

The Rise and Fall of Wartime Social Science: Harvard's Refugee Interview Project, 1950-54

David C. Engerman, Brandeis University

DRAFT – May 25, 2011 – PLEASE DO NOT CITE OR CIRCULATE

The World War II experience cast a large shadow over American social science in the early Cold War. Hundreds if not thousands of scholars left their ivory tower perches to serve in the rapidly expanding national security apparatus, studying everything from allies to enemies, from cultures to economies, from soldiers to statesmen. With breathless enthusiasm about their contributions to the victory over the Axis powers – contributions that turn out to be greatly exaggerated and perhaps even fictional – they drew upon their World War II experiences to transform American social science in the early years of the Cold War. An influential contingent of social scientists modeled their post-war work on their World War II experience; they abandoned disciplinary questions in favor of policy concerns; they rejected longstanding traditions of solitary work in favor of collective research enterprises; and they worked closely with the national-security organs that sponsored their work.¹ All of these marked a major departure from previous practice: single scholars working within disciplinary conversations and conventions, with limited extramural sponsorship coming from philanthropies and foundation-supported entities like the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS).²

¹ Some useful works on the effect of World War II on social science include: Peter Buck, "Adjusting to Military Life: The Social Sciences Go to War, 1941-1950," in *Military Enterprise and Technological Change: Perspectives on the American Experience*, ed. Merritt Roe Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); Rebecca S. Lowen, *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); James H. Capshew, *Psychologists on the March: Science, Practice and Professional Identity in America, 1929-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Philip Mirowski, *Machine Dreams: Economics Becomes a Cyborg Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

² For a broad overview of institutional infrastructure, see Roger L. Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) and Donald Fisher,

Even Soviet Studies, an enterprise so important in an era of American-Soviet tensions, was, especially in its early years, as much a creature of World War as Cold War. This essay explores the legacies of World War II at Harvard University's Russian Research Center (RRC), paying special attention to the largest and most important academic project in Soviet Studies: the RRC's Refugee Interview Project, which received a research contract of about \$1 million (almost \$9 million in 2009 dollars) from the Air Force. It shows the rapid rise of the WWII model of social science – collective interdisciplinary research projects for national-security organs – in the 1940s. It also explores the model's precipitous decline in the decade that followed, a decline due largely to funders' changing conceptions of what scholarship could do for strategy.

The story of the Refugee Interview Project (RIP) began, auspiciously, in Lake Success (Long Island, New York), the temporary home of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), in 1947. Carnegie Corporation trustee Frederick Osborn had come to Lake Success as a member of the American delegation to the AEC, a position he took after leading the Morale Branch of the War Department.³ A fervent believer in the application of social science to contemporary problems, Osborn hoped that scholars could help solve the atomic commission's impasse. Perplexed by the intransigent behavior of his Soviet counterparts, Osborn believed that “a psychologist might better be able to comprehend” what the Russians were doing.⁴ He turned to an energetic program officer at Carnegie, psychologist John Gardner,

Fundamental Development of the Social Sciences: Rockefeller Philanthropy and the United States Social Science Research Council (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993). See also disciplinary histories such as Charles Camic, “On Edge: Sociology during the Great Depression and the New Deal,” in *Sociology in America: A History*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Chicago: University of Chicago Press); David M. Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship and Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); and Michael A. Bernstein, *Perilous Progress: Economists and Public Purpose in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), chap. 3.

³ Osborn, *Voyage to a New World, 1889-1979: A Personal Narrative* (New York: n.p., 1979).

⁴ Frederick Osborn Oral History (CCNY Project, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1967), 64.

for help; Gardner soon became an advisor to the American delegation.⁵ Even psychological help, though, was insufficient. The problem, it turned out, had less to do with the psychology of the Soviet negotiators than with the growing antagonism between the superpowers; more than one historian has identified the UN atomic debates as the starting point of the Cold War.⁶

The failure at Lake Success deterred neither Gardner nor Osborn. Both were already converts to the notion that the behavioral sciences – an ill-defined but ultimately very well-funded amalgam of sociology, social psychology, and cultural anthropology – could help solve world problems.⁷ What better way to demonstrate the value of these behavioral sciences, Gardner wondered, than to explain what made America’s ally-turned-adversary tick?⁸ After a visit to Washington turned up little classified work on Russia, Gardner proposed that Carnegie should move right away to solve the “problem of understanding Russia and the Russian”; the best path toward understanding, he believed, was to focus on the new behavioral sciences.⁹

This interest in behavioral science led Gardner naturally to Harvard, which was just at that moment fomenting a behavioralist revolution in the social sciences. Impresario Talcott Parsons called for combining the insights of social psychology, cultural anthropology, and sociology in order to understand the structures and functions of modern society and its constituent elements. The foremost question for Parsons was social stability: under what terms, and with what mechanisms, would individuals put aside their own narrower interests in the name

⁵ “Red Psychology is Too Much for a Psychologist,” *NY Herald-Tribune*, 18 August 1948.

⁶ Larry Gerber, “The Baruch Plan and the Origins of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 6 (Autumn 1982), 69-95; David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 161-166.

⁷ See Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), chaps. 1-3; Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, chap. 5. On Parsons, see Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern American Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), chap. 4.

