



# PITTSBURGH SURVEYED

Social Science  
and Social Reform  
in the Early  
Twentieth Century

EDITED BY

*Maurine W. Greenwald*

AND

*Margo Anderson*

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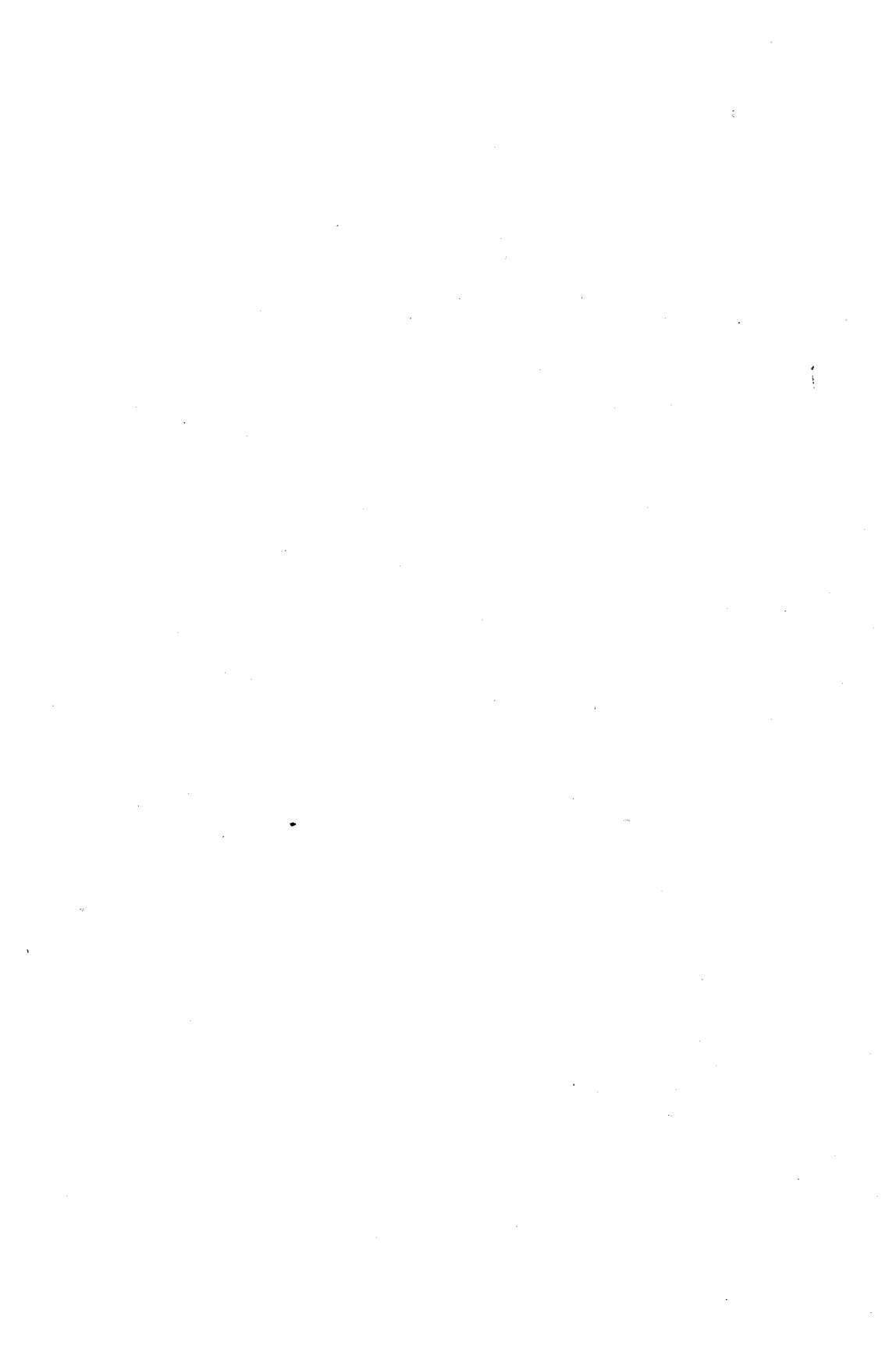
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*For Roy Lubove  
who devoted much of his career  
to studying American social reform,  
the social work profession,  
and Pittsburgh.*



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This project owes much to Andrew Abbott's long interest in the relationship between the disciplines of sociology and history. For many years he and Margo Anderson discussed the many links between these two fields at Social Science History Association meetings. Abbott initiated this project by organizing a panel at the 1992 American Sociological Association meeting in Pittsburgh to revisit the Pittsburgh Survey. Anderson had been working on the general topic of the relationship between the development of the social survey and social policy—focusing primarily on state and federal government agencies. The Pittsburgh Survey, as a prominent privately funded research effort, provided a good counterpoint to the state-sponsored studies conducted by labor bureaus and universities. At the invitation of Michael Ebner, Anderson explored pieces of her research in a talk to the Chicago Urban History Group. John Modell, Carole Shammas, and her many predecessors teaching Quantitative Historical Analysis in the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) Summer Program at the University of Michigan, introduced Anderson to the rich data in the cost of living surveys from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Pittsburgh Survey had long been a source of historical data and a research problem for Maurine Greenwald. As editor of the Social and Labor History Series published by the University of Pittsburgh Press, she had advised the press for almost a decade about manuscripts on Pittsburgh's history and the reprinting of the Survey volumes, including *Women and the Trades*, for which she wrote an introductory essay. She welcomed the 1992 American Sociological Association panel as a special opportunity to launch a larger-scale assessment of the Pittsburgh Survey.

The two-year dialogue about the Pittsburgh Survey was facilitated by the generosity of the Russell Sage Foundation and the Pittsburgh Center for

Social History in funding a working conference to define the intellectual agenda for this volume. Peter Karsten, co-director of the Pittsburgh Center for Social History, enthusiastically supported this project from its inception. At the conference, John Modell, Joe Trotter, and Richard Oestreicher provided incisive commentary on individual papers that influenced the project as a whole. Karsten, David Hounshell, Van Beck Hall, and Paula Baker served as moderators for our wide-ranging discussions. Judy Macey of the University of Pittsburgh History Department tended graciously to the myriad tasks associated with arranging and running a successful conference.

