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War of the Worlds to Social Media

MEDIATED COMMUNICATION
IN TIMES OF CRISIS

EDITED BY Joy Elizabeth Hayes,
Kathleen Battles,
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War of the Worlds (1938). CBS Radio Network, Sunday October 30th.

Williams, R. (1974). *Television: Technology and cultural form*. New York, NY: Schocken Books.

CHAPTER TWO

War of the Words: The *Invasion from Mars* and Its Legacy for Mass Communication Scholarship

JEFFERSON POOLEY AND MICHAEL J. SOCOLOW

In this chapter, Pooley and Socolow reevaluate the legacy of the *Invasion from Mars* study for the field of mass communication research based on new archival evidence about the authorship of the study. They show how the biased and exploitative conditions of early communication research helped produce a contradiction at the heart of the study. While Cantril's narrative emphasized the size and national scope of the panic, Herzog and Gaudet's research actually found weak media effects mitigated by intervening contextual and individual factors.

Introduction

Late in the evening of Sunday, October 30, 1938, Frank Stanton, CBS research director and future president, and his wife Ruth hurriedly drove down Madison Avenue towards CBS's headquarters at the corner of 52nd Street in New York City. On the car radio they caught the climax of *War of the Worlds*. Stanton realized earlier in the hour that the excitement and reports of panic that had begun to circulate represented one of the most fortuitous research opportunities in the history of radio. Upon arriving at the CBS building, he parked his car, took the elevator to his office, and composed a questionnaire—as quickly and accurately as possible—on the effects of the program. He telephoned Paul Lazarsfeld, head of the

Rockefeller-funded Princeton Radio Research Project, for a quick consultation,¹ and then phoned the Hooper Holmes Company in Atlanta, Georgia. Hooper Holmes specialized in personal interviews for the insurance industry, and, importantly, did not rely solely on telephones for their survey work.² Stanton carefully went over the samples he was interested in—by economic class, rural or urban residence, and other demographic considerations—and by the next morning fieldwork had commenced (Buxton & Acland, 2001, pp. 212–216; Stanton, 1991–1996, session 3 pp. 115–117).

Stanton recognized the unique research opportunity, but also “suspected that we [at CBS] were going to be charged with having stirred up the population” (Stanton, 1991–1996, session 3 p. 116). As it turned out, the FCC did not file an official complaint, and the “fire-house” data Stanton had culled was never published. But Stanton’s study served as one of the main data sources for the most important scholarly study of the *War of the Worlds* “panic,” the *Invasion from Mars*, cited throughout as *IFM* (Cantril [with Gaudet & Herzog], 1940). Stanton’s study, as analyzed by Hazel Gaudet, supplied the bulk of the evidence for *IFM*’s important claim about “critical ability” and education as means of defense against powerful media messages.

Because of his crushing workload at CBS, however, Stanton would only play an advisory role in the project. Instead, the project fell under the purview of four key players: Paul Lazarsfeld, Hadley Cantril, Herta Herzog, and Hazel Gaudet. Lazarsfeld and Cantril parlayed the project into substantial research support from the Rockefeller Foundation’s General Education Board, ensuring continuation of Lazarsfeld’s Radio Research Project and startup of Cantril’s Office of Public Opinion Research. Radio Project researchers Herzog and Gaudet, meanwhile, directed the bulk of the research and interpreted the findings. Herzog initiated the project by conducting a series of in-depth interviews with frightened listeners in the Princeton area almost immediately after the broadcast. Based on these interviews, she drafted a memo of preliminary analysis whose themes *IFM* later echoed with remarkable fidelity. Gaudet administered the research project and conducted the statistical analyses of both the CBS survey and the data from the final 135 interviews that supported Herzog’s initial analysis. It is a telling irony, then, that while Lazarsfeld and Cantril engaged in a battle for authorship recognition, credit and oversight

for over a year, much of the actual intellectual work was conducted, invisibly, by these two women. In the end, they were barely recognized in the published study. For some of the same reasons—the gendered division of labor and credit—the contributions of Herzog and Gaudet register only fleetingly in the surviving records. Still, it is possible to reconstruct their important roles with the fragmentary evidence that remains.

This chapter tracks the complex politics involved in the research and writing of the *Invasion from Mars* study—a book that stands alongside the broadcast itself as key to understanding the *War of the Worlds* phenomenon. It exposes the gender and class biases of academic culture that led to Cantril receiving authorship credit despite not having done the bulk of the work. Drawing on new archival evidence, the chapter illuminates the key contradiction at the heart of the *Invasion from Mars* study—namely its focus on the power of radio to create a national “panic,” despite its findings of weak media effects mitigated by intervening contextual and individual factors (Hayes & Battles, 2011, pp. 54–55; Lowery & DeFleur, 1995, pp. 66–67; Socolow, 2008, ¶15). Cantril—who referred to the project as the “Mass Hysteria Study”—“sold” the research to the Rockefeller Foundation by emphasizing the size and national scope of the panic. As Stanton first realized, the fact that the broadcast appeared to have had such a strong impact was what made it worthy of study. Herzog and Gaudet, however, focused on the mediating factors that emerged in the survey and interview data. In line with her broader research focus on audience “gratifications,” Herzog explored listeners’ constraints and motivations, and proposed the study’s central research question: why did some listeners “check up” on the validity of the broadcast while others did not?

