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COMMUNISM, CONFORMITY,  
AND CIVIL LIBERTIES:

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*A Cross-section of the Nation  
Speaks Its Mind*

By SAMUEL A. STOUFFER

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The study upon which this book is based was conceived by Elmo Roper, as chairman of a committee of the Board of Directors of the Fund for the Republic.

A special committee appointed by Clifford P. Case, then President of the Fund, reviewed the problems and developed the questionnaire which was the basis of the study. This committee comprised:

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The committee drew on the services of numerous consultants.

The field work was done by the American Institute of Public Opinion, under the staff direction of Paul Perry, and the National Opinion Research Center, under the staff direction of Paul B. Sheatsley. Their resourceful management of the survey, as well as their experienced counsel at every stage of the design of the study and the writing of this book, has been indispensable.

Mrs. Shirley M. Atkinson had charge of secretarial work.

The analysis of the data and the writing of this volume, which reports the findings of the survey, has been the work of the author. He has been helped in this task by the wisdom of members of the special committee which designed the basic study and by many other persons

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who have contributed memoranda and criticism. They include: Gordon W. Allport, Alice Bauer, Raymond A. Bauer, Bernard P. Cohen, Charles Glock, Louis Harris, Andrew F. Henry, Herbert H. Hyman, Marie Jahoda, Talcott Parsons, M. Brewster Smith, Shirley A. Star, Frederick F. Stephan, and Gerhart D. Wiebe.

To all who have had a part in this enterprise, and especially to the members of the committee who shared the burden of designing the study, a profound debt of appreciation is owed. While acknowledging the help of others, the author must accept personal responsibility for interpretations of the findings as they finally appear in this book.

SAMUEL A. STOFFER

Cambridge, Massachusetts

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## INTRODUCTION

This study was authorized by the Board of Directors of the Fund for the Republic during the period I served as President of the Fund. It is an honor to be asked to write these few introductory words, for I regard this study as a significant and valuable undertaking.

Some Americans will be surprised by what they find in these pages. Most readers, I think, will be helped to a better understanding of the disturbing situations that have marked the last few years in this country. Educators and others especially responsible for keeping our fellow citizens informed and alert will discern in *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties* how much they have left to do.

To Professor Stouffer, his eminent committee, and my former colleagues on the Board of the Fund for the Republic belongs by far the major share of credit for conceiving and carrying through this important piece of work. The Fund is concerned with preserving and strengthening the fundamental liberties of all Americans. This book reminds us that this is a continuing and much-needed job.

CLIFFORD P. CASE

## Chapter One

### WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

This is a report to the American people on the findings of a survey which was unique in its scope and in some of its methods.

More than 6000 men and women, in all parts of the country and in all walks of life, confided their thoughts in an interview which was as impartial as fallible ingenuity was able to devise. Over 500 skilled interviewers from two national research agencies did the field work.

The survey examines in some depth the reactions of Americans to two dangers.

One, from the Communist conspiracy outside and inside the country. Two, from those who in thwarting the conspiracy would sacrifice some of the very liberties which the enemy would destroy.

This inquiry, made in the summer of 1954, was concerned not with transient opinions but with deeper latent attitudes or dispositions. Some types of reactions to the Communist threat are not new and will be encountered in years to come. To think otherwise is to ignore what has happened throughout the long perspective of American history. Our Constitution was scarcely ten years old when national tempers were expressed in the Alien and Sedition Acts, under which editors went to jail for criticizing the government, and even bystanders at political meetings who made contemptuous remarks were hurried off to court. Eventually the "sober second thought of the people" prevailed. The Know-Nothing Party before the Civil War and the Ku Klux Klan in the Reconstruction period and again after World War I are other manifestations of intolerance. In the light of this record, will future historians find that the intolerance which thus far has marked the 1950s has been so extraordinary, considering the imagined provocation? There are people who see the danger from Communists as justifying drastic measures of repression, including the forfeiture of rights which were centuries in the making. Just as in the Civil War the North felt obliged to suspend the right of habeas corpus to cope

with the Copperhead conspiracy, so today do some alarmed citizens feel that the country cannot risk the luxury of full civil liberties for nonconformists. But there are others who disagree. They are convinced that our protection from Communist espionage and sabotage can be safely entrusted to the F.B.I. and other branches of an alert government, and that the diminishing risks of conversion of other Americans to Communism can be met by an enlightened public opinion.