⁸ Gardner notes, 3 June 1947, Carnegie Corporation (CCNY) Records (Columbia University Library), Series III.A, box 42.

⁹ Gardner notes, 7-9 July 1947, CCNY Records, Series III.A, box 42; an internal history rightly concludes that the notes are “most revealing as to the ease with which the Corporation moves around Washington” - Memorandum for Counsel: Harvard RRC (1954?) – CCNY Records, Series III.A, box 164. [John Gardner.] “Russian Studies” (15 July 1947), in RRC Correspondence (Harvard University Archives), Series UAV 759.10, box 1.

of social cohesion? Modern social institutions – which for Parsons encompassed modes of thought as well as actual organizations – promoted cohesion and therefore stability.

Behavioralists' list of institutions was broad, including families, workplaces, schools, and political parties; they explained with a reassuring circularity that the existence of a certain institution meant that it must help promote stability.¹⁰ Only through the behavioral approach could scholars conquer the major social and political problems of the day.

Behavioralists at Harvard seceded from old-line departments and united in the newly created Department of Social Relations in 1946, a development that Gardner had endorsed and followed closely. As the scholars worked together on many theoretical, empirical, and applied fronts, they shared a general feeling of excitement in the department in those years, a sense that its scholars, individually and collectively, were on the verge of major innovations that would reshape not only the social sciences but society itself.¹¹

The lofty aspiration to apply social science to improve society has long been a part of American life, but in few moments, and in few places, was that aspiration as fervently held as at Harvard in the late 1940s. The experiences of the Department of Social Relations staff during World War II explained this enthusiasm. Parsons's colleague Samuel Stouffer, for instance, worked in Osborn's Army research shop, ultimately producing a multi-volume study of American troops, *The American Soldier* (1949-50), which became a landmark in the application of social science to military issues. It used surveys of enlisted personnel to describe the sociology of Army life, and, importantly, to propose changes in how to organize the Army.¹²

¹⁰ This essay, like many other writings, uses "behavioralism" as a shorthand for "behavioral sciences"; practitioners often reject this term for its similarity to the "behaviorism" of B.F. Skinner.

¹¹ Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), chap. 3. Jamie Nace Cohen-Cole, "Thinking about Thinking in Cold War America" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2003), 154-160.

¹² Samuel Stouffer, *et al.*, *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II*, 4 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949-1950) – volumes 1-2 are *The American Soldier*. Herman, *Romance of American Psychology*, 66-74.

Stouffer returned to Harvard after the war to run the DSR's annex, the Laboratory of Social Relations, which was designed to host contract research projects like those undertaken during the war. The DSR complex was home to a number of collective research projects that shared much institutionally with the Interview Project, including "The Comparative Study of Values in Five Cultures" – which DSR alumnus Clifford Geertz later termed "industrial social science" – and the Carnegie Project on Theory.¹³

Harvard's new Social Relations complex was only one node of a growing network of social scientists in government, foundations, and universities that was dedicated to the belief that social scientists could and should serve their country. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, they took pride in their wartime work, trumpeting an honor roll of sociological and psychological contributions to the war effort: studies of American soldiers, the design and distribution of propaganda, the training of military personnel, and much, much more. All of these studies took place under the banner of this new form of social science, known variously as behavioral science, social relations, or human relations. Whatever its name, it quickly became fashionable among policy-makers and policy-oriented academics; as one academic noted wryly after a visit to the Pentagon, "Human Relations research... has become, next to mink, the greatest single Washington enterprise."¹⁴ A wartime experiment became a postwar fad.

Not one to joke about such matters, anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn was proud of his wartime work in behavioral science. He had been a leading figure in the Office of War Information's Foreign Morale Analysis Division. He and his colleagues (including Ruth

¹³ Willow Roberts Powers, "The Harvard Study of Values: Mirror for Postwar Anthropology," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 36:1 (Winter 2000), 15-29; and Joel Isaac, "Theorist at Work: Talcott Parsons and the Carnegie Project on Theory, 1949-1951," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71:2 (April 2010), 287-311. Geertz, *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 102.

¹⁴ Saul Padover to Daniel Lerner, 11 January 1952, Records of the Revolutions and the Direction of International Relations (RADIR) Project (Hoover Institution Archives), box 15.

Benedict) boasted that their knowledge of Japanese culture, even if cursory and obtained over a matter of months, had saved untold American lives at the end of the war with Japan. Especially in this highly exaggerated form, Kluckhohn's heady experience encouraged confidence bordering on hubris.¹⁵

Kluckhohn's generation of social scientists had served their nation well during war, and was well poised to do even more afterwards. Its leaders boasted that the "new social sciences" could shape the postwar period as much as physics had shaped the war itself. The goal, as Kluckhohn's friend and fellow anthropologist Margaret Mead put it, was that scholars could help in "devising new [social and political] forms to keep human beings safe in a narrowing world."¹⁶ Properly applied, the prospects were limitless; the new social sciences, Kluckhohn concluded, could have "consequences as revolutionary as those of atomic energy."¹⁷ Mead, Parsons, and their colleagues took important lessons from their wartime service: the need to relax (or transcend) disciplinary boundaries; the value of collaborative work, often on a large scale, as a means to interdisciplinarity; and the importance of applied projects. These lessons shaped the work of the Department of Social Relations, its adjunct Laboratory, and, before long, the Russian Research Center.