Ultimately, this chapter reevaluates the legacy of the *Invasion from Mars* study for the field of mass communication research. First, it reveals that the study was key in garnering continued financial support for the Radio Research Project, which Lazarsfeld would soon move to Columbia University to become the Bureau of Applied Social Research. Second, it shows how the exploitative and biased conditions of early communication research helped produce a study that con-

tributed to the notion of a broadcasting-induced mass hysteria despite its own more nuanced findings.

Contest and Conflict at the Radio Research Project

Lazarsfeld and Cantril welcomed the 1938 broadcast as an opportunity to secure the future of the badly managed Radio Research Project. Established in 1937, amidst a contested series of debates regarding the direction of radio broadcasting in the United States, the Rockefeller-funded Project was created by the ambitious psychologist Hadley Cantril, and formally housed at Princeton University. Cantril had come to the attention of the Rockefeller Foundation's John Marshall after Marshall read Cantril and Gordon Allport's 1935 collaborative book, *The Psychology of Radio*. While Cantril envisioned his role as providing "general direction," he invited Frank Stanton to act as the day-to-day executive director (Marshall, 1991–1996, session 3, p. 103). When Stanton decided to remain at CBS, Cantril and Marshall searched for a new director, and they settled on Paul Lazarsfeld just weeks before the project was to begin. However, Lazarsfeld and Cantril clashed almost from the start.

On one hand, both were similar in certain ways. They were charming, talented and ambitious. They shared a belief and interest in the newly emerging field of public opinion polling and its methods, and even had in common a commitment to the left that both men played down in the pursuit of academic distinction. But Cantril and Lazarsfeld were divided by circumstance and background, in ways that played out in a contentious relationship over resources, management style, and eventually authorial claim over the *IFM* study. Cantril was privileged, if not by birth, then by Ivy League pedigree. He was valedictorian at Dartmouth (Cantril, 2004, p. 387), which like other Ivy League schools remained in the interwar years a bastion of WASP exclusivity (Karabel, 2006). Cantril was debonair and polished, as Converse (1987, p. 144) concluded based on interviews with contemporaries. Lazarsfeld's place in the American academy, in contrast, was hard-fought and unstable. A Jewish Austrian émigré, escaping the rise of Nazism, Lazarsfeld used a growing network of social contacts to secure academic positions for himself at a number of schools.

Herta Herzog had been Lazarsfeld's student in Vienna (and later his wife), and was ambitious in her own right. She became a key player in the Project, developing what became the "uses and gratifications" approach to the study of media. She left the Project in 1943 to pursue a successful market research career at McCann Erickson (Herzog, 1994, pp. 6–8). While much is known about Cantril, Lazarsfeld, and Herzog, there is very little information about the fourth player in this drama, Hazel Gaudet. She was among the most active staff members at the Project, authoring or coauthoring two articles (Cantril & Gaudet, 1939; Gaudet, 1939) published in Lazarsfeld's *Journal of Applied Psychology* special issue. She was later credited as a co-author of *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944), the landmark panel study, for her major role in the fieldwork and analysis. She remained with the Project through 1941, when she joined the Office of War Information (Simonson & Archer, 2008).

Initiating the Study

In the days following the *War of the Worlds* broadcast, scholarly effort was expended on two distinct fronts: while Herzog and Gaudet began collecting and analyzing data, Cantril and Lazarsfeld began jockeying for funding. Just three days after the broadcast, Herzog was in the field conducting in-depth interviews with listeners.³ Over the next two months, she and four other female interviewers conducted interviews with 135 listeners, over 100 of whom had been chosen because they had claimed to be frightened by the broadcast (Cantril [with Gaudet & Herzog], 1940, pp. xiii–xiv).⁴ The earliest interviews formed the basis of Herzog's November memo.⁵ Lengthy excerpts from the full interview set would later dominate the published book's dramatic, scene-setting second chapter. (The book's first chapter was a reprint of the Welles transcript.)

