel had been his dean [at] Columbia College, and Keppel and Butler didn’t get along at all.”32 Not only did Keppel have three traditionalist trustees on the board, but he did not enjoy an easy relationship with the Chairman Butler.33

30 Ibid.


32 John Russell Oral Interview, 1968, CCOH Project.

33 Ibid. Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel expressed his frustrations with his board in another context, including a Social Science Research Council meeting that year. In August of 1930, the Council had invited Keppel to discuss the role philanthropic organizations were playing in the funding of social scientific research; a topic that interested social researchers ever since the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial had begun funding their work five years earlier.33 During his lecture, Keppel explained why some philanthropic organizations funded social research more than others. In particular, he pinpointed the role of trustees and how they could limit the creativity of an organization. Exposing his frustrations with his own board of trustees, Keppel told the audience: “We sometimes forget that these foundations have trustees; people who have matters that are of interest to them see only the hired man and they do not always realize that the trustees have very very strong views on these subjects. I often envy my colleague, Dr. Merriam, of the Carnegie Institution, because when it comes to a profound question in geodetics, let us say, the trustees are perfectly willing to rely on the advice of the scientific hired man. But every trustee exercise the God-given right to have views on economics and education.” Friday Evening Session, Aug. 29, 1930, Social Science Research Council Archives, Accession 1, Series 5. Hanover Conference, Box 330, Folder 1895 “Hanover Conference 1930,” Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York, 4 (hereafter cited as SSRC Archives).
Butler’s biographer, Michael Rosenthal, wavered on the reasons for this tension, but roots them in the interwar years. Before Keppel had left for wartime service in Washington D.C., Rosenthal writes that the future president of the Carnegie Corporation had worked at Columbia for seventeen years, so it was little surprise that he had expected to have his job back when he returned and that he was shocked when Butler denied it to him. Rosenthal further notes that there were no previous indications that Butler would relate to this longtime administrator in this way. The most likely reason was that “Butler saw Keppel’s administrative talents, popularity, and success (he rose quickly in Washington to the newly created post of third assistant secretary of war) as a threat to his own control at Columbia. [Keppel’s future assistant] suggested that the idea that Keppel was secretly nurturing ambitions for the Columbia presidency might well have troubled Butler.”\(^{34}\) Butler successfully kept Keppel away from Columbia (where Butler remained president until 1945). At the same time, Butler was a trustee of the Carnegie Corporation, so he could have prevented Keppel’s election to the presidency of the organization and he did not. In making sense of this seemingly contradictory behavior, Russell argues that Butler likely expected to be able to control this former subordinate in his new post. However, once Keppel became president of the Carnegie Corporation, Butler “found it offensive to deal as an equal with someone he regarded…as a ‘glorified office boy.’”\(^{35}\) Not only did Butler look down at Keppel because he had been his former employee, but because he disapproved of his particular leadership styles at the Corporation. As he told a fellow trustee in the early 1930s: “Of all the trusts, large or small, with which I have ever

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\(^{35}\) Ibid.
been associated, the Carnegie Corporation is far and away the most incompetently managed.” He later elaborated, “Everything they proposed and had been recently doing, was in flat contradiction of Mr. Carnegie’s hopes, plans and ideals. I suggested that the name of the Corporation be changed to the ‘Anti-Carnegie Corporation’.”

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that in his conversation with his confidant and fellow trustee in 1930, Keppel was counseled not to recommend anything new in “any part of negro education.” Not only did the Corporation’s president have a troubled relationship with Chairman Butler, but three of Andrew Carnegie’s associates still sat on the board. It was then unlikely that the trustees would heed Keppel’s suggestion to move the organization so explicitly away from Andrew Carnegie’s intentions for it.

During the following five years, the Great Depression had only worsened. Many black Americans throughout the country had lost their jobs, and their poverty-stricken neighborhoods were increasingly viewed as societal problems, with the Harlem Riot of 1935 only confirming this perception. That March, a property riot had broken out in Harlem “after rumors spread that the police killed a young boy who attempted to steal a penknife from a local five and dime. When calm was restored, seventy-five people had been arrested, sixty-to injured (of whom seven were police officers), one child had been shot in the back and killed by the police, and extensive damage had been done to white-
and black-owned stores.”38 Within days, New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia convened a blue-ribbon commission to investigate the causes of the riot.39

Six months later, the Carnegie Corporation of New York held its annual board of trustees meeting in Manhattan. During the meeting, former Secretary of War and current Cleveland lawyer Newton D. Baker asked his fellow Carnegie Corporation trustees to give consideration “to the general question of negro education and negro problems with special reference to conditions in the Northern States.”40 That day, the trustees listened.

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At 2 o’clock on October 24th, 1935, the Carnegie Corporation board members convened at the organization’s offices on the tenth floor of the Guaranty Trust Company Building on Fifth Avenue between 43rd and 44th streets in Manhattan.41 Since its establishment, the Board had been made up of the presidents of the six major philanthropic organizations, life-time appointments for three of his close assistants and confidants, and six term appointments of three or four years. In the past year, the three individuals who had held lifetime appointments had passed away and the board had been left with twelve members.

39 Ibid., 63-64.
Ten of the twelve arrived for the meeting that day. Among them were sixty-year-old and long-time New Yorker Frederick P. Keppel and the fifty-eight year old Midwesterner Walter A. Jessup, whose organizations shared offices in the building.\footnote{Ibid. The Carnegie Corporation and the Carnegie Foundation were then located at 522 Fifth Avenue: The Guarantee Trust Building.} Presidents respectively of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Keppel and Jessup steered two organizations that the steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie had established in 1911 and 1906 with the respective goals of promoting “the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding” and “improving teaching and learning.”\footnote{“Mission and Vision,” Carnegie Corporation of New York, http://carnegie.org/about-us/mission-and-vision (last visited, March 1, 2012); and, “About Us,” Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/about-us/about-carnegie (last visited, March 1, 2012).} President of the Corporation since 1923, Keppel likely gave managerial advice to Jessup, the former University of Iowa president who had become president of the Foundation only the year before. At times, they probably lunched together at the Century Club around the corner from their offices and reminisced about their years at Columbia University in the 1910s when Keppel was Dean of Columbia College and Jessup was completing his doctorate at Teachers College.

Also present were the presidents of the four other Carnegie organizations. Earlier that day, Carnegie Heroes Fund President Thomas S. Arbuthnot and Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh President Samuel H. Church had traveled by train from Pittsburgh.\footnote{See generally, David Nasaw, \textit{Andrew Carnegie} (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).} Established in 1904 to recognize “civilization’s heroes” and to provide financial assistance for those disabled and the dependants of those killed helping others, the...
Carnegie Heroes Fund in Pittsburgh awarded medals to heroic Americans each year.\textsuperscript{45} Founded in 1896 with the goal of improving Pittsburgh’s cultural and educational institutions, the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh “included a library, natural history museum, art gallery, and concert hall.”\textsuperscript{46}

Carnegie Institution of Washington President John C. Merriam and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace President Nicholas M. Butler traveled to New York from their offices in Washington D.C.\textsuperscript{47} Founded in 1902, the Institution was entrusted with the task of increasing basic scientific knowledge in the United States.\textsuperscript{48} Established eight years later, the Endowment was commissioned to advance “cooperation between nations and promot[e] active international engagement by the United States.”\textsuperscript{49}

Present at the Carnegie Corporation Board Meeting also were four of the term members, including Andrew Carnegie’s daughter, Margaret Carnegie Miller, Newton D. Baker, Arthur W. Page, and Russell Leffingwell. Former Secretary of War and U.S.


\textsuperscript{47} John C. Merriam was the brother of Charles E. Merriam, who founded the SSRC. See, Chester Stock, \textit{John Campbell Merriam: 1869-1945} (Washington D.C: National Academy of Sciences, 1951).


presidential hopeful, Baker traveled from Cleveland where he maintained a vibrant law practice. Aside from her work on the board, the daughter of the Corporation’s founder lived the life of an heiress, mother, and wife in Manhattan. Page was a former journalist whose work had centered on “explaining the special obligations of corporations in a democratic society,” and was then vice-president of public relations at AT&T in New York City. Leffingwell was a partner of the law firm Cravath, Henderson, Leffingwell & de Gersdorff and of J.P. Morgan & Co, whose offices were also in the city.

Absent were Henry James and Elihu Root. Root, a former friend of the late Andrew Carnegie, was then ninety years old. He had served as president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace from its founding in 1910 until 1925. For one year after Carnegie’s death in 1919, he had also served as president of the Carnegie Corporation. A graduate from New York University Law School, Root had established his own law firm practice in New York during the 1860s; served as U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York; U.S. Secretary of War (before Newton D. Baker); U.S.


54 Henry James was the lawyer and son of the philosopher William James.

Secretary of State; and, as a Republican Senator in the U.S. Congress. A much younger board member, the fifty-some year old Henry James, was a Harvard law graduate who was then president of the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America. The TIAA, founded in 1918 by the Carnegie Corporation and the Carnegie Foundation, was a non-profit entrusted with providing pensions to professors around the country. In fact, it was James who had given Keppel the advice five years prior not to do anything new in “any part of negro education.”

That afternoon, ten of these twelve trustees sat around the conference table as the chairman of the board, Nicholas Butler, read the agenda for the meeting. Like every October meeting before that one, the Carnegie Corporation trustees were there to vote on the following year’s budget. Led by Chairman Butler, the board confirmed most of the same budget that it had voted the previous year. Trustees allocated $540,000 toward long-standing “Carnegie Interests,” which included particular grantees that had directly interested “Mr. and Mrs. Carnegie,” and block grants to organizations on which certain board members presided, such as the Carnegie Endowment, Carnegie Foundation, Carnegie Institution, Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association, Church Peace Union, and Centenary Celebration. The board allocated a bit more to its “Continuing Fields of Interest” such as adult education, fine arts projects, library interests, music projects,


58 Carnegie Corporation of New York Memorandum of Interview (Frederick P. Keppel & Henry James), June 18, 1930, CCNY Records, Folder 24.5 “Trustees—Henry James.”

59 That year, Andrew Carnegie would have turned one hundred years old.
research in humanities, and occupational education. It also allocated funds to new fields of concentration such as women’s colleges, mental hygiene, junior college libraries, dental research, educational interests, and miscellaneous grants and to the rather obtuse “development of program.”  

The Board of Trustees excluded from the following year’s budget the Corporation’s longstanding field in “Negro education,” and wrote in its notes that: “At the suggestion of Mr. Baker the Executive Committee was asked to give consideration to the general question of negro education and negro problems, with special reference to conditions in the Northern States.” Decades later, it was the president’s assistant, James Russell, who provided the Carnegie Corporation archivists with some context of Newton D. Baker’s criticism of the Corporation’s funding practice with respect to black Americans.

Years later, Russell remembered that he had sat at the corner of the room with the secretary of the Corporation, Robert Lester, who took notes. The son of John Russell, who had traveled through Africa in 1926 in preparation for Keppel and Bertram’s trip there, James Russell himself was at the Carnegie Corporation to assist the president with anything that he might need, and in particular, had close at hand “an extra pipe or two”


63 Ibid.
for the trustees who forgot theirs. He recalled that the meeting went as usual. He sat and listened to the board members confirm the following year’s budget. Just after the board members voted “as usual for Negro education,” however, Russell remembered that his interest was piqued. Just as the board confirmed the usual yearly allocation of $100,000 toward black education, Newton D. Baker put down his corncob pipe and asked Chairman Butler if he could interject. Russell recalled that Butler opened the floor to the former Secretary of War from Cleveland.

Standing up to speak, Baker first acknowledged to his fellow trustees that he was happy to see the Corporation make these grants to black educational institutions such as Fisk and Hampton, because he was a trustee in a number of these institutions. But, at the same time, he wondered what the whole point was. Baker asked them why they allocated money toward black education, and particularly to segregated vocational education for black Americans in the South: “Do you do this because of some conscience you may have? Or are you doing it to really improve Negro education?” He continued: “I’d be interested in why you do it, because if you are out to improve Negro education, it seems to me that you could do it better than this in some other way. I’m also inclined to believe that things are much better off in Hampton and at Fisk and at Tuskegee than they are in your own backyard. I don’t know this for a fact about New York, but I do know it for Cleveland.”

64 John Russell Oral Interview, 1968, CCOH Project.

65 He further remembered the amount, which was “$100,000 for Negro education, which was an annual thing. This was divided between Fisk, Tuskegee, and Hampton every year.” Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.
Baker explained to the trustees that their funding practice was doing little, if anything at all, to address the so-called “Negro problem” in the United States. Referring to his own experience in Cleveland, Baker told his fellow trustees: “If this problem of the Negro is what you are really after, it is a vast one and an enormous one and a dreadful one. From the material that we have gathered in our own city, it seems almost insurmountable.”68 Baker asked his fellow trustees if they wanted to follow the Corporation’s long-standing precedent of funding the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education for black Americans in the South or if they actually wanted to do something to solve the multi-dimensional problem of black Americans’ unemployment, crime, health, education, and poverty in northern cities such as Cleveland and New York.69

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That day, the Corporation’s Trustees took note in their minutes that they requested its members to give further thought to Baker’s analysis of black education.70 When Keppel heard Baker’s criticism of the Corporation’s funding program and his fellow Trustee’s acceptance of it, he must have thought that maybe—just maybe then—he had an opportunity to do what he had wanted to do for years: redirect the

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 The next Executive Committee meeting was held on November 7, 1935: “The One hundred and seventy-first meeting of the Executive Committee of Carnegie Corporation of New York was held on November 7, 1935, at 2 P.M., at 522 Fifth Avenue, New York. Present: Messrs. Arbuthnot, Jessup, Keppel and Merriam./ Absent: Mr. Root. Mr. Russell, Assistant to the President, was also present.” Carnegie Corporation of New York Minutes 1935-1936, CCNY Records, I.A.4 Agendas & Minutes, Vol. 13.
Corporation’s funding of “negro education.” Not only did the Corporation’s trustees highly value the opinion of Baker, but Keppel had personal reasons to think that someone like Baker could help carry through such an unprecedented change.

Keppel was then the president (and a trustee) of the Corporation while Baker was simply a trustee; but years back, Baker had been Secretary of War during the First World War and Keppel had served under him as Third Assistant Secretary of War. Since then, Keppel and Baker had remained friendly and shared a mutual admiration. For example, when Baker passed away a few years later, Keppel wrote a description of the former’s influence and renown in the country for *Foreign Affairs.* He described their long days of work in Washington and the Secretary’s long list of visitors. Keppel wrote: “All this kind of thing went on all day and every day from eight-thirty in the morning until eleven at night (only two or three hours less on Sunday, but nothing that happened could ever ruffle the tranquility of the Secretary. How [he] could maintain throughout the alarums and excursions of wartime Washington this calm imperturbability was beyond our comprehension.” Keppel very much admired Baker, with Keppel’s secretary at the Corporation remembering that “Newton Baker was pretty close to being God as far as Keppel was concerned.”

71 Carnegie Corporation of New York Memorandum of Interview (Frederick P. Keppel & Henry James), June 18, 1930, CCNY Records, Folder 24.5 “Trustees—Henry James.”


73 Ibid.

Because this intimate and amicable relationship existed between Keppel and Baker, it is possible that Keppel had encouraged Baker to speak up about his criticism of the Corporation’s funding practice. Perhaps such a conversation had taken place over lunch one day in the months preceding the annual board meeting. Baker might have mentioned this unsolicited criticism of the Corporation’s funding practice and Keppel, aware of Baker’s popularity, might have jumped on the opportunity to inform the former Secretary of War of the utility of expressing such a viewpoint formally in the next board meeting, when the year’s budget would be considered. Together, Baker and Keppel also might have deduced that, particularly after the Harlem Riot of 1935, fellow trustees would be receptive to Baker’s argument that funding the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education in the South did little to address the multi-dimensional problem of black Americans’ unemployment, crime, health, education, and poverty in the North.

At any rate, the very next day on October 25, 1935, Keppel sent his personal assistant John Russell to Cleveland to learn more about Baker’s point of view.75 Upon the recommendation of the former Secretary of War, Russell visited the Cleveland Foundation during his stay in the city in order to see a map of these societal problems. Founded in 1914 by banker and lawyer Frederick H. Goff, the Foundation pooled the “charitable resources of Cleveland’s philanthropists, living and dead, into a single, great, and permanent endowment for the betterment of the city” with a particular interest in the “mental, moral, and physical improvement of the inhabitants of Cleveland.”76

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75 Ibid.

Throughout its existence, the Foundation had funded surveys and social scientific studies of its city with the idea of improving the living conditions of its citizens.

During his visit, Russell was particularly impressed by a map that showed how black Americans lived in the areas of Cleveland that were densest, “where all the social problems were concentrated” and explained to Keppel in New York City that the map “was a spectacular demonstration of what happens when a slum-ghetto is allowed to develop and what happens when industry can no longer use its people.” The “Negro problem,” Baker had explained to Russell, was the problem of unemployment and of urban slums; problems that funding vocational education for black Americans in the South would not solve. Baker did not define the problem as one of discrimination or of legal inequality; but rather, as a problem of delinquency, unemployment, and health in urban ghettos.

Upon his return to New York, Russell wrote to the president that:

In general, [Baker] told me that the industries in Cleveland had been short of help during the War and had offered all sorts of inducements to import cheap labor from the South. The result was that the colored population in Cleveland had suddenly grown to a tremendous size and when the depression hit they were the first to lose their jobs. They were the first to join the ranks of the unemployed.

In particular, Russell relayed to Keppel that Baker had noted that a growing population of black Americans in Cleveland, who had moved from the South during the First World


78 Alan Pifer to John M. Russell, March 12, 1974, CCNY Records, I.E. Staff and Trustees Files, 1913-1996, Box 18.
War with the promise of jobs up North, were increasingly becoming destitute during the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{79}

With Baker’s very public and articulate criticism of the Corporation’s funding practice with respect to black Americans, Keppel believed that it was the proper time to push the Corporation toward a new direction in this field. Plus, the composition of the Board of Trustees had changed dramatically in the previous five years. In particular, Franks, Bertram, and Poynton had all passed away within a year of each other in 1934 and 1935. This, of course, left open three of the fifteen spots on the Board.

In January of 1936, the Corporation’s trustees extended invitations to the three Americans that Keppel had recommended to take the place of Poynton, Bertram, and Franks. At the same meeting in which Baker made his statement on black Americans, Keppel had distributed a three-page letter describing why he recommended Lotus D. Coffman, Nicholas Kelley, and Frederick Osborn to join as trustees.\textsuperscript{80} According to Keppel, the Board needed “one more man of affairs, of sound financial judgment. We need another member, not over-burdened with other duties, who may be called upon not only for the incidental services hitherto performed by Mr. Bertram, Mr. Poynton and Mr. Franks, but also for a certain amount of traveling and inquiry.”\textsuperscript{81} One can almost hear


\textsuperscript{80} Frederick P. Keppel to “the Trustees,” October 24, 1935, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation of New York Board of Trustees Minutes.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
Keppel’s disdain for these three deceased characters as his secretary typed ‘incidental’ to describe the work that they had done at the Corporation.

Keppel continued: “Since most of our relations are with academic institutions, one additional member with broad experience in academic affairs is also very desirable.” As the man of affairs, Keppel recommended Nicholas Kelley, the son of the settlement house researcher and reformer, Florence Kelley. This younger Kelley was a lawyer who had worked at the law firm of Cravath, Henderson, Leffingwell & de Gersdorff (where Trustee Leffingwell was a partner) and had recently served as chairman of the committee to review the program of the American Law Institute.

Keppel suggested that Osborn could take over the administrative duties of Bertram, Poynton, and Franks. An independently wealthy (and retired) businessman who dedicated himself to scholarly research on population problems, Osborn would have “more time to give to the Corporation than a man in active business or professional life.” Lastly, Coffman could be the Board’s man of academic affairs. He was president of the University of Minnesota and, according to Keppel, “recognized as the outstanding figure among the presidents of our state universities.” A month after Keppel wrote this letter of recommendation to the Corporation’s trustees, the Board agreed to invite the three men to become members of the board, and by March of 1936, the board officially included fifteen members again. This time, however, nobody was nominated a lifetime

82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Carnegie Corporation of New York Board of Trustees Minutes, Nov. 19, 1935 and March 26, 1936, CCNY Records.
member; a title that the Board of Trustees gladly erased upon the passing of Franks, Bertram, and Poynton.86

When Keppel recommended Coffman, Kelley, and Osborn to the Board of Trustees, he recommended them with language that his fellow trustees would condone. He used words like “balancing the board” to explain why these three men were good selections; however, Keppel selected these three men because he thought that they would be inclined to use Corporation funds to do interesting work beyond what Andrew Carnegie had imagined himself. In particular, they were either social reformers themselves or supporters of them.

Frederick Osborn was a New Yorker of independent means who had become a population expert after he had become interested in empirical research and public welfare, and particularly with “the social issues surrounding population.”87 Just the previous year, he had co-authored a book titled Dynamics of Population: Social and Biological Significance of Changing Birth Rates in the United States.88 Osborn was interested in understanding national societal problems (in this case, the problem of over- and under-population in some areas of the country); in studying these problems in some comprehensive way; and, in providing comprehensive public policy solutions to solve them.

86 Carnegie Corporation of New York Board of Trustees Minutes, Nov. 19, 1935, CCNY Records.


At the University of Minnesota, “Coffman’s administration was marked by a tremendous growth in the number and scope of academic offerings.” He oversaw innovative changes, such as a college for academically gifted students; a center for continuing education; an orientation program for incoming freshman; and, a two-year collegiate course, with the student population doubling during his tenure.\(^8^9\) By recommending Coffman to the Board, Keppel recommended somebody who was friendly to creating new programs and more likely than not, friendly to creating new fields of funding.

With Kelley, Keppel was also recommending somebody accustomed to putting money behind new programs, and particularly, to efforts of social reform. For much of his childhood, he had grown up around the well-known Chicago settlement house founded by Jane Addams, Hull House, where his social reformer mother lived. Kelley had become an affluent attorney in New York City, but he remembered those childhood years fondly and looked up to settlement house workers and researchers. Years later, Kelley remembered fondly: “I have often wished that I could have seen with my present eyes those young women of sixty-three years ago, Miss Addam, whom my mother affectionately called ‘the gentle Jane,’ Miss Starr, Miss Lathrop, Miss Barnum, Miss Brockway, and my mother herself… All of them were in their early thirties or younger. They were cultivated, highly educated, filled with moral fervor, and confident in what they were doing. My mother had a great capacity for righteous and other wrath, she and Miss Adams and Miss Lathrop each in her own way had wonderful gifts of words, and all

three were bubbling with humor and wit that could be razor-sharp.™ Though Kelley was not a reformer himself, he was very much an admirer and supporter of these “guides for social improvement” in the United States.®

These three men, though they had different and unique interests, were all interested in reforming American life. Cognizant of this, Keppel saw himself inviting three reform-minded men who (unlike their predecessors) would encourage using Carnegie Corporation funds to help create a more modern society, irrespective of whether Andrew Carnegie would have done it himself. From the perspectives of these three men, trusteeship in the Corporation would provide them an opportunity to rub shoulders with some of the most renowned business and political figures in the country and to influence the allocations of one of the wealthiest foundations in the world.

With this new set of trustees, Keppel became confident enough in the dynamics of the board that his expectations grew for the Corporation’s redirection in its funding vis-à-vis African Americans.® A month before the Corporation’s next annual board meeting (when the trustees decided the following year’s budget), Keppel traveled to Ohio to share his idea of a national study with Baker. A year earlier, the former Secretary of War had directed his fellow trustees’ attention northward and had suggested that certain northern cities required the particular attention of the organization. Keppel took this idea one step

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91 Ibid.

92 Office of the President Record of Interview (Frederick P. Keppel and Mr. Osborn), Sept. 28, 1936, CCNY Records, I.D. Administrative Records, Policy & Program, Box 762, Folder 762.11 “Osborn, Frederick 1934-1940.” This memorandum suggests that Keppel already envisioned the problem as a national one, with Osborn discussing the problem in the context of two regions: the North and the South.
further and proposed coordinating a single, national study. In his notes, Keppel wrote that he had discussed the “negro situation” with Baker and that Baker was “rather attracted by [his] suggestion of a concentrated report.”

Keppel imagined that the Corporation could fund a policy-oriented social scientific study that canvassed the condition of black Americans throughout the country. He imagined that such a study would not only guide the Corporation’s policy in future funding decisions with respect to African Americans, but also help guide white American public policymakers in their governance of black Americans. During his time in Cleveland, Baker added that the viability and success of such a study “would depend upon the man.”

Within months, the Carnegie Corporation president began his search for a director for the proposed national study. As his search illustrated, he was particularly interested in finding a scholarly European statesman such as Lord Hailey. At a meeting in New York City with J.H. Oldham who was visiting from London, Keppel “reported his idea for a man of the Hailey type for a study of negro conditions in the United States.” A member of the Indian Civil Service since 1894, Hailey had been Finance and then Home Member of Viceroy’s Council, Governor of the Punjab (1924-28) and Government of the United


94 J.Th. Moll to Frederick P. Keppel (and accompany correspondence between J.Th. Moll to H. Mouw), Nov. 2, 1936, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.

95 Office of the President Record of Interview (Frederick P. Keppel and Newton D. Baker), Sept. 30, 1936, CCNY Records, I.E. Staff and Trustee Files, Box 22, Folder 22.9 “Baker, Newton D. 1931-1938, 1950-1955, 1979.”

96 Office of the President Record of Interview (Frederick P. Keppel and J.H. Oldham), Nov. 23, 1936, CCNY Records, Box 281, Folder 281.1 “Oldham, J.H. 1925-1938.”
Provinces (1928-34). Most recently, he was director of the Corporation’s comprehensive study of native Africans, published two years later as *An African Survey*.  

In conversation with the Dutchman J. Th. Moll in the fall of 1936, Keppel explained in further detail why it was important to find a “Hailey type” for the study of black Americans. The Corporation’s president noted that American researchers harbored sentimental and social bias and political prejudice on the issue of race in the United States. He presupposed that a non-American white European would be “perfectly free from sentimental and social bias and from political prejudice.” According to this Dutch contact’s notes, Keppel elaborated even further on his specifications: “The Corporation takes as the principal requirement the author’s capability to arrive at an all round conclusive mental conception of the situations and its future development; the next requirement being methodical clearness in presenting the thoughts conceived and the findings obtained.” This European would have experience collecting empirical data on a societal problem and analyzing it comprehensively.

Such a director also would be able to translate his findings into public policy recommendations. In this vein, the Carnegie Corporation’s president suggested to this Dutch contact that something was to be “said for a man of governmental or


98 Office of the President Record of Interview (Frederick P. Keppel and J.H. Oldham), Nov. 23, 1936, CCNY Records, Box 281, Folder 281.1 “Oldham, J.H. 1925-1938.”


100 Ibid.
administrative experience in dealing with alien races. This makes the Corporation inclined to look for their man in England or Holland or, perhaps, France.”

Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel had in mind selecting someone just like Hailey to direct the national study in the United States, which likely meant that he imagined that this American study could achieve what *An African Survey* was supposed to achieve across the Atlantic. In other words, he likely expected that this American study, like *An African Survey*, could play its part in helping to maintain white racial dominance across the Atlantic by providing white Americans with comprehensive, empirical, and policy-oriented knowledge on blacks that could help guide their continued peaceful governance of this group. As Hailey and his researchers had done in Africa, the American director “of the Hailey type” could travel across the United States; collect data on the overall conditions of blacks; and, after analyzing this data comprehensively, provide policy recommendations that could help guide white readers in their governance and management of blacks.