Roy Lubove played an important role at the conference, sharing his knowledge of the New York social work elite, whose politics shaped the Pittsburgh Survey. He wanted very much to contribute an essay of his own to this volume, but his failing health prohibited him from adding to his scholarly commitments. We have dedicated the book to his memory.

The conference was further enhanced by the presentations of four graduate students from the Pittsburgh history department's quantitative history seminar taught by Laurence Glasco. Scott Smith, Steven Manaker, Dean Chester, and Tom Taylor put the Survey's investigations on blacks to a test, demonstrating that the 1910 manuscript census confirmed the optimistic portrait of African Americans presented in the Pittsburgh Survey.

Two anonymous readers for the University of Pittsburgh Press offered trenchant, though diametrically opposite, assessments of an earlier version of the manuscript. Our title is based, in part, on the suggestion of one of the readers. Our contributors strove to merit the readers' praise and quiet their criticisms.

These essays went through an elaborate writing process involving successive drafts. Our gratitude goes to our colleagues for allowing us to question and edit their work, not once but several times. Their willingness to look critically at each draft helped knit the collection into a more coherent whole than would otherwise have been the case.

Collaborations entail a division of labor. Both of us read and discussed every contributor's essay. Anderson focused mostly on the aspects of the essays dealing with the social sciences, while Greenwald worked in greater depth with the issues of Pittsburgh history and social reform. We also collaborated on the introduction, with Anderson assuming primary responsibility.

All the essays in this volume are published for the first time, except for Ewa Morawska's, which appeared in *Les Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* in Sep-

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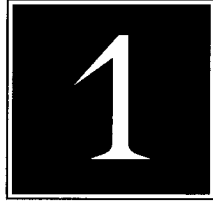
tember 1993 as “Une Vision ‘revisitée’: Les immigrés slaves vus par le *Pittsburgh Survey*.”

Maurine Greenwald owes special thanks to the University of Pittsburgh for funding the illustrations for her essay. A grant from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences covered the cost of the black-and-white illustrations. The History Department, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences funded the color reproductions.

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# Introduction

## *The Pittsburgh Survey in Historical Perspective*

MARGO ANDERSON

MAURINE W. GREENWALD

IN 1907 AND 1908, PAUL KELLOGG OF THE NEW YORK Charity Organization Society and several dozen researchers converged on Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They conducted a major study sponsored by the newly formed Russell Sage Foundation on life and labor in the Pittsburgh “district.” The researchers included some of the biggest names in early twentieth-century social reform circles, including Florence Kelley, John R. Commons, Peter Roberts, and Robert Woods. At the time, Pittsburgh was the center of one of the nation’s most powerful core industries: iron and steel. In the months and years after, the researchers presented their dramatic and sometimes scandalous results in speeches, magazine articles, a traveling exhibition, and finally six large volumes of research reports published between 1909 and 1914. They documented local conditions: an exploited labor force, a degraded physical environment, and corrupt civic institutions.

The Pittsburgh Survey, as the whole project came to be called, stands with a small group of government or privately sponsored research efforts that captured the problems and way of life of a locality so dramatically that Pittsburgh and Homestead became symbols of urban industrial problems for the society as a whole. At the time, the Pittsburgh researchers compared their work to Charles Booth’s late nineteenth-century classic study, *Life and Labour of the People of London*. The Lynds’ Middletown studies of the 1920s are a comparable American case.<sup>1</sup>

Four of the six volumes of reports were designed as monographs and are well known in their own right. In *The Steel Workers*, John Fitch examined wages, hours, and working conditions in the steel industry. He described the history and growth of the industry, the shifting ethnic and skill composition of the labor force, the rise and decline of the major union in the industry, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, the negative impact of the overwhelming power of the steelmasters. Margaret Byington's *Homestead: Households of a Mill Town* and Crystal Eastman's *Work-Accidents and the Law* traced the impact of the steel industry on family and community life. Byington focused on the earnings and household expenditures of the "American" and "Slavic" workers and their families in Homestead. Eastman explored the impact of fatal industrial accidents on workers' families in Allegheny County. In *Women and the Trades* Elizabeth Beardsley Butler chronicled the low wages and routinized working conditions of women employed in factory and other low-wage work in the larger Pittsburgh community.<sup>2</sup>

The final two volumes of the Pittsburgh Survey reprinted the research pieces from the larger project that had been published in article form, or were not long enough to merit full monographic treatment. These two volumes focused on the private economy and jobs and the public sector and its problems, respectively. Titled *Wage-Earning Pittsburgh* and *The Pittsburgh District: Civic Frontage*, they were both edited by Paul Kellogg and served as volumes 5 and 6 of the overall Survey.<sup>3</sup>

All the research reports, whether written, visual, or tabular presentations, were carefully designed to reach a general audience, to avoid technical jargon, and to bring "home to the community," as Paul Kellogg put it, the findings of the survey so they might "become part of the common understanding." Several elements of the larger survey, such as Lewis Hine's photographs, Joseph Stella's drawings of steel workers, or Margaret Byington's description of Homestead, have become emblematic of life in early twentieth-century urban America. By the 1940s and 1950s, photos and text excerpts from the Pittsburgh Survey had entered standard American history textbooks. In the late 1960s and 1970s, Arno Press and the University of Pittsburgh Press reissued the four main survey volumes.<sup>4</sup>

Now, as the century draws to a close, this volume considers the multifaceted history, legacy, and impact of the Pittsburgh Survey on its readers, the academic disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, the history of social reform, and Pittsburgh itself.

## Origins of the Project

The Pittsburgh Survey deserves a book-length assessment because of its special place in the history of the social sciences, of social reform, and of Pittsburgh. Recent literature abounds on the history of the social sciences, on the role of the state and social investigation, and on the role of private philanthropy and social investigation in fostering social reform.<sup>5</sup> The reason for interest in the topic is obvious. Much academic discourse and methodology were born in their current disciplinary forms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Governments in the Western industrial democracies instituted programs that have come to characterize the “welfare state.” Certainly major pieces of the American welfare state emerged at the federal and state level at this time.<sup>6</sup> And the large research foundations that have funded so much path-breaking social research originated then as well. The Pittsburgh Survey stands at the beginning of this knowledge-building process and thus serves as a particularly focused example of all these trends.<sup>7</sup>

The Pittsburgh surveyors identified many key problems that plagued urban industrial society. They focused particularly on the enormous influence that national corporations brought to bear on local community life. The steel corporations worked their employees long hours at low wages, defiled the local environment with abandon, crippled trade unions, and undermined civic activism. Such corporations drained human and physical resources from the community and impoverished community life. Parks and recreational facilities, kindergartens, good sanitation, and adult education found few defenders in a world run by large corporations bent on high production and profits.