Herzog's ([1938, November]) 14-page memo was based on the first 30 interviews—18 of which she conducted herself (Lazarsfeld, November 22, 1938). The memo's purpose, she wrote, was to bring out "those psychological categories which would seem useful for an analysis of the whole event" (p. 1). Her main conclusions, summarized on the last page, were strikingly similar to the core points elaborated in the published book. She concluded, for example, that one

cause of the panic was listeners' "readiness to be afraid" (p. 2). Just two weeks before the broadcast, the Germans had annexed Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, after the Munich acquiescence of British and French leaders. Recent natural catastrophes and Buck Rogers' Martian science fiction had all, she speculated, contributed to a "time out of joint" that primed listeners for "panic." The same point was elaborated in *IFM*'s seventh chapter ("The Historical Situation"), down to some of the specific language: "Are the times more out of joint now than they were in the golden 'nineties' or in 1925?" (p. 153).

Likewise, Herzog ([1938, November]) drew on the interviews to describe the broadcast's "realistic" features that, she argued, contributed to listeners' belief. She pointed to a technical virtuosity, as well as a series of devices used by Welles, including actual place names, the repeated interruption of a supposed music program, and the on-mic voices of scientists and government officials (pp. 5–8). *IFM*'s third chapter covered much the same "unusual realism" ground, including the "prestige of speakers" (pp. 70–71), the specific place names (pp. 72–73), and the music-program cross-cutting (pp. 68–69). Herzog (p. 5) discussed the importance of the "special confidence [listeners] have in radio as an institution," listing five interview snippets to support her claim; *IFM* concluded its nearly identical analysis by listing four of Herzog's five quotes (p. 70). Herzog (pp. 8–9) emphasized the importance of those who tuned in late (missing the disclaimer), a factor that *IFM* also stressed (pp. 76–84). Even Herzog's psychoanalytically informed speculation about the "thrill of disaster" (pp. 11–13) as a latent motive was written up in *IFM* with some of the same language and interview excerpts (pp. 161–164).

By far the most important probe in Herzog's memo was her extensive discussion of "checking up," a concept she apparently invented (pp. 9–11, 14). After all, the published book's most celebrated finding was its linkage of "critical ability" with listeners' tendency to seek out and confirm the broadcast's fantastic nature against other evidence. Although Herzog did not, in this early memo, tie "checking up" to education or critical ability—her colleague Hazel Gaudet performed the analysis of Stanton's CBS data that largely revealed the relationship—she did identify the immense significance of checking up to any further study. Referring to late tune-ins, she wrote, "The much

more important psychological problem is to what extent people were able to check up on the authenticity of the broadcast ... probably one of the most important aspects of the event from a social point of view" (p. 9; emphasis in original). She continued, laying out what would become the animating question of the published book: "Here again a more elaborate study would try to compare the personality of those people who did not check up at all with those people who checked unsuccessfully and those people who really found out the truth by checking." The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters, along with *IFM*'s conclusion, were largely concerned with making that comparison. Cantril's resistance to placing "checking up" at the center of the manuscript, until Lazarsfeld insisted just weeks before submission, may reflect his desire to underplay the central role of Herzog's ideas in the study.

Meanwhile, Lazarsfeld and Cantril were plotting to convince Rockefeller to release an emergency \$3000 grant to support further research on the "Mass Hysteria Study." Lazarsfeld hoped that publications deriving from the *War of the Worlds* study would shore up the Princeton Radio Project's shaky case for renewal. In a mid-November memo to Cantril with the playful "From: Orson Welles, Director of Publications, Princeton Radio Research Project" heading, Lazarsfeld (November 18, 1938) admitted that he was "much worried about the fact that the prolongation of the project will come up with Marshall and the Foundation at a time when no major initiative of the project will be finished."

Although Lazarsfeld apparently deputized Cantril to direct the *War of the Worlds* study, archival records make abundantly clear that he never intended Cantril to take sole authorship credit for any eventual publication.⁶ Cantril (November 21, 1938) did draft the Rockefeller proposal, which he submitted in late November. Perhaps at the suggestion of Rockefeller officials, Cantril submitted his proposal to the foundation's sister fund, the General Education Board (GEB). The "panic" over the *War of the Worlds* broadcast, he wrote (p. 1), provided an "almost unparalleled source of data" for both social psychologists and educators concerned about propaganda. He emphasized that Lazarsfeld, Stanton, and himself ("all trained psychologists interested in radio") had "already cooperated on a preliminary survey" (p. 3)—

thereby rendering invisible Herzog's crucial contribution. Cantril's proposal (p. 3) referred to a "written report by the [Project] directors." The clear implication that the study would be co-authored by Lazarsfeld and Cantril (and possibly Stanton) was confirmed at a meeting with a GEB official the next day. According to the GEB official's account (Havighurst, November 22, 1938), the write-up would be "published by the Princeton group." Lazarsfeld, the official recorded, "estimates that he could do a good job with \$3,000," and has "already had members of his staff make thirty interviews." The focus on Lazarsfeld (and not just Cantril) is notable, as is the second erasure of Herzog's contribution. That contribution, moreover, is evoked in the suggestion—credited here to Lazarsfeld—to compare the "affected" group with listeners "not affected."