The stark fact remains that for unknown years the free Western world must live under a menacing shadow. Vigilance cannot be relaxed against either the peril from without or varieties of perils from within. The question is: How can the sober second thought of the people be maintained in a state of readiness to resist external and internal threats to our heritage of liberties?

To contribute toward answers to this question, this book offers a body of data. Some of the specific findings may seem obvious. Some may not. A few may be so unexpected as to put a strain on acceptance. We hope that these findings, along with knowledge from other sources, can aid responsible citizens—in our government; in our newspaper offices and broadcasting studios; in our schools, churches, and other organizations within the local community—as they plan better for the task ahead. Following are some of the questions considered:

Who are the people most likely to have given the sober second thought to the problems with which we are concerned?

What about the attitudes of responsible civic leaders as compared with the rank and file within a community?

Is the American public in a state of pathological fear?

Are we raising a new generation which will be more sensitive or less sensitive than its elders to threats to freedom? What is the impact of our educational system, which provides more schooling to more youth than in any other nation in history?

Do attitudes differ in different regions of the country? In cities as compared with rural areas? Among men as compared with women? What role does religion play?

How are the images about Communists which people carry in their heads related to willingness to deprive other nonconformists, who are not necessarily Communists, of civil rights?

How important are agencies of mass communication likely to be in evoking more thoughtful reflection on the issues of Communism and civil liberties? How well do the people know the views of leaders

they respect? What can be accomplished by responsible citizens in their local communities?

These are some of the topics which this study has investigated. Not with an eye on the opinions about any particular public figure or on issues which may be ephemeral. Rather on basic underlying sentiments which do not change abruptly or fluctuate with the day's headlines. No one study can provide all the answers we need. Further inquiries must follow. Here and there new studies should record new trends as time goes on, but the main patterns of basic attitudes reported in this book will not undergo a metamorphosis overnight.

### *Who Were Interviewed in This Survey*

The survey, made in May, June, and July 1954, sought to combine the best features of several techniques of inquiry.

It is basically a public opinion poll and was conducted in the field not by just one but by two of the foremost public opinion research organizations. One was the American Institute of Public Opinion—the Gallup Poll. The other was the National Opinion Research Center, a non-profit organization with headquarters at the University of Chicago. Each agency used its own staff of sampling experts to draw independently what was intended to constitute a representative cross-section of the American population. The result is that, for the first time in the history of public opinion polling, the work of two different agencies can be compared on an entire questionnaire. Each of the two national cross-sections contains more than 2400 cases. The greatest advantage of utilizing two agencies was that each was able to carry out a very large assignment within a reasonable time without adding inexperienced interviewers to its staff. Quality was the first consideration. The total number of interviewers was 537.

The type of sampling method used was costly and time-consuming. Technically it is known as the "probability method," in contrast to the quota method more commonly used. In simplest outline, the probability method, as employed in the present survey, consists of the following steps:

1. From a list of all the counties and metropolitan areas in the United States, a sample is drawn at random. These selected counties and metropolitan areas are called "primary sampling units."
2. Within each primary sampling unit, urban blocks and rural segments are selected, also strictly at random.

Revised

3. Within each selected block or segment, interviewers list systematically every dwelling unit. Among these dwelling units a sample of X is selected, also strictly at random.

4. Within each of the selected dwelling units all adults are enumerated, and *one* in each dwelling is selected for the interview. This one is selected according to a fixed rule which leaves the interviewer no flexibility in making substitutions.

