

NORC Reprint

NORC: The First Forty Years

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Reprinted from: NORC Report 1981-82

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NORC

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE NATIONAL OPINION RESEARCH CENTER

NORC was founded in 1941 as the first national survey research organization established to do social research in the public interest. Today, NORC is both a research institute and a survey research laboratory.

NORC's Research Group comprises three programmatic centers: the Cultural Pluralism Research Center, the Economics Research Center, and the Social Policy Research Center. Scholars in the centers pursue their own research interests in an interdisciplinary basic research environment and conduct applied research in various areas of policy interest. The research staff of NORC is drawn largely but not exclusively from the Division of the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago.

NORC's Survey Group maintains the organization's nationwide sample survey capability. Its staff includes experts in all of the operations involved in the conduct of survey research: sampling, instrument design, data collection, and data preparation and processing. The Survey Group has a special interest in the methodology of survey research.

Both of these groups are supported by the Administrative Group, which provides all necessary services in financial management, grants and contracts administration, data processing, and office management.

In its long history NORC has pioneered in studies of health care, housing, drug abuse, aging, crime, mental health, and a host of other areas of policy interest. These studies have included program evaluation, social experiments, and needs assessments. NORC has monitored the attitudes and behavior of the population in trend studies, most notably through the General Social Survey, a social indicators study conducted since 1972.

Most of NORC's studies are conducted with government or foundation support. Many are archived at the Roper Center, University of Connecticut; the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; and in NORC's own data archive.

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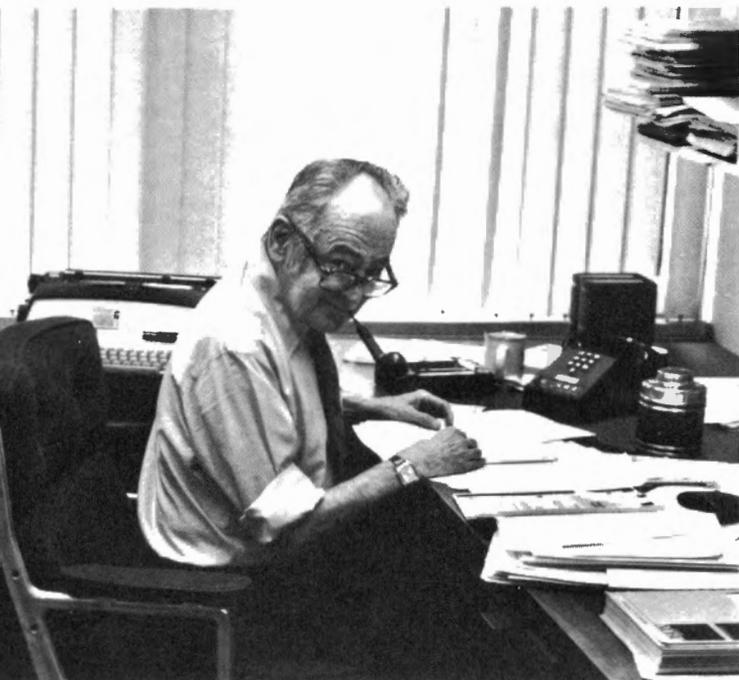
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Field, the founder of NORC, was a Brit. Born and raised in England, he fought in the British Army in World War I, came to the United States in the 1920s, worked as a door-to-door salesman to American people, and was introduced to George Gallup and Rubicam's research department, where he worked in 1935. It was Field whom Gallup asked

NORC: THE FIRST FORTY YEARS

George Gallup to conduct sample surveys. Field was charming, articulate, a bit of a showman but high intelligence, a flair for sales, and a sense of purpose. He was a man with a mission. That mission was to create a research center, affiliated with a university, that would serve the public interest. It would not do market research for profit. It would attempt to give the people a voice in public decision-making. It would also offer training and support to nonprofit organizations and to university students. It would conduct methodological experiments in the art of measuring public opinion.

George Gallup was in 1941, but Harry Field persevered, and eventually made in his business and professional life. He received strong support from the leaders of the social sciences and the research community. Gallup, Elmo Roper, and other researchers who had demonstrated in the 1930s the value of modern-day techniques, as compared to the discredited *Literary Digest*, knew and valued the kind of research center Field would not compete



Paul B. Sheatsley, Senior Survey Director

NORC: THE FIRST FORTY YEARS

Harry H. Field, the founder of NORC, was a man who lived twenty years before his time. Born and raised in England, he fought with distinction as a teenager in the British Army in World War I, came to this country to make his fortune in the 1920s, worked as a door-to-door salesman to further his understanding of the American people, and was introduced to surveys when he took a job in Young and Rubicam's research department, under the direction of George Gallup, in 1935. It was Field whom Gallup asked to organize the British Institute of Public Opinion, Gallup's first foreign affiliate, and in 1939 Field established his own People's Research Corporation to conduct sample surveys.