In place of the dirty, exploitative world they investigated, the surveyors proposed that Pittsburghers strive to create a community with safer work environments, clean water, clean air, open space, decent housing, and a higher standard of living for workers and their families. Such a world required that industry reduce accidents, raise wages, and shorten hours of work; that local government control floods, abate smoke emissions, and improve sanitation and water distribution. Since the Survey researchers came from the emerging social work community, their advice to workers also included exhortations to live more frugally or prudently. Immigrants should Americanize by discarding the culture of the Old World and learning the ways of their new country. Progressives hailed the surveyors’ description of early twentieth-century life in

Pittsburgh and Homestead as accurate and insightful, their reform proposals as reasonable, necessary, and proper.<sup>8</sup>

Our efforts to examine the history and legacy of the Pittsburgh Survey initially originated from a session organized by sociologist Andrew Abbott for the American Sociological Association Meetings in Pittsburgh in August 1992. In the session entitled, "The Pittsburgh Survey, the Survey Movement, and the Development of Modern Sociology," Margo Anderson, Martin Bulmer, Ewa Morawska, and Stephen Turner presented papers; John Modell commented. After the session, a number of people agreed that the Pittsburgh Survey deserved a fuller treatment than was possible in a single conference panel. These discussions resulted in plans for a full-fledged conference. Maurine W. Greenwald took the lead and solicited funding from the Russell Sage Foundation, the original sponsor of the Pittsburgh Survey, and from the Pittsburgh Center for Social History. In the following months, Greenwald and Anderson contacted other scholars—particularly social historians—to consider the Survey's impact on Pittsburgh history and American history more generally. The Russell Sage Foundation and the University of Pittsburgh funded a two-day conference in November 1993. This volume includes the much revised conference papers.

These essays provide a multifaceted perspective from which to view the history of social research and social reform. A number of approaches characterize the current literature in social research and reform. One strand traces the thought of key figures or the development of key institutions in the social sciences.<sup>9</sup> Another analyzes the relationship between the development of the social sciences and the problems those sciences addressed in the larger society.<sup>10</sup> A third approach treats the history of knowledge building as an adjunct to the development of the modern state or the history of political movements.<sup>11</sup> All these frameworks help to build a comprehensive picture of how the social sciences emerged in their current intellectual and political contexts. Some attempt to address several approaches simultaneously.

Such endeavors may not analyze specific research sites or processes, or the research methods and findings of the knowledge builders, as projects in their own terms. It is not hard to understand why. A critical analysis of a particular scholarly effort in the past often requires a full or partial replication of the project so as to critique the quality and character of the research in light of the actual and possible scholarship at the time and of later developments in social science research methods. Was the project truly innovative? What assumptions shaped the research design and findings? Did it accomplish its objectives? What else could have been accomplished? The essays in this volume reconstruct the

Pittsburgh Survey from a variety of angles and thus provide a detailed examination of an influential social science research project from the early twentieth century.

Two fundamental themes inform these essays. On the one hand, we document and analyze the history of the social survey as a research enterprise designed for social reform. We ask whether the Pittsburgh Survey influenced the development of academic sociology and social investigation. On the other, we evaluate the Pittsburgh Survey's research and reform agenda on the political, social, and economic life of Pittsburgh. In essence, we ask how effective and accurate the research was and therefore whether Kellogg succeeded in bringing "home to the community" the findings of the survey as "part of the common understanding." Most of the essays focus on one of these questions, though all speak to both in one form or another. All the essays, implicitly or explicitly, caution scholars to use the Pittsburgh Survey with care, recognizing it as the product of a particular group of reformers imbued with a particular political vision of how to study a community and change society.

Martin Bulmer, Stephen Turner, and Steven Cohen place the Survey within the history of social science and policy-oriented research. Bulmer examines the relationship between the Survey and contemporary sociological methodology. Turner explores the Survey in terms of the emerging field of social work and the history of expertise. Cohen places the Survey in the larger Progressive political reform agenda. Several other essays explore the conceptual foundations of the Survey. Edward Muller examines the geographic logic by which the surveyors defined Pittsburgh and how their geographic framework both facilitated and limited their scholarship and reform message. Jay Kleinberg analyzes the surveyors' conception of the family and the ways their concept framed and constrained their research efforts and reform proposals. Margo Anderson explores how the surveyors set standards for measuring the cost and standard of living and analyzes the logic and quality of Margaret Byington's research of Homestead. Maurine W. Greenwald interprets the Survey's visuals—particularly Joseph Stella's drawings and Lewis Hine's photographs—as expressions of liberal reform politics that failed to persuade the Pittsburgh corporate elite to their point of view.

John Bauman and Margaret Spratt, Joel Tarr, Richard Oestreicher, Ewa Morawska, and Laurence Glasco evaluate the research findings and reform agenda of the Survey in light of other scholarship on the history of Pittsburgh and its environs. Bauman and Spratt examine the civic activism promoting environmental reform in Pittsburgh that led to the Pittsburgh Survey and the Survey's limited effects on local politics and urban planning. Tarr explains why

the surveyors had little influence on environmental reform in Pittsburgh despite their obvious sensitivity to the city's flood problems, air and water pollution, and inadequate sanitary facilities. Oestreicher examines the myth of absolute corporate domination of Homestead expounded by Margaret Byington and John Fitch in light of workers' muted but ever present voice in local politics from the 1890s through the 1930s. Glasco explains the uncharacteristically optimistic portrayal of black Pittsburghers in the Survey in terms of the hostile racial climate of the time and the special intellectual dilemmas facing African-American scholars who wrote the Survey's two brief reports. Morawska highlights the Survey's misconceptions about immigrant world views by contrasting them with pictorial and textual evidence from the Pittsburgh and Johnstown immigrant communities of the time.