The following April of 1937, Keppel was once again in London to check upon the status of Lord Hailey’s project. He gloated over the Corporation’s involvement with the *African Survey*, and asked around for possible men to head a comparable study in the United States. He raised this same question with various people practically each day he was there. These contacts were by and large “interested and approving of [the] proposed study of the negro in the United States” and told Keppel that, though “there is a shortage

101 Ibid.

102 Memorandum on London Conference, April 14, 1937, CCNY Records, I.D. CCNY Administrative Records, Policy & Program, Box 6, Folder 6.5. At the conference, Keppel noted: “Lord Hailey had carried out a general study of Africa of which the Corporation was very proud.” Ibid.
of first-rate men in England,” they would “try to make suggestions.”  

For the next months back in the United States, Keppel continued his search for a European scholarly statesman to direct the study of black Americans.  

As the next chapters make clear, the Carnegie Corporation’s president believed that the organization needed to redirect its (and the country’s) attention away from thinking that segregated vocational education for black Americans was the key to addressing the problem of white-black coexistence. He had confidence that a comprehensive, policy-oriented, empirical study of black Americans with an objective, trustworthy European director at its head could—like The Poor White Study and An African Survey which the organization funded in 1920s and 1930s British Africa—help white public policymakers create modern policies that addressed problems in white-black relations. Put differently, the Corporation’s decision to commission, fund, and publish An American Dilemma resulted from its leaders’ vision during the 1920s and 1930s that comprehensive and policy-oriented empirical studies of whites and blacks, conducted by trusted (mainly white) social researchers, were the modern tools for addressing tensions in white-black relations both throughout British Africa as in the United States. At the suggestion of the Scottish minister and at the encouragement of the Chatham House advisers, the Carnegie Corporation had reason to believe that it had a role in funding these studies. From this perspective, it becomes easier to understand why the organization went forward in funding a national study of its own instead of funding W.E.B. Du Bois’s Encyclopedia of the Negro.

103 Ibid.

104 Office of the President Record of Interview (Frederick P. Keppel and J.H. Oldham), Nov. 23, 1936, CCNY Records, Box 281, Folder 281.1 “Oldham, J.H. 1925-1938.”
In 1931, the Phelps Stokes Fund brought together fellow philanthropic managers and white and black scholars to discuss plans for coordinating an *Encyclopedia of the Negro*. The Fund, which had funded the Jones Report in the U.S. and Africa, had experience coordinating surveys and studies of African American and native African education.¹ It planned to use this experience to coordinate a survey of the body of knowledge that had been created by and about African-Americans and the rest of the African diaspora. In particular, it imagined preparing a multi-volume encyclopedia “to include all important phases of Negro Life and History—anthropological, ethnographical, biographical, historical, educational, industrial, economic, political, religious, psychological (including race relations, artistic, etc., etc)” with the thought that this material would be useful for “scholars, teachers, editors, students and the public generally.”²

Several leading social scientists and philanthropic managers from the Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Rockefellers’ GEB and SSRC responded to the Phelps Stokes Fund’s invitation to attend a first meeting in Washington D.C. in November of 1931. During this initial gathering, the group agreed “that instead of

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² Minutes of the Committee on Problems and Policy, March 17, 1934, Social Science Research Council Archives, Accession 1, Series 2. Committee on P&P, Subseries 1. Minutes, Box 313, Folder 1781, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter cited as SSRC Archives).
an editor-in-chief there should be two associate editors—one black and one white.” To fill these positions, they selected the white sociologist at the University of Chicago and former associate of Booker T. Washington, Robert E. Park, and the black scholar who then edited the NAACP’s *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois.³ For the rest of the 1930s, these two editors alongside fellow scholars at Howard, Fisk, and Yale universities along with others from Spelman College, Hampton Institute, Tuskegee Institute, the National Urban League, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, and the American Council of Learned Societies met to coordinate plans for the encyclopedia.

The SSRC, like the Rockefeller organizations and the Carnegie Corporation, was favorable to the project during the first few months. After its first meeting in November, for example, a SSRC member wrote to the organization’s director that on “first blush it looks as though [the Encyclopedia] were the sort of thing the Council might well sponsor and it is interesting that it is looked to for leadership in this. Offhand I don’t see any reason why it is not in line with our policy.”⁴ Equally so, the philanthropic managers at the Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the GEB corresponded with each other about possibly funding this project. In early 1932, however, these managers received word of racial tensions amongst the participants.


Upon returning to New York City from a meeting on the encyclopedia in January of 1932, the Carnegie Corporation President’s assistant, Robert Lester, wrote to his superior. He began the report by mentioning that there had been “considerable waste of time in discussions, underlying which there was unexpressed racial antagonism.” In particular, he noted that the “controversy with C. G. Woodson, Director of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., was gone over and all documents between him and Stokes were put into the record.”

Since the Phelps Stokes Fund had gone public with plans for an *Encyclopedia of the Negro* the previous year, the black historian and director of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History Carter Woodson had told colleagues that he (and his organization) had been collecting material for a comprehensive encyclopedia since 1922. Furthermore, Woodson argued that such a comprehensive study should be conducted by black Americans, and not organized or orchestrated by white philanthropic managers and scholars.

From 1932 to 1936, the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s *Encyclopedia of the Negro* continued to seek the endorsement of elite philanthropic organizations such as the General Education Board, Carnegie Corporation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. The Fund was fully committed to seeing this project to fruition, but it did not have the necessary resources to execute alone a project of this scale. The financial assistance of

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5 Carnegie Corporation of New York Memorandum of Interview (From Robert M. Lester to the Trustees on the Encyclopedia of the Negro, Preliminary Meeting), Nov. 7, 1931, CCNY Records, III.A. Grant Files, ca. 1911-1988, Box 139, Folder 139.11 “Encyclopedia of the Negro 1931-1944.”


7 Ibid. From his point of view, Du Bois argued that “whites would control the project unless he became involved.” Ibid.
other philanthropic organizations such as the Rockefeller and Carnegie organizations was crucial to the realization of the encyclopedia.

In discussing the project in a letter dated April 10, 1932, the General Education Board’s President Jackson Davis acknowledged that there was a “growing desire on the part of fair minded persons in the South to give recognition to Negroes for their merit and achievements at their true worth.” At the same time, he doubted whether W.E.B. Du Bois’s increasingly controversial *Encyclopedia Africana* was the right project to fund: “I am not sure that at the present time when economic hardships are bearing heavily upon the Negro, anything that looks like an effort to push their claims in an aggressive, bristling manner will have a good effect upon race relations.”

During the next few years, board members at the General Education Board, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation continued to receive news from staff members and colleagues that the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s project was bound to fail. Not only had the SSRC declined the invitation to appoint two representatives on the Advisory Board of the *Encyclopedia of the Negro*, but the representatives whom these philanthropic managers sent to the meetings of the encyclopedia continued to return with negative impressions of its development. In 1934, Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel’s assistant Robert Lester told him: “You may recall that I attended two or three of the early meetings on this project. They gave me little reason to believe that there are: 1—unity among the people interested (the situation is already tense

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8 See e.g, GEB’s Jackson Davis to Anson Phelps Stokes, April 10, 1932, GEB Archives, Series 1, Subseries 3, Box 418, Folder 4386 “950 Encyclopedia of the Negro 1931-37.”

9 Ibid.

10 Minutes of the Committee on Problems and Policy, March 17, 1934, SSRC Archives, Accession 1, Series 2. Committee on P&P, Subseries 1: Minutes, Box 313, Folder 1781.
between black and white); 2—an actual contribution to be made by such a publication, except a glorification of mediocre personalities—the good ones are already on record: 3—a definite conception of the financial responsibilities involved.”

From what these philanthropic managers could gather, the team of black and white scholars under the directorship of W.E.B. Du Bois and Robert Park (who was later replaced by the North Carolina sociologist Guy B. Johnson) was fraught with antagonism and racial tension. Even more, the organizers seemed hard pressed to give the philanthropic managers at the Generation Education Board, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation a definitive budget for the project.

In addition, the historian Carter Woodson began contacting philanthropic managers directly and vocalizing his disapproval of Du Bois’s *Encyclopedia of the Negro*. In the summer of 1936, Woodson circulated a five-page cover letter and two press releases to the offices of the General Education Board, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. This leading African American historian explained to white philanthropic managers in New York City that he and his organization, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, could accomplish its proposed *Encyclopedia Africana* for a fraction of the amount of money that the Phelps-Stokes Fund was contemplating for its own *Encyclopedia of the Negro*.

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11 Memorandum on the Negro Encyclopedia, CCNY Records, III.A. Grant Files, ca. 1911-1988, Box 139, Folder 139.11 “Encyclopedia of the Negro 1931-1944.”


13 See e.g., G.G. Woodson to Rockefeller Foundation, June 26, 1936, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, 1.1 Projects, Series 200 United States, Box 9, Folder 81, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter cited as RF Archives).
Woodson also noted that the Fund had no place coordinating an encyclopedia and that W.E.B. Du Bois had no place collaborating with the Fund on this project. He reminded his readers that the Fund had spearheaded the Jones Report, which he and Du Bois had criticized quite extensively over a decade earlier. He called the organizers involved with this Phelps-Stokes project “ill-designing whites and hired Negroes” and suggested that a proper encyclopedia on Africans (or the African diaspora) should be coordinated exclusively for and by African Americans. Woodson explained that he had been cultivating this idea for years and that his own organization was the obvious group to organize such a study. He wrote: “We shall go forward with our Encyclopedia Africana without the aid of the rich foundations. We need only the support of the Negroes of the country. We are serving the race, and the race is standing by us. We shall demonstrate that after three centuries of contact with modern culture and seventy-one years of freedom the Negro can do some things for himself without compromising his honor and manhood.” With this packet of documents in hand, philanthropic managers at the GEB, Rockefeller Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation had further proof that Du Bois’s *Encyclopedia of the Negro* was riddled with racial antagonism.

More importantly, however, the one elite philanthropic organization interested in funding a large-scale, national study of African Americans had a particular vision in mind. As Woodson detailed in his 1936 letter to the philanthropic managers, the purpose

\[\text{14} \text{ Ibid.} \]
\[\text{15} \text{ Ibid.} \]
of an encyclopedia was to expose and highlight the achievements of Africans. An
*Encyclopedia of the Negro* (or Woodson’s own *Encyclopedia Africana*) would have
served as a means of proving to white and black audiences alike that blacks had
contributed to modern civilization and thus deserved to be treated as equals to whites.
Implicitly, such a project found value in nurturing and maintaining race consciousness
among blacks across the Atlantic.

By contrast, the Carnegie Corporation’s proposed policy-oriented empirical study
of Africans Americans was based on the idea that a comprehensive, policy-oriented,
empirical study of black Americans with a trustworthy white European at its head
could—like *The Poor White Study* and *An African Survey* which the organization funded
in 1920s and 1930s British Africa—help white public policymakers create modern
policies that addressed problems in white-black relations. Put differently, an important
reason that the Corporation did not fund Du Bois’ *Encyclopedia of the Negro* (or for that
matter, Woodson’s proposed *Encyclopedia Africana*) was that the organization had a
particular vision of what kind of knowledge on black Americans was authoritative and
what kind of knowledge could be helpful to white policymakers. This knowledge—like
the policy-oriented social scientific knowledge on whites and blacks resulting from *The
Poor White Question* and *An African Survey*—was provided by teams of white social
scientists for a learned white audience.

As president of the Carnegie Corporation, it was then up to Keppel to tell W.E.B.
Du Bois and his institutional promoter, the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s Anson Phelps Stokes,
that the Corporation would be funding its own comprehensive study instead of the
*Encyclopedia of the Negro*. In his letter, Keppel assured Stokes “that the trouble in my
Board did not rise from memories of Du Bois as a firebrand, but from a general feeling that the idea of a specialized Negro Encyclopedia at all was a mistake.”17 Though Keppel respected and admired Du Bois, he and his board opted against Du Bois’ project and in favor of their own study rooted in the British African experience.

Almost in a state of despair in November of 1938, the director of the Phelps Stokes Fund wrote to the Carnegie Corporation president: “It is rather hard to know just what to do next…With the Rockefeller Board and the Carnegie Board—the two on which we most counted for help—having decided (at least for the present) that they cannot grant money to the enterprise, it is difficult to know where to turn, but I am still hopeful that we may find some individual, or group, or foundation” to fund the project.18 In fact, Du Bois’s *Encyclopedia of the Negro* never secured funding, and (like Woodson’s own plans for an encyclopedia) remained an unfinished, unpublished heartbreak that followed these historians the rest of their lives.19

In the fall of 1936, Frederick P. Keppel began his search for a director “a man of the Hailey type for a study of negro conditions in the United States.” While he asked his contacts at Chatham House for possible names, he simultaneously approached the Social Science Research Council in New York for help in coordinating and planning this

17 Frederick P. Keppel to Anson Phelps Stokes, November 17, 1938, CCNY Records, Ill.A. Grant Files, ca. 1911-1988, Box 139, Folder 139.11 “Encyclopedia of the Negro 1931-1944.”

18 Anson Phelps to Frederick P. Keppel, November 14, 1938, GEB Archives, Series 1, Subseries 3, Box 418, Folder 4386, “950 Encyclopedia of the Negro 1931-37.”

American study. After all, the American SSRC had experience organizing national studies of societal problems with an eye toward guiding white policymakers in Washington D.C. as they addressed these problems. The first and last national, policy-oriented study in the United States of the size and scale that *An American Dilemma* would become was *Recent Social Trends*, coordinated by the SSRC and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation under the Hoover Administration.

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20 Office of the President Record of Interview (Frederick P. Keppel and J. H. Oldham), Nov. 23, 1936, CCNY Records, Box 281, Folder 281.1, Oldham, J.H. 1925-1938.
Chapter 6:

After Recent Social Trends, the Corporation’s President Has Confidence That a British African Import Could Make a Policy Impact

Elected president of the United States in March of 1929, Herbert Hoover was a well-respected American from Kansas who had helped guide the country during the Great War. He had led both a U.S. government-sanctioned Commission for Relief in Belgium and, later, efficiently led food rationing in the United States. In fact, he was such a popular figure in the United States that both parties had courted him as a presidential nominee in 1920. Refusing their offers, he opted instead to serve as the Secretary of Commerce during the Harding and Coolidge administrations. In that role, he transformed the department into one of the most important and well-publicized federal departments. One scholar wrote that: “As commerce secretary he encouraged and helped to develop some of the most advanced economic theories about business cycles and industrial standardization, promoted government regulation of the nascent radio and aviation industries, and supported federal supervision of foreign loans.”¹ By the time he became president, Hoover had enjoyed nearly fourteen years of experience managing, coordinating, and executing policies at the national governmental level. In the process, he gained an appreciation for the social sciences and the role that these fields of research could play in government.²

Six months after he came into office, Hoover invited the Rockefeller Foundation President Max Mason to visit him at the White House. The Foundation had recently taken over the funding of the social sciences from its auxiliary organization, the Laura Spelman Memorial Foundation, and Hoover wanted to see if the Foundation would be willing to fund a project larger in size and scope than anyone had conceived of previously.

As Part I of this manuscript mentioned, when the gilded age tycoons John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie had founded the Rockefeller Foundation and Carnegie Corporation in the early 1910s, many Americans (including those in Congress) had feared that these magnates would use their massively wealthy foundations to control and define American laws and politics in their favor. Though affluent Americans such as Carnegie had established other philanthropic organizations in the late nineteenth century, the Carnegie Corporation and Rockefeller Foundation seemed more threatening to Americans: No private philanthropic organizations of the size and wealth of the these two had ever existed before in the United States.

Reflecting Americans’ unease, the United States Congressional Commission on Industrial Relations had called in the oil magnate John D. Rockefeller Sr. and his son in 1915 to defend the independence of the Rockefeller Foundation. This experience was so traumatic for the Rockefellers and their Foundation that the organization decided to limit its direct involvement in funding policy-oriented social research. Comparably wealthy


5 Bulmer and Bulmer, “Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s,” 350.
and thus vulnerable to similar attacks in the United States, the Carnegie Corporation also stayed away from funding policy-oriented projects in the United States. In 1929, U.S. President Hoover invited the Rockefeller Foundation to do what Americans had long discouraged elite philanthropic organizations such as the Foundation and the Corporation from doing: precisely to fund policy-oriented social research.

In his diary of October 2, 1929, Foundation President Mason wrote that the U.S. President had told him that he had appointed a committee of five philanthropic managers and social scientists from the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), the Russell Sage Foundation, the University of Chicago, and the University of North Carolina to report on a possible study of trends and problems in the social field. “He expected this committee to determine what problems could be successfully attacked and to propose means of attacking them.” As Hoover explained to Mason, the SSRC could organize and manage the holistic survey of national trends and the Foundation could fund it. In 1929, Hoover was eager to see how the federal government could address some of the societal problems that had bubbled up ever since many Americans had moved from rural to urban settings and since industry had become to dominate the American national landscape. Instead of

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6 In 1902, Andrew Carnegie had established the Carnegie Institution as an independent research organization to provide basic scientific knowledge in Washington. Carnegie consulted with the then President Theodore Roosevelt; endowed the new institution with $22 million dollars; and placed the U.S. President, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and the President of the National Academy of Sciences as ex officio members of the first Board of Trustees. See, Carnegie Institution for Science, http://carnegiescience.edu/about/history (last visited April 8, 2013).

The year of its founding, the Carnegie Institution in Washington attempted to introduce social research to the federal government. In particular, it established a division of economics and sociology to study the effects of social legislation by states. Scholars write that the “project was a total failure, and after the [division director’s] death the department was closed. In 1917 the Carnegie Institution renounced all interest in social science, concentrating thereafter on the natural sciences.” Bulmer and Bulmer, “Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s,” 349.

7 Max Mason Diary, Oct. 2, 1929, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Officers Diaries, Max Mason, Reel #1 (hereafter cited as RF Archives).
asking Congress to fund a nation-wide investigation, however, Hoover approached a private philanthropic organization. In the process, he pushed for the completion of a national study he thought the country needed without making enemies of congressmen hesitant to expand the federal government’s powers or budget. Hoover’s appeal to the Rockefeller Foundation also fit within his own vision of voluntarism in the United States.

In a 1922 publication, Herbert Hoover had explained that Americans were an individualistic people. In American Individualism, Hoover stated that this individualism led Americans to rely on each other (rather than government) to address and solve their problems. The government’s role was simply “to articulate and orchestrate the aspirations of these better selves and to provide the information as well as the means for them to come together. Government might indeed step in where voluntarism had manifestly failed, but only after a fair trial.” During his tenure as chief organizer of the President’s Conference on Unemployment in 1921 and during his wartime tenure as the administrator of Belgian relief and food administrator in the United States, Hoover had relied on educational and propaganda techniques to get his agendas across rather than on formal legislation. Within months of being in office, President Hoover acted on this vision of using the government to coordinate Americans’ volunteer services and invited the Rockefeller Foundation to fund a national study for the federal government.

Clearly, a national policy-oriented study could lead to the creation of national public policies, which seemed (at least in theory) to contradict Hoover’s vision of a

8 Herbert Hoover, American Individualism (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922).


10 Ibid., 48.
federal government that simply coordinated Americans’ volunteer services. However, he came to terms with this contradiction by reasoning that if national public policies existed, they should be based on the observed needs of the American people. As one scholar noted, President Hoover at the time “believed that social policy should be based on the accumulation and analysis of social science data” and it was this belief “which led to his establishment in 1929 of the Research Committee on Recent Social Trends.”

Hoover believed in maximizing Americans’ volunteerism as a means of limiting the size and scope of government. At the same time, however, he also believed that whatever policies the national government did create, that they should be based on empirical data. From this perspective, Hoover’s idea for a comprehensive, empirical, and policy-oriented study of national problems sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation complemented these two visions of the national government’s proper role in the lives of Americans.

Mason took this idea back to his staff and Board of Trustees. Similarly convinced that the Rockefeller Foundation had a role to play in funding social scientific research for the benefit of the national government, the Foundation agreed to fund the project and, within months, the Rockefeller’s SSRC commenced work. During the length of the project, President Hoover clarified that the point of the project was “to examine the feasibility of a national survey of social trends in the United States.”

He believed that industrialization and modernization had caused stresses and points of tension in the lives of Americans. He said that the federal government, after considering where all the points

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of social stresses had occurred, could create a plan to bring “equilibrium” back into their lives.\textsuperscript{13}

The President’s Committee, which brought together leading American social researchers, met for three years and surveyed social changes throughout the country.\textsuperscript{14} They studied trends in all aspects of American life, including changes in population, natural wealth, invention and discovery, communication, economic organization, occupational patterns, education, changing social attitudes and interests, metropolitan communities, rural life, racial and ethnic groups, family and its functions, women outside the home, childhood and youth, labor groups, consumers, leisure time activities, arts in social life, religious organizations, health and medical practice, crime and punishment, privately supported social work, public welfare activities, governmental functions, taxation and public finance, public administration, law and legal institutions, and government and society.

In the words of the American sociologist Howard Odum, Assistant Director of Research for the President’s Committee: “[a]t no time in the history of the United States [] had there been attempted a comprehensive, well integrated, and coordinated campaign in which the social sciences jointly attacked the emerging social problems of the nation.”\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Recent Social Trends} was the first ever comprehensive, policy-oriented study of a national problem that took teams of American social researchers across the country.

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\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Howard W. Odum, “Notes on Recent Social Trends in the Application of the Social Sciences,” \textit{Social Forces}, 11 (May 1933), 477-488.
\end{flushright}
No other comprehensive policy-oriented study of a national problem existed in the United States before the Rockefeller Foundation’s *Recent Social Trends*. It was also the first time an elite philanthropic organization of the size of the Rockefeller Foundation or the Carnegie Corporation funded policy-oriented social research with the consent of Americans. However, this is not to say that it was born in a vacuum. It was preceded by other smaller scale policy-oriented studies of urban, citywide problems funded by smaller philanthropic organizations. Surveying these earlier studies allows us to acknowledge the distinctiveness of *Recent Social Trends* while also providing some context to the intellectual framework from which it was born.  

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In the late nineteenth century, social researchers in universities and settlement houses took an interest in understanding their urban neighborhoods as organisms whose ills could be identified, diagnosed, and cured. They perceived that crime, unemployment, and racial and ethnic differences between neighbors were problems caused by many varying factors; that these problems could be addressed by studying their different causes; and, that they could be solved by applying this knowledge to public policies.

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When studying black Americans, one of the first challenges that these researchers confronted was defining the ‘problem’ that this group of Americans posed in their communities.

In 1892, the College Settlement Association in Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania, and the philanthropist and settlement house founder Susan P. Wharton commissioned the newly graduated African American political scientist, W.E.B. Du Bois, to study and analyze “the forty thousand or more people of Negro blood [] living in the city of Philadelphia.”\(^\text{17}\) Seven years later, Du Bois (himself a black American) wrote in his published manuscript, *Philadelphia Negro*: “This inquiry extended over a period of fifteen months and sought to ascertain something of the geographical distribution of this race, their occupations and daily life, their homes, their organizations, and, above all, their relation to their million white fellow-citizens. The final design of the work is to lay before the public such a body of information as may be a safe guide for all efforts toward the solution of the many Negro problems of a great American city.”\(^\text{18}\)

In the first two chapters of the published survey, Du Bois noted that his investigation of the “Negro problem… of poverty, ignorance, crime and labor” in Philadelphia lasted sixteen months, between August 1896 and December 1897, and that it included house-to-house canvass, general observations and inquiries.” He further explained: “The house-to-house canvassing was done in six schedules: family, individual, home, street, institution, and house servants.” For the general observations and inquiries, he relied on “official statistics and historical matter as seemed reliable… and experienced


\(^{18}\) Ibid.
persons, both white and colored, were freely consulted.” In the subsequent sixteen chapters, Du Bois presented a comprehensive view of the problem. He dedicated two chapters to the history of black Americans in Philadelphia, and the rest of the fourteen chapters to a description of the black population in the city. He described the size, age, sex, education, literacy, occupations, health, and family composition of the population, and painted a picture of its social classes, churches, businesses, housing, rent prices, and “sources of amusement.” The black author also engaged in a discussion of racial prejudice, intermarriage of the races, and black Americans’ suffrage. All this was done in an effort to capture the many facets of the “Negro problem… of poverty, ignorance, crime and labor” throughout the city of Philadelphia; information which Du Bois’s funders (the College Settlement Association in Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania, and Susan B. Wharton) wanted to have.

However, Philadelphia Negro did not limit itself to a detailed analysis of black Americans in Philadelphia. Like Pittsburgh Survey (1909-1914), Regional Survey of New York and Environs (1928-1932), and Recent Social Trends (1933) that followed it, Philadelphia Negro also offered public policy solutions to solve the societal problem it described. Far from being unique to these studies, the very idea that a societal problem should be studied comprehensively and scientifically and that such an analysis could bring about public policy solutions to solve it was strong in the early twentieth century and had roots in nineteenth century United States and England.19

In particular, the historian Daniel Breslau has argued that this early twentieth century sensibility can be explained by looking back to the nineteenth century English theorist, Herbert Spencer.\(^\text{20}\) The historian Richard Hofstadter echoed this same conclusion, writing that “Spencer’s following in the United States was enormous, and he was regarded by many American intellectuals as the most important living philosopher.”\(^\text{21}\) Most notably, American scholars took from Spencer’s work that “the analogy between society and a living organism justified applying to the former those modes of analysis developed in studying the latter.”\(^\text{22}\) Like a living organism, society was an interconnected body that needed to be studied and analyzed holistically.

A generation of late nineteenth century Americans became exposed to Spencer’s work through the chair of political and social science at Yale, William Graham Sumner. The “Spencerianism that [Sumner] vigorously adopted—he was the first to use Spencer’s *Study of Sociology* as a textbook and was a key figure in the introduction of Spencer’s writing to North Americans—made an epistemological virtue of this position.”\(^\text{23}\) During the following decades, as university departments in the social sciences were established in Chicago and Columbia, scholars found this approach to studying society favorable. They approached their analyses society by first identifying and defining a societal problem; going out and observing the interconnected issues that made up this problem;


\(^{22}\) Ibid. 42.

collecting qualitative and quantitative data on these observations; and, finally, by analyzing the causes of the societal problem and predicting its solution. Specifically, the “social sciences faced […] problems of legitimation, and their very presence in the new universities was by no means certain. They therefore imitated the established natural sciences in order to appear ‘scientific.’” Since their own understanding of what it meant to study society and its problems was based on Spencer’s and Sumner’s metaphor of a living organism, early social scientists did not find it a stretch to compare their own analyses of society to that of natural scientists’ own work. In many ways, early sociologists’ approach to their discipline echoed what they perceived to be the approach of biologists, chemists, physicists, and astronomers in their studies of the natural world.

When Du Bois studied and analyzed the “Negro problem…of poverty, ignorance, crime and labor” in *Philadelphia Negro*, he approached it within this intellectual tradition that had been established by these two earlier theorists. Like them, he understood society to be an interconnected body whose problems needed to be analyzed holistically and with an eye toward curing them. In this vein, the black political scientist offered policy recommendations to solve the so-called “Negro problem” in Philadelphia; concluding that it was the duty of both white and black Americans in the city to help black Americans reach the standards enjoyed by most white Philadelphians. He wrote: “With these duties in mind and with a spirit of self-help, mutual aid and co-operation, the two races strive side-by-side to realize the ideals of the republic and make this truly a land of equal opportunity.” The societal problem in Philadelphia could be solved if white

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24 Ibid., 42.
Philadelphians helped fellow black residents and if these black Philadelphians also helped themselves.

Upon publication, *Philadelphia Negro* enjoyed little popular success among white Americans, so the author’s message (however important) largely fell on deaf ears. Over twenty years later, even the author acknowledged that “[n]obody ever read[] that fat volume.”\(^{25}\) Regardless, it is remembered for being the first comprehensive study of a societal problem in the United States, followed only by the Russell Sage Foundation’s *Pittsburgh Survey* eight years later.