But Field had his eye on something more. Charming, articulate, a businessman with little formal education but high intelligence, a flair for public relations, and a social conscience, he was a man with a mission. That mission was to establish a nonprofit research center, affiliated with a university, that would conduct surveys in the public interest. It would not do market research or even forecast elections. Rather it would attempt to give the people a voice in political, social, and economic decision-making. It would also offer its survey services, on a cost basis, to nonprofit organizations and to university social scientists and educators, and it would conduct methodological experiments to improve the art and science of measuring public opinion.

All this sounded pretty far out in 1941, but Harry Field persevered, skillfully using all the contacts he had made in his business and professional career. It should be noted that he had strong support from the leaders of the then-small world of public opinion research. Gallup, Elmo Roper, and Archibald Crossley, the three market researchers who had demonstrated in the 1936 Presidential election the accuracy of modern-day techniques, as compared

to the "straw poll" conducted by the discredited *Literary Digest*, knew and respected Field as a colleague. His proposed research center would not compete with their business and could only help the fledgling field of public opinion research. Through George Gallup, Field was acquainted with Hadley Cantril at Princeton University, and Cantril introduced him to fellow academics such as Gordon W. Allport of Harvard, Samuel A. Stouffer, then at the University of Chicago, and Paul F. Lazarsfeld at Columbia. These men, too, were highly supportive and their university contacts were invaluable.

After a great many months of intensive effort and negotiation, Harry Field finally found the two sources of financial support that he needed. One was the Field Foundation (no relation), which agreed to provide five years of seed money at approximately \$50,000 a year. The other was the University of Denver, which offered housing in its library building and a \$10,000 annual subsidy. While we may suspect that the choice of Denver as headquarters derived from an absence of comparable offers from more prestigious eastern universities, the location suited Harry Field's populist philosophy very well. He saw the United States as a big country, he foresaw the growth of population and institutions in the Mountain and Pacific states, and he felt no need for the additional status that might be provided by an eastern address.

So, in October 1941, NORC was incorporated as a nonprofit organization under the laws of Colorado. Its first board of trustees consisted of two representatives of the Field Foundation, including Louis S. Weiss, the Director; two representatives of the University of Denver, including Caleb F. Gates Jr., Chancellor; and three social scientists: Gordon Allport, Hadley Cantril, and Samuel Stouffer. Field had already started assembling a staff. In the summer of 1941 he had recruited Douglas Williams, a Vice President at Elmo Roper, to serve as Associate Director of NORC, as well as William Salstrom, Sampling Statistician, and Anne Schuetz, Field Supervisor, both of the Gallup organization. These three joined Field in Denver, and locally he hired a secretary, a coding supervisor, a bookkeeper, an editor, and a few clerks—a total of about a dozen people. The three executives—Williams, Salstrom, and Schuetz—immediately boarded trains leaving Denver's Union Station to travel around the country recruiting and training interviewers in the newly selected NORC sampling points.

Harry Field was dedicated to high standards of quality in research, and he saw the task of data collection as central. In those days, interviewers were commonly hired on the basis of a written application or on the unsupported recommendation of another interviewer or friend, and were never seen by the central office or by a supervisor. They received little or no training for the task: a few pages of written instructions or perhaps a practice interview to return to the office. Field often lamented that the most crucial part of a survey was entrusted to the poorest paid and least motivated members of the staff, working without any effective supervision. He therefore resolved that NORC should not employ any interviewer who had not been personally hired and trained for the work, a principle from which NORC has never deviated. At the time, the Roper organization was the only one following a similar policy, and Elmo Roper kindly allowed NORC to borrow some of his interviewers until such time as NORC could complete training its own nationwide staff.

World War II

War clouds were gathering over the United States throughout the year 1941, with Western Europe occupied by the forces of Hitler, England under siege at home and losing ground to Japan in Asia, and the United States rapidly arming to provide war materiel for the Allies. Hadley Cantril, Paul Lazarsfeld, Elmo Roper, and Sam Stouffer, who had the ear of many academic, political, and business figures brought to Washington at that time, were among those who sought to establish a place for survey research in the government's diverse war-related activities. In the fall of 1941 an Office of Facts and Figures was established to collect survey findings as well as other kinds of data, and, following Pearl Harbor and U.S. entry into the war, this office was merged into a new and expanded Office of War Information (OWI). OWI was provided with a Surveys Division, whose assigned task was to monitor civilian morale, to assess the effects of wartime regulations, and to collect data on public attitudes and behavior concerning a broad range of war-related problems.

The Surveys Division of OWI was located in New York City and was headed by Elmo C. (Budd) Wilson, a protégé of Elmo Roper who had studied journalism at the University of Minnesota and had recently held a senior research post at *Time* magazine. Acting on the recommendations of advisers from all over the country, Wilson staffed the division with a dozen or more bright young social scientists who were eager to put their academic skills at the service of the government. The problem was that the OWI did not have, nor was it about to obtain, a national field staff, nor did it have any people experienced in survey operations—such things as translating research objectives into workable questionnaires and training and supervising a national staff of interviewers.