### The Pittsburgh Survey and Its Meanings

The Pittsburgh Survey's uses and meanings have always been complex and have changed over the course of the century. Researchers, critics, sociologists, historians, labor activists, and civic leaders remember the Survey in different ways—because of their different uses and different vantage points. For the original researchers and their supporters, as John McClymer demonstrated, the Survey was a formative experience in their lives, which they intended as a “model” of survey research and social reform.<sup>12</sup> For its critics, it was a meddling diatribe by outside do-gooders. For later readers, the Pittsburgh study became a set of “texts” to be read and analyzed and an “icon” of early twentieth-century American life. For this volume, it has become a “project” to be analyzed, placed in context, and evaluated from different angles of vision.

We begin with a review of the history of the Pittsburgh Survey, first from the perspective of its creators and then from the perspective of Pittsburgh's reform community of 1910. This history provides a context for the essays that follow and for some summary thoughts on the production of knowledge, the organization of social reform, and the legacy of the situation of early twentieth-century Pittsburgh for later generations.

### The Researchers' Pittsburgh Survey

For the original researchers, the Pittsburgh Survey was an exercise in Progressive reform and social research that produced a set of documents and exhibits about life in Pittsburgh in the first decade of the century. In later years, the memory of the Pittsburgh Survey, as Cohen, Turner, and Bulmer

indicate, triggered thoughts of youthful social activism or maybe a bit of foolishness, political transformation, or sometimes frustration. The generation of scholars, activists, and social critics who conducted the study came of age in a period of phenomenal urban growth and pressing social problems which they felt it was their responsibility to address. For many of the original researchers, the Survey resonated throughout their lives.

The classic narrative of the project's origins illustrates the way they remembered the project. Key participants and their biographers told the story so frequently that it became something of a parable.<sup>13</sup> In June 1906, so the story goes, Alice B. Montgomery, chief probation officer of the Allegheny County Juvenile Court and a local reform activist in Pittsburgh, requested that Paul Kellogg, editor of the New York–based publication, *Charities and the Commons*, send her a set of articles published in the journal. “Would it be possible,” she began, “for you to appoint a special investigator to study and make a report of social conditions in Pittsburgh and vicinity?”

“We feel,” she continued, “that the people of Allegheny County are not as yet wide awake as to the needs of the poor, and it is almost impossible with our limited corps of workers, to make the systematic investigation and presentation that is needed. We should be very glad for any help that you might give us, or for any suggestions you could offer.” Kellogg and Edward T. Devine of the New York Charity Organization Society responded favorably and assembled a group of impressive backers in the emerging national social work and philanthropic community. Substantial local support came from leaders and residents of Pittsburgh's settlement house, Kingsley House, and from reform mayor George Guthrie. Most crucially, the newly formed Russell Sage Foundation appropriated the princely sum of \$27,000 for the research effort and another \$20,000 later to offset the cost of publication. Accordingly, Mrs. Montgomery's initial modest request for a “special investigator” mushroomed into one of the most extensive social research and reform efforts of the twentieth century. In all, over seventy researchers—a veritable who's who of early twentieth-century Progressive thought—lent their efforts and expertise to the Pittsburgh Survey. As Martin Bulmer's essay describes, by 1909 *Charities and the Commons* had changed its name to the *Survey*. The reform proposals listed in the pages of the Pittsburgh Survey reports provided much of the blueprint for reforming urban industrial society—including the introduction of workers' compensation systems, pollution control, civic reform, protective legislation, and a shorter workday in the steel industry.<sup>14</sup>

There were several morals to this version of the story. It extolled the creative efforts of reform advocates in the volunteer sector, the prescient request

of Mrs. Montgomery, the quick assemblage and dedicated work of an impressive group of researchers, the Charity Organization Society's energetic publication and promotion of the results of the survey, the eager response by ordinary Pittsburgh residents who provided information to the surveyors. Private philanthropists spoke passionately to pressing social needs, championing solutions to the problems of the poor, the disinherited, the neglected.

As Bulmer, Turner, and Cohen demonstrate, Paul Kellogg and many early twentieth-century social reformers conceived the Pittsburgh Survey as a model for reformers in other cities. Kellogg hoped to influence how social research was done in universities and how local elites and experts might change their local environment. He and the other Survey authors proposed legislation to improve working conditions in industry. Some participants made careers of the kind of research, writing, and publicity that the Survey involved. John Fitch, for example, remained an influential scholar who studied conditions in the steel industry and returned to reexamine those conditions during the 1919 steel strike. Paul Kellogg edited the *Survey* and its successors for the rest of his career. The Russell Sage Foundation continued to fund socially committed research.

### The View from Pittsburgh

When the results of the Pittsburgh Survey were publicized in Pittsburgh in 1909, the establishment press condemned it for giving the city a black eye and ignoring "the truth." As Greenwald explains, the local press restored the public image of the steel industry preferred by the corporations with a series of upbeat articles on industrial accidents, employers' care and compensation for injured workers, corporate welfare policies, and workers' housing.<sup>15</sup> Nor did the Survey's results become directly entangled in local electoral politics. In the 1909 mayoral election, Republican William Magee defeated the progressive Civic Party candidate, William Stevenson, and neither candidate spoke of the Survey. Local officials claimed they were already tackling the environmental problems that the Survey exposed. The Chamber of Commerce supported the city council's decision to commission a competing economic survey of Pittsburgh in 1911, which treated many of the same issues as the Kellogg survey.<sup>16</sup> The researchers failed to see the good side of Pittsburgh life, the papers complained. Reform would come in due course.

The steelmasters and other Pittsburgh employers also proclaimed that the Pittsburgh Survey grossly overstated labor exploitation in the steel mills, coal

mines, and other manufacturing sites in Pittsburgh. They maintained that the men liked their jobs; that the surveyors had listened to the disgruntled remnants of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers who did not represent the views of the current steel workers. Perhaps some isolated cases of bad conditions existed. United States Steel “voluntarily” tore down the Painter’s Row slum after its condition was exposed in the Survey.<sup>17</sup> Overall, however, manufacturers maintained that industry prospered in Pittsburgh for the benefit of both employers and workers. As Oestreicher demonstrates, it would take another fearsome strike in 1919 and the aggressive organizational efforts of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in the 1930s before conditions would change for workers in the steel industry.