This second major survey in the United States was the first significant venture taken on by the Russell Sage Foundation, which was founded in 1907 by the New York widow Margaret Olivia Sage. The previous year, she had inherited her financier husband’s $70 million fortune and decided to use $10 million of it to form a philanthropic organization “for the improvement of social and living conditions” throughout the United States and particularly in New York City.\(^{26}\) Named after Sage’s husband, the organization quickly focused on the conditions confronting young working women in the garment trade and other factory settings.\(^{27}\) Just a year into its existence, this overall interest led the organization to fund a comprehensive study of the living and working conditions of laborers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In the words of one historian:

\(^{25}\) Mia Bay, “‘The World Was Thinking Wrong About Race’: The Philadelphia Negro and Nineteenth Century Science,” in *W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and the City: The Philadelphia Negro and Its Legacy*, eds. Michael B. Katz and Thomas J. Sugrue (Philadelphia, PA: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 41. Since the 1960s, however, the study has received much more attention. The historian Mia Bay wrote that, largely due to this study, “Du Bois has been widely celebrated as one of the founding fathers of American sociology.” Ibid.


\(^{27}\) Ibid.
“Pittsburgh, the largest US producer of steel and iron at the time, was experiencing rapid industrial growth and massive immigration, making it the perfect place for the [Russell Sage Foundation] to study the social problems afflicting a flourishing industrial center.” The survey employed over 50 social-science researchers; and far from being unique, the Pittsburgh Survey’s reliance on teams of researchers became the norm in comprehensive social scientific analyses of citywide (and later, national) societal problems.

Documenting the living and working conditions of the working class in that city, The Pittsburgh Survey was noted for being “innovative, thoroughly documented, astonishingly comprehensive.” A thorough analysis of the working class in Pittsburgh, the survey included six volumes: Elizabeth Beardsley Butler, Women and the Trades (1909); Crystal Eastman, Work-Accidents and the Law (1910); John A. Fitch, The Steel Workers (1910); Margaret Byington, Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town (1911); Paul U. Kellogg, The Pittsburgh District: Civic Frontage (1914); and, Paul U. Kellogg, Wage-Earning Pittsburgh (1914).

Together, these volumes made up The Pittsburgh Survey and “helped jump start what would be enduring reform discussions about measures such as workers’ compensation and shortening the twelve-hour day, seven-day work week still widely practiced in American industry at the time.” More than Du Bois’s Philadelphia Negro, the Foundation’s Pittsburgh Survey immediately instigated public conversation on the urban, citywide problem it analyzed.


29 Ibid.
Four years later and after the First World War, the Russell Sage Foundation committed itself to its next major study of an urban problem. Much in line with comprehensive social surveys such as *Philadelphia Negro* and *The Pittsburgh Survey*, *The Regional Survey of New York* sought to visualize a city as an intricate organism with a complex set of societal problems that could be solved only through comprehensive analysis. Instead of analyzing a group of Americans such as black Americans in Philadelphia or the working class in Pittsburgh, however, this survey analyzed the physical city itself. In the early 1920s, the trustees of the Russell Sage Foundation approved a proposal to create “a Plan of New York bold enough to visualize the commercial, the industrial, the social and the artistic values and the possibilities of our glorious harbor and all of [its] broad and varied environs.”

Indicative of how mainstream these comprehensive social scientific studies of urban, citywide problems were becoming in the 1920s, the future Carnegie Corporation president Frederick P. Keppel served as the secretary (and American railroad president and uncle of the future U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Frederic A. Delano, served as chair) of this second major survey conducted by the Russell Sage Foundation. By then, many Americans saw the value in the Foundation and in the social scientific work it produced. Most importantly for this intellectual transformation, many Americans had seen the value added by the Foundation to the federal government during the First World War.

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Between the spring of 1917 and up until the end of the war, a significant portion of the Russell Sage Foundation’s staff had uprooted themselves from New York City to Washington DC. At the invitation of the federal government, over ten people from the Foundation had helped organize a Division of Statistics for the Council of National Defense and another had organized a War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities which had been responsible for “athletics, music, dramatics, entertainments, law enforcement, protective work for women and girls, sex hygiene instruction, and post exchanges in the camps.”\(^{31}\) One staff member had helped the federal government develop a system of postal exchanges; another had helped manage the Bureau of Refugees and Relief of the American Red Cross; and, a third person had helped coordinate the charitable contributions from charitable organizations societies across the country. Two others had directed the newly created women’s branch in the War Department’s Industrial Service Section and the Woman in Industry Service in the Department of Labor. Others had organized the war savings societies while yet others conducted comprehensive surveys of the national war savings movement; of the amount and character of entertainment available for the soldiers and sailors in New York City; and, of conditions in war production centers. After the war, the Foundation’s staff members returned to New York City and became involved in the \textit{Regional Survey of New York and Environs}. Between 1928 and 1932, the staff produced ten volumes of this study and they were reviewed with great success.\(^ {32}\)


\(^{32}\) Ibid.
As the social sciences gained mainstream popularity in the United States, the Russell Sage Foundation had been joined by another wealthier philanthropic organization interested in funding these fields of research: the Rockefellers’ Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial.

Founded by John D. Rockefeller Sr. in 1918 to commemorate the memory of his late wife, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial first funded social welfare organizations and religious organizations. In the beginning, some minor amount went toward emergency relief, public health, education, and an even smaller amount toward scientific research and investigation. Then in the early 1920s, the young Chicago psychologist, Beardsley Ruml, became the organization’s director and he suggested that the organization should fund the social sciences. In an early memorandum to his board, Ruml elaborated:

> It is becoming more and more clearly recognised that unless means are found of meeting the complex social problems that are so rapidly developing, our increasing control of physical forces may prove increasingly destructive of human values. To be sure, social knowledge is not a substitute for social righteousness; but unless we are ready to admit that the situation is utterly hopeless, we must believe that knowledge is a far greater aid to righteousness than is ignorance.

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34 One of the principle advisers to the Rockefeller Family, the lawyer Raymond Fosdick, pushed for Ruml to become the new director, whom he thought could help give the Memorial some direction. Martin Bulmer and Joan Bulmer, “Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s: Beadsley Ruml and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, 1922-29,” Minerva, 19 (Autumn, 1981), 258. In particular, he noted to John D. Rockefeller Jr.: “My respect for his ability has grown through contact and I cannot help believing him one of the ablest young men that I have ever met.” Rockefeller accepted this advice and instructed the Board of Trustees to elect Ruml as the new director. See, George McJimsey, “Ruml, Beardsley,” American National Biography Online, www.anb.org (last visited May 7, 2012). See generally, LSRM Archives.

35 The Executive Committee and Director to the Board of Trustees Memorandum: The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial (for the year October 1, 1924 through September 30, 1925), LSRM Archives, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 15 “Director’s Reports 1919-25.”
In this vein, Ruml suggested to the Memorial’s Board of Trustees that the organization should fund American university departments in sociology, ethnology, anthropology, psychology, economics, history, political science, and biology. He expected that the Memorial could help universities improve the tools of the social sciences, which could then be used to address “the complex social problems” the country confronted.\textsuperscript{36}

It so happened that Ruml’s ideas did not fall on deaf ears at the Memorial. In particular, he had the support of the lawyer Raymond Fosdick, who was a principle adviser to the Rockefeller family. One staff member later explained why this was so:

Ruml got under way partly because he had so much nerve and was so young as not to know better, and partly because Raymond Fosdick and Arthur Woods, who had recently come in as personal advisers to Mr. Rockefeller and as his representatives on all the Rockefeller Boards, were terribly fed up with the existing formality and welcomed any new activity.\textsuperscript{37}

Ruml was the right person at the right place at the right time.

Within two years of his directorship, Ruml furthered his agenda at the Memorial; suggesting that the organization should help improve the tools of social scientific research outside of universities; and in particular, recommended funding institutes such as the newly-organized SSRC. Established a year earlier by one of his mentors from Chicago, the political scientist Charles E. Merriam, the SSRC was modeled after the seven-year-old National Research Council in Washington D.C. (which Merriam’s brother, John C. Merriam had chaired during and just after the Great War).

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

Based in New York City, the SSRC was a national body that helped American social researchers plan and integrate their work. It brought together economists, sociologists, political scientists, demographers, psychologists, anthropologists, and historians from their respective professional organizations; explaining that “with the seven [organizations] thus united it [would] be possible to advance the prospects of social science by the study of methods of social research, by consideration of special problems, and by coordination of scattered types of inquiry otherwise independent and isolated.”

With the SSRC in existence, social researchers around the country had a place to meet outside of their university departments where they could coordinate comprehensive studies of national scale, and one day, bring these tools to bear on public policymaking.

In a memorandum to Memorial trustees, the director Beardsley Ruml explained that research institutes such as the SSRC could be particularly useful in studying practical problems, and less likely than university departments to produce work that was “bookish and remote.” In saying so, Ruml hid the very fact that the social researchers within the SSRC were ambivalent about the role the social sciences should play in public policy making. Merriam himself had organized the organization with the idea that it would serve a public policy role in Washington DC much as his brother’s own National Research Council (NRC) did. However, he and many others at the SSRC also believed that the social sciences were newer than the natural sciences and needed some time before they could be applied at the public policy level. Irrespective of these mixed

\[\text{38 Bulmer and Bulmer, “Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s,” 384.}\]

\[\text{39 Annual Report of the Social Sciences Research Council (Reprinted from The American Political Science Review, 20 (Feb. 1926), Social Science Research Council Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter cited as SSRC Archives).}\]
feelings and purposes within the SSRC, Ruml convinced his Board that institutes such as the SSRC—like the NRC—could apply its tools of research to analyses of national problems and suggest public policies to solve them. The trustees agreed with this vision, and from 1924 onward, the Memorial allocated one fifth of its appropriations to the SSRC. Put differently, it contributed 92% of the $4.2 million spent by the SSRC in its first decade. The SSRC followed suit in meeting its funder’s expectations for the Council.

Far from being on the periphery of American society, the social sciences then had their own university departments and were receiving funds from elite philanthropic organizations such as the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. The Memorial was funding social scientific fields of research within and outside of universities; both with intentions of furthering the fields as sciences and of applying them to address societal problems of national scale.

With the financial support of the Memorial, for example, the SSRC soon became a meeting place bringing together many leading Americans interested in these fields of inquiry. The organization’s members remained ambivalent about the maturity of the social sciences as scientific fields of inquiry and had mixed feelings about the preparedness of these fields for public policymaking. However, encouraged by their main funders, they flirted with the possibility. The organization’s summer conferences in Hanover, New Hampshire attracted university researchers, research institute staff, philanthropic managers, federal government officials from the United States Department of Agriculture, Institute of Economics in Washington, along with renowned jurist Learned Hand and law professors such as John Barker Waite and Felix Frankfurter (later
one of the Supreme Court justices who cited the Carnegie Corporation’s comprehensive study of black Americans in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).\(^{40}\)

Within four years of the Memorial’s inaugural funding of the SSRC, the Rockefeller Foundation’s Board of Trustees decided that it no longer needed to have an auxiliary organization such as the Memorial. It reasoned that it could administer its program in the social sciences within its larger organization, the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1929, the Foundation’s Board of Trustees dissolved the Memorial and appointed former Harvard economist and dean of business administration at the University of Michigan, Edmund E. Day, to direct the social sciences program within the Foundation. From his end, Ruml was appointed director of the newly formed Spelman Fund and assigned the task of overseeing the funding of any final projects that the Foundation was not planning to absorb. Within a year, Ruml moved to Washington to work in President Hoover’s Federal Committee on Employment; marking the end of Ruml’s career as a philanthropic manager.\(^{41}\)

In consolidating the Memorial’s program in the social sciences within the Rockefeller Foundation, perhaps the Rockefeller family and its advisers wanted to manage efficiently the family’s funds or perhaps they wanted to purge Ruml, who had then lost favor with key Rockefeller advisers.\(^{42}\) Irrespective of these motivations, the

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) After his appointment in Washington, Ruml became dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago. “However, the professors refused to be integrated, and in 1934 Ruml resigned to become treasurer of R.H. Macy & Company, rising to become chairman in 1945 and director in 1951.” George McJimsey, “Ruml, Beardsley,” *American National Biography Online*, www.anb.org (last visited May 7, 2012).

\(^{42}\) Bulmer and Bulmer, “Philanthropy and Social Science in the 1920s,” 397.
Foundation wanted to continue Ruml’s precedent of funding the social sciences. By then, many leading Americans perceived that these fields of empirical research were valuable for the advancement and management of a modern society. Of course, plenty of debate centered on whether or not this data was collected and analyzed *objectively*, but there was a general consensus among leading Americans that these fields of research had real social value. Against this backdrop, the Rockefeller Foundation’s trustees must have concluded that funding the social sciences provided them an opportunity to legitimize themselves in the eyes of many Americans as providers of dispassionate, policy-oriented social research.

During the latter part of the 1920s, the Rockefeller Foundation’s staff and board of trustees had come to believe that the social sciences were key to modern public policy making and particularly key to national planning. In discussing these fields during the dissolution of the Memorial, Rockefeller Foundation staff members articulated the importance of the social sciences: “For if we cannot get anywhere with the scientific attitude in the social field, if we cannot effect anything like substantial control on the basis of scientific study of social phenomena, then the prospect of civilization assumed different color, and there cannot but be grave doubts about the possibility of overcoming some of the difficulties which are developing increasingly in our social relations as a result of the increasing complexities of modern life.” The staff members were not concrete in explaining why they believed the social sciences to be worthy of continued

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43 Beardsley Ruml to Gosta Bagge, Dec. 21, 28, 1925, LSRM Archives, Series 3, Box 52, Folder 549 “Foreign Fellowships, 1925-29."

44 Thomas Applegate Diary, Jan. 14, 1930, RF Archives, 12.1 Officers’ Diaries, Box 8, Folder: Applegate, Thomas TBA, 1930, “Staff Conference, Tuesday, January 14, 1930.”
funding, but they did express an overall belief that they were important vehicles for addressing modern societal problems. Convinced of its importance, the Foundation continued the Memorial’s program in the social sciences, including its funding of the SSRC.

Within months of making this decision, the Foundation was approached by United States President Herbert Hoover to fund a project that was larger in size and scope than anything previously conceived. With an invitation to provide these services for the national government, the Rockefeller Foundation was on its way toward legitimizing its role as a neutral provider of policy-oriented social scientific knowledge. By then, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial’s funding of the social sciences within and outside universities had lent the Rockefeller name legitimacy among leading Americans as a provider of neutral, scientific knowledge on society. In 1933, Recent Social Trends came out in print.

The report written by President Hoover’s Commission on Recent Social Trends was published just as the U.S. President left the oval office in the spring of 1933; an untimely date for its publication. Not only was Hoover leaving the White House, but he was leaving office as an unpopular president. The economy had slumped into a depression after the bank runs of 1931 and Americans had felt that Hoover had done little to address their desperation. The new President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who had defined his presidential agenda in opposition to Hoover’s own, did not take to Hoover’s project.

Still, Roosevelt continued the relationship with the Rockefeller Foundation and continued to accept the Foundation’s offers of free social scientific research. With the
federal government’s open invitation to fund precisely the kind of policy-oriented social research that Americans had frowned upon only two decades earlier, the Rockefeller Foundation maintained its presence in Washington. The Foundation decided that funding national surveys was in its interest, likely because this funding practice provided the organization the opportunity to reinvent itself as a key player in the American democratic process. Slowly, it was shedding its public image as a vehicle for its founder’s industrial interests and whims, and reinventing itself as an objective, neutral representative of the American people’s needs. Even more, this practice of funding national, policy-oriented studies had potential for creating an immediate impact in society; a potential with which few other funding practices (not even the funding of education) could compete.

With President Roosevelt’s approval, the Foundation and the SSRC coordinated and funded two commissions in 1933 on National Policy in International Economic Relations, and Public Service Personnel; with the President noting that “in making the result of their studies available to the Government these commissions will be able to make a distinct contribution.” These two commissions resulted in the publication of two reports in the mid-1930s: *International Economic Relations* and *Better Government Personnel.*

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45 “Proposal of the Social Science Research Council for a National Program of Research in the Social Sciences,” SSRC Archives, Accession 1, Series 9. Council (SSRC Minutes), Box 354, Folder 2091.


Upon reflection, neither the SSRC nor the Rockefeller Foundation was convinced that the social scientific analyses of national problems that they provided for the federal government—Recent Social Trends, International Economics or Better Government Personnel—had affected public policies in any significant way. That said, they remained persuaded that social research was the key to modernizing public policies, and thus, remained convinced of the importance of the endeavor.

In 1935, the SSRC captured this perspective in a formal memorandum to the executive branch of the federal government. The organization noted: “The social sciences have developed the basic knowledge and techniques which enable them to bring to light a wealth of factual data with the necessary analysis and interpretation, regarding many social and economic problems now confronting the Government.” By then, philanthropic managers, social scientists, and federal governmental actors like Hoover and Roosevelt and their administrations were convinced of the benefit of working together. Philanthropic managers were able to fund research that could have a real nationwide impact; social scientists had an opportunity to make potential policy impact at the


50 “Proposal of the Social Science Research Council for a National Program of Research in the Social Sciences,” SSRC Archives, Accession 1, Series 9. Council (SSRC Minutes), Box 354, Folder 2091.
national level; and, the executive branch of the federal government received free modern tools for drafting national public policies.

While Recent Social Trends was lending legitimacy to elite philanthropic organizations as providers of neutral policy-oriented social scientific knowledge, Carnegie Corporation President Keppel was presented with the opportunity to redirect his organization’s funding with respect to black Americans. The Rockefeller Foundation’s presence in Washington and its role in funding the most comprehensive policy-oriented social scientific study to date likely gave the Carnegie Corporation’s president confidence that a British African import of comparable size and scope could be well received in the United States.⁵¹ One of the first steps Keppel took when he began to plan the study of African Americans was to reach out to the SSRC, which had coordinated this last, policy-oriented social scientific study of national problems.

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⁵¹ Keppel had served as an expert on Recent Social Trends in the early 1930s (writing the chapter on trends in American art and cultural life), so he was clearly aware of the project. See, Frederick P. Keppel, “The Arts in Social Life,” in Recent Social Trends in the United States: Report of the President’s Research Committee on Social Trends, ed. Wesley Clair Mitchell (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishers, 1933).
CHAPTER 7:

SEEKING OUT THE SSRC FOR ASSISTANCE IN
IMPORTING A FUNDING PRACTICE FROM BRITISH AFRICA

Within two months of receiving the Board’s approval to investigate the possibility of a national study of black Americans, Keppel contacted the Social Science Research Council’s Director Robert Crane for advice in planning it. After all, the SSRC was providing the national government with social scientific surveys and had experience organizing the last and only policy-oriented social scientific study of national scale: *Recent Social Trends*. Their help and guidance could help ensure the likelihood that the Corporation’s own proposed national policy-oriented study of African Americans would have some chance of making a policy impact at the national level.

Within weeks, Carnegie Corporation Frederick P. Keppel was in correspondence with two SSRC contacts—the Northwestern anthropologist Melville Herskovits and the University of Pennsylvania sociologist Donald Young—who helped him develop a timeline and budget.¹ From his offices in November of 1936, Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel first wrote a letter to Herskovits and asked to meet with him in Chicago. A few weeks later, they met and discussed Keppel’s idea for a comprehensive study of black Americans.

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Earlier that year, Herskovits had submitted to Keppel a grant application toward the continuation of his research into “the scientific problems arising from the study of Negro cultures and physical types as found both in the New World, and in the areas of West Africa from which the New World Negroes were derived.” Though this research was specific to culture and physical types, Herskovits framed it within a larger context that had intrigued Keppel. Herskovits had written that his work, more broadly, could “throw light on some of the larger problems concerning the results of contact between groups of widely differing physical types and cultures, but also offer a fundamental approach to our very pressing practical problems of race and race-relations.” This part of Herskovits’ grant application captured Keppel’s attention, particularly because the Corporation President had in mind commissioning and funding a study of black Americans that would help whites address the problem of governing co-existing whites and blacks.

When Keppel met with Herskovits in Chicago in late 1936, he asked the anthropologist if he would be willing to postpone his research plans to help plan the Corporation’s study. One can only begin to imagine how Herskovits reacted to this proposition. When he had met with the Corporation President and heard about his idea for a comprehensive study, he probably had expected an invitation to direct it himself.

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2 Melville Herskovits to Frederick P. Keppel, April 8, 1936, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records, III. A. Grant files, ca. 1911-1988, Box 278, Folder 278.10 “Northwestern U.—Research in the Field of Negro Cultures (Melville J. Herskovits) 1936-1940,” Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York (hereafter cited as CCNY Records).

3 Ibid.

4 Melville Herskovits to Donald Young, January 2, 1937, MJH Papers, Series 35:6, Box 14, Folder 1 “Myrdal, Gunnar (The Negro in America), 1936-1939 Sept.”
A month later, Herskovits wrote to his friend and colleague, Donald Young, a University of Pennsylvania sociologist who had written extensively on black Americans and who was currently directing the grants-in-aid program at the SSRC. Having discussed Keppel’s request for a meeting already, Herskovits opened the letter to Young by acknowledging that he “intended to get at this letter day before yesterday, but I was too tired after the meetings, and, anyway, I figured you’d not be going over to see Keppel today!”5 Since his conference with Keppel, Herskovits noted that he had thought about the Carnegie Corporation president’s idea for a comprehensive survey of black Americans. He had told Keppel that he would limit his own research commitments, so that he could help with the project.6 In particular, Herskovits noted to Young that this study on black Americans was a good opportunity for them to sketch out the exact kind of project of which they had dreamed. Herskovits explained to Young: “The more I have thought of the proposal the more possibility it seems to me to have; as a matter of fact, it seems to me, as it did when he mentioned it to me, to be a way into our doing the job we have been talking of doing, that is, of surveying what has been done and why this earlier work has come to nothing.”7 Agreeing with Herskovits that this was a good opportunity, Young began to help Keppel coordinate, plan, and staff the project until it was completed in 1944.

5 Ibid.

6 Melville Herskovits to Donald Young, Jan. 2, 1937, MJH Papers, Series 35:6, Box 14, Folder 1 “Myrdal, Gunnar (The Negro in America), 1936-1939 Sept.”; Melville Herskovits to Frederick P. Keppel, April 8, 1936, CCNY Records, III. A. Grant files, ca. 1911-1988, Box 278, Folder 278.10 “Northwestern U.—Research in the Field of Negro Cultures (Melville J. Herskovits.) 1936-1940.” The only other condition or his participation, he had explained to Keppel, was that the European director he selected could not come from a “colonizing government.” Later chapters will elucidate further on this point, which led to the particular selection of a Swede to direct the project.

7 Melville Herskovits to Donald Young, Jan. 2, 1937, MJH Papers, Series 35:6, Box 14, Folder 1 “Myrdal, Gunnar (The Negro in America), 1936-1939 Sept.”
In order to understand why both Young and Herskovits were eager to assist Keppel with his comprehensive study of black Americans, it is important to survey the social scientific studies on black Americans that philanthropic organizations had funded (and had failed to fund) during the previous decades. As the correspondence on W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Encyclopedia of the Negro* suggests, elite philanthropic organizations were the major sources of funding for social scientific research at that time. Therefore, this overview on philanthropic organizations’ funding of the social sciences on African Americans illustrates the character and development of the majority of the literature on black Americans that was published (or failed to come to fruition) before Gunnar Myrdal began his comprehensive study. It also suggests why Young and Herskovits perceived that there was a need to fund a comprehensive study of black Americans in the mid-1930s, and thus, why they were willing to commit so much of their time and effort to helping the Carnegie Corporation President bring it about, even though the study would not bear either of their names as the author.

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One of the pioneers in the social scientific study of African Americans was, of course, W. E. B. Du Bois, and it was he who acknowledged the difficulties of defining the “Negro problem” in the first comprehensive social scientific study of a societal problem in American history. In *Philadelphia Negro* (1899), Du Bois explained that Americans associated black Americans more than other groups of Americans with the
“peculiarly pressing social problems of poverty, ignorance, crime and labor,” largely because black Americans were segregated and consolidated in certain areas of cities and their evolution within American society was a longstanding interest of Americans. Reflecting this perspective, Du Bois had made clear that the average Philadelphian saw the “Negro problem” as a problem of crime, poverty, and unemployment in particular slum areas of the city. He wrote of this average city dweller: “His mind reverts to Seventh and Lombard streets and to Twelfth and Kater streets of to-day, or to St. Mary’s in the past. Continued and widely known charitable work in these sections makes the problem of poverty familiar to him; bold and daring crime too often traced to these centres has called his attention to a problem of crime, while the scores of loafers, idlers and prostitutes who crowd the sidewalks here night and day remind him of a problem of work.”

In a move distinguishing him from contemporary social researchers at settlement houses and burgeoning university departments, Du Bois explained to his readers that the so-called “Negro problem” was not just the problems that black Americans confronted in urban slums, but also the problems that they experienced in more affluent neighborhoods. Justifying his inclusion of the upper class in his study of black


9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 6.

11 Speaking of the ordinary Philadelphian, Du Bois wrote: “The social student agrees with him so far, but must point out that the removal of unpleasant features from our complicated modern life is a delicate operation requiring knowledge and skill; that slum is not a simple fact, it is a symptom and that to know the removable causes of the Negro slums of Philadelphia requires a study that takes one far beyond the slum districts.” Ibid., 6.
Americans in Philadelphia, Du Bois noted that “it may be numerically small and socially of little weight, and yet its study is necessary to the comprehensive of the whole—it forms the realized ideal of the group, and as it is true that a nation must to some extent be measured by its slums, it is also true that it can only be understood and finally judged by its upper class.”¹² In 1899, Du Bois’ definition of the “Negro problem” included not only the poverty, crime, and unemployment that poor black Americans confronted in lower class neighborhoods, but the different forms of discrimination that black Americans confronted in their day-to-day lives.

At the time, other black scholars also published studies on black Americans; particularly through the American Negro Academy. Founded by leading black scholars and writers such as William H. Ferris, Paul Laurence Dunbar, W.E.B. Du Bois, W.S. Scarborough, Kelly Miller, John W. Cromwell, Richard R. Wright, and Francis J. Grimke in order to promote literature, science and art, education and culture among black Americans,¹³ the Academy published journal-length papers “on subjects related to the culture, history, religion, social rights, and social institutions of African-American people.”¹⁴ It published works such as Kelley Miller’s “A Review of Hoffman’s Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro”; Du Bois’ “The Conservation of Races, Migration and Distribution of the Negro Population as Affecting the Elective Franchise”; Alexander Crummell’s “The Attitude of the American Mind Toward the Negro Intellect

¹² Ibid.
and How the Black St. Domingo Legion Saved the Patriot Army” (1899); Charles C. Cook’s “A Comparative Study of the Negro Problem” (1899) and “The Penning of the Negro (The Negro Vote in the States of the Revised Constitutions”; A.H. Grimke’s “Meaning and Need of the Movement to Reduce Southern Representation”; F. J. Grimke’s “The Negro and His Citizenship”; John Hope’s “The Negro Vote in the States whose Constitutions have not been Specifically Revised”; and, John L. Love’s “The Potentiality of the Negro Vote, North and West.”

This organization, though supportive of black Americans’ scholarship on black Americans, came to a close in 1924, just a year before the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial became interested in funding the social sciences. Within this general funding initiative, the Memorial dedicated some funds to social scientific research on black Americans.