OWI needed a contractor, and in those days it was not so easy to find one. National field staffs were scarce and poorly trained. Conscription and other wartime demands made it hard to find experienced personnel. Gallup and Roper were both reluctant to accept government contracts. Under these circumstances, the infant NORC organization was awarded a contract to serve as the operations arm of the OWI Surveys Division. A small NORC New York office was rented in the building used by the OWI group, and it was headed first by John F. Maloney, a veteran of the Gallup organization. Early in 1942, he was called into the service and succeeded by Paul B. Sheatsley, who was also working for Gallup at the time.

For the first four or five years of its existence, therefore, NORC bore little resemblance to the academic research center that Harry Field had envisioned. Only three or four surveys a year were issued from Denver during that period, the headquarters staff languished, only a few reports and news releases were distributed. Sampling activities, financial administration, and some measure of interviewer staff maintenance were still carried on at Denver, but almost all other NORC activity was centered in the small New York office: pretesting OWI questionnaires, preparing materials for the field, supervising data collection on national and special surveys, and turning over the completed interviews to OWI staff for coding and processing.

While these activities did little to enhance NORC's intellectual reputation, they were not without reward. Many of the OWI surveys were simply fact-finding endeavors (how people disposed of their waste fats, how they were using their ration coupons, etc.), but others were pioneering efforts in social science: the first national measurement of racial attitudes, the role of women in the work force, problems of absenteeism in factories. Exposure to the thinking and practices of the OWI survey directors, some of whom were to join

NORC after the war, was immensely educational to the NORC staff, most of whom had been accustomed to the polling tradition. The OWI staff, moreover, was concerned about the quality of the survey data. They welcomed methodological experiments and often suggested new methods of interviewer training and supervision. The OWI work also produced a strong national field staff, accustomed to questioning people about sensitive topics, handling complex questionnaires, and responding to sympathetic supervision.

The Central City Conference and the Death of Harry Field

At the close of the war in 1945, the Office of War Information was dismantled and almost all government survey efforts ceased. NORC's future was uncertain. The initial Field Foundation support money was soon to end, the research staff in Denver was depleted, the future role of the New York Office was not clear, and new research clients had to be found. Yet it was also a time of hope and high expectations. Survey research had demonstrated its usefulness to administrators in many ways during the war years, and a whole new generation of researchers was anxious to apply its skills in the postwar academic and commercial environment.

Harry Field had three major goals in mind. The first and most urgent was to build up the Denver research staff and to recruit an Associate Director to help him put NORC on a sound footing. The second was to encourage the development and use of public opinion research generally in building a peaceful and prosperous future. The third was to help spread the practice of survey research to other countries of the world by organizing centers like NORC in collaboration with foreign universities.

With respect to the first goal, there was some but not a great deal of progress. Prime candidate for the job of Associate Director and ultimately Director of NORC was Clyde W. Hart, a former University of Iowa sociologist, who had been special administrator to Chester Bowles in the Office of Price Administration and who had worked closely with NORC on several national surveys for OPA during and immediately after the war. The job appealed to Hart, but he was reluctant to settle in Denver and asked for more time to consider. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Denver location was also a deterrent to young researchers who were leaving government jobs. Field did arrange a faculty appointment at Denver for Don Cahalan, who had directed survey research activities for the U.S. Navy, but most of the researchers who were leaving Washington were more attracted to larger and more accessible universities or to the rewards of commercial research in the East or in California.

Field had greater success with his second goal. Before the war, public opinion research had been in its infancy, was highly fragmented, and was dominated by a small handful of social scientists, pollsters, and market researchers. There was no forum for discussion of mutual problems. In particular, the academic and the commercial researchers regarded each other with some suspicion and even distaste, and there was little or no communication between them. Field had the idea of inviting the most prominent teachers, users, practitioners, and philosophers of public opinion research to a three-day conference sponsored by NORC at a remote site in the Colorado Rockies, where they could meet informally to discuss common problems and the future of their profession. This conference, in Central City, Colorado, was such a success that a continuing committee was appointed to plan for a second conference the following year, in 1947. It was at this second conference, at Williamstown, Massachusetts, that the American Association for Public Opin-

ion Research was formed. AAPOR, marking its thirty-fifth anniversary this year, now numbers over 1,000 members and is the primary professional association of individuals engaged in or concerned with public opinion research.

Field's third objective, to encourage the development of university survey research centers in other countries, indirectly led to his untimely death at the age of 46. He had spent two days at the University of Louvain in Belgium and was en route to visit his brother in England before returning to the United States when his plane crashed shortly after takeoff. There were no survivors. This event occurred in November 1946.