5. Once the individual adult within the household is designated as the sample person, the interviewer is required to make repeated calls until he finds him or her at home and available for interview. This is the most time-consuming and costly part of the procedure.

6. No substitutions are permitted, and every effort is made to track down absentees, even assigning them to interviewers in other parts of the country if away on vacation. Some refusals are inevitable but are kept to a minimum by the resourcefulness of the trained interviewers. If that resourcefulness is unavailing, letters and even telegrams from the home office of the agency often overcome the remaining resistance. A careful analysis of the "fish that got away" appears in Appendix A, with the conclusion that bias thus occasioned could not be appreciably large.

The probability method of sampling has important advantages over the method more often used; namely, the quota method. In using the quota method, communities, or even street segments, are selected at random as described above, but the interviewer is left free to choose respondents, provided he or she ends up with a prescribed proportion of people with various attributes, such as a given sex, age, etc. The probability method eliminates any possible bias of the interviewer in the selection of respondents. For example, those who respond readily without urging, or who live in more accessible places, or who are at home at the time of call may be so different in some respects relevant to the study that a bias is introduced. The probability method also has important advantages from the mathematical standpoint of calculating margins of error attributable to chance alone.

The probability method has disadvantages also. One is its cost, which can be two to five times as high as the quota method. An interviewer may have to spend the aggregate of a day's time on a succession of efforts to make contact with a single respondent. The other is its slowness. If a study must be completed in a few days, the quota method, or some modification of it, seems to be the only answer. But to stretch out the field work on a survey over a period of several

weeks, as is necessary with a large probability sample, is to run the risk that some important happening in the news may change opinions in the middle of the survey. As will be noted in Chapter Two, there is no evidence of changes in basic attitudes during the course of the survey.

For further details on sampling, the reader is referred to Appendix A of this volume.

The aggregate number of cases obtained on the national cross-sections by the two agencies was 4933. In most of the tables and charts shown in the main body of this book, the two cross-sections are combined and treated as one. The agreement between the two cross-sections was quite close and most gratifying. Examples are shown in Chapter Two and subsequently.

But this combined cross-section of 4933 cases is only a part of the study. A unique feature of the survey lay in obtaining an additional special sample of 1500 selected local community leaders, entirely independent of the national cross-section. In this book the special sample of community leaders is always tabulated separately, never pooled with the cross-section.

Unlike the respondents in the cross-section, the community leaders were of necessity arbitrarily selected. But extreme care was taken to preclude interviewer bias in their selection. The steps in the sampling process were as follows:

1. From each of the cities of 10,000 to 150,000 in the sample, an arbitrary list of 14 occupational roles was drawn up. The same list was used in each city. It included the mayor, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, the chairman of the Community Chest, the president of a predesignated large labor-union local in the city, the chairmen of the Republican and Democratic county central committees, the commander of the largest American Legion post in the city, the regent of the D.A.R., the president of the local women's club, the chairmen of the school board and the library board, the president of the local council of the Parent-Teachers' Association (or if there was no such council, of the largest P.T.A. in the city), the president of the bar association, the publisher of the locally owned newspaper of largest circulation.

2. The list, it will be seen, was so drawn up that interviewer bias in selection was precluded, since one person only could fit a given description in a given community. Each interviewer prepared a list of the names and addresses of the 14 in his city, and to each of the

14 a letter was sent, signed by the head of the polling agency responsible for that city. (For this operation, each of the two polling organizations took full responsibility for half of the cities.) The letter, which spoke of the national importance of the survey without indicating the subject matter, was designed to pave the way for personal appointments at the least inconvenience to the respondents, many of whom are very busy people.

3. The selected community leaders were interviewed with questionnaires identical with those used in the national cross-section.