Carnegie's John Gardner shared these enthusiasms for behavioral science. By July 1947, he concluded that Harvard was the best place to host a center for the study of Russian behavior.

¹⁵ Alex Leighton, *Human Relations in a Changing World: Observations on the Use of the Social Sciences* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1949). Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man: The Relation of Anthropology to Modern Life* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949), 170-178.

¹⁶ Leighton, *Human Relations*, 43-44. Mead, "The Study of National Character," in *The Policy Sciences: Recent Developments in Scope and Method*, ed. Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951), 85.

¹⁷ Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man*, 288.

From the start, he wanted Kluckhohn to serve as the director.¹⁸ Carnegie sent \$75,000 to Harvard as an exploratory grant, with the promise of ten times that sum should the experiments pan out.

The Center's new leaders were impressive scholars, but were not, by any stretch of the imagination, Russia experts. Harvard's faculty included many scholars with experience in and expertise on Russia, yet none of these scholars had any connection to the formation of the RRC. The four scholars who comprised the Center's founding executive committee had all served in wartime Washington – but none had any knowledge of Russia or the USSR.¹⁹ Kluckhohn's appointment as director of the RRC – over many Harvard faculty members with closer personal and academic acquaintance with Russia – exemplified the preference for “general social scientists” over those whom Parsons condescendingly termed “experts in [an] older sense.”²⁰

The Department and Laboratory of Social Relations soon became the intellectual inspiration and organizational model for the Russian Research Center.²¹ The connections ran through both Kluckhohn as the Center's first director and Parsons (also, coincidentally, husband of the Center's longtime administrator). Parsons praised the close connections between the Social Relations department and the Russian center, though at least one colleague feared being overrun by Soviet work. From Kluckhohn's perspective, the Center existed primarily to further the behavioral sciences. It would seek extramural funding for collaborative research projects on

¹⁸ Henry Shattuck to James Conant, 25 January 1950, James Conant Presidential Records (Harvard University Archives), UAI 5.168, box 382. Talcott Parsons Oral History (CCNY Project, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1967), 21-22.

¹⁹ 14 September 1947, CCNY Records, Series III.A, box 164.

²⁰ Parsons, “Clyde Kluckhohn and the Integration of the Social Sciences,” in *Culture and Life: Essays in Memory of Clyde Kluckhohn*, ed. Walter W. Taylor, *et al.* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 35.

²¹ Kluckhohn to Buck, 3 November 1947, Dean of FAS Correspondence (Harvard University Archives), UAIII 5.55.26 (Hereafter Dean-FAS Correspondence.)

Soviet economics and Soviet politics, but the center's main purpose would be to seek insights about the USSR available through Social Relations.²²

Kluckhohn and other senior staff at the RRC envisioned their job as equal parts scholarship and government service: "Both from the point of view of scholarship and of the national interest I can think of nothing that is more urgent or important than this," he wrote Gardner as the Center got under way.²³ Gardner and Osborn, for their parts, had already confirmed that government officials would "cooperate" with Harvard's new center.²⁴ Even before the Center began formal operations, senior staff met with the Director of Central Intelligence, who hoped to "establish [a] continuous relationship between their organization and ours."²⁵ Within two years of opening its doors, the Center had become swamped by informal requests from CIA and other government agencies. "In some weeks the deluge has been so heavy," complained Kluckhohn to Harvard's provost, "that the research of six or seven members [i.e., more than half] of the staff has been virtually brought to a standstill."²⁶ This complaint did not mention RRC staff members' participation in classified research projects conducted at MIT for the State Department and CIA.²⁷

Harvard itself would soon host its own major research project; in keeping with the RRC's original vision, scholars aimed to apply methods of behavioral science to understand Soviet society. They quickly fixed on studying the 50,000 or so displaced persons (DP's) from

²² Parsons, "The Department and Laboratory of Social Relations: The First Decade" (1956), Harvard University Archives HUF 801.4156.2, p. 61. Kluckhohn, "Notes on Discussion of Social Relations Research in Connection with the Russian Research Center," 3 June 1948, RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 1.

²³ Kluckhohn to Gardner, 23 July 1947, RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 1.

²⁴ Gardner notes, 7-9 July 1947; Charles Dollard notes on conversation with Osborn, 30 September 1947 – both in CCNY Records, Series III.A, box 164.

²⁵ McKay to Kluckhohn, 18 November 1947, RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 2.

²⁶ David W. Bailey to Buck, 24 June 1949, in Records of the Dean of FAS, UAIII 5.55.26.

²⁷ "People Involved in the Work of the Center" (20 May 1952), Records of Chancellor Julius A. Stratton (MIT Institute Archives), Collection AC132, box 4. On TROY, see Allan A. Needell, "'Truth Is Our Weapon': Project TROY, Political Warfare, and Government-Academic Relations in the National Security State," *Diplomatic History* 17:3 (Summer 1993), 399-420; and Donald L.M. Blackmer, *The MIT Center for International Studies: The Founding Years, 1951-1969* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Center for International Studies, 2002), chap. 1.

the USSR living in the American occupation zone of Germany.²⁸ By the time the Harvard center came into being, Army intelligence was finished with the vast majority of DP's who were not of special interest, and the DP's themselves were at loose ends. The University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, run by sociologists who had worked in Washington during the war, organized a preliminary survey of DP's. The project aimed to "prepare basic social-psychological guides to air attack on the Soviet Union," helping determine both post-attack propaganda and (as the report eerily put it) "propaganda of the deed," the air attack itself.²⁹ Air Force sponsors seemed interested primarily in targeting, wanting the final report to include a list of thirty Soviet cities "which ought or ought not to be bombed."³⁰ The Air Force sponsors, apparently dissatisfied by the Michigan scholars' inability to apply their findings, then turned to Harvard.