The Invasion from Mars

In late November—less than a month after the *War of the Worlds* broadcast—Rockefeller's GEB (November 28, 1938) awarded the \$3000 grant. In the monthly bulletin to Trustees (December, 1938), Foundation officers highlighted the new grant. Except for some background on the Radio Project, the report to the Trustees was an edited down version of Herzog's November memo.

With the grant awarded, the study moved forward. At least for a time, Herzog remained heavily involved in planning the study's next phase. In a late November memo, Cantril (November 30, 1938) reported on a "conference" he and Herzog had the night before, to sketch "our general plans and purposes." The document laid out an elaborate plan for interviews in locations around the country, and designated Herzog as leader of over half the interview sites, including New York, New Jersey, Iowa, and New England.

The proposed budget, however, called into question Herzog's otherwise prominent role. Samuel Stouffer, for example, was slated to receive \$400 for running the Chicago interviews. "The sum left for Herta," Cantril wrote, "is not much. She will, of course, be paid \$3.00 for each interview and my thought was that there would be something left from the travel or special staff budget that could come to her at the end" (Cantril, November 30, 1938). Financial mismanage-

ment was a hallmark of the Princeton Radio Research Project, and this example further demonstrates the casual devaluation of Herzog's labor by the Directors.

The national interviews were never conducted, or at least not incorporated into the published book. Herzog, however, continued to direct the New Jersey fieldwork, at least through December when the 135 interviews were completed (Gaudet, December 15–16, 1939). Her work on the study seems to have dropped away soon after, and by March Lazarsfeld (March 21, 1939) was writing to Cantril to pointedly "remind" him of "some private debts": "In a general way, [Cantril] owes Herta some money for her work in the first weeks of the Orson Welles Study." A detailed expenditure report (Princeton Radio Research Project, June 23, 1939) submitted to the GEB in June lists no compensation for Herzog among the 19 people receiving payment.

Around the same time—late 1938 and early 1939—Hazel Gaudet seems to have taken on a much more active role in the data collection and analysis. Gaudet, as Cantril (1940, p. xv) admitted in the *IFM* preface, directed the "actual administration" of the Welles study. "She not only made most of the tabulations based on the interviews," he wrote, "but many of the ideas reflected in the tabulations and the text were contained in her detailed memoranda to the writer" (p. xv). Unfortunately only two of those memos seem to have been preserved, one (Gaudet, August 17, 1939) with Gaudet's detailed comments on Cantril's "first draft" and another (Gaudet, January 26, 1940) with remarks on a chapter of the near-final manuscript. In both instances Gaudet used supportive page-by-page comments to suggest stylistic and substantive changes. In the earlier memo, for instance, she (August 17, 1939) wrote, "On the whole I feel that the psychoanalytic material detracts from your story a great deal and even sounds a little silly" (p. 6). Gaudet's suggestions were largely adapted. Her call to restrict the psychoanalytic analyses reminded Cantril that the study's significant quantitative results could be overshadowed. Her concerns were addressed, and, in this case, Gaudet's influential edits left their mark.

Cantril, however, expressed little confidence in Gaudet or her ideas. When asked by Marshall to suggest a researcher to review educational questionnaires related to another foundation project, Cantril

(May 11, 1939) recommended someone else, adding that Gaudet would make "an excellent assistant to the person in charge." Gaudet, he continued, "has a thorough grounding in psychology and statistics, but would not have the methodological or theoretical grasp needed to set up such a study." Cantril impassively disqualified Gaudet from a research opportunity at the same moment he had come to rely on her *IFM* analyses—which, by all evidence, were theoretically informed and methodologically sophisticated.

Meanwhile, in the months following the GEB grant award Cantril seems to have decided to assert control—and ultimately authorship credit—over the *War of the Worlds* study. Cantril's increasingly brazen efforts to publicize his role directing the study soon led to a stormy confrontation with Lazarsfeld. Since the first days after the broadcast, he fed stories about his role in the study to Princeton University press outlets. A November 2 story in the *Daily Princetonian* centered on the Project's planned study, with Cantril as the unmistakable source. The piece ("Welles' Broadcast Aids Psychologist") concludes with the time and room location of Cantril's social psychology course, directing readers to a "lecture today touching the Orson Welles broadcast and the aspects of mob behavior that were brought out by it." A follow-up piece the next day ("Martian Invasion' Treated by Cantril," November 3, 1939) recounts his lecture. In December and January, these stories became more explicit about Cantril's leading role. A December 19 Associated Press story ("Men from Mars' Not a Dead Issue Yet—Savants Enter Case," included in Cantril, 1938–1951) describes him as the study's director, as does a January 6 piece appearing in *The Daily Princetonian* ("Cantril Directing Hysteria Analysis").