Harry H. Field

STUDIES OF THE FORTIES

Wartime Studies for OWI Surveys Division

Labor Problems, Absenteeism,
Morale
Attitudes Toward the Progress of
the War
Inflation, Price Controls,
Shortages, Rationing
War News and the Media
The Role of Women in the
War Effort

Other NORC Surveys

Attitudes Toward the War and
War Policies
The UN, Postwar Problems
Pre- and Post-Election, 1944
Atomic Energy and the Bomb
Socialized Medicine
Government Ownership, Tax
Policies
Radio Listening
Knowledge of Cancer
Foreign Affairs Surveys for the
Department of State
Drinking Behavior and
Alcoholism
Occupational Prestige
Medical Research
Evaluation of Information
Campaign for the UN
Palestine, Zionism
Race Relations

Clyde Hart and the Move to Chicago

Clyde W. Hart assumed directorship of NORC at the age of 50, shortly after the death of Harry Field. Before taking the job, he had persuasively argued to the NORC Board of Trustees the case for moving the Center out of Denver to a larger and more prestigious university where it could attract the scholars necessary to carry on NORC's work. Hart had a vision of NORC somewhat different from that of Field. Whereas Field had come from the world of advertising, market research, and political polls, Hart had been a university professor and scholar. Whereas Field saw NORC as a sort of nonprofit public interest polling center, Hart envisioned a major social research institution, with academically trained social scientists pursuing their interests under government or foundation grants and contracts.

The move from Denver to the University of Chicago in 1947 and the recruitment of such distinguished researchers as Shirley Star, Jack Elinson, Eli Marks, and James Davis as NORC Study Directors marked a real change in NORC's structure and the start of the organization as we know it today. While such a shift in emphasis may appear now to have been inevitable, alternative scenarios were possible or even more likely: stagnancy and gradual decline at Denver, inability to attract foundation funding or to compete for contracts, attrition of the highly trained NORC field staff, perhaps an attempt to perform market research, or even insolvency. It was Clyde Hart who correctly diagnosed the weakness of NORC's postwar position and who took the forthright actions required to correct it.

The decision to move from the Denver headquarters suggested another possibility, which Hart pursued but which was eventually to fail. The University of Denver was anxious to retain a presence in survey research, and when NORC moved to Chicago an affiliated Opinion Research Center was left on the Denver campus. Interest in similar research centers appeared at other universities around the country at the time, and conversations were held with researchers at Cornell, Wisconsin, and other institutions concerning a possible consortium of survey research centers. The affiliate centers would do secondary analyses of NORC data, NORC study directors would work with the affiliated centers on local surveys, NORC's national surveys would be supplemented by local studies conducted by the affiliates, and so on. Although organizational and operational difficulties put an early stop to these efforts, the affiliated Center at Denver thrived for several years. Indeed, a methodological study of the validity of survey responses, conducted there in 1947 by Parry and Crossley, is still frequently cited in the textbooks.

The move to Chicago raised questions about the future of the New York office. While the desirability of a New York or other eastern presence was granted, it was hard to justify the maintenance of only a sales or promotion office in the city, and the necessary research contracts were not immediately visible. It happened that Hadley Cantril, still an NORC trustee at the time, discovered interest in the State Department in a series of private polls that would keep the Department informed about public opinion concerning foreign aid, the United Nations, relations with Russia, and other postwar problems that the Truman Administration had to grapple with. As a result, NORC contracted to provide to the Department several such surveys a year, and these, conducted out of the New York office, provided basic support for that office. These surveys also furnished an early example of the "amalgam" or "omnibus" type of survey. In order to reduce their own costs, the Department of State had no objection to the sale of additional questions on their surveys to other clients, and sometimes as many as three or four different interests were represented on these questionnaires. Herbert Hyman and Herbert Stember were added to the New York staff, and later Paul Borsky, Ann Brunswick, and Pearl Zinner.

A great deal of important research was done at NORC during the 1950s under Clyde Hart's direction, most with grant support from foundations such as Carnegie and Ford. Included among these surveys were Shirley Star's pioneer study of public attitudes toward mental illness, the first occupational prestige survey, early research on race relations, studies of radio listening and television viewing, and the first comprehensive survey of family medical costs. During the McCarthy era, NORC worked closely with and collected the data for Samuel Stouffer on his famous study of Americans' attitudes toward communism, conformity, and civil liberties, and with Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues at Columbia on "The Academic Mind," a survey of college and university professors on the effects of Senator McCarthy's anti-communist crusade. Perhaps one of the most important projects of this period was Herbert Hyman's study of interviewer behavior, which culminated in the publication of *Interviewing in Social Research*, still a much-studied volume in the training of social researchers.