Kluckhohn learned about the Michigan project through his work with the Pentagon's Research and Development Board, but the initiative came from two Rays of social-scientific enlightenment in the Air Force hierarchy. The first, Lt. Col. Raymond Sleeper, was a familiar figure at Harvard; he had earned an A.M. degree in the Department of Social Relations in 1949, studying with both Parsons and Kluckhohn. Sleeper's years in Cambridge had left their imprint as he returned to active duty; his demeanor was more ivory tower than control tower. This attitude led him to envision an Air Force contribution to psychological warfare, which relied on better social science. He was involved in the Michigan project and would be more deeply involved at his *alma mater*.³¹ The second Ray, Dr. Raymond V. Bowers, was similarly inspired

²⁸ E.V. Kodin, "Garvardskii proekt" (Moscow: Rosspen, 2003), chap. 5.

²⁹ "An Analysis of Soviet Society," Part I (1949), in Institute for Social Research (ISR) Records (Bentley Library, University of Michigan), box 5.

³⁰ Angus Campbell to Burton F. Fischer, 17 August 1948, ISR Records, box 41.

³¹ Raymond Sleeper "Admissions File" (Harvard University Archives) UAV 161.201.13, box 152 (thanks to permission from Christine Sleeper). Sleeper to Gordon W. Allport, 27 December 1960, Gordon Allport Papers (Harvard University Archives), HUG 4118.10, box 37. Sleeper interview with Charles O'Connell, 3 June 1986,

by the prospect of applied behavioral science. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Minnesota and undertook advanced training in social psychology and sociology at Columbia and Yale. By 1946, he directed the Air Force's Human Relations Research Institute (HRRI), the sponsor of Harvard's Refugee Interview Project.³²

Sleeper and Bowers shared with Kluckhohn many assumptions about the value of applying behavioral science to pressing international problems. Bowers and Sleeper looked to familiar groves of academe to shape military strategy. As another Air Force officer put it, the interview project was the "largest and most important" work ever undertaken by the Air Force's social-science wing; Kluckhohn used almost identical words to describe the role of the project for Harvard's center.³³ He went so far as to praise the interview project as "the best chance our kind of social science has to prove itself for the Air Force."³⁴ The Refugee Interview Project reveals the "academicization" of military life as much as it does the "militarization" of academic life.

The high aims of the Interview Project and its roots in Parsonian behavioral science were visible in the final Air Force Report, entitled "Strategic and Psychological Strengths and Vulnerabilities of the Soviet Social System." It included chapters on key institutions of the "social system," including family, work, Party structures (considered primarily as a source of social interaction than a means of political control), and the professions. Each was evaluated in terms of strategic "strengths and vulnerabilities," producing a model of Soviet society in order to

cited in Charles Thomas O'Connell, "Social Structure and Science: Soviet Studies at Harvard" (Ph.D. diss., UCIA, 1990), 351-353.

³² Bowers to Shaw Livermore, 29 January 1962 and Bowers cv (15 June 1968) – both in University of Arizona Biographical Files (University of Arizona Archives).

³³ George W. Croker, "Some Principles Regarding the Utilization of Social Science Research within the Military," in *Case Studies in Bringing Behavioral Science into Use (Studies in the Utilization of Behavioral Science*, vol. 1, 1961), 122-123. Kluckhohn to Bowers 2 March 1950, RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 7.

³⁴ Kluckhohn-Sleeper correspondence 17 March 1950 and 29 May 1950 – both in RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 10.

predict the effects of various system shocks, up to and including all-out war. As critics of the Interview Project publications later observed, it emphasized sociological factors to the detriment of political ones. Yet these tensions were hardly apparent in the heady early days of the Project, as project leaders and graduate-student researchers alike envisioned their role the work as an effective blend of scholarship and strategy.³⁵

Both Harvard and the Air Force saw the stakes as going well beyond pure knowledge. As Sleeper wrote Kluckhohn, “if our utilization of the social sciences in combating communism is not immediate and at once,” atomic Armageddon would surely follow.³⁶ Bowers and Sleeper shared Kluckhohn’s broad mission, treating with utmost seriousness the aspirations to innovate in social-science method while at the same time providing support and hands-on training for cadres of graduate students. Yet the Air Force officials also needed to show results that would interest fellow officers less enamored of the social sciences.³⁷ Even with common purposes and perspectives, and even with the fate of the earth riding on the project, military-academic cooperation was not guaranteed.