Under the Chicago psychologist Beardsley Ruml’s leadership, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial took it upon itself in 1925 to examine “the means of studying the Negro problem in its various phases,” and like Du Bois, came across varying definitions of the problem. Ruml noted to the Memorial’s Board of Trustees that the problem was discussed sometimes as “the Negro Problem, the Race Question, the Tide of Color, and so forth.” In his 1925 annual report to the Memorial’s trustees, Ruml noted that it was best to move away from these general discussions and focus on the “Negro Problem”


16 Memorandum: The Executive Committee and Director to the Board of Trustees (The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial for the year October 1, 1924 through September 30, 1925), Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Archives, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 15 “Director’s Reports 1919-25,” Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter cited as LSRM Archives).
specifically as the “problem of finding out whether and by what means bi-racial (or possibly polyracial) groups may live together harmoniously in a single unit.” Since Americans acknowledged that black Americans should be (whether immediately or sometime in the indefinite future) equal citizens of the United States, Ruml concluded that these studies should focus on finding out how white and black Americans can co-exist more peaceably, and one day, become equal citizens. In 1925, the Memorial funded investigations and inquiries into the status of the social sciences on black Americans and these fields of study at black universities.

Relying on its own investigation, the Memorial decided to assist in the development of research in psychology, anthropology, history, sociology and economics and business law at Fisk University, a leading black university in the United States where the Memorial also partially funded the Department of Statistics and Records. Beyond university departments, the Memorial also established “fellowships for professional training in the social sciences, in business, and in jurisprudence” among black Americans. It also funded specific studies of black Americans at the University of Chicago and the University of North Carolina; two organizations that already received significant funds from the Memorial. At Chicago, the Memorial funded a “plan for community research studies… dealing with the negro in industry and negro

17 Ibid.

18 LSRM Archives, III. Appropriations, Sub-Series 8. Interracial Relations, Box 98, Folder 996, “Race Relations and Negro Work, 1926-1927”; and, Excerpt “Race Relations” from Memorandum: The Executive Committee and Directors to the Board of Trustees (The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial for the year Oct. 1, 1924 through Sept. 30, 1925), LSRM Archives, Series 2, Box 2, Folder 15.

19 LSRM Archives, III. Appropriations, Sub-Series 8. Interracial Relations, Box 98, Folder 996, “Race Relations and Negro Work, 1926-1927.”
employment”; and at North Carolina, the Memorial funded “studies of music and of negro social background” and studies “in the development of negro business institutions, in the negro agricultural credit system, and in credit facilities for negro business” under the leadership of the white sociologist Howard Odum. Beyond university departments, the Memorial also funded the Society for the Study of Negro Life and History “for continuation of social and historical studies carried out under the direction of Dr. Woodson” and “studies along civic, social and industrial lines” conducted by Charles Johnson at the National Urban League in New York City.20

Just before the organization’s program in the social sciences merged with the Rockefeller Foundation in 1929, Beardsley Ruml reviewed the organization’s field on black Americans. He noted that the organization made an effort to facilitate the coexistence of white and black Americans in the United States and black Americans’ ultimate equal status in American life by funding social scientific studies of black Americans; organizations “working on a national basis for the improvement of the relations between white and colored races”; and, black universities like Fisk, Howard, and Atlanta Universities “that would be strongly equipped in the social sciences and able to develop professional training in law, business, social work and public administration.”21 From Ruml’s point of view, this multi-faceted approach of funding white and black scholars’ social scientific studies of black Americans and race relations

20 Ibid.

was helping white and black Americans reach a more harmonious state of co-habitation in the United States.

When the Memorial’s program in the social sciences was consolidated with the Rockefeller Foundation, however, the Foundation’s managers questioned whether they wanted “to include the negro in the social science program.” The managers deliberated and ultimately declined, preferring instead to channel its funds for African Americans through its sister organization, the General Education Board. The General Education Board’s trustees, like Ruml at the Memorial, saw value in funding black colleges and universities. However, unlike Ruml, the GEB led all other leading philanthropic organizations toward a particular program of funding segregated vocational and agricultural education for black Americans at the great exclusion of other programs and institutions.

Throughout the 1930s, the Rockefeller organizations decreasingly funded the social sciences on black Americans; and as an informal ancillary of the Rockefeller organizations, so too did the Social Science Research Council. The SSRC, launched in 1923 by Charles E. Merriam and W. Mitchell, received most of its funding from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial (and then the Rockefeller Foundation after 1929). Its program reflected the intentions of its donor.

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23 See, correspondence between Carter G. Woodson and Rockefeller Foundation Managers, March 1930 through April 1932, RF Archives, RG 1.1 Projects, Series 200 United States, Box 9, Folder 80 “Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1930-1931” and Folder 81 “Association for the Study of Negro life and History 1932-1936.”
As long as the SSRC was funded primarily by the Memorial, the Council maintained a program on black Americans. For example, the same year that Ruml established a program on the “Negro problem” at the Memorial, the SSRC founded an “Advisory Committee on Problems Related to the Negro.” Echoing Ruml’s own emphasis that the problem was really a problem of relations between white and black Americans that should incorporate the work of white and black Americans alike, the SSRC renamed the committee a year later to become the “Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations” and solicited the participation of white and black Americans alike. The SSRC made this echo quite explicit by mentioning in a committee memo that the purpose of the group was to analyze “the social welfare of the negro in his relationship with the whites”; or rather, “the negro-white relationship from the social point of view.”

Even more specifically than Ruml’s program at the LSRM, however, the SSRC focused “on the status of research on problems of the Negro, to consider what types of studies should be made and how such studies might be correlated.” From 1925 to 1930, the SSRC funded several social scientific studies on black Americans by white and black scholars with the goal of increasing this body of literature.

The Advisory Committee consisted of white Americans such as William W. Alexander (a Southern white divinity graduate and director of the Commission on


Interracial Cooperation); 26 Howard Odum (Clark university psychologist who directed the University of North Carolina’s Institute for Social Sciences and former contributor of *Recent Social Trends*); 27 Edward Sapir (Columbia anthropologist teaching at Chicago); 28 and Clark Wissler (Columbia psychologist teaching at Yale’s Institute of Psychology). 29 Black Americans on the advisory committee included George Arthur (‘the first African American hired to a staff position at a foundation’ and manager at the Julius Rosenwald Fund); 30 Charles S. Johnson (Chicago sociologist who was then research director of the Chicago Urban League); 31 Carter Godwin Woodson (Harvard historian who directed Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in Washington DC); 32 and, Monroe Nathan Work (who studied sociology at Chicago (masters degree) and editor of the *Negro Yearbook*, which provided information on discrimination and black progress to educators, researchers, and newspaper editorialists). 33 The SSRC’s Advisory Committee


on Interracial Relations also formed two sub-committees: a sub-committee on tests for racial differences and another one on governmental and political aspects of interracial relations. These committees included, among others, scholars such as the white anthropologist Melville Herskovits and the black zoologist Ernest Just.\textsuperscript{34}

From 1925 to 1930, this committee and its two sub-committees funded studies on black Americans and appointed colleagues in the social sciences to direct them. Among the directors were African American social scientists such as Charles S. Johnson, Guion Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, Carter G. Woodson, and Charles S. Johnson and white social scientists such as Franz Boas, Robert S. Woodworth, and Howard W. Odum.\textsuperscript{35}

They oversaw studies and surveys on: \textit{Problems of the Colored Race in the United States}; \textit{Negro Culture on St. Helena Island}; \textit{the Negro family}; \textit{Discovery and Collection of Historical Materials among Negroes}; \textit{Racial and Social Differences in Mental Ability of Rural Negroes}; \textit{Interracial Attitudes}; \textit{Racial Differences, with Division of Anthropology and Psychology of the National Research Council}; and, the \textit{Influence of Heredity and Environment}.\textsuperscript{36} These eight surveys resulted in nine book manuscripts and four articles.\textsuperscript{37}


\textsuperscript{36} “Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations, 1925-30,” 52-53, SSRC Archives, Social Science Research Council Reports 1925-1933, Series: Annual Reports, 1925-1933.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
In 1930, the SSRC discontinued this committee and its two sub-committees. The Rockefeller Foundation (unlike the Memorial) found little interest in funding social scientific research on black Americans.\textsuperscript{38} Even more, this moment coincided with the Advisory Committee’s recent decision to discontinue its joint efforts with the National Research Council’s “Negro Committee;” a joint effort which the Columbia anthropologist and NRC member, Franz Boas, had thought could be fruitful for both organizations two years earlier.\textsuperscript{39} By 1930, the SSRC’s Advisory Committee was “anxious to quit” and separate from the NRC.\textsuperscript{40} The SSRC’s Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations still saw the need for more social scientific studies of black Americans and white-black relations,\textsuperscript{41} but the Council’s committed funds for the social sciences on black Americans came to a halt in 1930. Steering its attention toward studies of the Great Depression, the SSRC gave less priority to social scientific studies of black Americans.

During the following decade, the Rockefeller Foundations continued to fund the SSRC, but the Foundation’s (like the SSRC’s) program in the social sciences had no particular focus on funding the social sciences on black Americans. The Foundation continued to fund the social sciences on black Americans indirectly by funding departments of anthropology, sociology, history, economics, and psychology at the

\textsuperscript{38} “At Hanover 1930, the committee and its sub-committees were discontinued in view of the new plans of the Council, with the suggestion that a committee be appointed to review the work in this field.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} “Conference on Racial Differences,” 59, SSRC Archives, Accession 1, Series 1. Committee Projects, Sub-Series 10. Miscellaneous Projects, Box 173, Folder 997.

\textsuperscript{40} “P&P December 14-15, 1930 ‘Joint Committee on Racial Problems,’” 339-340, SSRC Archives, Accession 1, Series 1. Committee Projects, Sub-Series 10. Miscellaneous Projects, Box 174, Folder 998.

University of Chicago, Columbia University, the University of North Carolina and other centers of research throughout the country that studied black Americans and race relations more broadly. It also pooled some resources (though significantly less than the Memorial had) to help the *Association for the Study of Negro Life and History*, which conducted “studies of negro life.”42 Even more, some of the policy-oriented studies it funded had sections on black Americans. For example, two of the major studies on the national economic depression that the SSRC coordinated (with Rockefeller Foundation funding) included monographs on black Americans. Also, one of the ten monographs within Hoover’s Research Committee on Recent Social Trends, which the SSRC coordinated and the Rockefeller Foundation funded, focused on an analysis of “races and ethnic groups in American life,” authored by T. J. Woofter, who had been a member of the SSRC’s Advisory Committee on Interracial Relations.43 Lastly, Donald Young’s *Research Memorandum on Minority Peoples in the Depression* (which included an analysis of black Americans alongside other “minority groups” in the U.S.) was one of thirteen studies funded by the Council’s Committee on Studies in Social Aspects of the Depression to “stimulate the study of depression effects on various social institutions” in the 1930s.44

42 *See*, Correspondence between Carter G. Woodson and Rockefeller Foundation Managers, March 1930 through April 1932, in RF Archives, RG 1.1 Projects, Series 200 United States, Box 9, Folder 80 “Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1930-1931” and Folder 81 “200 Association for the Study of Negro life and History 1932-1936.”


Funding for studies of black Americans researched and written by an individual social researcher was still available, but no funding was made available for comprehensive studies of black Americans that would bring multidisciplinary social researchers together to study this group comprehensively. Since this was a highly praised model of social scientific research at the SSRC at the time, it is not surprising that Herskovits and Young jumped at the opportunity to work on any well-funded, comprehensive project on black Americans. The first of these was the Phelps-Stokes Fund’s idea for an *Encyclopedia of the Negro*.

Both Young and Herskovits had served on the Advisory Board of the encyclopedia and they had been friendly colleagues since 1933, so it is little surprise then that the two scholars had corresponded and confided with each other about the fate of Du Bois’ project during these years of turmoil. In April of 1936, for example, Young complained to his friend in Evanston that he saw “no hope that the Encyclopedia can be turned into the sort of work in which you and I would be interested,” and told him that he would not be attending the next meeting. “If I had any hope that you and I by our attendance at the meeting could exert ‘a restraining influence,’ as you put it, I’d be there with bells on, but I do not believe that a dozen of us could do more than make nuisances of ourselves without swerving the leaders of the project a fraction of an inch from the course they have planned. These are hard words, but I suspect that you rather agree with

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45 Encyclopedia of the Negro Memorandum, Sept. 15, 1938, MJH Papers, Series 35:6, Box 7, Folder 19, Folder “Encyclopedia of the Negro, 1935-1940.” For a development of Herskovits’ and Young’s friendship, see Herskovits-Young correspondence, MJH Papers, 1906-1963, Series 35:6 Box 22, Folder 3 “Social Science Research Council, 1926-1936” and Folder 4 “Social Science Research Council (Donald Young), 1937-1942.”

46 Donald Young to Melville Herskovits, April 7, 1936, and Melville Herskovits to Donald Young, April 13, 1936, MJH Papers, Series 35:6, Box 22, Folder 3 “Social Science Research Council, 1926-1936.”
me.”47 In response, Herskovits echoed Young’s dissatisfaction and said that he too would miss the next meeting: “I think you’re right at that, and so I too am sending regrets. As a matter of fact I was thinking of the jaunt in terms of that peculiar type of recreation obtained from fighting a lost cause.”48 Just two months before Woodson circulated his press releases to the managers at elite philanthropic organizations, Herskovits and Young had slowly walked away from Du Bois’s Encyclopedia of the Negro.

Six months later, they were approached by the Carnegie Corporation’s president with a request for help in coordinating a comprehensive study of black Americans.49 It was not only their service on the Advisory Board of the Encyclopedia of the Negro during the past year that had convinced these two scholars of American race relations that it was time for such a study. For years, both Herskovits and Young had been affiliated with the Social Science Research Council, so both were aware that the SSRC (and its main funder, the Rockefeller Foundation) had decreased funding opportunities for social scientific studies of black Americans. With secured funding from one of the largest philanthropic organizations in the world, Herskovits and Young had an opportunity to steer one of the most well funded comprehensive studies of black Americans in U.S. history. Unlike W.E.B. Du Bois’s Encyclopedia of the Negro or Woodson’s proposed Encyclopedia Africana, this would be a comprehensive, policy-oriented study of black

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Melville Herskovits to Donald Young, January 2, 1937, MJH Papers, Series 35:6 Box 14, Folder 1 “Myrdal, Gunnar (The Negro in America), 1936-1939 Sept.”
Americans dreamt up and planned by white social researchers and white philanthropic managers and for white readers.

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In his January 1937 letter to Keppel outlining a timeline and budget for the Carnegie Corporation’s proposed comprehensive study of black Americans, Donald Young explained to the Corporation’s president that he envisioned three essential parts to the study:

First, there must be an assembling and sifting of what is definitely known about the American Negro, including not only his present status but his biological and cultural heritage as well. Second, significant gaps in knowledge must be charted and, in some instances, subjected to preliminary exploration. Third, there must be a comprehensive, integrated report so written that it may be expected to excite into action both scholars and social leaders.50

The technical director, two staff members, and experts would write surveys and explorations and would assist the director of the study in gaining a comprehensive view of black Americans and of white-black relations. Young noted: “The range of data covered by the staff and their assistants should include the Negro in the United States today with regard, for example, to his economic, political and social status, contributions to arts and letters, psychological characteristics, including personality traits and social attitudes, health record, anthropometric measurements, cultural patterns and inter-racial relations as such.”51 Moreover, Young suggested that black Americans would have to be

50 Donald Young to Frederick P. Keppel, Jan. 39, 1937, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Microfilm #1.
51 Ibid.
seen in a larger geographic context: “Since the present status of no people may be understood without historical perspective, serious attention would have to be paid to African and early American cultural influences. For comparative purposes, consideration would have to be given the Negro in other parts of the New World than the United States.” All in all, Young predicted that it would take no less than three but no more than five years to complete all the envisioned surveys and the director’s final report.

Frederick P. Keppel agreed with this proposed timeline and budget; and with his suggestion, the Corporation’s Board of Trustees approved the funding of the project with an open-ended completion date. As the previous chapter illustrated, the Corporation’s

52 Ibid., 4.

53 Strategic once again in the way he presented to the Board of Trustees his developing idea for a comprehensive social scientific study of black Americans, Keppel noted that this was not only Baker’s idea but that the project had received the endorsement of the Columbia psychologist E.L. Thorndike, the archaeologist and chairman of the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s Division of Historical Research A.V. Kidder, and the sociologist and director of fellowships at the SSRC, Donald Young. Carnegie Corporation of New York Board of Trustees Minutes (included “Comprehensive Study of the Negro—Preliminary Survey”), Nov. 16, 1937, CCNY Records.

Years later, Young remembered precisely this moment and wondered how, by offering the Carnegie Corporation president on how to plan and organize the study, became an endorsement of the project. He recalled: “I did write this long letter reiterating what I had said over there, and got a very very warm note from Mr. Keppel, both for the conversation and the letter, but particularly the letter, which he was having duplicated and sent to the trustees in support of the proposal. I remember taking it to Mr. Crane and saying, ‘Is this in support of that proposal as Mr. Keppel had it?’ Crane read it over and said, ‘No.’ But it could be so read, as a matter of fact. Sometimes when you put things in writing you don’t say quite what you meant, but maybe it is better that way.” Donald Young Oral Interview, 1967, Carnegie Corporation Project, Columbia University Oral History Research Office, New York (hereafter cited as CCOH Project).

Much for the same reason that Keppel felt most comfortable presenting this study as Baker’s own idea, he felt comfortable presenting it as a project that others (besides him) endorsed. And many people around him, like Crane and Young, knew that it was Keppel’s own idea all along the way, but allowed him to present it otherwise. See e.g., Donald Young Oral Interview, 1967, CCOH Project: At the time there was a little friendly gossip about it. Most of us believed that the idea had probably been fed to Mr. Baker, that undoubtedly Mr. Baker had said that, but whether the initiative came from him was a matter of grave doubt. We had seen Mr. Keppel attribute things to other people at earlier times, and also Mr. Keppel had the kind of enthusiasm that could only come from a father, not from a step-father. Q: You mean for this particular idea? Young: That’s strict speculation. We’re not sure. But anyway if Mr. Baker did say it first, Mr. Keppel certainly nurtured it and built it up. Gunnar Myrdal Oral Interview, 1969, CCOH Project: “I have no idea about how the trustees felt. I do know, however, that Frederick Keppel was sold on the idea, and I believe he was the originator of the idea, perhaps together with Newton Baker, but he was the one that was driving it.” Ibid.
proposed study of black Americans mirrored the timeline, structure, and scope of *Recent Social Trends* (1933). In the 1930s, it served as a model of the most ambitious kind of national, policy-oriented study that the American public would allow elite philanthropic organizations to fund.

The Carnegie Corporation’s President Frederick P. Keppel clearly wanted to import a funding practice from British Africa as a means of redirecting Americans’ attention away from vocational and agricultural education as the answer to African Americans’ needs in the United States and towards more comprehensive, national public policy solutions. However, he also wanted to ensure that this import made a public policy impact in the United States. With that two-tiered vision in mind, he had approached the SSRC for guidance in planning this American study. And with the same vision in mind, he also listened to his contacts at the SSRC when they took issue with his plan for selecting a white European colonial officer like Lord Hailey to direct and author the national survey.
When Keppel had reached out to the SSRC’s Robert Crane and Melville Herskovits in December of 1936, he had told them that he was searching for a non-American director with experience studying and governing “alien races” in other parts of the world. In response to Keppel’s topic of conversation, Crane suggested that he speak with the sociologist Donald Young, who was a scholar of black Americans and the secretary for fellowships and grants-in-aid at the SSRC.¹

Decades later in the 1960s, Young remembered that “Mr. Keppel quite often asked for Crane’s advice or recommendations on things that came up, and sometimes those were referred to me, and I wrote the memorandum or fed Mr. Crane what he passed on over when it happened to be more in my bailiwick than his own. So it was that informal way.”² Confirming the order of events, he continued: “I think the first time Mr. Keppel ever consulted me formally was when he first got the idea for the study of the American Negro.”³ Focusing on this particular moment, Young remembered more specifically: “I brought out a book in 1932 called American Minority Peoples, and I have

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² Donald Young Oral Interview, 1967, CCOH Project.

³ Ibid.
written quite a number of articles in the area. Mr. Keppel, then, undoubtedly at Mr. Crane’s suggestion, asked me to come over and talk with him about the idea.”

The same month that Keppel spoke with Crane and before ever meeting Young, the Carnegie Corporation president met with Herkovits in Chicago and shared his ideas for the study. In a letter to Young that January of 1936, Herskovits recounted his meeting with Keppel:

In talking over the matter, I gave him two names for those who, besides myself, should be on the ‘advisory committee’ that would tell this European what was to be seen and give him the necessary documentation for his report,—yours and that of Abe Harris. He did not know of Abe at all, but reacted promptly and very favorably to yours; apparently Keppel doesn’t know you as a researcher in this field, and was delighted to learn that you might be available when I took the liberty of mentioning to him your desire to take a year for study after this year at the SSRC.

Both Crane and Herskovits had recommended Young to Keppel, and perhaps because of this, the SSRC’s secretary for fellowships and grants-in-aid became a particularly important adviser to the Carnegie Corporation’s president.

Soon after Herskovits mentioned Young’s name to Keppel, the Carnegie Corporation’s President contacted the SSRC’s secretary. He wanted, he told the younger scholar, to think about his idea that “a socially effective interpretation of the Negro in American life could now be written by a European of keen and detached discernment the were afforded ample financial and technical assistance.” In his letter to Keppel in January of 1937, Young reciprocated the Carnegie Corporation president’s enthusiasm by emphasizing the utility of such a study. That said, he also made clear that he had issues

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
with Keppel’s assumption that a non-American with prior experience governing and studying “alien races” was the ideal image of an unbiased and detached scientific director for a study on black Americans.

In particular, he told Keppel that it would be misguided to assume that all Europeans would be more objective and dispassionate than Americans in their analyses of black Americans. In particular, he noted that “[l]ack of first-hand contact with American racial problems…may not be regarded as a guarantee of freedom from bias.”

This was the case, he noted, because problems “of adjustment in the relations of a majority population with minority peoples have faced practically every nation of the world, and are today prominent in many.” These were the words of a scholar who, just five years earlier, had introduced the European term “minority people” into academic discussions of black Americans in the United States.

In 1932, Young published *American Minority Peoples: A Study in Racial and Cultural Conflicts in the United States*. In this book, Young explained how the problems black Americans faced were not caused by any biological inferiority on the part of black Americans. Rather, they were largely caused by the majority group’s prejudice against them. According to Young, black Americans were a minority group like any other group of immigrants in the United States, whose problems were largely caused by prejudice (and not by any biologically-determined racial traits); and like immigrants, black

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7 Donald Young to Frederick P. Keppel, Jan. 30, 1937, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records, Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York (hereafter cited as CCNY Records).

8 Ibid.

Americans were capable of assimilating into the majority culture. These minority groups, Young explained to his readers, cared more to assimilate into the majority culture than in staying connected to their sub-cultures. If freed from the prejudice and discrimination of the majority culture, he noted that minority groups could and would become part of the majority.

It was from this perspective that Young wrote this January 1937 letter to Keppel. In it, he explained that black Americans were a minority group like other minority groups around the world and that any non-American who came to analyze the societal problem of race in the United States could potentially bring his own experience and prejudices against minority groups in his own country to bear in his analysis of black Americans. Young explained to Keppel that this would make the director’s analysis in the study of black Americans just as emotional and unscientific as if an American would have written it.

In this vein, Young noted: “This is especially true in such colonial countries as Holland, England, France and Italy, and in others which include minority peoples of distinct racial or national origin within their borders, such as Germany and Hungary. The Scandinavian countries are perhaps the most free today of such influences.”10 Young explained to Keppel that most European countries had minority groups and that any exposure to such groups would prevent a European from being a dispassionate observer of black Americans. By contrast, he suggested that such majority-minority relationships

10 Donald Young to Frederick P. Keppel, Jan. 30, 1937, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.
did not exist in the Scandinavian countries.\(^\text{11}\) Perhaps, he noted to Keppel, it was there that he could find a “European of keen and detached discernment” to direct the Corporation’s study of black Americans.\(^\text{12}\)

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In the first months of 1937, Keppel continued to receive and consider recommendations for the directorship of the study of black Americans. His personal notes at the time suggest that Young’s advice did not preclude him from considering candidates from Switzerland, Belgium, and England.\(^\text{13}\) In June of that year, however, Young wrote to the Carnegie Corporation’s president to reinforce his point that a dispassionate, objective, and thus, scientific director of a social scientific study of black Americans should harbor no ill feelings toward minority groups.\(^\text{14}\)

The following month, Keppel requested some recommendations for the directorship from former director of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Beardsley Ruml, who had since resigned as dean of the Division of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago and had become treasurer of R. H. Macy & Company. Most

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Correspondence between Donald Young and Frederick P. Keppel, 1936-1937, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.

\(^{13}\) “Negro Study Personnel Suggestions through July 15, 1937,” CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.

\(^{14}\) Donald Young to Frederick P. Keppel, June 14, 1937, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.
recently, he also had been made director of the New York Federal Reserve Bank.\textsuperscript{15} In early July of 1937, Ruml recommended the names of two Canadians, one American, and one Swede. The two candidates from Canada were Douglas Brown and Billy Blatz. Ruml also mentioned Heinz at the National Bureau, “which Keppel disapproved.” The Swede was the former Rockefeller Fellow, “Karl Gunnar Myrdal of Stockholm.”\textsuperscript{16}

The Swede caught the attention of the Carnegie Corporation’s president, and soon after meeting with Ruml, Keppel called Ruml’s former second-in-command at the Memorial to hear his thoughts on Myrdal.\textsuperscript{17} Myrdal and his wife, Alva Reimer Myrdal, had received fellowships from the Memorial for the 1929-30 academic year; precisely the same year that this fellowship program (and all of the Memorial’s other programs in the social sciences) had transferred to the Foundation. When the Myrdals had arrived in the United States in the fall of 1929, they were Rockefeller Foundation—not Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial—fellows. However, the Memorial’s staff had selected that year’s group of scholars.

In mid-July, Lawrence Frank wrote back to Keppel: “Myrdhal [sic] was a social science fellow from Sweden who spent some time here and then went back to Sweden where he has been in a responsible (and I believe directory) capacity in the Social Board which is the central statistical agency and social research board for Sweden. They


\textsuperscript{16}“Negro Study Personnel Suggestions through July 15, 1937,” CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.

actually have social situations studied by the Social Board as a basis for legislation.”

This description fit Keppel’s expectations for a Hailey type. Though Myrdal was not a European colonial officer with experience studying and governing colonial subjects, he was a European scholarly statesman with a successful record collecting and analyzing substantial amounts of empirical social data and translating this analysis into policy recommendations. Even more, according to Keppel’s adviser at the SSRC, Myrdal was a Hailey type who would be well received by leading white policymakers in the United States. Within weeks, the Stockholm-based Myrdal received a letter of invitation from Carnegie Corporation’s President Keppel to direct the organization’s study of black Americans.

In a letter dated August 12, 1937, Keppel explained the proposed project to Myrdal: “I have been discussing with some of the members of my Board of Trustees the desirability of financing a comprehensive Study of the Negro in the United States to be undertaken in a wholly objective and dispassionate way as a social phenomenon.”

Suggesting that plans for the study were still nebulous and that the Board had not yet finalized its decision to appoint him as director, Keppel simply wanted to find out if Myrdal was available and interested in taking on this study.