In short, the Survey failed to arouse Pittsburghers—either influential citizens or the middle class—to improve everyday life for workers in Pittsburgh, solve environmental problems of the area, or meet the immediate “needs of the poor” at the time.<sup>18</sup> Its local accomplishments, as Bauman and Spratt maintain, resulted in modest efforts in the new field of urban planning.

### The Survey in Later Years

As time went on and the first flush of reaction to the Survey faded from public view, the original meanings of the Survey changed. By the mid-teens, the Survey had ceased to be a focal point for immediate community mobilization and social reform in Pittsburgh. Nevertheless, the original researchers, their local supporters, and the critics of the surveyors’ vision returned again and again to data in the reports as benchmarks against which to measure change in life in Pittsburgh and the condition of industrial workers nationally. Similarly, social science researchers from the social work and reform community and academia analyzed, praised, and criticized the project as an example of a particular form of social research. Ironically, perhaps, the obvious failure of the Survey as an instrument of immediate social reform prompted its original creators, and social science researchers sympathetic to its goals, to ponder other mechanisms for solving the problems the Survey exposed.

Cohen provides a particularly pointed example of this process in his narrative of Kellogg’s and Fitch’s efforts to press their reform proposals before the Commission on Industrial Relations (1913). Once they realized that documentation of workers’ long hours and terrible working conditions would not persuade local elites to raise wages and shorten the workday, they explored more profound remedies for restructuring American industrial relations. These

proposals included increased use of administrative boards and a claim for a kind of property right for workers to the job itself. Oestreicher discusses how CIO organizers in the 1930s recalled the findings of the Survey—sometimes disingenuously—during their campaigns to organize the steel industry, using the very litany of the industry's problems at the time of the Survey to justify union organization.

Academics also used the Survey as an example of possible research strategies. As Bulmer points out, sociology course syllabi from the teens onward treated the Survey as an acceptable method for sociological practice. But by the late 1920s sociologists favored the sociological survey over the social survey—that is, scientific sociology over the kind of work presented in the Pittsburgh Survey.

By midcentury, the Survey volumes ceased to be models for current research. Rather they had become historical documents, most commonly used to provide primary evidence of life in urban America at the turn of the century. Dozens of citations to the main Survey volumes are found in social science publications of the past twenty years, and the volumes are cited by geographers, sociologists, economists, psychologists, and historians. Much of this literature is focused on Pittsburgh, but not exclusively so, and current writers use the data from the Survey as evidence of broader patterns from turn-of-the-century America.<sup>19</sup>

### Looking Backward

From the perspective of almost a century, it is possible to see the Pittsburgh Survey as an amalgam of three different strands of social research: investigative journalism, normal sociology or normal social science, and policy analysis. At the beginning of the twentieth century, these strands were imperfectly differentiated. The findings and results of the Pittsburgh Survey appeared in many forms: newspaper and magazine publication and in university-based research efforts (including John Fitch's dissertation). The Pittsburgh Survey was designed to provide direct advice to government, though it was a privately commissioned study. At the end of the twentieth century, an elaborate array of knowledge-building professions and institutions all could trace some of their roots to the kind of research done in the Pittsburgh Survey and the social survey movement more generally. It is perhaps useful then to see how these three kinds of research have differentiated themselves since.

Investigative journalism and the tradition of muckraking were already well established when Kellogg and his researchers undertook the Pittsburgh Survey. From the muckraking tradition they took the dramatic language and visual

imagery, and the challenge to the readers or viewers to undertake citizen action, to eradicate social evils. The documentation of the long hours and dangerous working conditions in Pittsburgh's industries was designed to shock as well as inform. The exposure of corruption, environmental pollution, and illness caused by unregulated industry was intended to arouse the local citizenry to action. Such journalism characterized the work of some of the most famous reporters and photographers of the day—for example, Jacob Riis, Ida Tarbell, and Lincoln Steffens.

Such reportage tugged at the heartstrings of readers and not surprisingly angered the targets of the investigation. The political battles such journalism inspired were a sheer contest of wills, often framed in manichean terms: the people versus the “interests,” the trusts, or arrogant power. Nevertheless, in one sense reporters stood at the margins of the political process, though they were sometimes allied with particular partisan or reform positions. Their professional success as reporters depended more upon selling newspapers (and keeping the support of their editors) than it did in actually achieving their proposed reforms.

Paul Kellogg and the surveyors took a different position. They clearly wished to avoid generating a hostile reaction from employers and civic officials in Pittsburgh and hoped that their outsiders' perspectives would elevate their research to a scientific, if reform-minded, stance. The researchers aimed at portraying a detailed and comprehensive view of the community, including the effort to understand the complex set of social and economic relations that created Pittsburgh's problems. The sheer volume of information and analysis was impressive. The academic community admired this vision of comprehensive community evaluation, and indeed it inspired later work: notably the community studies of the Chicago school of sociology, the Lynds' Middletown studies, and the Yankee City series.<sup>20</sup>

But the emerging social sciences veered away from reform and were describing and analyzing what *was*, not what was and ought to be changed. Scholarly social research came to have a different focus, on the “normal” or average life of Americans, taking the existing situation as a given, not as a departure from what should have been. Later community studies, sample surveys, electoral and public opinion polls begin with the premise of building science as an ongoing process, not in changing the immediate world under study. The very title of the studies of community life in Muncie, Indiana—*Middletown*—captured the change in emphasis. Even emerging sociological work on “deviance” “normalized” the subject by examining the underlying logic and rules of the improper behavior.<sup>21</sup>

The Pittsburgh Survey, eighty years after its publication, might be fairly

compared with the work done in the field of policy analysis, an applied social science that emerged in the United States after World War II. Policy analysis has the explicit goal of developing what David Weimer and Aidan Vining call “client-oriented advice relevant to public decisions and informed by social values” or, in William Dunn’s language, “policy-relevant information that may be utilized to resolve problems in specific political settings.” Policy analysis (or, as Harold Lasswell calls it, policy science) “speaks truth to power,” in Aaron Wildavsky’s phrasing, and is consciously concerned with both the creation of knowledge and the problem of serving a client—be it a policy maker, an interest group, or the “public” at large. Unlike the world of academic scholarship, where the problems to be studied are defined by the discipline itself and hence at least partially by the researcher, the client explicitly defines the problem for the policy analyst. Without such a request for information, knowledge, and advice from a specific client, the policy analyst has nothing to study.<sup>22</sup>