One sticking point came over the classification of results. Kluckhohn insisted that the project reports should be unclassified, allowing project staff to publish rather than perish prematurely in their academic careers, and abiding by Harvard’s ban on classified research projects; open research would be a “condition of our acceptance of any contract,” he wrote. Kluckhohn was, however, willing to contract separately with the Air Force to “funnel into the

³⁵ Clyde Kluckhohn, *et al.*, “Strategic and Psychological Strengths and Vulnerabilities of the Soviet Social System,” Report to the Air Force, October 1954, in RIP Reports, Series UAV759.175.75, box 4. Reinhard Bendix, review of *The Soviet Citizen* by Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer, *Public Opinion Quarterly* 24:2 (Summer 1960), 372-377.

³⁶ Sleeper to Kluckhohn, 25 October 1948, RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 6.

³⁷ Bowers, “The Military Establishment,” in *The Uses of Sociology*, ed. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *et al.* (New York: Basic, 1967), 238-240. Croker, “Some Principles,” 123-125.

classified framework some relevant parts of our contract research.”³⁸ Kluckhohn saw this arrangement as the best way of “avoiding a somewhat embarrassing situation in terms of general university policy.”³⁹ This compromise had, in the jesting words of one participant, “more difficulties than Heinz has beans,” but was the only way to meet the Air Force’s demand for “operational” information while meeting Harvard’s demand that the project would be “general social science.”⁴⁰

While Kluckhohn was the titular head of the Refugee Interview Project, a pair of junior behavioral scientists did the bulk of the work. Alex Inkeles came to Harvard from a stint at the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the wartime predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency. Though he had learned Russian in a wartime program, Inkeles did not consider himself a Russia expert; he was instead a sociologist of modern industrial society.⁴¹ Similarly, third-in-command Raymond Bauer had learned Russian while in the Navy, but (as one of the first doctoral students in Harvard’s Department of Social Relations) considered himself a sociologist, not a Sovietologist. Inkeles and Bauer fit perfectly at Harvard, where senior scholars like Parsons expected the RRC to contribute to general social-scientific knowledge. A better understanding of the Soviet Union could feed the grand integration of knowledge to which Social Relations scholars aspired.⁴² This intellectual goal was not an academic “cover story” for nefarious classified work, but a central element of the Center’s identity and aspirations, at least during Kluckhohn’s six years as director.

³⁸ “In handling these operational intelligence problems, Dr. Kluckhohn made considerable use” of RIP data – see “History of the HRRI, July-December 1953,” Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) Microfilm K2898:1859-1861. Kluckhohn to Croker, 14 February 1954, RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 23.

³⁹ Kluckhohn to Buck, 9 May 1950, Dean-FAS Correspondence, Series UAIII 5.55.26.

⁴⁰ Bauer to Kluckhohn, 22 October 1952, in Raymond Augustine Bauer Papers (Harvard Business School Library), 8:34.

⁴¹ Alex Inkeles Oral History (Spencer Foundation Project, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University), 33.

⁴² Parsons, “Notes for Panel Discussion on the Objectives of Area Study,” 28 November 1947, in Records of the Dean of the Graduate School of Public Administration (Harvard University Archives), Series UAV 715.17, box P-R.

The fact that the Center accepted large government contracts, and that its faculty maintained long-term consulting arrangements with military services and intelligence agencies, did not undercut this self-conception of the high academic purposes of the Center. Indeed, the model of applied social sciences that Kluckhohn promoted in the late 1940s encouraged scholarly connections to such agencies. Insouciantly believing that like-minded men (and a small handful of women like anthropologists Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead) could come together to promote both scholarly and national interests, Kluckhohn and his staff did not imagine government work as presenting any challenge to academic autonomy.⁴³

This innocence would soon be tested by the interview project's operations. Even after resolving the issue of classification, the project was hardly the perfect marriage of scholarship and strategy that its proponents at Harvard and HRRI celebrated. The question of security clearances for interviewers followed immediately on the heels of the fights over declassified reports. As Inkeles and Kluckhohn recruited young Russian-speaking social scientists to conduct the interviews, they had to negotiate access to the DP's. Entry into DP camps required a security clearance. While Kluckhohn and Inkeles held clearances from their work with MIT, most of the junior staff were unvetted. After determining that clearances were "unavoidable," Kluckhohn and Inkeles sought a work-around. The Air Force could grant temporary clearances just before the group departed for Germany – permissible so long as they had submitted Personal Security Questionnaires seeking permanent clearances. Given the long processing time, the group would already be home from Germany before the investigations had concluded.⁴⁴

⁴³ It is hard to cite concrete evidence of this lack of concern, except to say that in reading thousands of pages of correspondence, memoranda of conversation, and reports related to Interview Project, I ran across no concerns about the source of funding. Even participant-turned-critic Barrington Moore, Jr. argued against group research rather than its organizer or sponsor.

⁴⁴ Kluckhohn to Bowers, 2 May 1950, RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 7. Interview with Alex Inkeles.