Lazarsfeld had apparently not seen these stories, but did come across yet another article, running in *The Princeton Alumni Weekly* in mid-January ("Psychologists to Study Martian Hysteria," January 13, 1939). The story, referring to "Dr. Cantril's study," states that the project "will be greatly aided by work already performed at Princeton by Dr. Cantril in the Princeton Radio Project." Lazarsfeld was not mentioned, and he wrote Cantril about the oversight. Though Lazarsfeld's letter of complaint does not survive, it is clear from Cantril's (January 26, 1939) reply that Lazarsfeld had reacted angrily to the

Alumni Weekly article. Cantril took obvious umbrage at Lazarsfeld's accusation:

I am glad you expressed yourself on the release, but I must say that the reaction seems a bit infantile. Perhaps we should have directors' uniforms with differential insignia. It is hard to imagine people like [Lawrence K.] Frank, [George] Gallup, [Gordon] Allport, [Daniel] Katz, [Samuel] Stouffer would maintain petty jealousies, and I should like to think that you, too, would have sufficient perspective not to let such trivia bother you. . . . In the official university release I clearly indicated that the whole project was under your direction.

Cantril wrote that, "I seldom see the sheet," and that the "report seemed quite harmless." He continued:

If the project could go on completely without me I should honestly be much happier. But apparently I am a strategic link in the chain. I am willing to play the role only for two reasons: (1) [Princeton President] Dodds feels that we should not tell the Foundation outright that we do not want a renewal; (2) I am anxious to help you make a reputation and attain some sort of eventual security in these highly insecure days. Please believe me that these are my only motives. . . . If I have to become involved in many emotional reactions, I may reconsider my whole position.

That the professed concern for Lazarsfeld's "eventual security" is juxtaposed to the issue of the Project's renewal is ironic, since Cantril's letter carries the unmistakable implication that Princeton was no longer interested in serving as host. Lazarsfeld's security depended on the Project's renewal.

At stake here, too, was Lazarsfeld's sense of the prerogatives of the directorship: he, and he alone, should decide who directs a Project study. This extended to authorship as well: When the Project's first book was issued in 1940 as *Radio and the Printed Page*, it was solely credited to Lazarsfeld—despite the fact that many of its constituent chapters were written by Project subordinates (including Herzog). It is likely that the *IFM*, had Lazarsfeld succeeded in maintaining control over its destiny, would also have followed this director-as-author practice.

The Project's fate was hanging in the balance. Just days before the nasty exchange between Lazarsfeld and Cantril, the Foundation's John Marshall had secured a \$750 internal grant to appoint a review committee to consider the Project's renewal (Rockefeller Foundation, January 25, 1939). Marshall's committee, a mix of academic and in-

dustry representatives, issued a report in March recommending renewal, but with a renewed focus on the "detailed analysis and interpretation of some of the material collected to date" (quoted in Morrison, 2005, p. 79). Rockefeller officials, however, opted to delay the renewal pending a more coherent write-up of the Project's research to date. Marshall cabled Lazarsfeld in mid-March: "DISCUSSIONS IN OFFICE INDICATE RELUCTANCE TO INVEST IN NEW RESEARCH PENDING FORMULATION OF PRESENT FINDINGS STOP FEELING HERE THAT NEED IS FOR BREATHING SPELL TO SAVE PROJECT FROM BEING VICTIM OF ITS OWN SUCCESS" (quoted in Morrison, 2005, p. 79).

Marshall gave Lazarsfeld until June 1 to assemble the Project's eclectic research portfolio into a summative manuscript. The Project staff threw themselves into the project—"day and night literally" (Lazarsfeld, 1969, pp. 328–329)—and submitted the draft on the morning of the deadline. Marshall was satisfied, and the manuscript was published the following year as *Radio and the Printed Page* (Lazarsfeld, 1940). The Foundation awarded the Project a temporary grant to prepare a proposal for a three-year renewal, which Lazarsfeld submitted sometime in the fall (Lazarsfeld, n.d. 1939).

Cantril (April 17, 1939) successfully used the Project's "breathing spell" sprint to press the Foundation to accept a delay in his delivery of the *IFM* write-up. He took at least some of the time, however, to chart out a new, solo project—involving the analysis of Gallup polling data—independent of Lazarsfeld and unconnected to radio. The two men were soon fighting over CBS and Gallup data and vying for new Rockefeller funds—all of it layered atop the ongoing *IFM* conflict.