Paul Kellogg received a request for information and advice, but Mrs. Montgomery’s modest request certainly did not justify the elaborate effort put into the project. Nor did she pay for it. Accordingly, the broad-based reforms proposed in the Pittsburgh Survey were not directed at the very actors who actually had the power to implement them. A comparison of Kellogg’s Pittsburgh Survey with the 1911–1912 economic survey of Pittsburgh supported by the Chamber of Commerce and authorized by the mayor and city council illustrates the difference in approach between a policy analysis commissioned by the policy makers and the hybrid brand of muckraking, social science, and reform-minded research that characterized the Pittsburgh Survey.<sup>23</sup>

The economic survey of Pittsburgh was an official revisiting of the issues discussed in Kellogg’s social survey. Much more modest in scope, it produced one volume of research results, a *Report* written by J. T. Holdsworth and published in 1912. The “primary needs” clearly reflected the findings of Kellogg’s survey including “elimination of the smoke nuisance, more and better moderate-cost homes, reduction of the cost of living, . . . flood protection, . . . civic and industrial cooperation and solidarity.” Mindful of his clients, Holdsworth opened his report by saying it was “predicated upon the idea that a good city in which to live makes a good city in which to do business, and that industrial and commercial progress is largely dependent upon social and civic conditions.”

Thus there was little or no discussion in Holdsworth’s report of working conditions in any industry, little mention of the problems of immigrants, and much more discussion of the absence of the amenities of everyday life that

hindered business; it favored smoke pollution abatement, flood control, reduction of railroad freight rates, and better utilization of land. Workers' problems were seen as the result of the high cost of living, rather than exploitation on the job. Proposed solutions were aimed at bettering local conditions and involved building more inexpensive housing and improving the production and distribution of food in the metropolitan area. Finally, mindful of the city boosters and officials to whom he was speaking, Holdsworth made his case for reform with detailed comparisons of the situation of wages, rents, and housing types in other midwestern industrial cities. Implicitly, he suggested, Pittsburgh had problems that needed a response if workers in Detroit or Buffalo, Cleveland or Milwaukee received higher wages, obtained cheaper and better housing, and found food more available. Unlike Kellogg's implicit comparisons to middle-class and "American" living standards, Holdsworth worried whether Pittsburgh was at a disadvantage vis-à-vis its industrial competitors. Only in the latter situation was action necessary.<sup>24</sup>

The Pittsburgh Survey spoke to the nation. The economic survey of Pittsburgh spoke to the key political actors of the local area in 1912. The latter survey may have been rather quickly forgotten as a set of documents, but it was probably more credible to the Pittsburgh establishment of 1912.

### Looking Forward

This volume is a product of a conference, its debates, and press readers' reports. As editors, we did not try to reconcile the sometimes widely differing appraisals of particular aspects of the Survey. Our authors take a variety of positions on core questions. For example, did the surveyors' "crisis" rhetoric facilitate or undermine their message? Did the project represent an innovative new approach to social reform or a sanctimonious set of documents that could be (and was) ignored by policy makers? Were the disparaging comments about the southern and eastern European immigrants merely part of the common language of the day or did they seriously flaw the research efforts? Our contributors disagree on these and other issues. As editors, we concluded that such disagreement represented the state of scholarly evaluation and is itself evidence of the complexity of the Survey as an event and set of documents. We thus preserved our contributors' diverse results and perspectives.

In the 1990s Pittsburgh hardly resembles the city of Kellogg's day. The steel industry is no longer dominant locally or nationally. The remnants of the smoke pollution of earlier years appear merely on the sooty faces of buildings

not yet sandblasted. The Homestead Works exist no more. A Bessemer converter today graces the railroad station that has been converted into a shopping mall near downtown Pittsburgh.

The contributors see the Pittsburgh Survey texts as a benchmark and vivid snapshot of early twentieth-century urban industrial life. They emphasize how dramatically social science and political discourse and the politics of the nation have changed in nearly a century. Race has joined national origin as major social divides in urban America. The male breadwinner–female homemaker nuclear family no longer represents the standard and normative American family. Policy analysis is a full-fledged academic discipline.

What remains of the world described by the Pittsburgh Survey is found in the continuing challenge of the differences in living standards between middle-class and poorer Americans. The late twentieth-century welfare state has legislated into being most of the safety net programs the surveyors advocated. These programs are again controversial, but not because they seem like radical challenges to corporate America. Rather, either they seem insufficient to lift the poorest Americans from poverty, or they appear as a wasteful drain on public-sector budgets. Paul Kellogg called up a vision of an earlier republican America on which to ground his vision of social change. The chapters that follow shed light on both the history of social research and social reform and the ongoing dilemmas of creating a just society.



# The Social Survey Movement and Early Twentieth-Century Sociological Methodology

MARTIN BULMER

**T**HE PITTSBURGH SURVEY MAY BE VIEWED IN SEVERAL ways. This chapter seeks to establish the significance of the Survey in relation to the development of the academic discipline of sociology and the evolving history of empirical social investigation in the early twentieth century in relation to that discipline. In this history, the Pittsburgh Survey itself and the social survey movement which it initiated play a significant role, although one that is orthogonal to academic sociology rather than a linear ancestor. As a very significant local study of one city, it was exemplary, but it could be read in different ways and it influenced a variety of different groups. What this chapter seeks to elucidate are the connections between studies carried out around the time of the Pittsburgh Survey and the subsequent development both of the social survey movement and of academic sociology, which paralleled each other but intersected relatively infrequently.