Conflicts between scholarly and policy aims emerged as the RRC staff began its crash course in project design in spring 1950. Kluckhohn defined the project's main task as a "conceptual model of the Soviet social system," but one with direct military application: it would identify elements of Soviet society "which, if damaged, will most impair efficiency." The model, furthermore, would allow its operators to predict the results of a change in domestic or international events. Bauer, however, used the language of behavioral science to argue strenuously against this approach. He wanted instead a "description of the structure and functioning of the major institutions of the system" in order to build a "description of the structure and functioning of the total system." Bauer considered military applications such as assessments of systemic strength and weakness to be a "relatively minor job," to be completed only after the scholarly exercise was complete.⁴⁵

Only a few months later, though, hounding from Air Force officials led Bauer to restate his priorities. In an all-points bulletin to RIP staff, Bauer worried that initial reports paid "inadequate or no attention to the fact that the Project is being sponsored by Air Force funds" – in other words, that they had heeded Bauer's initial advice that scholarship came first. While he did not want to redeploy any staff members to deal directly with issues for the "Air Force and U.S. policy in general," he implored his staff to pass on anything they could; they needed to demonstrate "a semblance of concern" for Air Force need.⁴⁶ The supposedly seamless interweaving of scholarship and intelligence was already fraying – even before the ink on the contract could dry.

The questionnaires themselves were compendia of the behavioral science topics, asking dozens of questions about key Soviet institutions – workplace, family, education, Party, and the

⁴⁵ Kluckhohn, "Analysis Plan," 17 April 1951; Bauer, "Notes on Analysis Plan," n.d. – both in RIP Correspondence (Harvard University Archives), Series UAV 759.175, box 2.

⁴⁶ Bauer Circular Memorandum, 27 August 1951, Bauer Papers, 8:34.

like. The researchers developed two interview schedules, a general one to be administered to all participants, and various topical questionnaires for those who could shed light on the internal operations of Soviet factories, health care, military services, Party organs, etc. The mix of questions apparently left the staff somewhat defensive; Inkeles warned prospective interviewees that some questions might appear “strange and even illogical to non-specialists” – but were, he reassured, in accord with the latest precepts of American social science.⁴⁷

Some of the project’s multiple aims left clearer marks on the research design than others. Its efforts to advance knowledge of Soviet society are evident in the wide range of questions about social structure, work life, leisure, family, etc. The interest in psychoanalytic techniques are visible in the sixty “depth interviews” performed by staff psychologists. The two sorts of written schedules, dividing basic from specialized knowledge, reveals also an ancillary mission of the project: training the next generation of America’s Soviet experts by providing them with the experience of interviews (not to mention to payment for the work) and in many cases data for use in their own dissertations. The project functioned, as RRC reports happily noted, as a “training ground” for young social scientists.⁴⁸ And indeed, graduate-student interviewers soon published pathbreaking books and articles on Soviet factory management, health care, family structure, and other topics.⁴⁹ The interest in advancing social science methods was revealed by a study, conducted by Columbia’s Bureau of Applied Social Research for HRRI, of Harvard’s interviewing techniques.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Inkeles to Bauer, 16 October 1950, RIP Correspondence, Series UAV759.175, box 1. Inkeles letter, 21 June 1950, RIP Minutes of Planning Meetings (Harvard University Archives), Series UAV 759.175.8.

⁴⁸ RRC Report, 1950-51 – in RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 11. “RRC Briefing of the Directorate of Intelligence,” 15 December 1952, RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 18.

⁴⁹ For a list of RIP publications, see Alex Inkeles and Raymond A. Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), Appendix 22.

⁵⁰ The BASR project was classified as “Intelligence Methods Research” in “History of the HRRI, July-December 1952,” on AFHRA Microfilm K2679: 39.

One of the key analytical categories that united scholarly and intelligence aims of the project was political allegiance/disaffection. For behavioral scientists, knowing Soviet attitudes toward the regime would help explain the extent of “adjustment” to social norms. And military officials wanted to know the extent of “home front” support in a military conflict. Which Soviet citizens were most likely to grow disaffected with the Soviet system – or already had? What events, internal and external, would lead to stronger popular support for the regime? What might increase animosity? The question of political allegiance was a particularly complicated one for the population of DP’s in Germany. They were in a no way a representative sample of Soviet citizens: the sweep of the Wehrmacht meant that the western regions of the USSR were disproportionately represented; the large number of escapees and AWOL soldiers meant that critics of Stalin were more heavily represented in Germany than in the Soviet population. “No statements made in any portion of this document,” Kluckhohn warned his Air Force sponsors, “should be interpreted as meaning we assume that we have a representative sample of the Soviet or even of the émigré population.”⁵¹

If the scholarly aims were fulfilled in the course of the project’s work, so too was the intelligence function, in a way that revealed the project’s contradictions. Even as they emphasized the scholarly potential for their work, Kluckhohn and his collaborators did not stint national-security concerns. One report to the Air Force, for instance, sold the “working model” once developed: it would compare the likely impacts of internal and external shocks, including even the “simultaneous atom-bombing of twenty major cities.”⁵² Bauer’s reminders about what the Air Force called operational concerns were clearly not forgotten by the Harvard group.

Inkeles reassured an officer in the Air Force Directorate of Intelligence that “we will be able to

⁵¹ Kluckhohn to Bowers, 21 August 1951, “Analysis Plan,” RIP Workbook (Harvard University Archives), Series UAV 759.175.95, vol. 2.