Keppel explained in the letter why his organization was interested in inviting a European to direct this project; and in the process, made explicit his own internalization

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18 Lawrence K. Frank’s Secretary to Frederick P. Keppel, July 13, 1937, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.


of Young’s definition of a detached European for the position. He wrote: “[I]t has seemed to us that it might be desirable to turn to someone who would approach the situation with an entirely fresh mind. We have thought also that it would be well to seek a man in a non-imperialistic country with no background of domination of one race over another.” Keppel chose to use the words “non-imperialistic” instead of non-imperialist and non-fascist countries and the phraseology “domination of one race over another” instead of majority-minority group dynamics, but like Young, he emphasized that the European scholarly statesman directing the study would need to come from a country without race dynamics. After describing the length of the project and the type of research assistance he would receive, Keppel ended by asking Myrdal if he would be interested in the position.21

That October, the Swede accepted the offer.22

21 Ibid.

22 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, Oct. 7, 1937, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Microfilm Roll #1.
PART IV.

THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION IMPORTS A FUNDING PRACTICE

FROM BRITISH AFRICA WITH A SWEDISH TWIST
In 1929, the couple Gunnar Myrdal and Alva Reimer Myrdal received fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation to spend the 1929-30 academic year reading at the Library of the British Museum and traveling throughout the United States meeting sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and economists at various American universities.

After the Great War, the Rockefellers’ Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial had initiated these fellowships with hopes of helping young European researchers such as the Myrdals gain exposure to the newly growing fields of the social sciences in the United States. The Memorial had expected that these young and promising fellows would then (with the organization’s continued financial backing) strengthen these fields in their home countries, intending that strengthening social scientific research in Europe could help governments stabilize their populations and, thus, prevent a second world war.¹ In 1929, the Rockefeller Foundation took over the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial’s program in the social sciences; and among other aspects of the Memorial’s program in the social sciences, the Foundation continued funding these fellowships. That year, the Myrdals arrived across the Atlantic as Rockefeller Foundation fellows.

Gunnar Myrdal was a bright young economist who had published a few books on economic theory. Alva Reimer Myrdal was a recent university graduate interested in

child psychology. They spent the year poring through scholarship, meeting social researchers throughout the United States, and witnessing the effects of the stock market crash of 1929. Particularly, the two were impressed by the seemingly increasing role that the American social sciences were playing in Washington D.C. They saw scholars throughout the country using empirical tools such as demography, statistics, and archival material to analyze the causes and patterns of human behavior and social change. Some among these researchers, and particularly those working on Recent Social Trends inside and outside of Washington D.C., had hopes of creating policies that addressed and solved the economic and social chaos that surrounded them.

This combination of experiences made Gunnar Myrdal less interested in economic theory and much more in applied economics. From her part, Alva Reimer Myrdal saw this as an opportunity to co-author with her husband.\(^2\) When the Myrdals returned to Stockholm in 1931, Gunnar continued work at Stockholm University and, within a year, became a professor of political economics and financial science at the University.\(^3\) He also became a member of the committee directing research at the Rockefeller-funded Institute for the Social Sciences and Alva became director of the Institute for Social Pedagogy.\(^4\)


\(^3\) Upon leaving the United States in the summer of 1930, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal moved to Geneva. A year later, they moved back to Stockholm. See, Carlson, *Swedish Experiment*, 45: “In 1930, Gunnar Myrdal gave up his docentur at the University of Stockholm and accepted, at Cassel’s urging, a better-paying, more prestigious position at the Institut universitaire de hautes Etudes Internationales in Geneva, teaching international economics.” Ibid. A year later, he and Alva returned to Stockholm.

During these years, they both became involved with the Social Democratic Party and preached the importance of applying modern social scientific research to public policy making. In correspondence with a colleague in Geneva, Myrdal explained why it was so important for him to be in Sweden in the 1930s: “Now there is hardly anyone [] in Stockholm who is enough in touch with modern realistic social studies, especially of the American type, besides myself, and I feel also a certain responsibility for the whole thing. That is a strong reason for us to stay in Stockholm during the next years in order to get the business started.”

Gunnar and Alva Myrdal were eager to cultivate their new American-born interest in the applied social sciences. Their first joint attempt in this vein was the 1934 publication of *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* (Crisis in the Population Question). Gunnar wrote the “demographic and economic aspects” and Alva the “treatment of social policy.”

In *Crisis*, the Myrdals engaged with the ongoing debates on decreasing fertility rates in Europe. After the First World War, several belligerent countries in Europe had become worried that they would suffer steep population declines since they had lost so many young men during the war. They believed that these men’s deaths signaled a decrease in the quantity and quality of the nation’s population and that this left the nation 

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7 Though Sweden had remained neutral during the First World War, Swedes engaged in this European-wide discussion on population and were anxious about its relevance in their own country.
at a disadvantage with a smaller and weaker social corpus. Some perceived that this was disastrous for the nation’s sense of identity, while others (who assumed that more workers meant a stronger economy) perceived the nation’s compressed social body as a threat to the nation’s economy.

Though Sweden had remained neutral during the war, its people engaged in this interwar continental conversation on population. In Crisis, the Myrdals claimed that Swedes were right to fear decreased fertility rates and argued that they had a policy answer to the population problem in Sweden. The Myrdals’ 1934 book began with a description of economic theory; and here, Gunnar Myrdal made clear that he was opposing his economic theory to that of the English scholar Thomas Robert Malthus. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Myrdal explained, Malthus had argued that there were limited resources on the earth, so population growth threatened the

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After the Great War, the sense that the flower of a generation had been sacrificed for the mere yards of shell-blasted soil imparted an urgent lesson: the power and pride of nations were vested in their population, not territory, and governments must strive to increase their numbers or at least their “quality.”

Ibid.


11 Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, Kris i befolkningsfrågan (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1934), kap. 2, “De allmänna befolkningssteorierna.”

12 Gunnar Myrdal began to distinguish his economic theories from those of earlier generations in his 1930 publication Vetenskap och politik i nationalekonomien (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1930), later published in English as The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory, trans. Paul Streeten (London: Routledge, 1953); see Carlson, Swedish Experiment, 38.
existing population’s quality of life. While he had been hesitant to propose contraception, the Englishman did suggest that people should marry later and try to have fewer children than they were currently producing. The generation of eugenicists who followed also warned that populations were becoming too numerous for the limited resources that humans could produce, but unlike Malthus, they were much more vocal about condoning and promoting the use of contraception in an effort to limit fertility rates. Among these eugenicists was the famous American birth control advocate Margaret Sanger whose work had spread across both continents.

By contrast to scholars and advocates who believed that human beings needed to decrease fertility rates in order to maintain their quality of life, Myrdal maintained that a balanced population size was more beneficial for these purposes. In Crisis in the Population Question, he and Alva Myrdal argued that crafting a balanced population that had enough productive citizens to support its unproductive citizens (including children and the elderly) was more important than limiting the total population numbers. A balanced population, they said, would have enough working citizens to support the non-working ones in any national economy.

In the case of Sweden, the Myrdals explained that eugenicists had done such a good job in promoting delayed marriages and contraception that the country now suffered alarmingly low fertility rates. The low rates not only threatened the country’s ability to

\[\text{\textsuperscript{13}}\text{ Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, Kris i befolkningsfrågan (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1934).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{14}}\text{ Ibid.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{15}}\text{ Ibid.}\]
support the future aging population, but Swedes’ existence as a nation.\textsuperscript{16} If Swedes continued to reproduce in such low numbers, the authors explained, then other populations could immigrate into Sweden and overwhelm and threaten the dwindling native Swedish population.\textsuperscript{17} Such immigrants, they wrote, “would signify the race’s degeneration and mean ‘racial suicide.’ If the population size is reduced, the land would be flooded by immigrants of alien groups with high fertility rates. With their stronger numbers, they could take over and transform our precious cultural heritage.”\textsuperscript{18} The Myrdals here delineated a distinction between immigrants and native Swedes in order to explain why increasing immigration to the country was not an appropriate way of inflating the Swedish population. Instead, they suggested, Swedes should increase the population by increasing their own fertility rates.

The Myrdals were aware that young Swedish couples would not hearken easily to this message. At the turn of the century, economic conditions for the Swedish masses had been so dire that twenty-three percent of the population had emigrated.\textsuperscript{19} Against this backdrop, the country’s transformation into a modern, urban, and industrial society in the 1920s and early 1930s was all the more dramatic for its population. Many young Swedes were moving from the countryside to urban centers and did not want to give up the

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\textsuperscript{16} As pointed out in the literature on the Myrdals, they here captured an argument so popular among the nationalistic right in Sweden and transformed it into an argument for social democratic economic and social policies. Such a capture of opponents’ arguments was characteristic of the Myrdalian argumentation/rhetoric. See e.g., Yvonne Hirdman, “Crisis: The Road to Happiness,” in \textit{Culture and Crisis: The Case of Germany and Sweden}, eds. Nina Witoszek and Lars Trägårdh (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).
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\textsuperscript{17} Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, \textit{Kris i befolkningsfrågan} (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1934), 9.
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\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
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modern lives that they were establishing for themselves. Swedish women still wanted to work and when they married, they (like their husbands) were unwilling to make the financial and lifestyle sacrifices that having children represented. If Sweden wanted to increase its fertility rates, the Myrdals asserted, it would need to keep this kind of young urban and modern couple in mind and create policies that limited the burdens of childrearing.

Potential young parents, they advised, neither should be forced into parenthood nor burdened with new financial responsibilities that decreased their quality of life. In this vein, the Myrdals suggested that the state should promote the free exchange and use of contraception; ensure mothers’ ability to retain their employment outside their homes; and, provide services that covered the main costs associated with parenting.\(^{20}\) Specifically, they proposed that the Swedish state should cover living subsidies for families with children; free public nurseries, baby cribs, and kindergartens; free health services and free school lunch for all children; price reductions for necessary food items for children living at home; all costs for school materials (including school buildings, books, and transportation to and from the school); and, education stipends.\(^{21}\)

The Myrdals noted that population quality not only concerned the quality of parents’ lives, but the quality of the children they brought to the world. These state benefits would ensure that Sweden’s future children would be more educated and more physically healthy than previous generations. In other words, the way to improve the

\(^{20}\) For further discussion of the disputes among the Social Democrats and even Social Democratic women’s organizations on mothers’ ability to retain their employment outside their homes, see Yvonne Hirdman, *Alva Myrdal: The Passionate Mind*, trans. Linda Schenck (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 160-66.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
quality and quantity of the future generations of Swedes was to create public policies that offered more resources to parents and children alike. In offering such policies, the Myrdals were explicitly distinguishing themselves from other population experts in Germany, Italy and France, whom they thought were merely interested in increasing the population size irrespective of how childbearing and childrearing affected couples’ quality of life.

For improving population quality, the Myrdals did not discount the importance of hereditary characteristics and genetics, but advocated a guarded approach to such considerations. The “quality problem can be tackled thus, with studying individual differences in the population and finding to which degree those differences are hereditary or conditioned by the environment… In the case of differences conditioned by the environment, one can of course change the population’s quality by (in different ways) changing the environmental conditions for certain individuals.”22 Most differences among individuals, the Myrdals noted, were caused by the environment and thus, could be remedied by changing the population’s surroundings (like improving living, health, and education standards).

Still, the Myrdals argued that some differences could not be “remedied.” When it came to the mentally ill and mentally deficient, the couple advocated sterilization. They mentioned that race biologists and “social pedagogues” each had different reasons for sterilizing these individuals, and concluded that they sided with the latter’s reasons.23 The Myrdals noted that “hereditary biologists have already made interesting and practically

22 Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, Kris i befolkningsfrågan (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1934), 66.
23 Ibid., 67.
meaningful contributions and one has reason to expect more in the future,” but explained that they were not ready to say that mental illness and mental deficiencies were most definitely passed on from parent to child. Instead, the couple concluded that individuals with such illnesses and deficiencies should be sterilized because (as social pedagogues argued) their abilities to parent were limited. Similarly, other Swedes at the time supported sterilization on “eugenic, social, humanitarian and criminal” grounds, with the social grounds entailing “‘first and foremost the situation where persons are psychologically or physically inferior to such a degree that they cannot, or are not suited to care for their children.’” The Myrdals were thus part and parcel of 1920s and 1930s eugenics politics in Europe and, like some, supported the sterilization of the mentally ill and deficient on “social grounds.”

In the rest of their discussion of population quality in Crisis in the Population Question, the Myrdals argued that the state should go about improving the quality and quantity of the population by improving and equalizing Swedes’ environments. To this point, the Myrdals made clear that “social group differences” were irrelevant in discussions of population quality. Citing the differences between poorer and richer Swedes, they argued that class characteristics like intelligence, affluence, and success were caused by the environment, and thus were not heredity or genetic. In the case of

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 223.


intelligence, they referred to a contemporary study of schoolchildren in England which showed that children of academics, doctors, lawyers, and writers scored higher than children of factory workers on intelligence tests, and claimed that these differences resulted from differences in their upbringing.\textsuperscript{28} “[T]hose children of intellectual workers have, from their very early ages, more intellectual training at home than is often granted the children of heavy work or wholesale traders…”\textsuperscript{29} The intelligence gap between poorer and more affluent children in England or in Sweden could be bridged if children were offered similar childhood benefits.

When it came to the upper classes’ multi-generational affluence and success, the Myrdals explained that “the higher classes’ children receive better upbringing, better education, they are accustomed to significant social security and know how to make use of personal connections.”\textsuperscript{30} That is, environmental factors like childrearing, education, and friendships (not genetics) led the higher classes to perform better on intelligence exams and to be more successful and affluent than the lower classes. To support their claims, the Myrdals wrote that “researchers do not support the hypothesis of the existence of socially significant character differences between social classes that are of hereditary quality.”\textsuperscript{31} Moreover, they explained, “a social group is actually not (like an individual) a naturally given biological unit; but rather, created by social and institutional factors

\textsuperscript{28} Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, \textit{Kris i befolkningsfrågan} (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1934), 69.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 71.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 74.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 72.
established and accumulated by highly different individuals.” If only the social and institutional factors that maintained poor and lower class Swedes’ inferiority were erased, then they could achieve the same health and intelligence standards as the rest of Swedes.

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As mentioned above, the Myrdals’ proposed population policy was part and parcel of 1920s and 1930s eugenics politics in Europe. Describing eugenicist thinking in the interwar period, historian Mark Mazower wrote: The “state had not merely to promote the healthy body; it had also, in one way or another, to ensure it was not contaminated by the unhealthy. It had, in terms of eugenicist thought, to concern itself with the quality as well as the quantity of the nation’s stock.” Like many other eugenicists in the United States, Italy, France, and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, the Myrdals argued that the state could manufacture a national population of higher quantity and quality through public policymaking. Like many of them, the Myrdals also noted that sterilization of the mentally ill and feeble-minded was permissible as a means of protecting the quality of the population.

Moving from this broader context to a more specific one, the Myrdal’s population program echoed the eugenics politics of the Nazis, who had come to power in Germany

32 Ibid., 67.


34 In this respect, the Myrdals’ proposed program echoed the efforts of Americans who had supported the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924, which sought to protect the quality and quantity of the American population by limiting the amount of immigrants from Asia and Eastern Europe.
the year before the Myrdals published *Crisis*. Like the Nazis, the Swedish couple maintained that the national social body was a single body (*folk* in Swedish, *Volksgemeinschaft* in German) and that there were outsiders to this national body. For the Nazis, such outsiders included Jews, gypsies, Poles, Ukrainians, and the mentally ill among others. For the Myrdals, immigrants were the outsiders whose increased fertility would threaten the Swedish *folk*.\(^35\) Second, both suggested that their population policies should promote higher birth rates within the national community and across class lines.

However, some significant differences existed between the two models. First, the Myrdals supported sterilization of the mentally ill and deficient on “social grounds.”\(^36\) This made them part of 1920s and 1930s eugenics politics in Europe, but distinguished them from the Nazis who supported sterilization on biological grounds. Second, the Myrdals maintained that the national body was one *folk* and that one dominant, native group defined its identity. However, unlike the Nazis, the Myrdals suggested that subordinate social groups living in Sweden could and should assimilate and integrate into the national social corpus. The couple did not mention the Jews or the indigenous Sami who lived in Sweden in their discussion of the national community in *Crisis in the Population Question*, and these were visible minorities.\(^37\) From reading the couple’s

\(^{35}\) For an analysis of the Swedish welfare state’s contrasting characteristics both past and present, see Vanessa Barker, “Nordic Exceptionalism Revisited: Explaining the Paradox of a Janus-Faced Penal Regime,” *Theoretical Criminology* 17 (Feb. 2013).


\(^{37}\) See e.g., Hans-Ingvar Roth and Fredrik Hertzberg, *Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Sweden* (San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy: European University Institute Press, 2010); Mikael Tossavainen, “Jews in
work, it seems that the Myrdals expected these inhabitants of Sweden to shed their own cultural and ethnic identities and to assimilate and integrate into the national community, which the dominant native Swedes defined.

Third, the German model of promoting higher birthrates within the national community “helped newly-weds with marriage loans (granted, naturally, on condition that the woman gave up work…) and offered child benefits, free vacations and day-care facilities.” By contrast, the Myrdals emphasized that Sweden should remain a modern, democratic, and industrial society. This required women and men to maintain their modern, urban lifestyles. It also required the state to create public policies that reflected the needs and wishes of the population and of the segment of the population to be most affected by the policies.

In making these distinctions between their own proposed population policies and the other population models in Europe that rejected modernity and democracy, the Myrdals aimed to present to fellow Swedes (and to the world) a means of increasing the quality and quantity of a population in a modern democracy.

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After the publication of *Crisis in the Population Question*, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal became leading figures in the Swedish Social Democratic Party and particularly


in the country’s discussion of the population problem, which came to the fore in 1930s Sweden.\textsuperscript{39} The party capitalized on the public debate that was created in the wake of the couple’s book to promote welfare policies and, in the process, the Myrdals became equated with the Social Democratic Party and its social policies.\textsuperscript{40} In the mid-1930s, Gunnar was elected to the upper house of parliament and became a member of the Royal Population Commission. On her end, Alva was chair of the Swedish Professional Women’s Association; secretary of the government commission on the right of married women to work outside the home; and, a member of the Social Democratic Women’s Association.\textsuperscript{41}

Though Alva and Gunnar Myrdal both were respected by scholars, political figures, and philanthropic managers across the Atlantic, it was Gunnar moreso than Alva who took the limelight and the prestigious lectureships and fellowships that came with it. For example, it was Gunnar who was invited to participate in the Royal Population Commission and later to deliver the Godkin Lectures at Harvard.\textsuperscript{42} In his letter of invitation, Harvard University President James B. Conant wrote: “We are particularly anxious to have you with us next year as we are concerned with establishing a new School of Public Administration. In this connection, we shall be having during the winter


\textsuperscript{40} Some scholars have contested the relative influence of the Myrdals’ \textit{Crisis on the Population Question} on population policies in 1930s Sweden. See e.g., Bo Rothstein, \textit{The Social Democratic State: The Swedish Model and the Bureaucratic Problem} (Pittsburgh: U. of Pittsburgh Press, 1998).

\textsuperscript{41} Yvonne Hirdman, \textit{Alva Myrdal: The Passionate Mind} (Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008), 203.

\textsuperscript{42} James B. Conant to Gunnar Myrdal, June 9, 1937, Papers of President James B. Conant, UAI 5.168, Box 83, Folder “Godkin Lecture, 1936-1937,” Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts (hereafter cited as JBC Papers).
a series of seminars or conferences with government officials on various aspects of the problems, both political and economic, which face a government of a free country in these difficult times.” 43 Conant explained that Myrdal was the perfect person to showcase to Americans the utility of applied social research. 44 Foreseeing Americans’ interest in his and Alva Myrdal’s application of social scientific research to public policy making across the Atlantic, Myrdal chose to discuss precisely about the population problem in Sweden.

In May of 1938, Gunnar Myrdal arrived in Boston to deliver these lectures on “The Population Problem and Social Policy.” 45 He spent nearly three weeks at Harvard, and met with students eager to discuss fiscal policy and to learn about the newly-minted Stockholm School of Economics. 46 He also met with faculty who would remain long-

43 Ibid.


45 Ibid.

I understand that you have decided not to deal with fiscal policy in those [Godkin] lectures, but would be willing to discuss problems of fiscal policy more informally. Professor Hansen and I are this year conducting a seminar on this subject in our new Graduate School of Public Administration, which is very closely allied with our Graduate Department of Economics, of which both Hansen and I are members. We shall be delighted to have you participate in the seminar which is conducted very informally, and we can promise you an interested group of our graduate students and colleagues.

In a letter dated January 19, 1938, Myrdal accepted the invitation. See, Correspondence between John DeWitt Norton and Gunnar Myrdal, March 14, 1938 to June 14, 1938, AGM Archives, Korrespondens: Gunnar Myrdal, 1930-1939, Volym: 3.2.1:7. On March 14, 1938, John DeWitt Norton wrote:
No brand of economics has excited so much interest here as the recent contribution of the Stockholm school—and of no brand have we had so little opportunity to satisfy our curiosity. Many members of our group have studied abroad—at Cambridge, London, Oxford, Vienna or Bonn—so that we feel that the personal and intellectual acquaintance of our circle extends to all the significant regions of the world of economists, excepting the Scandinavian. It would therefore make us very happy indeed to have you as the guest of honor at our spring party.” Ibid.

In his letter dated March 30, 1938, Myrdal accepted the invitation.
time contacts, such as Harvard Law Professor Felix Frankfurter and Harvard economist Gottfried Haberler.47 He also dined with the Harvard economist, Alvin H. Hansen, who had been in correspondence with Myrdal since 1932. Four years earlier when Crisis in the Population Question had been published, he had written to the Sweden that he had been “following [his] work with great interest and [was] particularly interested in [his] recent report to the government which was reviewed for a number of us at Columbia University a week or two ago by a young Swede temporarily in New York.”48

From many Americans’ perspective, the Myrdals in Sweden were the architects of one of the most comprehensive population policies ever executed in a modern democracy. With the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924, Americans had made efforts to improve the quality of their population. And like the Swedes and other Europeans, many American states in the 1920s had passed sterilization laws targeting the feeble-minded and others deemed to have unfavorable biological traits that could be passed


48 Gunnar Myrdal to Alvin W. [sic] Hansen, March 3, 1932, and Alvin H. Hansen to Gunnar Myrdal, July 2, 1934, AGM Archives, Korrespondens: Gunnar Myrdal 1930-1939 Volym: 3.2.1:5, Folder “GM-1930 Ha.” For years, American economists such as Hansen, Henry Schultz, and Jacob Viner and others had looked over to Sweden for inspiration on ways to address the most important national societal problem of the times: the Great Depression. Henry Schultz to Gunnar Myrdal, Nov. 9, 1932, Gunnar Myrdals Arkiv, Brevsamlings 1930-1939 S, Volym 9, Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, Stockholm, Sweden (hereafter GM Archives). Schultz wrote:

A few minutes ago, when I was coming out of a polling booth, I met my colleague, Professor Viner, who informed me that he had just received a book by you, written in German, and that he thought it an excellent piece of work. I asked him kindly to pass it on to me as soon as he was through with it, because “I do not want to miss anything of importance that Myrdal has written.” You can, therefore, imagine my pleasure and surprise when upon my return to my office I found that you had sent me an autographed copy of the same book. I cannot tell you how I appreciate your courtesy. You may rest assured that I shall familiarize myself with your ideas as soon as possible.

Ibid.
down through to their children or who were deemed unable to care for potential children.

In 1927, the U.S. Supreme Court condoned this practice on the feeble-minded with its holding in *Buck v. Bell* (1927):

> In 1924 the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act incorporated Harry Laughlin’s eugenic advice and rolled back immigration quotas to 1890 levels in an effort to stem the tide of Asian and southern and eastern European immigrants that the children of northern and western European immigrants found undesirable. A new wave of eugenic sterilization laws began to pass, many of them modeled on laws recently passed in Scandinavia. In 1927, the *Buck v. Bell* Supreme Court case upheld the constitutionality of Virginia’s sterilization law and established the model for a statute that could not be overturned as unconstitutional.\(^49\)

In the 1920s and 1930s, many leading American jurists, public policymakers, social scientists were as interested as their European colleagues in using state laws and public policies to engineer a national body of a higher quality. From their perspective, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal had been able to achieve a national population program of which the United States had not yet achieved, but might one day.

After delivering the Harvard lectures and during late May and June, Myrdal split his time between Washington D.C. where he had several speaking engagements and New York City where he was scheduled to meet the Carnegie Corporation’s Board of Trustees. In Washington, Myrdal shuffled around meeting academics and government officials. Before arriving in the States that spring of 1938, the United States Department of Agriculture’s Senior Agricultural Economist O.E. Baker had asked him to give a few lectures at the Department.\(^50\) Baker had met Gunnar Myrdal in Stockholm in 1937 and


\(^{50}\) O.E. Baker (United States Department of Agriculture) to Gunnar Myrdal, Dec. 17, 1937, AGM Archives, Korrespondens Gunnar Myrdal 1920-1929 Vol. 3.2.1:1, Folder “1930-t Ba.”
had thought that the Swede’s springtime trip to the United States provided an opportunity for a useful transatlantic exchange of ideas. He suggested to Myrdal that he deliver a similar lecture on the population problem to his colleagues at the Department of Agriculture: “For I consider the trend of developments in Great Britain and Sweden, where economic conditions and social and political institutions are similar to our own, as very suggestive in anticipating future trends in the United States.”

On June 1st and 2nd of 1938, Myrdal presented two lectures to the Department of Agriculture; one on “The Population Problems and Social Policy,” and another on “Population Trends in Relation to Agriculture in Sweden.”

On June 2nd, he also delivered a lecture on the Swedish population problem at American University in Washington D.C. In particular, the dean wrote that several faculty members, “many of whom are working on our National Resources Committee surveys, would appreciate very much the opportunity of discussing with you the role of government in connection with science and scientific research. More especially this would apply to resources and the population field.”

For these Americans in Washington, Myrdal was a scholarly statesman who had been able to apply social scientific analysis to public policies as a means of addressing societal and economic problems in a modern democracy. In this vein, U.S. Secretary of the Treasurer Henry

51 O.E. Baker to Gunnar Myrdal, Feb. 16, 1938, AGM Archives, Korrespondens Gunnar Myrdal 1920-1929 Vol. 3.2.1:1, Folder “1930-t Ba.”

52 Ernest Griffith (Dean of American University Graduate School) to Gunnar Myrdal, May 16, 1938, AGM Archives, Korrespondens: Gunnar Myrdal 1930-1939, Volym: 3.2.1:3, Folder “1930-t.”
Morgenthau invited Myrdal for a private lunch;\textsuperscript{53} the Works Progress Administration staff invited him to dinner;\textsuperscript{54} the United States Housing Authority invited him to discuss “the public housing program”;\textsuperscript{55} and, the Population Association of America in Washington asked him to discuss the Swedish population problem.\textsuperscript{56}

Thereafter, he met with the Carnegie Corporation’s Board of Trustees in New York City. During this visit, Myrdal found that the board members were, like the Americans in Washington, particularly interested in learning about his and Alva’s work on the population problem in Sweden. Years later, he remembered:

Incidentally, when I was [in the United States] early in 1938, to give the Godkin Lectures, when Freddie Keppel and I made the final agreement that I should undertake this study, at that time I remember he had a sort of a party, I think a dinner, where a number of the trustees were invited. And what we discussed at that time, in which Freddie Keppel was tremendously interested in bringing forward, was what Alva and I had been doing, what I particularly had been doing, in problems of population and family in Sweden. That must have interested them.\textsuperscript{57}

Like many other Americans, the Corporation’s trustees saw Gunnar and Alva Myrdal as successful examples of how applied social research could help create public policies that solved societal problems in a modern democracy. In particular, they wanted to learn

\textsuperscript{53} H.D. White (Director of Monetary Research, Treasury Department) to Gunnar Myrdal, June 24, 1938, AGM Archives, Korrespondens: Gunnar Myrdal 1930-1939, Volym: 3.2.1: 11: “Dear Prof. Myrdal: This is just a note to confirm your luncheon appointment with Secretary Morgenthau at one o’clock next Wednesday, June 29th. I am looking forward to another chat with you during your visit here.”