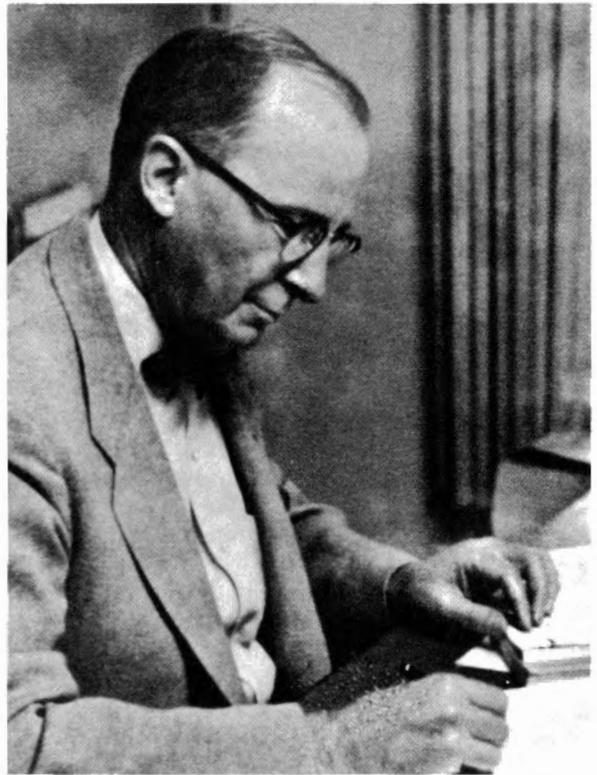
STUDIES OF THE FIFTIES

NORC-Generated Studies

Interviewer Effects in Survey
Research
Mental Illness: Knowledge and
Attitudes
Phonevision
Chronic Illness in Hunterdon
County, New Jersey
Family Medical Costs
Health Attitudes and Behavior
Health of the Elderly
Skid Row
The Adolescent Society
Adjustment of Migrants in
Chicago
Massachusetts Hospitalization
Study
Medical Insurance Under Two
Plans
The Great Books Program

Contract Research

Foreign Affairs Studies for the
Department of State
Effects of TV on Sports
Attendance
Philanthropic Giving
Anti-Semitism
Behavior in Disasters
Aircraft Noise
Communism, Conformity, and
Civil Liberties
The Academic Mind
Dental Health and Practices
Foreign Medical Students
American Cancer Society's
Professional Education
Program



Clyde S. Hart

The Rossi Years

Clyde Hart reached retirement age in 1960, but his successor was not immediately apparent and there was a sort of interregnum until Peter H. Rossi was appointed in 1961. Rossi was a Columbia University sociologist who was well known in the survey research profession as a result of his work at Columbia's Bureau of Applied Social Research under Paul Lazarsfeld. His first task, like that of Field and Hart before him, was to assemble a staff of study directors, for most of those who had served under Hart, uncertain of NORC's future direction, had decided to pursue other opportunities. Peter Rossi's enthusiastic recruitment efforts brought NORC by far the strongest research staff it had ever had. Included in the group were James Coleman, Norman Bradburn, Andrew Greeley, Seymour Sudman, John Johnstone, Elihu Katz, David Caplovitz, Alice Rossi, Philip Ennis, Joe Spaeth, and many others.

But Rossi saw the danger of building a strong organization of study directors who would be dependent upon grants and contracts coming in. He also saw the importance of expanding NORC's provision of data collection and other services to the nonprofit scientific research community—what had been number two on Harry Field's original list of NORC purposes. The need for such a service had expanded in the postwar years as survey research became more complex and sophisticated and individual scholars could not meet prevailing standards in sampling, questionnaire development, interviewer training and supervision, data collection and processing without specialized assistance. Rossi saw such service work as having enormous potential benefit to NORC, as it would provide a steady stream of field assignments for the national interviewing staff and generate income that would help support the research of the study directors. He was successful in obtaining a small grant from the National Science Foundation to establish a Survey Research Service at NORC and recruited Paul Sheatsley from the New York office to direct the effort.

Many important studies were conducted at NORC during Rossi's term. There were more national surveys of family medical costs, repeated on a trend basis. Norman Bradburn's study of the structure of psychological well-being, known as the happiness survey; Father Greeley's study of the effects of Catholic education; Johnstone's survey of public attitudes toward adult education; the 1961 college graduate survey, a huge sample interviewed by mail, and followed as a panel in 1962-64 and in 1968; the Kennedy assassination survey; studies on anti-Semitism and on racial attitudes in some of the riot-torn communities in the sixties; studies of the effects of school desegregation; the occupational prestige studies—all of these served as landmarks in their various fields and have assumed permanent importance. It was also during those years that NORC began conducting telephone interviews.