⁵² “Analysis Plan,” in Kluckhohn to Bowers, 21 August 1951, RIP Workbook, Series UAV 759.175.95, vol. 2.

undertake fairly close collaboration” with their “interrogations.”⁵³ The Air Force intelligence staff took this promise seriously, presenting Harvard with a fourteen-page wish list; it focused almost entirely on military topics.⁵⁴ These queries suggest that Sleeper’s ambitions for the behavioral sciences had more adherents at Harvard than among Air Force brass. By mid-summer, Inkeles and Bauer wrote increasingly distraught, even desperate, entreaties to Sleeper, hoping that he could convince fellow officers to keep the project on a social-scientific footing rather than becoming another sort of intelligence gathering.⁵⁵ They summed up the problem with a wit born of frustration, telling their staff that they were busy rebutting the military’s “notion that some good friend ... bought a piece of Harvard University and is sending it over to them so they can get some service from it.” The pair sought to “clarify” the situation by offering to hand over “things that are useful” for military intelligence as long as it did “not interfere with our prime mission” of scholarship.⁵⁶

Air Force misapprehensions of the interview project were shared elsewhere in Washington – and came close to shutting it down in 1953. A Congressional subcommittee responded with incredulity when a senior Air Force officer tried to explain what a “Working Model of the Soviet Social System” was. Apparently Representative Erret Power Scrivner (R-KS) envisioned a “working model” of a society along the lines of a working model train or airplane; worried, he called for the elimination of all Air Force work in the social sciences.⁵⁷ Things went little better on the other side of the Capitol, as Senator Homer Ferguson (R-MI)

⁵³ Inkeles to Maj. Robert Work, 8 May 1950 and Kluckhohn to Sleeper, 9 May 1950 – both in RIP Correspondence, Series UAV759.175, box 8

⁵⁴ List of Air Force requirements (n.d.), in RIP Correspondence, Series UAV759.175, box 1.

⁵⁵ Inkeles to Sleeper, 20 July 1950 and Bauer notes on conversation with Sleeper, 11 August 1950 – both in RIP Correspondence, Series UAV 759.175, box 8.

⁵⁶ Minutes 18 July 1950, RIP Minutes, Series UAV 759.175.8.

⁵⁷ Scrivner in *Congressional Record*, vol. 99, part 6 (1 July 1953), 7834-7835. Verna Johnson to Paul Buck, 7 July 53, Dean-FAS Correspondence, Series UAIII 5.55.26. Scrivner in Department of the Air Force Appropriations for 1954, Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations. U.S. House of Representatives. 83rd Congress, 1st session (15 May 1953), 70-71.

wondered aloud why the USAF had spent so much on a study of Soviet society – “not targets,” he reiterated incredulously, but “the Soviet Union social system [*sic*].”⁵⁸ While these attacks came at the high point (or perhaps low point) of McCarthy’s anti-Communist inquisition, it is worth noting that the attacks had less in common with the activities of the McCarthy’s Internal Security Subcommittee than they did with the Congressional investigations of the other major supporters of American social science: philanthropic foundations.⁵⁹

This Congressional questioning made public a fissure that already existed within the Air Force; many old-line brass saw no point in social-science research, marginalizing the two Rays (Bowers and Sleeper). Brass was winning out over sheepskin; already in late 1952, Air Force liaisons to Harvard wanted closer contacts with the Director of Intelligence, and not just the HRRRI think tank: “The era of Raymond V. Bowers is passed,” they menaced.⁶⁰

Unlike Bowers, Kluckhohn effectively protected his turf against Congressional depredations. He went right to the top, explaining the situation to President Eisenhower’s National Security Advisor, who considered the congressional complaints “absurd” and promised to sort them out.⁶¹ Yet other senators piled on. The Harvard program, one proclaimed, was “simply throwing money away.” If military leaders “have not sense enough to know how to counteract Soviet propaganda without hiring a bunch of college professors... this defense establishment is in one darn bad shape in my opinion.”⁶² True enough, some of the biggest promoters of social science for military use were in bad shape. While the Harvard staff continued the wearying task of data analysis, the project’s sponsors had no such luxury. After a

⁵⁸ Ferguson in *Congressional Record*, vol. 99, part 7 (22 July 1953), 9467.

⁵⁹ On McCarthyism and academic life, see Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁶⁰ Bauer to Kluckhohn, 22 October 1952, Bauer Papers, 8:34. The Air Force’s changing attitude towards social science research paralleled closely a similar change in the Navy; see Harvey M. Sapolsky, *Science and the Navy: The History of the Office of Naval Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁶¹ R.W. Pratt to Edward Reynolds, 7 July 1953, Dean-FAS Correspondence, Series UAIII 5.55.26.

⁶² John Kelso, “Harvard Study Called ‘Insane.’” *Boston Post*, 28 September 1953.

long, hot summer of controversy, the Air Force quietly dissolved HRRI, and with it all such ambitious social science research. Bowers was fired because, as one draft memorandum noted, he promoted more and more research “with less and less application to our military needs.”⁶³

The unhappy fate of the HRRI – even if its largest project survived – reveals one of many ironies in this case of government support for university-based research. Historians of science have long explored the explosion of “big science” projects housed in academic institutions with the government (often the Pentagon) footing the bill. As one pioneering historian admits, though, these scholars have focused more on the scientific end of things than on military sponsors’ interest and needs. The Harvard Refugee Interview Project, as an example of “big social science,” shows how divisions within the military, amplified by Congressional inquiries, could be as important as tensions between the military and academics.⁶⁴ Bowers, Sleeper, and a handful of others represented an academically oriented colony within the Air Force, one that ultimately faced troubles from above and outside.