\textsuperscript{54} T.J. Woofler, Jr., (Coordinator of Rural Research, Works Progress Administration) to Gunnar Myrdal, May 23, 1938, AGM Archives, Korrespondens: Gunnar Myrdal 1930-1939, Volym: 3.2.1: 11.

\textsuperscript{55} Nathan Straus (Administrator, Department of the Interior United States Housing Authority) to Gunnar Myrdal, June 24, 1938, GM Archives, Brevsmaling 1930-1939 S, Volym 9.

\textsuperscript{56} Frank Lorimer (Secretary, Population Association of America) to Gunnar Myrdal, May 10, 1938, AGM Archives, Korrespondens: Gunnar Myrdal 1930-1939, Volym: 3.2.1:6.

about his and Alva’s policy solutions to the problem of population and family planning in Sweden.

In June of 1938, Gunnar Myrdal left the United States. For the next months, he and Alva busied themselves planning for the transatlantic move that upcoming September. That summer, he had come back to Sweden with the news that the Corporation not only wanted him to direct a comprehensive study of black Americans, but also wanted to commission Alva Myrdal to translate for an American audience the couple’s experience addressing the population problem in Sweden. According to Corporation trustee and American population expert, Frederick Osborn, Gunnar’s “competent wife” could summarize in English the “important 12 volume report of the Swedish Commission on Population of which Myrdal was chairman.” Americans were curious about the successful experiment in population policy taking place in a modern democracy across the Atlantic.

At the ages of 39 and 35 respectively, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal had created solid professional lives for themselves in Stockholm. Before their journey across the Atlantic in the late summer of 1938, they needed to resign and take leaves of absence from an assortment of university and governmental positions. They also needed to secure nannies for their three young children and tenants for their newly constructed house in the suburbs.


59 Frederick Osborn to Frederick P. Keppel, Aug. 12, 1938, CCNY Records, “Grant Files Series 1 Carnegie Corp.,” Folder 235.5 “Myrdal, Alva (Mrs. Gunnar) Nation and Family (book by).”
While the Myrdals were resigning and taking leaves from their educational and
governmental posts in Stockholm, the Carnegie Corporation was making plans for their
arrival on the other side of the Atlantic. The Corporation’s President Frederick P. Keppel
formalized plans with the Social Science Research Council’s Donald Young to help staff
the team of American social scientists who would be of service to Myrdal. He also asked
the Rockefeller Foundation’s President Raymond Fosdick to lend the Corporation the
white Virginia native Jackson Davis, who was associate director of the Rockefeller’s
General Education Board (GEB). Keppel had explained to Fosdick that Myrdal needed
to “see the general situation in the South more or less incognito before public
announcement [was] made of his appointment, and there [was] no one who could show
him what he ought to see half so well as Jack Davis.” Keppel hoped that Davis could
help guide Myrdal throughout the Southern states and help him see race relations on the
ground before he settled down with his own team of researchers.

One can imagine that the decision of Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P.
Keppel to involve the SSRC, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the GEB in the Carnegie
Corporation’s planned study served various purposes. Keppel sought the guidance and

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1 Raymond Fosdick to Frederick P. Keppel, June 10, 1938, General Education Board Archives, Series 1,
Sub-Series 1.2 Box 270, Folder 2788, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter cited as GEB Archives). See also Jackson Davis Collection of African-American Educational Photographs, University of Virginia Library.

2 Frederick P. Keppel to Raymond Fosdick, June 8, 1938, GEB Archives, Series 1, Sub-Series 1.2 Box 270,
Folder 2788.
advice of American social researchers and philanthropic managers who had either previously coordinated a national policy-oriented social scientific study (as the SSRC had done) or who had experience in the particular topic of white-black relations (as the GEB had). By seeking their assistance, Keppel likely thought that their guidance was helpful in a funding practice that the organization had never before ventured into in the United States. Secondly, the Carnegie Corporation alone carried the entire cost of bringing about this comprehensive, policy-oriented study of black Americans. Keppel perhaps reasoned that the services provided by the SSRC, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the GEB could help offset some of the expense in realizing this study. Thirdly, and most importantly, the Corporation’s president likely was making every possible attempt to ensure the study’s impact in the near future. By involving leading social scientists and philanthropic managers, Keppel perhaps imagined that he was making these individuals feel invested in the ultimate success of the project.

As earlier chapters illustrated, the SSRC’s Donald Young and Melville Herskovits were eager to help Keppel coordinate and mold a comprehensive study on black Americans. From the perspective of philanthropic managers at the Rockefeller Foundation and the General Education Board, it was time for a new funding practice with respect to black Americans. The schools for black Americans in the South that they had been funding were then being transferred from the hands of philanthropic organizations to local school boards. This was, after all, what the philanthropic organizations and local

3 See chapters 7 and 8 of this manuscript.
school districts had been planning for decades. The Rockefeller Foundation’s and the GEB’s managers were not convinced that Keppel’s study would come to any novel conclusions on what philanthropic organization’s next funding practice should be, but they were curious to see how the project developed and were willing to help.

On September 10th of 1938, Gunnar Myrdal, Alva Myrdal, Richard Sterner and his wife, along with the Myrdal’s three children and their nannies arrived by ship to New York City. Within the month, the two Swedish men and Jackson Davis were en route to the Southern United States.

In his diaries of the three-week trip, Davis wrote that they visited a long list of cities. They drove through Richmond, Hampton, Norfolk, and Petersburg, Virginia. In North Carolina, they visited Raleigh and Chapel Hill; and in South Carolina, Hartsville, Columbia, and Orangeburg. Further south, they passed through Georgia and Alabama before settling in Louisiana. Once back in New York, Gunnar Myrdal recounted to the Carnegie Corporation’s President Frederick P. Keppel that he had been able to establish “contact with a great number of white and Negro leaders in various activities; visited universities, colleges, schools, churches and various state and community agencies as well as factories and plantations, talked to police officers, teachers, preachers, politicians, journalists, agriculturists, workers, sharecroppers, and in fact, all sorts of people, colored

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4 Office of the Secretary Record of Interview, October 4-6, 1935, Carnegie Corporation of New York Archives, Box 341, Folder 341.1 “Stingray Conferences [1934-1946],” Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York (hereafter cited as CCNY Records).

5 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, Jan. 28, 1939, GEB Archives, Series 1, Sub-Series 1.2, Box 270, Folder 2790; and, Memorandum from Jackson Davis to Frederick P. Keppel (“Trip with Gunnar Myrdal and Richard Sterner, October 3-20, 1938”), GEB Archives, Series 1, Sub-Series 1.2, Box 270, Folder 2787 “Jackson Davis.”

6 Ibid.
and white.”7 Myrdal noted to his employer that he had not only established various contacts, but that Keppel had been right to select a foreigner for the study. He commented: “Being foreigners seemed, in most instances, to work out as an advantage rather than the contrary, even in our contacts with various southern leaders, as because of that, we were generally assumed to approach the situation without preconceptions as well as without knowledge.”8 After this trip to the South, Gunnar settled into his family apartment near Columbia University in the upper-west reaches of Manhattan; an apartment which he and Alva had rented from Columbia economist Carter Goodrich who was then serving as the United States Labor Commissioner in Geneva.9 Myrdal was happy to see his “little Swedish colony” settle in and to be surrounded by old American friends whom he had last seen when he and Alva had been Rockefeller Fellows nine year earlier.10

In the early weeks of 1939, Gunnar Myrdal began his daily work routine in New York City. His office and those of the Carnegie Corporation were seventy blocks south from his apartment near Columbia; just a half hour subway ride downtown. The Carnegie Corporation was on Fifth Avenue and forty-third street just north of Bryant Park, and

7 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, Jan. 28, 1939, GEB Archives, Series 1, Sub-Series 1.2, Box 270, Folder 2790.

8 Ibid.


10 Gunnar Myrdal to Gösta Bagge, Nov. 12, 1938, AGM Archives, Korrespondens Gunnar Myrdal 1920-1929, Vol. 3.2.1:1, Folder “Gösta Bagge 1930-t.”
Myrdal’s own office was three blocks east in the Chrysler Building. Completed just eight years earlier, the building had a lobby with “an oddly welcoming expanse of red African marble (said to have been mined 200 feet underwater): The warm russet color, veined with gray, black and cream, seems to beckon you in. A majestic mural, including a likeness of the building itself as well as scenes of construction workers (some of them real men who worked on the building), airplanes and other symbols of the modern age, stretches across the ceiling, a Sistine Chapel to honor the goes of industry and prosperity.”

Writing from his own offices, Myrdal could not help but brag to a colleague back in Stockholm: “I am writing to you from the 46th floor of the Chrysler Building where we have half of a tower apartment for the Negro study.”

Writing to friends and colleagues from one of the world’s tallest skyscrapers at the time, Myrdal could not help but sound as if he were on top of the modern world.

As director, Myrdal began work on the Carnegie Corporation’s study of black Americans by reading the social scientific literature on this group of Americans. In his own words, he wanted to “reach a broad perspective of the whole field and also attempt[] to acquire some understanding of the Negro problem in other Western countries and in


Africa, and of other minority and race relations within the United States.”

The statistician Richard Sterner collected “material and information about sources, particularly on population, incomes and standard-of-living from the various public and private agencies” in Washington D.C. Such sources were the “extensive volume on the Negro of the 1930 Census, the National Resource Committee’s important report on Problems of Changing Population, some related general works in the field, and some miscellaneous reports and papers.”

Myrdal and Sterner took their first steps in analyzing black Americans and race relations in the United States. With the help of Donald Young at the Social Science Research Council, Myrdal met fellow social researchers and enlisted their aid in the project.

In April of 1939, Myrdal and Young organized a three-day meeting at an oceanfront hotel in New Jersey with the white sociologist Thomas Jackson Woofter of the Works Progress Administration; African American sociologist Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University; the white sociologist Guy Benton Johnson of the University of North Carolina; the African American political scientist Ralph J. Bunche of Howard University; and, Myrdal’s longtime friend and white American demographer at Yale University.

14 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, Jan. 28, 1939, GEB Archives, Series 1, Sub-Series 1.2, Box 270, Folder 2790.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 For an example of Young’s assistance, See “Office of the President Record of Interview, Subject: Negro Study, CD and Myrdal,” March 21, 1939, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.
Dorothy Thomas (The two had met during the Myrdals’ year as Rockefeller Foundation fellows).\textsuperscript{18}

During the three days, Myrdal, Young, Sterner, and their five guests came up with a list of American social researchers who could “devote their whole time to the project and who [could] be located in New York.”\textsuperscript{19} They decided that the permanent staff members should include Sterner, Thomas, Guy Johnson, and two professors from Howard University. These two African American scholars were Bunche (who had just returned from a two-year fellowship abroad funded by the SSRC) and the education professor Doxey A. Wilkerson.\textsuperscript{20}

In his letter to Keppel at the end of the three-day conference in New Jersey, Myrdal the tasks that each of his staff members would undertake. He regarded Sterner as an “expert in social statistics” who could well be in charge of research “centered around the standard of living (amount and security of family income, actual family consumption, and [the] related problem of medical facilities, relief, etc.).”\textsuperscript{21} Equally experienced in quantitative work, Thomas “will be in charge of problems relating to population

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\textsuperscript{18} Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, April 28, 1939, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1. The hotel was then called “Berkeley Carteret.” See, “Office of the President, Record of Interview, Subject: Negro Study, CD and Myrdal,” March 21, 1939, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1; “… CD called the Berkeley Carteret to make preliminary investigation to be confirmed by letter.” The hotel is located on 1401 Ocean Ave., Asbury Park, NJ, http://www.visitnj.org/berkeley-carteret-oceanfront-hotel-conference-center (last visited May 2, 2012).

\textsuperscript{19} Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, April 28, 1939, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.


\textsuperscript{21} Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, April 28, 1939, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.
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(distribution, migration, fertility, mortality, etc.), mental and personality aptitudes and performance on the basis of tests and measurements, social attitudes, and patterns of segregation, discrimination and contact.” While this demographer and statistician analyzed the quantitative data, Guy Johnson (a “recognised expert from the South”) would be “in charge of a great variety of problems; recreation and use of leisure time, social structure within the Negro group, family life and sexual patterns, church, lodge and interracial organizations, crime and related problems.”

Myrdal noted that the final two of the five staff members, Bunche and Wilkerson, would analyze the presence of African Americans in politics, education, and the press. As Myrdal explained to Keppel, these were qualified selections. Bunche was an obvious choice as “one of the best of the younger Negro social scientists” and Wilkerson’s “close cooperation with other social scientists, as well as his high qualifications in his own field, convince me that he is a happy choice. Since he has also studied the Negro press, he can be put in charge of this problem too.” The five staff members spent the next months collecting data and drafting memoranda for Myrdal. Sterner, Myrdal, Guy Johnson worked from the Chrysler Building office, while Bunche conducted his research from

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.

Aside from these five central staff members, Myrdal also asked for working memoranda from other American social researchers. He received reports from Columbia anthropologist Ralph Linton; Chicago sociologist Louis Wirth; Fisk sociologist Charles S. Johnson; sociologist and head of the department of social science at Howard, E. Franklin Frazier; and, the sociologist Horace Rosco Cayton who was then leading a “Works Projects Administration project that studied the social structure of the African-American family.” By the summer of 1939, Linton had written a memorandum “on the anthropological point of view”; Wirth had begun his memorandum on “Race Mixture and Racial Hybridity Among American Negroes”, and Johnson had engaged three field workers in his analysis of “Discrimination and Segregation” in the South.

Along with these American social researchers, Myrdal also asked “certain outsiders…to make major contributions in cooperation with the staff and under my direction.” These included Woofter of the WPA; Howard University economist Abram

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.


30 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, April 28, 1939, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.
Harris (who also served on the Consumers Advocacy Board of the National Recovery Administration); North Carolina sociologist and “prominent New Dealer” Arthur Raper; Howard University poet and editor on “Negro Affairs for the Federal Writers’ Project,” Sterling Brown; the labor movement activists and historians Charles and Mary Beard; and, University of North Carolina sociologist Guion Griffis Johnson. 31

However, the coordination had its challenges. For example, Cayton was never more mentioned in Myrdal’s correspondence on the project, and E. Franklin Frazier postponed his participation in the project.32 One can speculate on some of the challenges that Myrdal confronted in directing this comprehensive study of black Americans. For starters, he was white and he was directing a study on blacks. Secondly, he was not an expert on American race relations and his position required him to demand memoranda from actual experts in the field. One could imagine that some leading American social scientists would find this power dynamic insulting to their status. Adding insult to injury, Myrdal would pester them for their memoranda and relay to them that this study should be their first priority. As Bunche explained it, he was on a “slave routine for our Swedish


32 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel (“Report of Progress”), Dec. 20, 1939, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1. Myrdal wrote: “It was mentioned in the October memorandum that we were discussing with Dr. Frazier the possibility of his assisting us. This discussion has been postponed until January.” Ibid., 3.
Simon Legree.”\textsuperscript{33} In Harriet Beecher Stowe’s \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin}, of course, Legree is the ruthless plantation owner to whom the slave Tom is sold.\textsuperscript{34}

Moreover, Myrdal had an office in the Chrysler Building, a staff of top scholars, and access to a limitless amount of funding from one of the wealthiest philanthropic organizations in the world. This point could have made any expert in the field jealous. Since the study was taking place during the Great Depression, this display of wealth particularly in that moment in time might have recoiled some social researchers.

A year after his first exploratory trip through the Southern United States in 1938, Myrdal took another month-long road trip to the region with staff members Ralph Bunche and Arthur Raper who were working respectively from Washington D.C. and Atlanta.\textsuperscript{35} During October and November of 1939, the three met individually with white and black Southerners and collected qualitative data on their views on race relations. As Bunche would remember it, this trip took him further south than he had ever been in the United States and put him in social situations foreign to him. For example, under the contemporary racial norms in the South, the African American Bunche was largely barred from eating and staying in the same restaurants and motels as whites Myrdal and Raper. Even so, Myrdal urged that they ignore these norms. From the Swede’s perspective, it was thrilling to see how white southerners simply stood in silent shock as


\textsuperscript{34} Harriet Beecher Stowe, \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin} (Boston: John P. Jewett & Company, 1852).

\textsuperscript{35} Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel ("Report of Progress"), Dec. 20, 1939, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Roll #1.
he and his staff transgressed racial norms and laws. From Bunche’s perspective, it was one of the scariest trips of his life and he was more than happy to see this fact-finding mission come to a close.36

After this trip, Bunche, Raper, and Myrdal returned to their offices in Washington D.C. and New York, where Myrdal’s staff continued coordinating research projects across the country and writing their own reports. Within weeks, Myrdal left again for another trip. This time, he went west in an effort to see how race relations worked themselves out in that region of the country. From November 1939 until April of 1940, he visited Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Louis, Denver, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.37 In his own words, these trips “turned out to be very valuable in helping me get a more complete picture of the Negro situation in the United States.”38

Clearly, Myrdal traveled around the United States in order to see first-hand what the condition of African Americans was really like from coast-to-coast. Because the Carnegie Corporation had provided him with an open budget, he also had access to an infinite amount of data on African Americans. If a data set had not been amassed (or if a certain aspect of African American life had not yet been analyzed and published), the

36 Most memorably, the Carnegie Corporation president’s assistant noted in his own records that “Myrdal left Georgia rather hurriedly after being advised that an Atlanta woman, with whom he had had a conference, had gotten out a warrant for him.” This assistant, Charles Dollard, later noted that Myrdal’s “own inclination was to stay and have the thing out, but Raper pointed out to him that, under the terms of the southern code, a woman was never wrong and that it would be cheaper to ‘arrange’ things with the local magistrate.” See, “Office of the President Record of Interview,” Nov. 20, 1939, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1. Also, it was during this trip with Bunche and Raper that Myrdal became a member of the NAACP, see Gunnar Myrdal’s NAACP card from Charleston, South Carolina, in AGM Archives, Korrespondens: Gunnar Myrdal, 1930-1939, Volym: 3.2.1:7.

37 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, Dec. 20, 1939, Feb. 13, 1940, April 23, 1940, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Roll #1.

38 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, April 23, 1940, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence Roll #1.
Corporation gave him full reign to enlist the time and energies of countless researchers across the country.

Even with this boundless amount of data and researchers, however, the two volumes of *An American Dilemma* suggest that he wrote the manuscript mainly in conversation with four American scholars. Myrdal’s staff likely was little surprised by this development. In 1939, staff member Ralph Bunche had relayed to Melville Herskovits: “I have come to learn that Myrdal, while a brilliant scholar, is primarily a philosopher.”\(^\text{39}\) Before he had become an applied social scientist, Myrdal was an economic theorist. Not far from his mind was a concern for how social researchers analyzed the empirical data they collected. In *An American Dilemma*, he framed his own analysis of the amassed data with the work of Ralph Bunche, Melville Herskovits, Donald Young, and E. Franklin Frazier in mind.

When Myrdal had taken up the directorship of the Carnegie Corporation’s study, Frederick P. Keppel had asked the Swede to include the African American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois in his team of researchers. Perhaps, this was Keppel’s attempt to make peace with the African American scholar, whose plans for an *Encyclopedia of the Negro* the Corporation had rejected just a few years earlier.\(^\text{40}\) Myrdal never did ask Du Bois to join his team, perhaps because he felt embarrassed to ask such a senior scholar to work for him on the project. More likely, though, he did not ask Du Bois because Myrdal

\(^{39}\) Ralph Bunche to Melville Herskovits, Oct. 9, 1939, MJH Papers, Series 35:6, Box 5, Folder 1, “Bunche, Ralph, 1932-1941.”

\(^{40}\) “Conference with Dr. Keppel, Sunday, March 12, 1939” and “GM conference with Dr. Keppel, May 2, on the plan contained in letter of April 28, 1939,” CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Roll #1.
wanted to remain the most dominant voice on the study of black Americans. Referring to him as the “elderly Du Bois,” Gunnar Myrdal cited and celebrated the African American social scientist throughout the two volumes. For example, he praised him for writing the best study of an African American community ever written, *The Philadelphia Negro*. Through all the praise, however, he did not engage critically with the elderly scholars’ theories of racial equality. By contrast, he did just that with four American scholars who were his contemporaries: the African-American political scientist Ralphe Bunche; the white anthropologist Melville Herskovits; the white sociologist Donald Young; and, the African-American sociologist E. Franklin Frazier.

Before Ralph Bunche had joined Myrdal’s study, he had published his own analysis of African Americans’ condition in the United States. In *A World View of Race*, the political scientist first acknowledged that “[m]odern races may have no scientific validity; the term ‘race’ may even be pseudoscientific, but ‘racial problems’ are ever with us.” The distinctions between races were difficult, if not impossible to distinguish, but Bunche noted in this 1936 publication that human beings’ discussions of racial problems were very real. He explained that the “powerful land and capital owning interests” encouraged these discussions as a means of distracting the masses of whites and blacks from the reality that they had a shared class interest to challenge the powerful

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41 Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, Vol. 2, 1005, 1132: “We cannot close this description of what a study of a Negro community should be without calling attention to the study which best meets our requirements, a study which is now all but forgotten. We refer to W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, published in 1899.” Ibid., 1132.


43 Ibid., 25.
whites. He wrote: “In America today it is widely accepted that ‘the race problem’ is one of the fundamental problems of our society. It is one of the great factors in confusing the American populace in its efforts to understand the fundamental conflicts and issues confronting society… It has been one of the most serious obstructions in the alignment of the population along lines of natural class interests.” From Bunche’s perspective, Americans’ discussions of supposed “racial problems” simply served to distract white proletarians away from their natural class alignment with the majority of African Americans whom Bunche argued were also part of this “peasant” group. Since the majority of African Americans were poor, Bunche reasoned that the way to address African Americans’ subordinate status in society was to show poor whites that they had a class interest with African Americans and to henceforth mobilize a class-based conflict. In other words, African Americans’ condition in the United States would improve only by challenging the existing class relationship.

In An American Dilemma, Gunnar Myrdal agreed with Bunche that racial differences between whites and blacks were socially constructed, but disagreed with his emphasis on class unity as the panacea to African Americans’ status in the United States. He cited Bunche’s thesis throughout the two volumes of An American and acknowledged that this African American scholar was “in fundamental agreement with the view that the Negroes’ main hope lies in an alignment with white labor.” By

44 Ibid., 67.
45 Ibid., 81.
46 Myrdal, An American Dilemma, Vol. 1, Ch. 2 “Encountering the Negro Problem.”
contrast, Myrdal argued that white laborers harbored quite a significant amount of prejudice against African Americans, so they should not be counted on to mobilize on behalf of blacks. Noting his experience traveling around the United States, the Swede wrote: “It has often occurred to me, when reflecting upon the responses I get from white laboring people on this strategic question, that my friends among the younger Negro intellectuals, whose judgment I otherwise have learned to admire greatly, have perhaps, and for natural reasons, not had enough occasion to find out for themselves what a bitter, spiteful, and relentless feeling often prevails against the Negroes among lower class white people in America.”48 Contrary to Bunche, Gunnar Myrdal had been left with the impression that white laborers could not be counted on to unite with African Americans.

Further distinguishing himself from Bunche, Myrdal argued that African Americans’ subordinate status could not simply be reasoned away by one factor such as “class.”49 In other words, there was not just one panacea to the problem of African Americans’ subordination; but rather, it was caused by a vicious circle of multiple factors: “White prejudice and discrimination keep the Negro low in standards of living, health, education, manners and morals. This, in its turn, gives support to white prejudice. White prejudice and Negro standards thus mutually ‘cause’ each other…If either of the factors changes, this will cause a change in the other factor, too, and start a process of interaction where the change in one factor will continuously be supported by the reaction of the other factor.”50 The way to address the problem of African Americans’ subordinate

48 Ibid., Vol. 1, 69.
49 Ibid., 77.
50 Ibid., 75-76.
status in society was to analyze the cumulative factors causing it and creating policies that addressed each of these factors.\textsuperscript{51} While Bunche looked at class-consciousness across racial lines as the means for addressing black Americans’ subordinate status in American society, Myrdal explained that this subordinate status was caused by a “vicious circle” and that its solution required the state’s involvement.

With an eye toward mobilizing the national state apparatus to create such policies, Myrdal also noted that he wanted to be realistic about African Americans’ precarious situation in American life and about the power dynamics in the United States. It was the dominant white New Dealers and their college-educated constituents (not the laboring whites) who held power in the United States. Not only did this “dominant white majority” hold “practically all the economic, social, and political power” in the country, but they were generally more sympathetic to African Americans than were laboring white Americans.\textsuperscript{52}

With this power dynamic in mind, Myrdal wrote his two-volume \textit{An American Dilemma} with a dominant white majority audience in mind (whom he implied lived and worked largely in the Northeast).\textsuperscript{53} While Bunche argued that African Americans’ future salvation lay in uniting with the white laboring class, Myrdal counter-argued that it lay in convincing the dominant white majority to pass comprehensive policies that would address the vicious circle causing African Americans’ subordinate status in different aspects of American life. And, the way to convince these dominant white Americans was

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 77.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., xlvii-xlvi, 462-466; and, Vol. 2, 792-794.

\textsuperscript{53} CCNY Records, Myrdal-Carnegie Study, Roll #1.
to appeal to their shared values. In this vein, Myrdal explained that white Americans’
treatment of African Americans ran against their national egalitarian ideals. They way to
solve this moral problem was for dominant white Americans to change their individual
behavior and public policies toward African Americans to match their ideals (the
American Creed).\(^{54}\)

The Swede’s second significant intellectual influence was Melville Herskovits,
who most recently had published *The Myth of Negro Past*.\(^{55}\) Like Bunche, the white
anthropologist is mentioned throughout *An American Dilemma*. Situating his own thesis
against Herskovits’s general theories, Myrdal wrote: “One white anthropologist, Melville
J. Herskovits, has…not only made excellent field studies of certain African and West
Indian Negro groups, but has written a general book to glorify African culture generally
and to show how it has survived in the American Negro community.”\(^{56}\) Through his
research of African culture, Herskovits had reacted to some whites’ claims that African
Americans had little history and culture of their own. By illustrating the links between
African Americans and native Africans and the long history associated with the latter,
Herskovits was attempting to illustrate that African Americans indeed had a deep culture
of which they could be proud (and which could prove to white Americans that African
Americans were a cultured group whose humanity needed to be acknowledged).

Like Herskovits, Myrdal argued in *An American Dilemma* that white Americans
needed to acknowledge African Americans’ equality as fellow Americans. However, he


disagreed with Herskovits’s starting point that African Americans’ culture was distinct from white Americans’ own. He argued that African American culture was “not something independent of general American culture. It is a distorted development, or a pathological condition, of the general American culture.”\textsuperscript{57} Like the African American sociologist E. Franklin Frazier who had authored \textit{The Negro Family in the United States} (1932),\textsuperscript{58} Myrdal argued in \textit{An American Dilemma} that the African American community was a pathology of white American life. Citing Frazier in his discussion of the African American “underworld,” Myrdal explained: The “general experience of exclusion and isolation, makes for a fatalistic sense of not belonging. Quite ordinarily the Negro is deprived of the feeling that he is a full-fledged participant in society and that the laws, in this significant sense, are ‘his’ laws.”\textsuperscript{59} Any differences that white Americans perceived between themselves and black Americans existed—not because African Americans had particularly unique African-rooted behavioral traits, but rather—because the discrimination and segregation they experienced in the United States led to these traits. Contrary to what Herskovits argued, Myrdal and Frazier concurred that African Americans deserved to be treated just like white Americans—not because their African-born culture was equally worthy, but—because they were really just like the rest of white Americans. Any differences were caused by white Americans’ segregation and discrimination towards black Americans within the United States.