Cantril (September 18, 1939) wrote to Marshall that he had just received a Lazarsfeld memo "regarding an extension of the Project to cover some of the radio problems arising out of the present European situation." He had also "gathered the impression that you and the others in the Foundation were interested in having some studies made very shortly on the effects [sic] of war propaganda, changes in attitude, and the like." He was, he wrote, "very dissatisfied" with Lazarsfeld's memo, for "the new problems are far too important to become mere appendages of research already in progress." With considerable brio, Cantril proceeded to outline in great detail his Gallup

proposal, reframed as a study of Americans' attitudes toward the war. He concluded:

Please forgive me for butting into any plans you and Paul may have. Naturally, I have not written this to Paul and should prefer that you do not mention it to him. But I think one should definitely take a fresh start on so important a matter and, if possible, not be arbitrarily limited by a 'communications' category.

In his reply, Marshall (September 21, 1939) confirmed that he was, "still holding strictly to the position" that the Princeton Radio Project "undertake no fresh investigation until the present work of formulation is virtually complete." That could only change, Marshall added, with your "full concurrence and in all probability only on your initiative."

As for the Gallup proposal, Marshall continued, "I am of course particularly interested. . . . As a matter of fact, the whole question which underlies your letter is now being canvassed as rapidly as possible." Marshall, who remained supportive of the Project under Lazarsfeld's leadership, was now poised to take advantage of Cantril's new independence. In follow-up correspondence Marshall encouraged him to submit a revised proposal, which Cantril (November 13, 1939) delivered in mid-November.

Up until the publication of the *Invasion from Mars* in March 1940, Lazarsfeld and Cantril kept up their interlocked fight over Rockefeller money, the Project's future, and the *IFM* study itself. At the same time, both men needed the other's cooperation. Cantril discovered that, as a practical matter, he could not get the Welles manuscript published without Lazarsfeld's clearance. Lazarsfeld, likewise, came to realize that his plan to relocate the Project to Columbia could not move forward without Cantril's cooperation.

In a mid-October memo to Cantril, Lazarsfeld (October 12, 1939) pressed his case that *IFM* should center on "checking up," the theme that Herzog had highlighted almost a year earlier. Lazarsfeld wrote that he had, "a still stronger feeling that the emphasis of your study should be very strongly upon checking up." The fact that people panicked, Lazarsfeld continued, is not compelling. "However, what is so extremely interesting and deserves all generalization is the fact that after people were scared they were not able or not willing to check up to see whether it was true or not." Lazarsfeld, an especially savvy

packager of concepts (Platt, 1996, ch. 7), urged Cantril to find a better phrase than "checking up," so that the idea "could be more easily merchandized."

Though collegial, Lazarsfeld's memo also served a tactical purpose: he was angling to bring Herzog back into the study, presumably to secure her co-authorship credit.⁷

In case you have not enough time to do something about it, why don't you ask Herta to go over all the interviews and dig out everything she finds on check-ups and write to you an elaborate report on the check-up situation. Then you can take all the factual material she gives you and re-write it as the final chapter in your own interpretation. . . . I am sure that Herta would be willing to volunteer her help to make this improvement, if you agree with me that it is an improvement. I am stressing her possible help because I am quite sure that it would not do the situation justice if you just wrote a few pages about the check-up problem.

Cantril, previously eager to maneuver Herzog away, was suddenly receptive. In an undated reply to Lazarsfeld, he (1939, n.d.) wrote that he "simply MUST" submit the *IFM* manuscript by mid-November. Though he had only recently disparaged Lazarsfeld's war-related memo to Marshall, Cantril assumed a chummy tone. "So COULD Herta go at the job in the very near future?" he asked, estimating three days of "rather concentrated work." In the same jovial tone, he proceeds to nullify any future credit Herzog might claim: "God knows what her reward will be—except my continued admiration for her ability and a eulogistic footnote in the last chapter." There is no record suggesting that Herzog agreed to help under these conditions.

Lazarsfeld and Cantril continued to spar over the *IFM* manuscript. In a late November exchange, Cantril (November 25, 1939) flatly refused to make substantive changes suggested by Lazarsfeld, citing the impending deadline. "Since you and Frank [Stanton] have both read it carefully once, since I am satisfied that I have taken account of your suggestions, and since [Gordon] Allport—as a complete outsider—has caught no errors or misinterpretations . . . I have reached a stage where I must stop any major revisions." Lazarsfeld scribbled angry challenges to Cantril's deadline claims in the margin. Needless to say, Cantril's request, in the same letter, for Lazarsfeld's foreword was not granted—as the book was published without one. Lazarsfeld answered with an apparently bitter memo, judging from

Cantril's (November 29, 1939) curt reply: "I shall refrain from answering your classic letter. But it is hard to do so."