Even though the RRC fared much better than its Air Force sponsors, it too changed direction as the Interview Project wound down. In its original incarnation, the RRC was to host collaborative research projects in behavioral science, economics, and political science. Yet Harvard’s scholars of Soviet politics never engaged in any serious collaboration, while studies of the Soviet economy were becoming more and more individual by the mid-1950s. Behavioral science represented the last gasp of collaborative research at the Center – and that too was under threat.

⁶³ Gene M. Lyons, *The Uneasy Partnership: Social Science and the Federal Government in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969), 143-145. Draft memorandum on “Organization of the HRRI,” n.d., AFHRA Microfilm A2573:1893.

⁶⁴ Bruce Hevly, “Reflections on Big Science and Big History,” in *Big Science: The Growth of Large-Scale Research*, ed. Peter Galison and Hevly (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

With the end of the interview project in 1954, the enthusiasm that had characterized the heady years of the RRC's founding began to wane; one alarmist called the Center "demoralized." Kluckhohn resigned his directorship, leaving the Social Relations scholars at the Center worried, with some justification, that the Center's original mission – applying behavioral sciences to the Soviet Union – faced extinction. For its first six years, the RRC had echoed the Carnegie Corporation's emphasis on Social Relations, devoting one-quarter of its budget to the field.⁶⁵ But what was first soon became last, as the Center's social relations program became all but defunct after Kluckhohn's departure. Inkeles undertook broader comparative projects in which the USSR would be one of many cases – and pursued the project individually or with single co-authors, not as part of a research team. Bauer, with no prospects for tenure, decamped for MIT.⁶⁶ Clyde Kluckhohn offered a farewell address of sorts, imploring his successor to "recall that one of the explicit purposes" for the Center and for Carnegie support was "the development of scholars and scholarship in the 'Social Relations' area."⁶⁷ But by the time he wrote, the Center had almost no connections to Social Relations as an intellectual approach or academic department.

The decline of Social Relations at the RRC was not the only sign that the Center was moving beyond its World War II origins. The Interview Project was meant to be the exemplar for the Center as a research institute – but ended up being the sole example. In the felicitous phrase of historian Hunter Heyck, the RRC went from being "a place that did research" to "a

⁶⁵ "Allocation to Disciplines" calculations, (summer 1954?), RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 22.

⁶⁶ John Gardner notes on conversation with Milton Graham (19 November 1954), CCNY Records, Series III.A, box 164.

⁶⁷ Kluckhohn Members of RRC Executive Committee, 2 November 1954, in Clyde Kluckhohn Papers, Series HUG 4490.7 (Harvard University Archives), box: RAND/RDB/RRC.

place where research was done”; instead of organizing extramurally funded research projects, it housed individual scholars working independently.⁶⁸

Another part of the World War II legacy, interdisciplinarity, also faded quickly, even before the Interview Project was completed. As early as 1952, the Center’s visiting committee concluded that the Center ran like a loose “federation of disciplines,” not a truly interdisciplinary organization. The Center’s seminar, a key locus for intellectual discussion across the disciplines, was becoming something of a revolving disciplinary seminar, with economists showing up to hear economists, historians to hear historians, and so on. More interdisciplinary conversations took place around the lunch table, the committee concluded, than the seminar table.⁶⁹

At Harvard’s Russian Research Center, the first postwar decade represented a special form of academic research. In content, purpose, sponsors, and organization, the form of social science during the early Cold War shared a great deal with World War II social science. By the mid-1950s, the postwar moment had faded, a result of pressures among sponsors to produce relevant research as well as a reorientation of social science away from large-scale collective projects (“big social science”).⁷⁰ To the extent that it was representative of broader trends, the RRC experience calls for recognition of multiple versions and visions of social science in the Cold War. The RRC experience, furthermore, calls into question the very notion of a singular “Cold War social science,” showing the complexity of interactions between scholars and their Pentagon funders – not to mention within the Pentagon itself – as well as significant shifts in the

⁶⁸ Hunter Heyck, “The Russian Research Center and the Postwar Social Sciences” (Paper presented at the Davis Center, Harvard University, December 2008; cited with permission.)

⁶⁹ Report of the Visiting Committee of the Russian Research Center, 6 June 1952, Conant Presidential Records, Series UAI 5.168, box 443. Replies to Berliner memorandum 26.6.53, RRC Correspondence, Series UAV 759.10, box 24.

⁷⁰ This transformation is visible in a number of works: Hunter Crowther-Heyck, “Patrons of the Revolution: Ideals and Institutions in Postwar Behavioral Science,” *Isis* 97:3 (September 2006), 420-446; Joel Isaac, “The Human Sciences in Cold War America,” *Historical Journal* 50 (September 2007), 725-746; Sapolsky, *Science and the Navy*.

first decade of the Cold War. “Cold War social science,” in other words, is hardly a simple or uniform as the term suggests; indeed, it is worth inquiring whether there is such a thing.⁷¹

⁷¹ For examples of historical scholarship that challenges the notion of a single and monolithic Cold War science, see Focus section on “Cold War Science,” edited by Hunter Heyck and David Kaiser, in *Isis* 101:2 (June 2010).