The effects of all this activity on NORC's administrative structure were of course enormous. In the twenty years from 1941 through 1960, only once had the annual volume of business reached half a million dollars, and it had never exceeded that amount. In 1962 the figure was three quarters of a million, in 1963 it went over one million, in 1964 it was just under two million, and in the following years it was more than two million. The staff grew from thirty or forty, who had formerly gathered in Clyde Hart's office for coffee every morning, to over a hundred—overflowing the building at 5720 Woodlawn Avenue, even after an addition had been constructed, and occupying space wherever it could be obtained on campus or in the neighborhood. In accordance with his plans for expansion, Rossi had started negotiations early on for the construction of a new NORC headquarters building, and the present building at 6030 South Ellis was ready for occupancy in the fall of 1966.



Peter H. Rossi

Unfortunately, NORC was still operating under the informal management structure of the earlier days. Ledgers were posted by hand, billing was long delayed, field costs were poorly monitored, survey budgets went out of control before there was sufficient information to prevent overruns. At one point, the majority of surveys conducted during the year exceeded their budgets by large or small amounts. The situation was compounded by the high standards and the zeal of Rossi and his study directors. Delays and overruns just had to be accepted in the interests of superior research. An example of the heady atmosphere of those days occurred following the assassination of President Kennedy. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to study public opinion at a time of national crisis, no one else had plans to field a comprehensive national study, and Rossi gave his staff the go-ahead while he attempted to arrange funding. His sources were unanimously encouraging and optimistic. But once the study was in the field, no one felt an obligation to pay for it and NORC had to swallow the cost. One final problem was the gradual shift in research support from the foundations, which had sponsored much of NORC's work during the fifties, to the government, which was now playing an increasing role. Foundations used to pay in advance; government paid only after invoices were received and processed. This produced a difficult cash position when a large volume of work was in progress and necessitated an increasing amount of bank borrowing.

Obviously, this method of management could not continue indefinitely, and an ultimate cash crisis arose one day in 1966. It seemed for awhile that, after 25 years, Harry Field's noble experiment might come to an end. NORC's fate rested with the University of Chicago. But expressions of support came in from former clients, from government agencies, and from the survey research field generally, attesting to NORC's importance and urging that some means be found to continue the operation. The University was persuaded and agreed to a long-term loan. A professional management team was brought in to reorganize administrative procedures, and Norman Bradburn was appointed Director.

STUDIES OF THE SIXTIES

NORC-Generated Studies

Almond-Verba and Verba-Nie
Political Participation Studies
Longitudinal Study of 1961
College Graduates
The Structure of Psychological
Well-Being
Adult Education
Occupations and Social
Stratification
Effects of Parochial School
Education
Desegregation in the Public
Schools
Physician Reporting of Venereal
Disease
Kennedy Assassination Study
The New York Power Blackout
Victims of Crime
Integrated Neighborhoods in
the U.S.
Adult Literacy
The Catholic Priesthood

Contract Research

The People Look at Television
Post-Censal Studies of
Occupations
Mobilization for Youth
Popular Tastes in Music
Aircraft Noise and Sonic Booms
The "Hidden Blind"
Occupation and Childrearing
Dental Care in the U.S.
The Health of Spanish-American
War Veterans
Health in the First Year of Life
Physician Attitudes Toward
Medicare
Ethics and Honesty in the U.S.
Amalgam Surveys
The Job Corps
Health of Retired Auto Workers
Manpower Development
Training Programs
Pre- and Post-Legislation
Attitudes Toward Medicare
The Nisei Japanese
Parents' Attitudes and
Experience with Headstart
First Graders in Woodlawn,
Chicago
Problems of Widowhood
Neighborhood Health Centers in
11 Areas
Welfare Medical Care
Civil Defense and Fallout
Shelters

STUDIES OF THE SEVENTIES

NORC-Generated Studies

The General Social Survey
Public School Desegregation
Study of American Values
Study of American Journalists
Continuous National Survey
The Use of Sensitive Questions
in Survey Research
Informed Consent in Survey
Research
Ethnic Drinking
Study of Value-Oriented
Education
Farmers in the Dakotas
Study of Young Catholics
Farm Decisions on Production
and Marketing

Contract Research

Smoking Behavior Among
Health Professionals
Sexual Beliefs, Attitudes, and
Practices
Medical Care Costs
High School Drug Use
Parent Attitudes Toward the
Follow Through Program
National Ambulatory Medical
Care Survey
Drug Use and Postwar
Adjustment Among Vietnam
Veterans
Study of Family Growth
Vocational Education
Legal Needs of the American
Public
Boston School Desegregation
Access to Medical Care
Housing Assistance Supply
Experiment
Drug Abuse Reporting Program
Experimental Housing
Allowance Program
National Longitudinal Survey of
Labor Force Behavior
Physician Participation in
Medicaid
The Health Insurance Study
Amalgam Surveys
Community Development Block
Grant Program
Study of Dental Hygienists
Distribution of Funds in a Class
Action Suit
Internal Medicine Manpower
Health of Harlem Adolescents
National Medical Care
Expenditure Survey
Physician Administrative
Practices

Modern Times

In his first tour as Director, Bradburn served from 1967 to 1971, and NORC's accomplishments in that era were striking. It was no easy task to restore the morale of study directors, the New York office, and staff generally after such a close brush with disaster. Nor was it easy to restore confidence in the outside world—to convince clients, government agencies, and other funding sources that NORC remained a viable organization. Annual revenues, which had peaked at \$2.3 million in 1965, declined to \$1.7 million in 1969; but they almost doubled in the following year and remained above \$3 million through 1972.