Various traditions in the history of social investigation may have coexisted, or followed one another in time, but there were no necessary connections between them. Sometimes innovative investigators were aware of the work of others but saw themselves as doing something distinctly different. The Pittsburgh Survey stands out as in many ways different from the studies that preceded it, and the particular historical circumstances in which it arose need to be understood. This chapter, however, looks forward as well as backward, to ask

to what extent the Pittsburgh Survey served as a model for subsequent social investigation in the United States, and if it did not, why it did not. The paradox in the early history of social investigation in the United States is that the social survey movement and surveys of social conditions conducted in the manner of Charles Booth made a considerable public impact in demonstrating the possibility of the empirical study of society and in pointing the social sciences in a more empirical direction. Yet they did not become the model for how the social sciences should actually conduct empirical research. In sociology, political science, and social psychology, other methods of research were developed that by-passed the social survey as it had emerged between 1890 and 1920. The origins of the Pittsburgh Survey go back into the late nineteenth century. The earlier models on which it drew include studies of urban housing and public health by investigators such as Walter Laidlaw in New York, the work of the Bureau of Labor Statistics under Carroll Wright (discussed in chapter 7) and early community studies undertaken by sociologists at Columbia University.<sup>1</sup> These studies were not surveys but rather studies of social conditions with a particular urban focus, or studies of small rural communities.

The Pittsburgh Survey is thought to be the first empirical inquiry to use the term *survey*,<sup>2</sup> although several studies from a few years earlier are today considered to be surveys. The earlier work of Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree in Britain, and by the Hull House group in *The Hull House Maps and Papers* in the 1890s, by other settlement houses, and by W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Philadelphia Negro* did not explicitly use the term, tending to talk about a social *study*. Nevertheless it is appropriate to describe all as surveys. Such studies were characterized by (1) field work, in which data was collected at first hand rather than relying on reports by others or on preexisting data; (2) comprehensive rather than partial coverage, within a local area, usually a city; (3) data about individuals, families, and households rather than aggregate data; (4) attempts at quantitative statements about the people and the area(s) studied; (5) links to social action, social intervention, and social reform.

In the history of empirical social investigation, the Pittsburgh Survey of 1906–1909 launched the social survey movement as it developed in the United States. It was followed in the succeeding twenty years by over 2,500 surveys of localities that sought to examine their structure and social conditions and identify their problems by community self-study. What was the relationship between these early social surveys and the methods of research that developed in academic sociology at this period? Was there cross-fertilization? To what extent did the young academic discipline borrow from the practically oriented and influential studies of poverty and other social ills?

## The Pittsburgh Survey

The main features of the Pittsburgh Survey are well known and do not need extensive recapitulation. The study was conceived in spring 1906 when Alice B. Montgomery, chief probation officer of the Allegheny Juvenile Court, wrote to the editor of *Charities and the Commons* to ask for "a study and a report of social conditions in Pittsburgh and vicinity."<sup>3</sup> The imagination of the young Paul U. Kellogg, managing editor of the magazine, was attracted by the idea, and he took steps to realize it. Kellogg was a journalist and social worker who conceived of the survey as a community movement to investigate social conditions and to tackle social problems. He secured initial financial support from the New York Charity Organization Society and the Pittsburgh Civic Association, and then a substantial grant of \$27,000 from the Russell Sage Foundation, set up by Mrs. Russell Sage. The policy of the foundation was "to take up the larger and more difficult problems" and to pay attention to issues not provided for in existing philanthropic activity.

The Pittsburgh Survey was the first major attempt to investigate the entire social life of a community in the United States by means of team research. In all, seventy-four people went into the field to provide assistance for the study, many of them local Pittsburgh notables and professional people, some of them outsiders who played a major role in the study. The latter included a number of leading social reformers and social investigators such as Robert A. Woods of Boston (a native of Pittsburgh), Florence Kelley (formerly of Hull House), and political economist John R. Commons. The most intensive researches were conducted by Crystal Eastman (a law graduate), John Fitch (a graduate student of Commons), Margaret Byington, Elizabeth Beardsley Butler, and Kellogg himself, each of whom spent a year doing field work in the city.<sup>4</sup> The results of the study began to appear in *Charities and the Commons*, which had meanwhile been renamed the *Survey*, thirty-five articles appearing in the first quarter of 1909. The full results were published in six volumes between 1909 and 1914. These disparate articles formed two volumes edited by Kellogg, *The Pittsburgh District: Civic Frontage* and *Wage-Earning Pittsburgh*. The other four volumes were monographs with a more specific focus: Elizabeth Butler on women workers, *Women and the Trades*; Crystal Eastman, *Work-Accidents and the Law*; Margaret Byington's study of the social and economic circumstances of ninety families, *Homestead*; and John Fitch's study, *The Steel Workers*.<sup>5</sup> When completed, a civic exhibit illustrated by photographs specially taken by Lewis Hine was held in the city to publicize the findings of the study.

Although Kellogg was advised by a committee that included John R. Commons, Florence Kelley, and Robert A. Woods, the Pittsburgh Survey was closer to investigative journalism than to academic social science—Kellogg indeed invoking the names of Lincoln Steffens and Jacob Riis to support the kind of factual investigation in which they were involved. Compared to the work of Charles Booth, the Survey used quantitative data in more of an exploratory and descriptive than analytical way. The overview of the community as a whole lacked focus and tended to produce a variety of unintegrated material on public health, sanitation, housing, libraries, education, taxation, crime and justice, social welfare and recreation, in addition to the monographs.<sup>6</sup> Yet it was important both as publicity for the investigation of social conditions and for bringing a wider range of concerned middle-class professionals, in addition to supporters and activists in the settlement house movement, into the orbit of social investigation.

The Pittsburgh Survey was produced by a coincidence of several conditions. A crusading spirit and moral indignation about unfavorable social conditions propelled Kellogg and the younger generation of Progressive reformers to put their efforts into such an enterprise. The request from Montgomery and copious Russell Sage Foundation funding provided the opportunity. Although academic advice was sought from John Commons at Wisconsin, Commons's own principal interests lay elsewhere and he sent his graduate students to participate. In the absence of any alternative, volunteer workers were recruited to undertake considerable parts of the investigation, although the survey staff wrote the monographs. Local publicity about the results of the survey was a fundamental feature of the Pittsburgh Survey.