While the national cross-section can be defended as representative of all classes of the population, it must be stated here emphatically that the sample of leaders is not intended to be and is not a representative sample of community leaders in America. There is no objective definition of what constitutes a community leader and, even if there were, the cost of procuring a large and exhaustive sample would be prohibitive.

What, then, does the sample of leaders represent?

First, it represents only people in the cities of 10,000 to 150,000; people in rural communities, smaller cities, and larger metropolitan centers are by definition excluded.

Second, it represents only arbitrarily selected leaders. Strictly speaking, an average based on all such leaders combined is not susceptible of clear interpretation. What we can say, however, is the following: The mayors, for example, are a representative sample of all mayors in cities of 10,000 to 150,000. By "representative" we mean that if we had been able to interview all such mayors in all American cities of this size the result would differ from those in our sample only by a relatively small chance error, which is mathematically calculable. Similarly with each of the other incumbents of positions as defined. And this can provide very important, interpretable knowledge.

But why 14? This is not a magic number but is simply the maximum which the budget of time and money permitted in a given city. And why these particular 14? There is no right or wrong answer to this question. Each leadership role was chosen either because, as in the case of the president of the Community Chest, for example, he was likely to be a generally respected figure; or because, as in the case of the president of the Chamber of Commerce or the bar association or the largest labor-union local, he was likely, on the average, to be influential among certain segments of the population; or because, as in the case of heads of patriotic organizations or in the case of various

electd or appointed officials, the specific nature of their responsibility made their views especially relevant.

It would be easy to construct a list twice as long or longer. Women's groups, for example, are inadequately represented—missing are such organizations oriented to public affairs as the League of Women Voters. The clergy are unrepresented—it proved to be too difficult to settle on a satisfactory objective definition of a single clergyman to represent each city. Fraternal groups are omitted. So are leaders of ethnic minority organizations.

On the whole, in so far as the sample of leaders is biased, there are fewer rather than more leaders who would automatically be expected to have liberal attitudes.

For purposes of comparison with the views of each of the 14 selected types of leaders, a special sub-sample of the national cross-section has been segregated for exactly the same cities as those used for the sample of leaders. This sub-sample should be representative of the total population of all such cities, in the same sense as the mayors are representative of all mayors in cities of 10,000 to 150,000.

So much for the samples. We see that they introduce features some of which are rare and some of which are new in national surveys of this type.

#### *What Kinds of Questions Were Asked?*

The questionnaire used is reproduced in full in Appendix B. It is somewhat unconventional, by customary opinion-survey practice, in two main respects.

First, it relied more heavily than many surveys on what are called free-answer or open-ended questions. Much care was taken not to introduce specific check-list questions until the respondent had had a chance to talk generally about a subject. For example, the first twenty minutes or so of the interview were devoted to a general discussion of whatever things the respondent had most on his or her mind, without any hint as to the ultimate purpose of the survey. This was facilitated only by such leading questions by the interviewer as the following:

**Everybody of course has some things he worries about, more or less. Would you say you worry more now than you used to, or not as much?**

**What kinds of things do you worry most about?**

**Are there other problems you worry or are concerned about, especially political or world problems?**

**We are interested in what kind of things people talk about. Offhand, what problems do you remembering discussing with your friends in the last week or so?**

**(Unless volunteered above) Were there other things? For example, did you talk about any dangers facing people in the United States?**

The questionnaire then led into a series of check-list questions on war and civil liberties, with no direct question on attitudes toward the internal Communist threat until nearly half of the interview was completed. Here, again, open-ended questions were introduced to get the flavor of opinions in the respondent's own language, which the interviewer was instructed to take down as nearly as possible verbatim. For example, if the respondent said that the Communists within the United States were dangerous or were not dangerous, he was asked:

**Why do you think this?**

**What kind of people in America are most likely to be Communists?**

**(Unless volunteered) What racial and religious groups are they most likely to be in?**

**(Unless volunteered) What kind of jobs are they most likely to be in?**

**What kinds of things do Communists believe in? (Probe) Anything else?**

**Have you ever known a person who you thought might be a Communist?**

**(If yes) How could you tell? What made you think this?**

A number of open-ended questions also were used in later portions of the questionnaire, dealing with methods of handling the internal Communist threat.