Behind this substantial growth in annual revenues during the late sixties and early seventies was an increasing amount of government funding for evaluation studies. A contract with the Office of Economic Opportunity led to baseline health surveys in eleven different communities where Neighborhood Health Centers were being established. NORC found a ready market for its data collection skills and experience and performed that role as subcontractor to such firms as Stanford Research Institute, Abt Associates, and The Rand Corporation. Among these studies were evaluations of manpower training programs in a number of different sites, of the Head Start and Follow Through educational programs in a series of interviews with parents of enrolled children, and of the effects of school desegregation programs in North and South. From foundations and private sources support was found for the Ennis study of adult literacy and Greeley's survey of the Catholic priesthood. Federal grant money funded the Bradburn-Sudman study of integrated neighborhoods during these years.

With NORC back on sound footing, Bradburn returned to his roles of University of Chicago professor and NORC Senior Study Director, and was succeeded as Director of NORC by James A. Davis. Though then at Dartmouth College, Davis had long been associated with NORC and his return to Chicago was welcomed. His tenure as Director, from 1971 to 1976, was distinguished in several respects. First, he made important additions to NORC's professional staff, successfully recruiting two of the most renowned sociologists in the country—Arthur Stinchcombe and James Coleman—and also Martin Frankel, distinguished sampling statistician, who would serve as NORC Technical Director.



Norman M. Bradburn



James A. Davis

Davis also pioneered several creative research innovations. One was the Continuous National Survey, in which a national probability sample of 200 interviews was collected every week of the year. The samples could be cumulated until sufficient numbers of cases for suitable analysis were available; old questions could be dropped and new ones added at any time. The survey was designed as a kind of amalgam survey for government agencies, and indeed it served as the principal source of data for the Department of Transportation and the Federal Energy Administration during the oil embargo and ensuing gasoline crisis in the winter of 1974-75. Another important innovation conceived and implemented by Jim Davis was the General Social Survey. Under the sponsorship of the National Science Foundation and the guidance of an advisory committee of social scientists, questions asked on national surveys by NORC, Michigan, Gallup, Harris, and other organizations were reused periodically to provide measures of social change. The General Social Survey has been fielded annually or biennially since 1972 and the datasets made available to anyone interested, through The Roper Center, for a modest fee. The GSS has provided data for scores of scholarly articles in social science journals and is commonly used as a teaching aid in survey research courses in all parts of the country.

During James Davis's years as Director, NORC revenues more than doubled, from a little over \$3 million to more than \$7 million, but the nature of the survey market was fast changing. In response to the increasing stream of government procurements for research and evaluation studies, many new firms with some form of survey research capability were established, in the Washington area and elsewhere, and many older firms that had specialized in management consulting or systems engineering expanded their activities to include survey research. At the same time the letting of government contracts became institutionalized. Instead of sole-source agreements and letter contracts, federal agencies were now required to issue requests for proposals in accordance with standardized specifications, and awards were made on the basis of technical adequacy and lowest cost.

Restructuring of Operations and Expansion of Research Capability

One of the last actions by Davis in his term as Director was to ask James Murray, who had directed the Continuous National Survey, to try to restructure NORC Operations. The type of Survey Research Service devised by Peter Rossi, operating under a single director who worked separately with the Sampling Department, the Field Department, the Data Processing Department, and so forth, was ill suited for the current environment, but it was not clear just how to improve it. Murray's solution was to set up a Project Planning Committee (PPC) to govern NORC operations. Six Senior Survey Directors—four in Chicago and two in New York—each of whom was to be separately responsible for each NORC project, would meet in a telephone conference call between New York and Chicago every week and in person once a month. Included on the Project Planning Committee, along with the six Senior Survey Directors, were the NORC Director, the Contracts Officer, and the heads of the major departments concerned with operations. The PPC would review RFPs and make bid or no-bid decisions, assign proposals and projects to an appropriate Senior Survey Director, and resolve conflicts and monitor problems on all NORC operations.