John McClymer argues that those who undertook the study represented a new emergent professional middle class

whose careers started in settlement houses, charity organization societies and universities who later moved into governmental investigation and regulatory commissions, private foundations, additional surveys and professional social work agencies. Fundamental to such a pattern of career development was an emerging technology of measuring and mediating social change familiar to us as social engineering. The social engineers had first to identify the nature of an America that had suddenly become industrial, urban and polyglot. Pittsburgh, with its mills and mines, congested central city, and enormous immigrant population, displayed these phenomena in its starkest forms.<sup>7</sup>

## The Social Survey Movement

The social survey movement, which developed and flourished in the United States during the second and third decades of the twentieth century, owed its existence to the benefactions of Mrs. Russell Sage, who relied heavily on her legal counsel, Robert W. DeForest. As well as being lawyer to railroad, banking, and insurance companies, DeForest was the leading figure in New York philanthropy, president of both the Charity Organization Society after 1888 and the National Conference on Charities and Corrections after 1903, and coauthor of a study of the tenement house problem.<sup>8</sup> He advised Mrs. Russell Sage to adopt a flexible strategy for philanthropic activity, since given "constant change and shift of social conditions, and extension, or it may be contraction, of the sphere of government activity, the future may develop other and greater needs for philanthropic action than any which is now apparent."<sup>9</sup>

The foundation supported the Pittsburgh Survey, and growing interest in the potential of the survey method led to a number of cities seeking advice from the *Survey* magazine and from the Russell Sage Foundation. In 1912 the foundation established the Department of Surveys and Exhibits, directed by Shelby M. Harrison, who had worked on the Pittsburgh Survey. A graduate of Northwestern University, with graduate work at Harvard and Boston University, Harrison had also worked on the *Survey*, directed the Syracuse survey and the field work for the Birmingham, Alabama, survey. The purpose of the department was to spread the survey idea and to develop further methods of survey research.<sup>10</sup> The department's aim also was to present information gathered from such sources to wider audiences through public exhibits. As Harrison later recalled, the foundation intended

something more than the centralizing of inquiries regarding surveys and exhibits. Behind that was a conviction that the survey . . . was proving a sound and an effective measure for preventing and correcting conditions that are wrong, and for quickening community forces that are showing promise. It was recognized that important changes in our national life and community relationships . . . had brought new problems calling for study, and that in dealing with the new needs the usefulness of the survey as an organized method of social discovery and analysis, and the exhibit as an agency for popular interpretation, had been demonstrated.

The official history of the Russell Sage Foundation reiterates the point,

again quoting Harrison: "The aim always . . . was not to humiliate the city but to inform it."<sup>11</sup>

The department sponsored a survey of Springfield, Illinois, a town of some 60,000 people. This survey, directed by Harrison, was one of the main studies carried out in this tradition. The Springfield Survey illustrates the character of surveys conducted in the style of the social survey movement. It relied heavily upon local volunteers to gather the evidence used in the study. It used diverse methods of gathering data, including use of the records of local organizations and institutions, studies of particular agencies in operation, observations of conditions throughout the city, interviews with and written inquiries from knowledgeable informants, and some intensive studies in certain sections of the city. It had weighty local sponsorship, and its results were presented in an exhibition in the First Regiment Armory, which attracted thousands of visitors. The journalistic element predominated, both in the methods of data collection and in the presentation of the results to a wider public. The Springfield Survey represented a kind of populist version of the social survey, with more emphasis upon the reception of the results by a wide audience than on the penetration of the data collection or analysis.

Shelby Harrison later explicitly acknowledged that the survey movement, like the Pittsburgh Survey itself, fostered an amalgam of several different activities. It was not scientific research alone, nor journalism alone, nor social planning alone, nor any one other type of social or civic endeavor; it was a combination of a number of these. At its best, the survey united the contributions of the research worker who brings to light new information bearing upon related problems and needs in a definite locality, of the experienced social planner who offers suggestions for improvements based upon new knowledge, and the expert in educational publicity who spreads widely both the information and what it suggests and who interprets its significance.<sup>12</sup>

#### THE 1920S AND THE SURVEY GRAPHIC

There followed in the 1920s an increasing number of such surveys, some general studies of a community and some specialized investigations of particular topics more reminiscent of nineteenth-century studies of sanitation and housing. The sponsorship was a mixture of local civic bodies, schools of social welfare, and the Russell Sage Department of Surveys and Exhibits, which continued to be active. Specialized topics investigated included education, recreation, employment, industrial relations, and crime. Some surveys had academic sponsors. In the field of crime, for example, the Cleveland Survey of 1921 was directed by Roscoe Pound and Felix Frankfurter; the Missouri Crime

Survey of 1926 was directed by Raymond Moley of Columbia. For the most part, however, such surveys were undertaken by nonacademic workers usually associated with the worlds of social welfare and local philanthropy, with a dash of reform politics.

The *Survey*, of which Paul Kellogg became the editor, was the main channel of communication among this constituency. After 1922 it was published in two parts, the *Survey Mid-Monthly*, aimed at professional social workers, and the *Survey Graphic*, an illustrated magazine aiming to popularize the findings of social inquiry to a wide audience.<sup>13</sup> It drew on the work and ideas of social scientists, some of whom were also contributors, but it embodied, as Clarke Chambers notes, a particular ideological ethos; "Robert Marion LaFollette was the *Graphic's* favorite politician—after his death in 1925 there was none until Senator Robert Wagner came along. . . . The British Fabians and the British labor movement were still its models of what democracy applied might mean for human welfare."<sup>14</sup> It had, however, a distinctively American character, both in its democratic and populist appeal (reflecting the conception of the social survey as a vehicle for publicity and community consciousness), and it sought to harness expertise to the solution of social problems. The *Survey Graphic* stood for experimentation in all phases of modern life and the application of the latest specialist knowledge to that end. Social and regional planning, the engineering of society, featured prominently in its pages, reflecting the ideas of—among others—Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford. This, then, was an indication of the type of audience beyond the locality to which the social survey of the 1920s was aimed.

### The Social Survey and Academic Sociology

The community self-survey is interpreted by John McClymer as a type of social engineering by the professional middle class. The authors of the Pittsburgh Survey contrasted the organic development of the city's business organizations with the haphazard and disorganized character of its social institutions. Residents of the city suffered from outbreaks of typhoid fever and tuberculosis, death and injury in the mills and mines in which they worked. Children sent to work were deprived of education; families lived in unsanitary and crowded tenements. One aim of the Survey was to provide an accounting of these conditions, which in turn required the services of the social engineer.<sup>15</sup>

The bifurcation of effort in the growth of social investigation in the United States, which by the 1920s had become two quite separate streams, one in