Just days later, however, the two men met face-to-face in a fascinating yet mysterious denouement to their long struggle. No account of the meeting survives, although Cantril (December 2, 1939), in coordinated letters to Lazarsfeld and Marshall, struck a surprisingly conciliatory tone. In the letter to Lazarsfeld, Cantril brought up what "I told you at the end of our discussion today—that I now for the first time honestly see what has been bothering you about the Invasion from Mars study." Lazarsfeld's methodological criticisms, Cantril continued, were finally clear. His failing was not the "common charge of 'mismanagement,'" but instead impossibly high standards. "So I can admit—since I now understand—that many of your troubles have been over genuine methodological procedures."

The letter comes off as a less-than-genuine statement, a suspicion confirmed, perhaps, by its transparent performativity. Indeed, the letter closed on a note of saccharine harmony that the two men's history rendered implausible: "Personally, I am enormously relieve [sic] that we at last know what has been the cause of our minor difficulties. In order that John Marshall should know how I feel, I am sending him a copy of this letter." That their difficulties were "minor" and mendable seems a message intended more for Marshall than for Lazarsfeld.

The accompanying letter to Marshall doubled down on the first letter's praise:

Today, however, [Lazarsfeld] was able to verbalize for me in a really brilliant way his objections to my study and other studies of the project (including his own). I can see now for the first time the fundamental reasons for the delay we have been worried about with respect to the project. And in all fairness to Paul, I did want you to know at once that the delay now makes sense to me and would, I feel sure, make sense to anyone if Paul explained it to them the way he explained it to me.

Though impossible to prove, it is plausible to read Cantril's sudden camaraderie as evidence of a deal between the two men—a reconciliation of mutual expediency. After all, Cantril could hardly move forward with the *IFM* submission over Lazarsfeld's vociferous objections. Likewise, Lazarsfeld was days away from learning the fate of his proposal to relocate the Project to Columbia University—a move that Cantril could attempt to block. Both men, moreover,

depended very much on Marshall's near-term favor: Lazarsfeld for the Columbia move, coupled with a three-year extension, and Cantril for the pending war-opinion grant. Cantril's closing paragraph, at any rate, strengthens this interpretation:

In a conversation with [Princeton] President Dodds the other day, I gathered that he and [Rockefeller official] Mr. Stevens were quite worried about the slow rate of productiveness of the project. I can quite understand their point of view. But I should be very glad to discuss with Mr. Stevens, if you think it at all advisable, what I have finally learned about Paul's difficulties and the reasons for what has seemed a publication blocking.

Three days later, Cantril won the \$15,000 grant (Rockefeller Foundation, December 5-6, 1939). Soon after he formally established a new Office of Public Opinion Research at Princeton to host his war-opinion polling and Gallup re-analysis. Just over a week later Lazarsfeld learned that his proposal to extend and move the Project was approved (Morrison, 2005, p. 75). It is likely that the pair of December grants were coordinated, enabling the two men to disentangle their long-fractious union.

The Publication and Its Legacy

The "Mass Hysteria Study" was finally published in March 1940 as the *Invasion from Mars*, with Cantril listed as sole author—though there was a "with the assistance of" credit for Herzog and Gaudet. The book's popular style, and its arresting topic, made for rapid sales, and *IFM* was later issued as a mass-market paperback. In the remembered history of media research, the book is exclusively associated with Cantril, and most bibliographic references drop the "with the assistance of" credit altogether. The book's ties to Herzog, Gaudet, Stanton and Lazarsfeld have long been forgotten.

Lazarsfeld was still bitter about Cantril's self-serving behavior years after the book's release. In a 1942 letter to a government official, he wrote that Cantril has "hardly done any original research," adding "I just want to be sure that in the field of research, moral and intellectual standards are not set by him" (quoted in Glander, 2000, p. 84). In a 1943 interview with a Rockefeller official, Lazarsfeld (March 29, 1943) called Cantril "pathologically ambitious" and dismissed his work on the *IFM* project as "laughable."

Lazarsfeld had tried, in the run-up to the book's publication, to get Herzog recognized as co-author. Still-incensed, he published Herzog's key memo in a 1955 collection, with an editorial introduction that asserted the clear priority and originality of this Herzog memo over the published report under Cantril's name (Herzog, 1955, p. 420). As late as 1975 he was still writing of his "justified complaint" against Cantril, that he "forced me to make him co-author of the *Invasion from Mars* while he had practically nothing to do with it" (quoted in Pasanella, 1994, p. 30). Of course Cantril had not settled for co-author. Stanton (March 29, 1943), too, savaged Cantril to a Rockefeller official. He claimed that Cantril had refused to revise a "completely unsatisfactory" draft, and insisted on sole authorship even after Stanton and Lazarsfeld had rewritten the manuscript.