Succeeding Davis to the NORC directorship was Kenneth Prewitt, then chairman of the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago, who had formerly served as a Study Director at NORC. Prewitt refined and strengthened the Project Planning Committee to include not only operations and management personnel but two or three of NORC's Study Directors from the academic side, integrating the research and survey groups in this central management activity. The management of NORC field activities was also restructured during these years, with a view to decentralizing decision-making and improving accountability. The job of area field supervisor was upgraded to Regional Field Manager (RFM), with seventeen of these each responsible for recruitment, training, and supervision of all interviewers in the region. A Field Operations Committee was established, including RFMs on a rotating basis, along with field representatives of both NORC offices. Interviewers are now directed by and report to their RFM in accordance with the procedures specified for each project, and the RFMs report by telephone on a weekly basis to the project managers in the central office.

These changes helped pave the way for NORC's entry into large-scale longitudinal research. It was during Prewitt's tenure as director that NORC undertook the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Force Behavior/Youth Cohort and High School and Beyond (described in the report from the Survey Group).

Looking to expand and strengthen NORC's research capability, Prewitt initiated discussions with a number of eminent economists, including Robert Michael and James Heckman. These efforts resulted in the establishment of NORC's Economics Research Center in 1980, after Prewitt's departure. Taking advantage of NORC's affiliation with the University of Chicago, Ken Prewitt and Norman Bradburn, then President of NORC's Board of Trustees, proposed that a Committee on Survey Research be established in the University to enhance and formalize training in the theory and methods of survey research. Through its multidisciplinary faculty membership, the Committee offers a specialization in survey research in many graduate departments of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago.

The resignation of Ken Prewitt after four years as Director, to assume the Presidency of the Social Science Research Council, and the return of Norman Bradburn as Director in 1979 seems a convenient place to end this summary account of NORC's first forty years. More recent developments are reported in other sections of this publication, and they give evidence of continued organizational vitality.



Kenneth Prewitt

**Recipients of the AAPOR Award
for Exceptionally Distinguished Achievement
in Public Opinion Research
Associated with
NORC**

1955	Paul F. Lazarsfeld	<i>NORC Trustee (1973-75)</i>
1956	Herbert H. Hyman	<i>Senior Study Director (1947-57)</i>
1958	Samuel A. Stouffer	<i>Founding Trustee (1941-60)</i>
1960	Clyde W. Hart	<i>Director (1947-61)</i>
1965	Harry H. Field (Posthumous)	<i>Founder and Director (1941-46)</i>
1966	Hadley Cantril	<i>Founding Trustee (1941-56)</i>
1980	Shirley A. Star (Posthumous)	<i>Senior Study Director (1947-60)</i>
1982	Paul B. Sheatsley	<i>Senior Survey Director (1942-)</i>

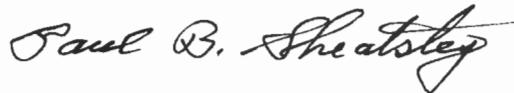
**Presidents of the American Association
for Public Opinion Research
Associated with
NORC**

1947-48	Clyde W. Hart	<i>NORC Director (1947-61)</i>
1949-50	Paul F. Lazarsfeld	<i>NORC Trustee (1973-75)</i>
1953-54	Samuel A. Stouffer	<i>Founding Trustee (1941-60)</i>
1957-58	Frederick A. Stephan	<i>NORC Trustee (1952-70)</i>
1959-60	Herbert H. Hyman	<i>Senior Study Director (1947-57)</i>
1967-68	Paul B. Sheatsley	<i>Senior Survey Director (1942-)</i>
1979-80	Jack Elinson	<i>Senior Study Director (1947-56)</i>
1981-82	Seymour Sudman	<i>Sampling Director (1962-68)</i>

Past and Future

Not many corporations and institutions manage to survive over a period of forty years, and even fewer manage to grow and prosper. NORC has certainly not achieved a steady annual progress over that period. There have been a series of plateaus, many setbacks and disappointments, other years of almost frightening growth and expansion. But NORC history has encompassed World War II and its aftermath, wars in Korea and Vietnam, periods of economic prosperity and economic recession, Republican administrations and Democratic administrations, periods of expansion and periods of contraction in research funding, years of domestic quiet and years of social unrest, the McCarthy era, concerns about privacy and equal opportunity, the computerization of America, and numerous other social, political, and economic changes—most of them documented in the hundreds of NORC studies conducted during those forty years.

We now face a period of new crisis and change. Economic and political conditions during the next several years look discouraging. Social problems may be expected to multiply. The task of survey research will not become easier, but opportunities to demonstrate its usefulness will abound. It will be NORC's task, as always, to plan for and adapt to the changing environment, and we have the experience and the resources to do just that. A strong staff of creative and hard-working researchers and support personnel, seasoned but youthful management, a uniquely qualified and experienced field staff, a sound financial position, and an unflagging zeal to continue to conduct social research in the public interest—these assets combine to set NORC off on its next forty years.



Paul B. Sheatsley joined NORC in 1942, the second year of the organization's existence. During his long tenure, he has served the organization in many capacities, including a term as Acting Director in 1970-71. He received the 1982 AAPOR Award for Exceptionally Distinguished Achievement.