\textsuperscript{57} Myrdal, \textit{An American Dilemma}, Vol. 2, 928.


\textsuperscript{59} Myrdal, \textit{An American Dilemma}, Vol. 1, 332.
Frazier, like Bunche, was one of Myrdal’s “friends among the younger Negro intellectuals.” Though Frazier and Myrdal concurred in their analysis of African American culture, one significant difference existed between their theses. Like Bunche, Frazier argued that economic equality was (if not the panacea as Bunche suggested) a critically unique and important favor in the search for African Americans’ equality in the United States. Historian Jonathan Scott Holloway has noted that Frazier closed *The Negro Family in the United States* “with an explicit reference to the connection he saw between economics and culture: [Frazier wrote,] ‘… in the final analysis, the process of assimilation and acculturation will be limited by the extent to which the Negro becomes integrated into the economic organization and participates in the life of the community.’” Frazier did not go as far as Bunche in arguing that the Marxian class struggle was key to African Americans’ improved status, but he did conquer with Bunche that economics was a critically important factor in the struggle. By contrast, Myrdal argued that economic exploitation was merely one of many factors that caused black Americans’ subordinate status, so its solution must be multi-dimensional.

One of Herskovits’s friends at the Social Science Research Council, the white sociologist Donald Young, also served as a sounding board for Myrdal. The author of *American Minority Peoples*, Young had suggested to the Swede that there was a

60 Ibid., 69.
common pattern between the discrimination that African Americans confronted from dominant white Americans and that which other ethnic and immigrant groups confronted in the United States. Myrdal took note of this argument; but in *An American Dilemma*, he pointed out that most of these other groups in the United States would be allowed to assimilate and integrate into the dominant white majority group while African Americans would be left out: “In spite of all race prejudice, few Americans seem to doubt that it is the ultimate fate of this nation to incorporate without distinction not only all the Northern European stocks, but also the people from Eastern and Southern Europe, the Near East and Mexico...The Negroes, on the other hand, are commonly assumed to be unassimilable and this is the reason why the characterization of the Negro problem as a minority problem does not exhaust its true import.”\(^6^4\) Myrdal pinpointed anti-amalgation laws throughout the United States as an example of how dominant white Americans distinguished African Americans from other minority groups and made a particularly pointed effort to keep this group from assimilating and integrating into the nation’s dominant white majority identity. He argued that the problems African Americans faced in assimilating and integrating into the dominant *folk* were unique and thus deserved specialized attention. This was, of course, the kind of specialized attention he was planning to provide in *An American Dilemma*.

In the final manuscript, Myrdal situated the following four-part thesis in dialogue with the work of these four American social scientists. He explained that the differences between white and black Americans were caused by environmental factors such as

segregation and discrimination. He argued that black Americans should shed their own cultural traits and become like the dominant white majority, which defined the American national identity. He noted to his white readers that the New Deal federal state apparatus had a role to play in bringing about this process of assimilation into the national state. And lastly, he explained that white Americans could get the state apparatus to move in this direction by realizing (and explaining amongst each other) that their behavior and public policies vis-à-vis African Americans needed to match their national egalitarian ideals: the American Creed.

To understand the roots of Gunnar Myrdal’s particular definition of racial equality in the United States, it is necessary to return to his and Alva Myrdal’s work on the population problem in 1930s Sweden.
In 1934, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal had published the book that propelled them into their country’s discussion of the population problem and forever cemented them as founders of the Swedish welfare state. In *Kris i befolkningsfrågan (Crisis in the Population Question)*, the Myrdals had explained that the Swedish state could play a central role in promoting higher quantity and quality within the population, by providing social policies that helped Swedes to procreate, raise, and provide for their children. Throughout the book, they emphasized that class distinctions between Swedes were irrelevant and that Swedes of lower and upper classes should be equally encouraged to procreate. Within Sweden, the couple suggested that only the mentally ill and feeble-minded should be discouraged from procreating.¹

To understand Gunnar Myrdal’s thesis in *An American Dilemma*, one must look back to a particular section of Alva and Gunnar Myrdal’s *Crisis in the Population Question*. As part of their analysis of the contemporary population problem in Sweden, the Myrdals in *Crisis* had engaged with contemporary scholarship on race- and class-based differences and population quality. They explained that racial differences, like class differences, were “social group differences” caused by the environment,² and that hereditary and genetic arguments had no place in discussions of population quality. They wrote: “One should take note that the modern, empirical, and nonspeculatively working

¹ Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1934).
² Ibid., 76.
social psychology is led to follow quite the opposite working hypothesis, namely that—when it comes to large social groups—differences at the average level of different mental, inherited abilities even between completely separate races, plays relatively little role…. No social group possesses that uniformity, that biological high or low rank, which one sometimes in one’s national improvement efforts, wanted to assume.”

In particular, the Myrdals noted that their analysis of social group differences applied in other corners of the world: “If blacks in America or Jews in Poland display certain average racial characteristics in their actions, by that it should be explained, that since childhood they had been branded, treated and had to react just as blacks in America or Jews in Poland.”

Just as social and institutional environments were to blame for creating poor and lower class Swedes’ differences, so too were these environmental factors to blame for creating black Americans’ and Jews’ own differences in their respective societies. If black Americans in the United States and Jews in Poland were not raised and treated as black Americans or Jews, the Myrdals asserted, they could assimilate and achieve the same standards of their nations’ common folk.

In Crisis, the Myrdals discussed black Americans in the context of social group differences, rather than in their discussion of immigrants to Sweden. In other words, they perceived that black Americans belonged in the American folk in a way that “immigrants of alien groups” did not belong within the folk in Sweden. Put differently, in Crisis, the Myrdals perceived that African Americans did not threaten the identity of the American folk in a way that immigrants would in Sweden. They argued that the differences

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3 Ibid., 76, 224.
4 Ibid., 76.
between white and black Americans (like the differences between richer and poorer Swedes and Jews and non-Jews in Poland, but unlike those between immigrants and natives of Sweden) could be erased to create a common folk.

In their discussions of Jews in Poland and black Americans in the United States, the Myrdals made explicit what they understood implicitly within Sweden: The couple assumed that race-, class-, and religious-based groups living within the geography of a nation-state could and should assimilate and integrate into the dominant folk, which the dominant native group defined.⁵ Most pressing to this discussion, the Myrdals unlike the Nazis assumed that racial, ethnic, and religious groups living within the nation-state could and should integrate into the folk.

Four years after the publication of Crisis in the Population Question, Gunnar Myrdal commenced work on the study of African Americans. Relatively early on during his tenure as director of this American study, the links between the Myrdals’ analysis of subordinate groups in Crisis and Gunnar Myrdal’s analysis of black Americans became clear. After two months of contemplative work in Manhattan in early 1939, Myrdal had sent Keppel a 63-page letter outlining exactly the kind of data he needed to collect in order to complete the comprehensive study of black Americans.⁶ He told the Corporation’s president that he was hoping to analyze topics of “importance to social programs of immediate actuality and to changes actually under way in the relations between the races, some of them bringing forth a more harmonious modus vivendi, but

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⁵ In Crisis, the Myrdals did not reflect on why they believed that the dominant group in a society was necessarily the “native” population.

⁶ Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, Jan. 28, 1939, General Education Board Archives, Series 1, Sub-Series 1.2, Box 270, Folder 2790, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter cited as GEB Archives).
some intensifying the several dilemmas confronting American culture because of the presence of the Negro.”

He made it clear to the Corporation’s president that he thought that social and institutional factors (not heredity or genetics) created the differences between white and black Americans and that these were the factors that were most important to investigate in an analysis of African Americans.

Much as he and Alva had explained in Crisis on the Population Question, the Swede explained in his January 1939 letter to Keppel that he believed that the differences between white and black Americans were caused by environmental (not hereditary or genetic) factors. In particular, he told the Carnegie Corporation president, he would not be looking for the supposed “inborn qualities of the American Negro.”

“If my impression is correct,” Myrdal wrote, “that the inborn physical and mental (intellectual and moral) qualities of the American Negro, or, rather, the differences with regard to these qualities between Negroes and other groups in the American population, are not in themselves of great significance in the social problem, no intensive studies should be made in these fields.”

After confirming his vision of the project with Keppel in the early days of 1939, Gunnar Myrdal moved forward with the study.

For the next year, Myrdal and his staff continued to investigate what they believed was every possible environmental barrier to black Americans’ assimilation and

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid; and, Correspondence between Gunnar Myrdal and Frederick P. Keppel, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Microfilm Roll #1, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New York (hereafter cited as CCNY Records).
9 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, Jan. 28, 1939, GEB Archives, Series 1, Sub-Series 1.2, Box 270, Folder 2790.
10 Ibid., 20.
integration in the dominant population. They observed and examined “recent changes and present tendencies to change of status as well as interests and values,” and studied “the several dilemmas confronting Negro groups and the American culture at large which grow out of these changes (or the lack of change).”\textsuperscript{11} They investigated “particularly the Negro-white race relations (contacts, conflicts, adjustments and differentiations)” and analyzed “the induced changes (or the interferences) in the process of change and adjustment, represented by legislative programs, educational work, interracial efforts, concerted action by Negro groups, etc.”\textsuperscript{12}

In July, Myrdal noted that Woofter had “undertaken to assume general advisory relationship to some one who would work on the study of the Negro in Southern Agriculture, and especially the impact of recent agricultural policy upon the Negro.” For this work, the WPA researcher recruited Professor T. C. McCormick of Wisconsin and two assistants.\textsuperscript{13} Working largely from Atlanta, Raper already was engaged on a study of the “System of Extra-Legal Pressure upon the Negro to Keep Him in his Place”; while from Washington D.C., Brown was making plans to begin a study of “The Negro and American Culture” that upcoming September.\textsuperscript{14} From her part, Guion Johnson was preparing her memorandum on the history of racial ideologies in the United States.\textsuperscript{15}

Though plans fell through for the collaboration of Howard University’s Abram Harris

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\item[12] Ibid., 2-3.
\item[14] Ibid.
\item[15] Ibid.
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and of the historians Charles and Mary Beard, several American social scientists and their assistants joined in.¹⁶ For example, Dillard University anthropologist and fellow at Yale’s Institute of Human Relations where Dorothy Thomas worked, Allison Davis, was beginning work on a memorandum on “The Negro Churches and Associations.”¹⁷ A recent doctoral graduate from Columbia who had returned from fieldwork in Brazil months before, Ruth Landis, was engaged in writing about “The Negro in Other Parts of the New World than America and the Cultural Influences on American Negro Culture,” while the established Northwestern sociologist, Melville Herskovits, worked on a “shorter statement of the influence of the bi-racial culture situation in America of the present interest in African art and culture and Negro achievements in art, science and athletics.”¹⁸

For the next months and well into the following year of 1940, Myrdal’s staff in New York City, Washington D.C., and Atlanta and his researchers scattered across the country continued work on their memoranda (with the only significant change being that staff member Dorothy Thomas accepted a position in California and Wisconsin sociologist Samuel A. Stouffer replaced her).¹⁹ During this time, Myrdal traveled around

¹⁶ Ibid.


the country and, alongside Sterner, managed his team of over seventy American researchers.\textsuperscript{20}

They all worked to ascertain “in some detail the actual demographic, economic, education, social and political status of the Negro population in the United States,” and analyzed the “conflicting interests and values as to the ‘right’ status of the Negro held by different groups of whites and Negroes.”\textsuperscript{21} They observed and examined “recent changes and present tendencies to change of status as well as interests and values,” and studied “the several dilemmas confronting Negro groups and the American culture at large which grow out of these changes (or the lack of change).”\textsuperscript{22} The researchers on this comprehensive study of black Americans investigated “particularly the Negro-white race relations (contacts, conflicts, adjustments and differentiations).”\textsuperscript{23} Lastly, they analyzed “the induced changes (or the interferences) in the process of change and adjustment, represented by legislative programs, educational work, interracial efforts, concerted


\textsuperscript{20} Myrdal, \textit{An American Dilemma}, xi. From his part, Carnegie Corporation President F.P. Keppel was content with this approach for the study. For contemporaries today who see \textit{The Poor White Study} and \textit{An African Survey} as examples of colonial projects and \textit{An American Dilemma} as a significant text of the American civil rights movement, it seems odd that Keppel could support Myrdal’s approach to this project while at the same time looking fondly at his role in bringing about the two earlier works. However, one must remember that Keppel’s primary goal with these three studies was to use comprehensive social scientific analyses of white-black relations to stabilize and improve race relations across the Atlantic. More than channeling any particular commitment to racial segregation or integration, he believed that holistic social scientific analysis was the key to creating modern public policies on race relations that furthered international peace throughout the different regions of the world.

\textsuperscript{21} Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, May 8, 1939, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Microfilm Roll #1, 2-3.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
action by Negro groups, etc.” In a nutshell, they investigated what they believed was every possible environmental barrier to black Americans’ assimilation and integration in the dominant population.

In April of 1940, the German army crossed the Danish and Norwegian boarders and the two countries subsequently succumbed to German occupation. Myrdal was then collecting memoranda from his researchers and commencing plans for writing his own conclusions and analysis. He had not yet begun this manuscript, so his obligations to the study had not yet been met. However, the Swede explained to the Carnegie Corporation President Keppel that it was his duty to return to help his fellow countrymen fight a probable Third Reich invasion and to share their fate. Richard Sterner and his wife could stay, he explained, but he and Alva were prominent Swedes and their country needed their expertise. The Corporation agreed to Myrdal’s decision and made plans for the Chicago sociologist Samuel Stouffer to collect the remaining reports during Myrdal’s absence.

At that time, nobody knew if Myrdal would be able to return to complete the study: Assuming the United States became a belligerent in the European war, many must have thought that Myrdal’s return across the Atlantic would be unlikely. The Corporation’s president decided that the organization would take the approach of waiting and seeing. While the researchers completed their work, Stouffer would serve as acting director.25

24 Gunnar Myrdal to Frederick P. Keppel, May 8, 1939, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Microfilm Roll #1, 2-3.

25 “Office of the President Record of Interview: FPK, Dr. Myrdal and Dr. Samuel A. Stouffer,” April 29, 1940, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Microfilm Roll #1; and, Frederick P. Keppel
The following month, the Myrdals left behind an unfinished study in order to return to Sweden and await their country’s fate during the Second World War. They crossed the Atlantic “on a cargo steamer loaded with arms, arriving in Petsamo (northern Finland), and flying from there to Sweden with two little girls and an irate, taciturn son who had wanted to remain in New York”26 and were back in Stockholm by early June of 1940. Though the country remained neutral during the war, members of Parliament prepared for a probable German invasion by creating committees and taskforces. Contrary to their expectations, however, returning expatriates Gunnar and Alva Myrdal were not offered wartime tasks within the Swedish government.27

Less than a year later, Gunnar Myrdal returned to the States to complete the study. Alva Myrdal and their three children stayed in Sweden, while he traveled to New York via Moscow, the Trans-Siberian Railway, Vladivostok, Japan, Honolulu, San Francisco, and Chicago;28 arriving at the Carnegie Corporation offices in Manhattan three months later.

In March of 1941, Gunnar Myrdal met with his principal staff members in the Chrysler Building and the Carnegie Corporation president before installing himself in at

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27 Ibid., 223.

28 Hirdman, Alva Myrdal, 225.
the Robert E. Lee Hotel, a luxury hotel in Jackson, Mississippi. Though it is unclear exactly why Myrdal chose this destination, Stouffer had suggested to Keppel that the Swede should isolate himself in order to create his own thoughts and analysis on the topic. The Chicago sociologist reasoned that if Myrdal thought through the collected data near other academics, he might not arrive at a unique thesis. From Myrdal’s perspective, he perhaps thought that living in the South for a few weeks might rekindle his awareness of the roots of white-black relations in the United States, and perhaps thought that this immersion would be particularly useful to him since he had spent the previous year in Stockholm.

In Jackson, the Swede read over the thousands of pages of memoranda his staff and their assistants had completed during his absence. Among the memoranda were four that the Carnegie Corporation (unsure if Myrdal was to return) had selected for publication. These were Melville J. Herskovits’ *The Myth of the Negro Past*, Charles S. Johnson’s *Patterns of Negro Segregation*, Richard Sterner’s *The Negro’s Share*, and Otto Klineberg’s *Characteristics of the American Negro*. Even more, Myrdal had access to

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30 “Office of the President Record of Interview: CD and Samuel A. Stouffer,” Feb. 28, 1941, CCNY Records, Negro Study General Correspondence, Roll #1.


an endless list of unpublished memoranda, which his staff and their associates and assistants had completed during his absence. The titles of these reports varied from “Tests of Negro Intelligence,” “Mental Disease among American Negroes,” and “The Hybrid and the Problem of Miscegenation,” to “Race’ Attitudes,” and “The Stereotypes of the American Negro.” Others focused further on “Conceptions and Ideologies of the Negro Problem,” “The Fertility of the Negro,” “The Ethos of the Negro in the New World,” and “The Negro in Agriculture.” Between 1938 and 1941, Myrdal’s team of American and Swedish social researchers produced over fifty memoranda and countless numbers of smaller reports that, together, totaled 15,000 pages worth of research.33

After reading through this material in Jackson, Mississippi, Gunnar Myrdal spent the summer reading secondary literature at the university library in Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Leaving their three children behind in Sweden, Alva Myrdal joined Gunnar Myrdal a few months later just as he moved to Princeton, New Jersey to write the manuscript.34 Just an hour away from Manhattan by train, he was in close proximity to the Carnegie Corporation and just over three hours north of Washington, DC. Perhaps most importantly to the Corporation, he was far away from both to focus on his writing.

In Princeton, Gunnar Myrdal was reunited with his Swedish assistant Richard Sterner who had remained in the United States during the Myrdals’ stay in Sweden. The

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33 Myrdal, An American Dilemma, xii-xiv.

34 Walter A. Jessup (Chairman of CCNY Executive Committee) to Ernest M. Hopkins (Dartmouth College President), May 13, 1941, and “Office of the President Record of Interview: CD and Dr. Myrdal,” June 17, 1942, CCNY Records, Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence, Roll #1. See also, An American Dilemma Revisited Manuscript (Foreword), Dec. 3, 1985, AGM Archives, Handlingar från Gunnar Myrdals verksamhet: An American Dilemma Revisited 1984-1986, 4.2.11:08b.
two were joined by the American sociology graduate student from Chicago, Arnold Rose, who was to help the two Swedes collect data and write the final manuscript within the year. Since English was neither Gunnar Myrdal’s or Richard Sterner’s mother tongue, Myrdal found it helpful to have the young American onboard.

In the end, the three authors compiled forty-five chapters and ten appendices. In *An American Dilemma*, Gunnar Myrdal noted that he had written thirty-four chapters and six appendices; Rose wrote ten of the chapters and three appendices; and, Sterner wrote nine chapters and one appendix. Myrdal penned most of the final manuscript, but Rose wrote most of the sections on racial theories and ideologies; population and migration; and, some sections on politics, social inequality, leadership and concerted action, and the African American community. From his part, Sterner made most of his contributions to the section on economics. Though Sterner and Rose helped in the writing of the manuscript, Gunnar Myrdal had the final word on the composition of the final manuscript. The only exceptions were chapters 43 and 44 on “The Negro Community” and sections one and four of the tenth appendix, which Arnold Rose completed after the two Swedes had returned to Sweden in the fall of 1942.

Running the length of 1,483 pages, Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* presented an unprecedented amount of data on

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37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., xvi.
African Americans. In the forty-five chapters and ten appendices making up the two-volume study, Myrdal presented chapters on economic inequality, economic discrimination, political inequality, inequality of justice, and social inequality, alongside chapters on black American families, churches, schools, and voluntary associations. Weaved throughout this presentation of empirical data was Gunnar Myrdal’s four-part argument that the differences between white and black Americans were caused by environmental factors (such as segregation and other forms of discrimination); that African Americans could and should become part of the dominant


white majority; that the state had a role to play in bringing about this process of assimilation and integration; and, that white Americans could mobilize towards this policy change by ensuring that their behavior and public policies reflected their national egalitarian ideals.

Like in Crisis on the Population Question, Myrdal again assumed that the dominant group defined the identity of the nation and that it was in the interest of the subordinate social groups to become part of this dominant group. Much as in this earlier book, Gunnar Myrdal in An American Dilemma paid little attention to the possibility that there might be something about poor Swedes’ or black Americans’ culture and institutions that might be worth saving.

This point was implicit in the Myrdals’ theory of subordinate group equality in Crisis, while Gunnar Myrdal’s associate Arnold Rose made it explicit in chapter forty-three of An American Dilemma, which the American penned after the Swedes had returned to Stockholm. Rose noted: “In practically all of its divergences, American Negro culture is not something independent of general American culture. It is a distorted development, or a pathological condition, of the general American culture.”^41 Because the dominant white majority had prevented African Americans’ assimilation and integration into the national white community, Myrdal’s associate explained that the latter had created their own particular family structures, educational institutions, churches, recreational activities, social organizations, political opinions, artistic movements, and other “character traits.”^42 These differences between white and black

^41 Myrdal, An American Dilemma, 928.
^42 Ibid., 928-29.
Americans were “a reaction to discrimination from white people, on the one hand, and a result of encouragement from white people, on the other hand.”43 Given the opportunity to assimilate and integrate into the dominant white majority, Rose explained that African Americans could and should shed themselves of these institutions that distinguished them as African Americans.44

In *An American Dilemma*, Myrdal and his associates explained that once these environmental barriers to black Americans’ assimilation and integration were erased, black Americans could and would become just like white Americans:

As more Negroes become educated and urbanized, it may be expected that the will lose their distinctive cultural traits and take over the dominant American patterns. As the trend proceeds, and as there emerges a class of Negroes which is recognized by whites to have the same cultural traits as themselves, the Negro will be thought to be less ‘peculiar’ than he is now. Recognition of increased cultural similarity is not unimportant in the general attitude of whites toward Negroes. Thus cultural assimilation plays a role in the general circular process determining the Negro’s status in America.45

As white Americans continued to dismantle the social and institutional barriers that made black Americans different, Myrdal and his associates imagined that black Americans would assimilate, integrate, and become part of the common (white) American group.

This theory of social group equality was present in the Myrdals’ *Crisis in the Population Question*. In this 1934 text, the couple had assumed that it was in the interest of poorer parents to receive state benefits and attain for their children and themselves the

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 929.
45 Ibid., 966.
standards of more affluent Swedes. Moreover, they had compared poor Swedes to black Americans and had suggested that the latter (much like the former) could and should undergo this process of assimilating and integrating into the standards and norms of the dominant group.

However, since the Myrdals had written *Crisis*, Gunnar Myrdal had read mounds of social scientific knowledge on black Americans, and he incorporated this literature into his presentation in the 1944 publication. In *An American Dilemma*, Myrdal emphasized that the modern social sciences showed that black Americans were physically and mentally able of becoming just like white Americans. In his chapter-long analysis of the history of the social sciences on black Americans, he noted that Columbia anthropologist Franz Boas (alongside other social scientists such as the late sociologists W.G. Sumner and C.H. Hooley and the independent sociologist W.I. Thomas) defined modern social scientific knowledge on ethnic and racial groups. To this point, Myrdal wrote:

The last two or three decades have seen a variable revolution in scientific though on the racial characteristics of the Negro. This revolution has actually a much wider scope: it embraces not only the whole race issue even outside the Negro problem, but the fundamental assumptions on the nature-nurture question. The social sciences in America, and particularly sociology, anthropology, and psychology, have gone through a conspicuous development, increasingly giving the preponderance to environment instead of to heredity.\(^{46}\)

These American sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists were increasingly disproving the inherent and biological differences between ethnic and racial groups; thus

\(^{46}\) Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (1944), Ch. 4 “Racial Beliefs,” 93.
suggesting that these differences could be addressed, solved, and dissolved through environmental means.

Myrdal argued that this modern social scientific knowledge was not simply a younger generation’s particular perspective, but rather, a more scientific perspective. Past social researchers who had argued that human differences were caused by biology produced prejudiced, fallacious, unsubstantiated race dogma, while contemporary social scientists who emphasized the environmental causes of human differences were “inventing and applying ingenious specialized research methods.” In the process, they were forcing “informed people to give up some of the more blatant of [their] biological errors.”47 From Myrdal’s perspective, it was modern social scientific truth that black Americans’ differences from white Americans were simply caused by the environment. If environmental factors diminished in significance, then as he already suggested in Crisis, black Americans could and should become like white Americans.

Chapter seven of An American Dilemma, however, reveals one significant deviation between the Myrdals’ discussion of black Americans in Crisis and Gunnar Myrdal’s own in 1944. Before getting into a discussion of the chapter’s substantive arguments, it is first important to note that Myrdal’s associate Arnold Rose prepared a draft of this section of the manuscript. However, Gunnar Myrdal wrote its final form before he had left the United States for Sweden in the fall of 1942.48

In this seventh chapter, Gunnar Myrdal and his associates explained that white Americans very much resisted black Americans’ assimilation and integration. Dominant

47 Ibid.

white Americans allowed other minority groups to become part of the national *folk* after a
generation or two: “[White Americans] see obstacles; they emphasize the religious and
‘racial’ differences; they believe it will take a long time. But they assume that it is going
to happen, and do not have, on the whole, strong objections to it—provided it is located
in a distant future.”\(^49\) By contrast to these other minority groups, Myrdal and his
associates observed that white Americans generally treated African Americans as
“unassimilable” into the white national community.\(^50\)

Since the couple had written *Crisis*, Gunnar Myrdal had become convinced that it
was just as important to study a subordinate group’s ability to assimilate and integrate
into the *folk* as it was to investigate a dominant group’s resistance to it. As the racial
policies in the Third Reich and the United States likely showed him, just because social
scientific knowledge on “Jews in Poland” or black Americans in the United States
illustrated that these subordinate groups could assimilate and integrate (and even if he
and Alva Myrdal thought that they *should*) did not necessarily mean that dominant
national groups would allow them to. In *An American Dilemma*, Myrdal still argued that
black Americans (like “Jews in Poland” and poorer Swedes in Sweden) could and should
become like the dominant *folk*. However, in this 1944 study, he acknowledged that
prejudice from the dominant national community in the first two cases made the
experience of black Americans and Jews distinct from that of poorer Swedes in Sweden.

In this chapter, Myrdal addressed his dominant white American audience with the
thought that the experience of black Americans in the American national community was

\(^{49}\) Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, Ch. 3 “Facets of the Negro Problem,” Section 1 “American
Minority Problems,” 50-53.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 53. Myrdal thus considered African Americans distinct from other minority groups and categorized
them as a “caste,” not part of a class in American society.
analogous to the experience of Jews under the Third Reich. He wanted to help his white readers distinguish themselves from the latter. In particular, Myrdal reminded his readers that they, unlike Germans, cherished their “American Creed” of equality and liberty. Because of this, the “Negroes cannot be killed off. Compulsory deportation would infringe upon personal liberty in such a radical fashion that it is excluded.”\(^5^1\) White Americans would not be able to replicate the Germans’ “solution” to their own race problem, because white Americans were a people with shared national ideals that prevented them from doing so.

With this deeply entrenched American Creed, Myrdal argued that white Americans only could limit the size of the African American population by limiting fertility.\(^5^2\) In particular, Myrdal suggested the possibility of sterilizing all African Americans as the “most direct way of meeting the problem” of African Americans’ continued existence in the United States. However, he was quick to note that the American Creed would prevent white Americans from pushing forward such a policy on all African Americans. Much like Swedes, Americans generally only supported sterilization to “prevent the reproduction of the feeble-minded, the insane, and the severely malformed when a hereditary causation can be shown.”\(^5^3\) Without the prospects of sterilization as a public policy measure for limiting the fertility of this unwanted

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 170.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 170, 175-78.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 176. During the Second World War were increasingly defining themselves against Nazi Germany and many of these same Americans who had applauded sterilization laws in Europe as a means of controlling population quality now found it less appealing as a public policy. Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), Ch. 7 “Bitter Harvest.”
segment of the American populace, Myrdal noted that white Americans only had
contraception to consider.