Stanton and Lazarsfeld left a record of complaints, mainly because they were asked. In the end neither man's career suffered as a result of Cantril's recognition grab. We cannot know if Herzog and Gaudet harbored similar grievances, since their accounts of the *War of the Worlds* project were never solicited. Both women left academic life for other pursuits, but it is impossible to judge whether a just share of *IFM* authorship would have made a difference in their life courses. Lazarsfeld (February 17, 1938), in an early memo addressing Stanton's apprehension over credit, made an offhand comment that applied well to the Project's largely forgotten female staff: "I think it will be the destiny of all of us directors to sink a lot of ideas into other people's studies." Lazarsfeld's indifferent attitude towards the exploitative aspects of research collaboration under his direction is indicative of academic practice between the wars. That he could confidently voice such an attitude to Stanton shows his belief that claiming credit for the work of others was a standard practice at the Radio Research Project.

In sum, this chapter reveals important blind spots concerning the history and legacy of the *Invasion from Mars* study. While two ambitious men jockeyed for credit and control over the study, two women made extensive research contributions that today remain unrecognized. Archival documents indicate the extent to which both Cantril and Lazarsfeld simultaneously undervalued and exploited Herzog and Gaudet's work for their own academic achievement (although

Lazarsfeld made some efforts to gain co-authorship credit for Herzog). Completion of the study helped to ensure continued Rockefeller Foundation support for mass communication research along the model of the Princeton Radio Research Project. Indeed, the *IFM* study played a central role in helping Cantril and Lazarsfeld obtain directorships of powerful academic institutes that would shape the future of research into mass communication and public opinion.

This chapter also reveals the extent to which the gender- and class-biased conditions of early communication research helped produce the conflict at the heart of the *Invasion from Mars* study. The case of Herta Herzog is instructive in this respect. The *IFM* is etched in memory as a chronicle of unbridled panic. But the text itself, especially the core chapters, tells a different story about critical ability as an effective defense against media-induced psychosis. One reason that the book's freshest insight gets so routinely misremembered is that Cantril himself insisted on a dramatic prose-style and chapter structure, and exaggerated the extent of the panic (Socolow, 2008). In part, we suggest, this was a product of Cantril and Lazarsfeld's need to "merchandise" the study in order to attract funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. To draw attention and resources, the study mimicked the theatricality of the *War of the Worlds* broadcast. Herzog's original analysis is an especially good place to recover the *Invasion from Mars*'s most important finding: some listeners checked up on the validity of the broadcast, for discernible reasons. With Herzog's guidance, we might recover that crucial, and still relevant, point in *IFM* itself.

Notes

- ¹ Lazarsfeld (1969, p. 313) later claimed that he called Stanton, not the other way around. Stanton's accounts, however, are far more detailed and correspond with other particulars, including the arrangements for the CBS study.
- ² Telephone surveys excluded a large percentage of Americans who did not have telephones in the 1930s.
- ³ Herzog (1994, p. 6), states that her interviews began the day after the broadcast: "I still recall with pleasure the interviewing the day after the CBS broadcast of 'The Invasion from Mars' to find out why some listeners had been scared." A later document (Rockefeller Foundation, December 1938) refers to the "Wednesday following the broadcast"—November 2.

- ⁴ One index of female researchers' virtual anonymity is that *IFM* (p. xiv) names these four as "Mrs. Paul Trilling, Frances Ginevsky, Mrs. Richard Robinson, and Mrs. David Green."
- ⁵ Though the memo is undated, Lazarsfeld (November 18, 1938) makes a pointed reference to it, which would place its composition in the first half of the month.
- ⁶ Pasanella (1994, p. 15), in her guide to Lazarsfeld's papers, refers to a "November memo," which she quotes: "Had will be in charge of the study and will draw a compensation of \$400 for it." The memo could not be located in the Lazarsfeld papers.
- ⁷ In his memoir, Lazarsfeld (1969, p. 313) documents his effort to secure Herzog recognition: "at that time I had hoped Dr. Herzog would receive a major share of the credit for her imaginative work on that study."

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CHAPTER THREE

Assassination, Insurrection and Alien Invasion: Interwar Wireless Scares in Cross-National Comparison

KATE LACEY

In this chapter, Lacey argues that the *War of the Worlds* broadcast was not the first "radio scare" of its kind, but followed in the footsteps of a 1926 British production, *Broadcasting from the Barricades*, and a 1930 German radio broadcast, *Der Minister ist ermordet! (The Minister's Been Murdered!)*. Drawing on newspaper reports from Germany, as well as the UK and US, Lacey shows how public discourse surrounding these fictional broadcasts referred back to the ones before, even across national borders. She contends that some audience members perceived the dramas as real because a) they played convincingly with the developing conventions of live news reporting; and b) they drew on a prevailing climate of fear (social, economic, and political) to enhance the believability of their fictional crisis reports.

Introduction

The Berlin audience tuning into the radio one late September evening in 1930 heard the station break into an orchestral recital with the following announcement:

Achtung! Achtung! This is Berlin and Königs Wusterhausen. The