In *An American Dilemma*, the Swede acknowledged that white Americans (like
dominant Germans under the Third Reich) were concerned by the numbers of their
loathed subordinate group and conceded that one of their public policy measures could be
to limit the amount of African Americans through contraceptive measures. Because of
the American Creed, however, white Americans would direct themselves toward public
policy measures that distinguished themselves from the Third Reich’s treatment of Jews
and brought them closer to creating a modern, democratic population policy such as the
Myrdals’ own in Sweden (which assimilated and integrated subordinate social groups and
limited sterilization to the mentally ill and feebleminded).

Clearly, Gunnar Myrdal and his associates in *An American Dilemma* found little
value in the preservation of African American life, both literally and figuratively. In fact,
scholars have long wondered why Myrdal thought that racial equality required black
Americans to disappear into the dominant white majority *folk*.54 While they generally
have overlooked Myrdal’s discussion of genocide, sterilization, and contraception in *An
American Dilemma*, scholars have noted that his argument for racial equality in the
United States downplayed the importance and value of black culture and institutions by

54 See, Stephen Graubard, “*An American Dilemma Revisited,*” in *An American Dilemma Revisited: Race
Herbert Aptheker, *The Negro People in America: A Critique of Gunnar Myrdal’s An American Dilemma*
(New York: International Publishers, 1946); and, Ralph Ellison, “*An American Dilemma: A Review*” in
House, 1973), 81-95. In his review, Ellison wrote: “Much of Negro culture might be negative, but there is
also much of great value and richness, which, because it has been secreted by living and has made their
lives more meaningful, Negroes will not willingly disregard… In Negro culture there is much of value for
America as a whole. What is needed are Negroes to take it and create of it ‘the uncreated consciousness of
their race.’ In doing so they will do far more; they will help create a more human American.” Ibid.
calling for their destruction. They have further noted that this would require black Americans to make too great a sacrifice in order to gain their rightful equal status in American life.\(^55\) In other words, these critics have found disconcerting Myrdal’s claim that black Americans’ due equal status in American society should depend on their ability (and willingness) to abandon their own culture and institutions and act, live and speak like mainstream white Americans every minute of the day, every day of the year.

In *An American Dilemma*, as in *Crisis in the Population Question*, Gunnar Myrdal argued that the differences between white and black Americans were caused by the environment; that one dominant group defined the identity of the national community; that black Americans could and should become part of this *folk*; and, that the state could play an important role in bringing about this assimilation and integration into the social corpus. Once in the United States and writing specifically on African Americans, however, Myrdal concluded that white Americans placed particular barriers to African Americans’ assimilation and integration that made this dynamic unique. In the process, he departed from *Crisis* by suggesting that the experience of black Americans was more analogous to that of Jews under the Third Reich (than to the experience of poorer Swedes in Sweden). In the first two cases, the dominant group vehemently rejected these subordinate group’s assimilation and integration into the national community. Myrdal further explained that, though white Americans and Nazi Germans shared an interest in limiting the size and future reproduction of their despised subordinate groups, Americans could distinguish themselves from Nazi Germans by assimilating and integrating the existing population of African Americans into the national community.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.
The third part of Gunnar Myrdal’s four-part thesis, present both in *An American Dilemma* as in the Myrdals’ *Crisis in the Population Question*, was that a national government and its bureaucracy could play a central role in bringing about this process of assimilation and integration into the folk. In *An American Dilemma*, Gunnar Myrdal noted that black Americans’ assimilation and integration into the dominant white American folk would come not only by changing white Americans’ individual behavior, but also by changing public policies on black Americans. To this point, he explained that the U.S. federal government in the early 1940s was in a particularly good position (like Sweden had been in the 1930s) to bring about these public policy changes; noting that the “New Deal during the ’thirties ha[d] speeded up” the trend of public control gradually “moving from municipalities and counties to states and from the states to the federal government.”56 Increasingly, he observed, the U.S. federal government was becoming the nucleus of political power in the United States.

Within the U.S., Myrdal commented that Americans were establishing federal agencies populated with bureaucrats to deal with the increasing body of public activity, public control, and social reform taking place from Washington D.C. He also remarked that these reform-minded individuals working in these federal agencies were un-elected public servants with a “relatively high level of education and professional training” and with a particular investment in “preventing individual and social inefficiencies and wrongs and upon improving conditions.”57


57 Ibid., 546.
Reflecting on Americans’ perception of this novelty in American politics, he wrote: “[T]he common people in America are coming to realize that a capable and uncorrupted bureaucracy, independent in its work except for the laws and regulations passed by the legislatures and the continuous control by legislators and executives, is as important for the efficient working of a modern democracy as is the voter’s final word on the general direction of this administration.”58 From Myrdal’s perspective in the early 1940s, bureaucrats in U.S. federal agencies could play a central role in administrating the social reforms passed by the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. federal government, while the U.S. Supreme Court’s recent decisions suggested to Myrdal that this third branch of the federal government would serve to complement these reforms.59 He deduced that the three branches of the federal government were well positioned to receive his public policy recommendation of assimilating and integrating black Americans into white life.

At the same time, Myrdal acknowledged that Americans might receive with some hesitation his suggestion of using the federal government to achieve this public policy goal. Writing during the Second World War, however, Myrdal emphasized that times were changing, becoming much more complex, and that Americans would need to embrace the idea of using the U.S. federal government to achieve such comprehensive changes in American society.60 He wrote: “Many things that for a long period have been predominantly a matter of individual adjustment will become more and more determined

58 Ibid., 437.
59 Ibid., 555.
60 Ibid., 1023.
by political decision and public regulation.” Like the Swedish government in the 1930s, Myrdal predicted in *An American Dilemma* that the U.S. federal government in the 1940s was poised to manage and direct the reconstruction of the national social corpus (the *folk*). Though usually more hesitant than Swedes to mobilize the national government for such purposes, Myrdal predicted that the Second World War—and the urgency it placed on Americans to prove themselves distinct from the Third Reich—would serve as sufficient motivation to do the extraordinary.

The fourth and final part of Myrdal’s four-part thesis in *An American Dilemma* was that dominant white Americans could mobilize the national state apparatus to bring about African Americans’ assimilation and integration into the dominant white majority by ensuring that their behavior and policies reflected their national egalitarian ideals: the American Creed. This part of the thesis grew out of the Myrdals’ wartime propaganda book, *Kontact med Amerika* (*Contact with America*, 1941).

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61 Ibid.
In the spring of 1940, the Myrdals had left behind an unfinished study of black Americans to return to Sweden, where they had expected to put their services and expertise at their countrymen’s disposal. Given no formal tasks by the Swedish Government, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal created wartime work for themselves in the form they knew best. As in the early 1930s, the couple came together to co-author a book. This time, it was a 300-page defense and glowing description of American democracy, Kontakt med Amerika (Contact with America).¹

A year later, Gunnar Myrdal returned to the United States to write the manuscript for the Carnegie Corporation’s study of black Americans. First settling in a hotel in Jackson, Mississippi to read his researchers’ reports in the summer of 1940, Myrdal then moved to Princeton, New Jersey in the fall. There, he was reunited with Alva Myrdal and, within the year, wrote the two-volume manuscript of the American study.

In An American Dilemma, Myrdal not only argued that the differences between white and black Americans were caused by the environment; that white Americans defined the identity of the nation; that black Americans could and should assimilate and integrate into this national community; and that the state apparatus had a role to play in bringing about this assimilation; but also, that white Americans could mobilize the state in achieving this goal by ensuring that their individual behavior (and public policies)

¹ Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, Kontakt med Amerika (Stockholm: A. Bonnier, 1941).
matched their national egalitarian ideals, the “American Creed.” By looking at Contact with America, one sees how and why Gunnar Myrdal added this fourth part to his thesis in An American Dilemma.

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When Alva Myrdal returned to Stockholm in late spring of 1940, she wrote to an American friend that she saw some Swedish colleagues and friends turn into outright Nazis and wondered to another friend just how their country could have changed so much. She wrote that the Sweden that she had left had been a modern, democratic, and forward-thinking country that served as a model for other democracies like the United States, but that the one she had returned to in 1940 was conservative, traditional, and tolerant of the Third Reich.² From this and other similar observations, the Myrdals came to the idea of writing a book about the United States.

In writing Contact with America, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal aimed to garner support for the United States in Sweden. In the summer of 1940, the United States was already informally engaged in the Second World War and appeared likely to soon become a formal belligerent.³ The Myrdals wanted to make clear to fellow Swedes that there was an inherent difference between modern-day Germans and Americans, and that the latter group was worthy of Swedes’ allegiance during the war. They set out to disprove stereotypes about the United States that their fellow countrymen seemed to hold

³ Alva och Gunnar Myrdal, Kontakt med Amerika (Stockholm: A. Bonnier, 1941).
and that lead them to equate the two regimes. In particular, they sought to explain that the U.S. was not just a heterogeneous group of people who treated racial minorities (particularly black Americans) as badly as Germans treated Jews. Rather, the United States (like Sweden) was a common national community united by egalitarian national ideals.

America, they acknowledged, “is more heterogeneous” than any other country, so it “takes a long time and through lively studies before one discovers that which is shared and stable [there].” However, they noted, the “secret is that America, more than any other land in the Western world, large or small, has the most homogeneous, firmly and clearly formulated, vividly living system of expressed ideals for human social life…Each American has had them stamped in his mind.” This, they explained, was the “American creed” that bridged the American folk together. Here the Myrdals previewed for the first time the concept of American democratic ideals that was to be part of Gunnar Myrdal’s thesis in *An American Dilemma*: the American Creed.

Every American, the Myrdals explained, shared the belief that “[a]ll individuals have the same rights in relation to each other and before the state, independent of race, religion, and standing. Around each individual, in whatever condition he lives, stands therefore an aura of clear rights which even the state must respect.” These were, according to the Myrdals, shared egalitarian ideals which Swedes could relate to (and which were lacking among the German people).

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4 Ibid., 32-33.
5 Ibid., 33
6 Ibid., 34.
The authors conceded that Americans, like Germans, treated racial minorities badly. However, they noted that Americans, unlike Germans, were eager to correct their discriminatory behavior in order to live up to their egalitarian ideals. “[N]o people on earth are (or ever were) so passionately interested in finding and crying out their own deficiencies as Americans,” they wrote.\(^7\) Indeed, Gunnar Myrdal mentioned he had been asked to research black Americans in the United States and he very much doubted that Germany would ever have invited a foreign researcher to analyze “the country’s most difficult race problem—the Jewish question.”\(^8\)

Because of their adherence to this creed, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal noted that Americans distinguished themselves from Germans. Gunnar Myrdal reported: “I often would ask [Americans] how they could criticize so much the treatment of Jews in Germany, while their own Negroes and so often many of their poor whites did not have it much better. The answer was: ‘But we do not say that what happens is right! That is the difference between America and Germany, that here that goes against our ideals…’”\(^9\)

This gap between their actions and ideals caused Americans emotional distress. According to the Myrdals, “The Negro problem, like all the other difficult social problems, is mainly a problem in Americans’ own hearts.”\(^10\) In other words, the American national community (the *folk*) was bound together by egalitarian ideals. When white Americans treated black Americans unequally, they felt badly about it, because it

\(^7\) Ibid., 51.
\(^8\) Ibid., 52.
\(^9\) Ibid.
\(^10\) Ibid.
went against the ideals that defined them as Americans. Americans, unlike Germans, aspired to be a more egalitarian people.

In comparing these two countries, the Myrdals hoped to remind Swedes why it was important to fight for a modern, democratic Sweden and why it was important for them to support the United States if and when it formally entered the war. In this vein, the couple hoped to convince their readers that Sweden was more similar to the United States than to Germany. In Gunnar’s words, “One of those who writes this has had, for the last two years, the assignment of becoming an expert exactly on America’s social deficiencies and he knows more about those imperfections than maybe anyone else who writes in the Swedish language. He knows quite well how much more evil, injustice and shortcomings that still remain in America compared to Sweden. But he has also learned how much more there is of goodness, justice, and extraordinary power.” For this reason, the Myrdals believed, the United States, despite its unequal treatment of black Americans, was worthy of Sweden’s support.

The American Creed was at the very heart of the Myrdals’ distinction between Germany and the United States in Contact with America. In these national egalitarian ideals, the Myrdals found a straightforward and clear way to distinguish in the minds of Swedes the United States’ treatment of black Americans from Germany’s treatment of Jews. Through this analysis, the Myrdals tried to illustrate to their fellow countrymen just how the United States was distinct from the Third Reich; how it was more similar to the modern, democratic Sweden of the past; and, why Sweden and the United States should be allies in this war.

11 Ibid., 56.
Just as this Swedish book went to press in the first weeks of 1941, Gunnar Myrdal made his way back to the United States to complete the Carnegie Corporation’s study of black Americans and Alva Myrdal joined him in the fall. For the next year, Gunnar Myrdal worked tirelessly on the final manuscript of his study, which he perceived as an important project in its own right as well as an important project on behalf of modern democracy. From his and Alva’s perspectives at the time, Sweden likely would be invaded by the Third Reich, so the United States would need to stand alone as the wartime model of a modern democracy.  

In *An American Dilemma*, Gunnar Myrdal not only explained that black Americans were equal human beings with white Americans who could and should become like the dominant white majority in the country, but that this was a democratic necessity. By then, Myrdal understood that his analysis and public policy recommendation for the Carnegie Corporation’s study of black Americans had particular weight during the Second World War. In *An American Dilemma*, he wrote:

> This War is an ideological war fought in defense of democracy. The totalitarian dictatorships in the enemy countries had even made the ideological issue much sharper in this War than it was in the First World War. Moreover, in this War the principle of democracy had to be applied more explicitly to race. Fascism and Nazism are based on a racial superiority dogma—not unlike the old hackneyed American caste theory—and they came to power by means of racial persecution and oppression. In fighting fascism and Nazism, America had to stand before the whole world in favor of racial tolerance and cooperation and of racial equality. It had to denounce German racialism as a reversion to barbarism. It had to proclaim universal brotherhood and the inalienable human rights.  

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Myrdal argued that it was important for white Americans to integrate black Americans into their majority *folk*, not only because social scientific knowledge on black Americans proved that black Americans could become part of the dominant folk, but in order to prove their democratic nature as a people.

Transplanting his discussion of the “American Creed” from *Contact with America* into *An American Dilemma*, Myrdal explained that American democracy could be defined by Americans’ democratic ideals, the “American Creed.”¹⁴ He noted that all Americans shared this democratic faith in equality and liberty,¹⁵ and that increasingly so, they were placing more value in egalitarianism. He wrote: “In America as everywhere else—and sometimes, perhaps, on the average, a little more ruthlessly—liberty often provided an opportunity for the stronger to rob the weaker. Against this, the equalitarianism in the Creed has been persistently revolting. The struggle is far from ended...When opportunity became bounded in the last generation, the inherent conflict between equality and liberty flared up. Equality is slowly winning. The New Deal during the ‘thirties was a landslide.”¹⁶ Myrdal explained to *An American Dilemma* readers that Americans valued their democratic ideals; and that among these ideals, their egalitarian ideals were becoming increasingly dominant during the mid-twentieth century. He emphasized that these American democratic ideals were important to showcase on the world stage during the Second World War, precisely because an American victory relied on Americans’ ability to prove themselves distinct (and better) than their Third Reich

¹⁴ Ibid., 25.

¹⁵ Ibid., 755, 756, 656, “…white Americans’ ideals of democracy and equality…”

¹⁶ Ibid., 9, 80.
adversaries. In other words, Americans would need to prove to the world that modern
democracy was a distinct political ethos from fascism and worth fighting for.
Specifically, they would need to show how democratic ideals lead a people to a
population policy on a marginalized, discriminated group that was wholly distinguishable
from the Third Reich’s own.

Over a year after he had returned to the United States to complete the Carnegie
Corporation’s study of black Americans and over four years after he had begun directing
it, Myrdal finally completed this final manuscript. Choosing a title to reflect the book’s
double thesis, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy,
Myrdal delivered the manuscript to the Carnegie Corporation President Keppel in
September of 1942. Days later, he, Alva Myrdal, and the Sterners returned to Sweden.¹⁷

¹⁷ Charles Dollard to Frederick P. Keppel, Sept. 15, 1942, Carnegie Corporation of New York Records,
Carnegie Corporation Negro Study General Correspondence, Roll #1, Columbia University Rare Book and
Manuscript Library, New York.
When Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel read Myrdal’s final manuscript in the fall of 1942, he was retiring from the presidency of the Corporation, and as war work, was soon joining the U.S. President’s Committee on War Relief Agencies in Washington D.C.¹ He was happy with the results of this last major project under his presidency. Writing to the new president of the Carnegie Corporation,² Keppel compared this project with others under his leadership such as The Poor White Question and Lord Hailey’s African Survey. The former had been, according to Keppel, a “ten-strike” while the latter had “already created a profound impression and like the Poor White Study” he expected that its influence would grow through the years.³ He celebrated An American Dilemma’s statistical data, unpublished reports, and overall “wealth of factual material.”⁴ It was the comprehensive collection of empirical data on black Americans that he had imagined could be useful to white Americans creating public policies on black Americans. Equally so, Keppel found Myrdal’s equation between


⁴ Ibid.
American democracy and racial integration insightful. Like Myrdal himself, Keppel had internalized the wartime equation between American democracy and racial integration. Further suggesting this point, he explained to Jessup that the interest “of all Americans in the Negro question has been definitely increased” by the war.

*An American Dilemma* was published two years later in 1944. A year before that, Keppel passed away after suffering a heart attack during one of his many commutes between Washington D.C. and New York City. However, he did leave behind a four-page foreword in *An American Dilemma* reminding Myrdal’s future readers why the Corporation ever ventured into funding this project in the first place.

Frederick P. Keppel wrote: “In the public mind, the American foundations are associated with gifts for endowment and buildings to universities, colleges and other cultural and scientific institutions, and to a lesser degree with the financial support of fundamental research. It is true that a great part of the funds for which their Trustees are responsible have been distributed for these purposes, but the foundations do other things not so generally recognized.” *An American Dilemma*, of course, was part of these other things that Keppel thought that foundations should do, but for which they were not generally known. He continued: “There are, for example, problems which face the

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5 Ibid. He explained to Jessup: “Myrdal’s underlying thesis is an original and challenging one, namely, that the essence of the Negro problem lies in the heart of the white man, in the conflict, usually unrecognized, between adherence to the broad and generous American creed and what is actually happening to one-tenth of our population.” Ibid.

6 Ibid.


American people, and sometimes mankind in general, which call for studies upon a scale
too broad for any single institution or association to undertake, and in recent years certain
foundations have devoted a considerable part of their available resources to the financing
of such comprehensive studies.” Such problems were, Keppel imagined, the problems
whites confronted in governing co-existing whites and blacks across the Atlantic. As
examples of such useful studies, Keppel mentioned not only the present 1944 study
authored by Myrdal, but also The Poor White Question and An African Survey. He wrote:
“Lord Hailey’s memorable study, An African Survey, in the thirties was financed by the
Carnegie Corporation. The significance of such undertakings cannot be measured by their
cost. The volumes on the Poor Whites of South Africa, published in 1932, represent a
relatively modest enterprise, but they have largely changed the thinking of the South
Africans upon a social question of great importance to them.”

These three projects—The Poor White Question, An African Survey, and An
American Dilemma—reflected the Corporation’s overall goal in the 1920s, 1930s, and
early 1940s of supplying white public policymakers in colonial Africa and the United
States with white social scientists’ dispassionate and comprehensive observations on
whites and blacks to help guide them as they governed these two groups. The
Corporation commenced this program in South Africa in the 1920s; throughout colonial
Africa in the 1930s; and after the experience of Recent Social Trends made it clear that
Americans had become more receptive to elite philanthropic organizations’ role as
providers of policy-oriented knowledge, in the United States in the late 1930s and early

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
1940s. This is why the Corporation suggested that the organization should move away from prioritizing vocational and agricultural education in its funding program for African Americans; why the organization bypassed W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Encyclopedia of the Negro*; and, why it commissioned, funded, and published Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma*. The purpose of the American study was not to highlight the achievements of blacks for a white and black American audience (as W.E.B. Du Bois’s encyclopedia proposed to do), but to help guide white Americans in creating modern, scientifically-based public policies that would help them to continue governing co-existing whites and blacks.

With the goal of ensuring the policy impact of *The Poor White Question*, *An African Survey*, and *An American Dilemma*, the Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel had involved the parties these studies were supposed to influence. In South Africa, the Corporation had invited the participation of the Dutch Reformed Church and South African public policymakers and researchers; in London, the organization had included colonial administrators and officers; and, in the United States, the Corporation had reached out to the Social Science Research Council and philanthropic managers at the GEB and Rockefeller Foundation. Moreover, it had selected a director for the study who was well received by policymakers in Washington D.C.

As former Carnegie Corporation President Frederick P. Keppel had hoped, white policymakers in Washington D.C. took notice when Myrdal’s study was published. In 1944, the United States Army’s Information and Education Division coordinated with the Public Affairs Committee to publish a 32-page summary of *An American Dilemma* as
part of its G.I. pamphlet series. Published between 1943 and 1945, these forty-two booklets were created under the guise that they would help prepare American soldiers for their postwar lives back in the United States. With this goal in mind, the pamphlets covered such varied themes such as “Income and Economic Progress,” “Schools for Tomorrow’s Citizens,” “The Smiths and Their Wartime Budgets,” and “War, Babies, and the Future.” Approximately 200,000 copies of each of these pamphlets were distributed among the four million American military personnel in “war theaters, occupied Germany and Japan, or while being shipped back from overseas and mustered out to civilian life.”

For those Americans who missed reading one of these G.I. pamphlets, there were many other opportunities to come across Myrdal’s thesis. The two-volume study was summarized and reviewed by American sociologists, economists, political scientists, and law professors in academic journals and law reviews throughout the country. In the

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popular press, *An American Dilemma* was reviewed in numerous American newspapers and magazines, with some of the lengthiest analyses written by Sinclair Lewis in *Esquire*; by Doxey Wilkerson in the *Daily Worker*; by Justine and Shad Polier in *Survey Graphic*; by Robert S. Lynd in the *Saturday Review*; by J.S. Redding in *The New Republic*; and, by Frances Gaither in *The New York Times Book Review.* In 1948, the American public also had access to a pocketbook-length summary of Gunnar Myrdal’s four-part thesis in *An American Dilemma.* One of the Swede’s American assistants, Arnold Rose, came out with a 325-page summary of the two-volume book in 1948, titled *The Negro in America.* As one reviewer in the *American Journal of Sociology* put it: “The Negro in America might have been titled, perhaps more appropriately, ‘A Digest of an American

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Dilemma,’ for it represents a ‘thumbnail’ abbreviation of Myrdal’s brilliant analysis of ‘The Negro Problem and American Democracy.’”16

The 1944 study was being considered groundbreaking in the United States; surpassing the popularity and authority of any prior study on African Americans or race relations in the United States. As the Howard University sociologist Sophia Fagin McDowell noted in the early 1950s: “Since its publication in 1944, Gunnar Myrdal’s An American Dilemma has been accepted by American sociologists as the definitive theoretical statement about race relations in the United States.”17 Across the country, postwar Americans were reading, thinking about, and debating Gunnar Myrdal’s thesis. Many internalized his claim that black Americans were just like white Americans; that white Americans defined the national American identity; that black Americans could become just like this dominant folk; that the national government had an important role to play in this process of assimilation and integration; and, that dominant white Americans could mobilize the state apparatus to bring about this change by realizing that their behavior and policies should reflect their national egalitarian ideals. Wartime propaganda had attempted to distinguish Americans and American democracy from the German people and the Third Reich; and in An American Dilemma, Gunnar Myrdal provided his targeted audience of white Americans with blueprints on how to achieve it.

In the 1940s, leading African American scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois listened to the white American public eulogize a book on African Americans that both discounted


the value of black life and blacks’ cultural, political, educational, and social institutions in the United States and assumed that black Americans’ equality required them to cease to exist as a distinct group in the national community. In this way, the study did exactly the opposite of what his Encyclopedia of the Negro would have tried to achieve: Rather than celebrate the unique achievements of blacks, An American Dilemma criticized and dismissed blackness.

Even more, Du Bois had to hear white Americans celebrate a book on African Americans that was written by a white Swede and to hear them discuss the book as if no prior literature on African Americans had come close to Myrdal’s insights on the group (not even his own). This must have greatly affected the elderly scholar. However much Du Bois likely experienced these thoughts in private, though, he did not state them publicly. Myrdal’s An American Dilemma became too powerfully identified as the definitive study on African Americans, and Du Bois was hard-pressed to criticize it in a public forum.18

In 1944, W.E.B. Du Bois reviewed An American Dilemma in Phylon.19 Illustrating the popularity of this study among liberal whites, he did not voice his own reservations about the very fact that this study was authored by a white European (instead of a leading African American social scientist like himself) or about the Swede’s devaluation of black life. Instead, he unequivocally celebrated the book, writing: “Never before in American history has a scholar so completely covered this field… This is a monumental and unrivalled study.” Du Bois decided to join—rather than fight—the


adulation. After all, he probably reasoned that *An American Dilemma* was (though the result of philanthropic managers’ racialized judgments on authority and objectivity in the social sciences and on the kind of knowledge on African Americans that was useful and thus worth funding, and narrow in its equation between racial equality and racial integration) at least pointing white Americans toward a greater acknowledgment of African Americans’ humanity. Even if, of course, this definition of equality required black identity to cease to exist.

With leading liberal whites inside and outside of Washington D.C. overwhelmingly celebrating Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* and criticism among respected scholars of race largely muted, this Carnegie Corporation study was (like *The Poor White Question* and *An African Survey* that preceded it) poised to make an impact in public policymaking on whites and blacks. And on this side of the Atlantic, at least, *An American Dilemma* would be remembered (not as the successor to these British African studies on white-black relations or to the social engineering projects of the Myrdals in Sweden; but rather) as a founding text of modern civil rights discourse. By extension, the Carnegie Corporation would be remembered as a civil rights actor championing on behalf of African Americans.

Reflecting this perspective, U.S. historian David M. Kennedy argued: “[N]either Myrdal nor the Carnegie Corporation flinched from publication when the project was completed while the fighting still raged in 1944. The book’s release in that year reflected their confidence that even in the midst of a global war, perhaps precisely *because* of the war, the American people were prepared to hear a probing report about their country’s
most enduringly painful social issue: race.”20 In thinking about An American Dilemma, Americans in the postwar (and their historians) largely have assumed that the Carnegie Corporation and Gunnar Myrdal came together to provide an analysis of a uniquely and exceptionally American issue.

What postwar Americans did not know, however, was that the reason that the Carnegie Corporation ever got into the business of commissioning, funding, and publishing this founding text of modern civil rights discourse was precisely because the organization’s president had confidence that a comprehensive, policy-oriented empirical social scientific study of black Americans with a trusted white European director at its head could—like The Poor White Study and An African Survey before it—help white policymakers create modern policies that addressed problems in their governance of co-existing whites and blacks. In all their efforts to be distinct and exceptional from the rest of the world in their treatment of African Americans, postwar white Americans failed to grasp that the text they were reading—An American Dilemma—was very much rooted in the experience of British colonial administration and, with Gunnar Myrdal as its director, also of eugenics projects in 1930s Sweden.

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