The approach is not too dissimilar to what would be used by an expert newspaper reporter. It provides invaluable data on the depth and intensity of opinions which may be later ascertained systematically by more conventional check-list questions. It evokes a given

opinion within a larger context of the general attitudes of the individual. And it does not put into a person's head ideas that may not have been there before.

There are disadvantages as well. One is the sheer time it takes to conduct such an interview. Another is dependency on the objectivity and accuracy of the interviewer in recording the salient remarks when, as is often the case, he or she cannot set down every word. A third is the monumental task of summarizing systematically such qualitative data from thousands of interviews, and the further dangers of bias or subjectivity in preparing such summaries.

Therefore, there is an important place for simple check-list questions to which there is a prescribed set of answer categories. Such questions were used in considerable numbers.

The second respect in which the questionnaire used on this survey represented some departures from current practice was in the planned use of a series of questions to summarize a given opinion rather than in reliance upon a single question. One would not think of offering a single word to a person to spell as a test of his spelling ability, nor a single little problem in arithmetic as a test of his ability to multiply or divide. Often one can come closer to ascertaining an opinion by a single question than to measuring ability by a single test item. But experience has shown that a test or a scale of opinions based on a series of related questions is usually much more stable than a single item and also makes possible an internal test for validity. Do the various answers a person gives hang together in some systematic, consistent way? If they do, and if they satisfy certain fairly rigorous technical requirements, we can say they constitute a *scale of measurement*.

Two subjects of central importance to this study were studied by means of such scales. These were:

Degree of willingness to tolerate nonconformists, such as Socialists, atheists, or Communists, or suspected nonconformists such as people whose loyalty has been criticized.

Degree to which the internal Communist threat is regarded as a serious danger.

The first of these scales, based on 15 questions, will be introduced in Chapter Two. The second scale, based on 9 questions, will be introduced in Chapter Eight. For the technical reader, a description of the scales appears in Appendix C.

One of the important reasons for scales like these is to provide a

standard against which to compare a particular question. There are some items, especially those agreed to by very few people, which will be answered "Yes" by some who do not understand the meaning—even by some who say "Yes" when their real opinion is "No." By trying to fit such questions into a scale we can learn about their limitations and discount their reliability.

It is never easy to construct check-list questions so simple and clear that they can be readily grasped by people with only a limited education. Question wording is something of an art in itself, but the most ingenious deviser of questions seldom can be sure of their clarity until they have been field-tested. For the present survey, five successive drafts of questionnaires were prepared under the auspices of the special committee appointed by the president of the Fund for the Republic to plan this study. Each form was tried out in the field and brought back for revision. The semi-final pre-test involved interviews with 250 people at all educational levels in different parts of the United States, and the final dress rehearsal was done on 50 persons also at different levels. Perhaps twice as many questions were tried out and discarded as appeared in the final questionnaire. Yet, as always seems to happen, there were a few disappointments on the main survey—and these will be duly noted in the text of this volume.

#### *How This Study Relates to Previous Studies*

The central purpose of this book is to tell the story of what Americans were thinking in the early summer of 1954, as learned by this particular study. This book is not intended to be an exhaustive compendium of previous research. Nevertheless, the reader is entitled to some intimations as to how findings of a given chapter relate to earlier findings, from public opinion polls or from other research in the literature of psychology and sociology. Just before the summary of each chapter, therefore, the findings are very briefly placed within the setting of past research. To reduce textual details, each specific reference to the literature is keyed simply by number to a bibliography which appears as Appendix E.

#### *A Note to Enthusiasts and Skeptics*

The limitations of studies like the present one are not always properly appreciated. There are some people who are disposed to seize a

little too uncritically upon a reported number, like the percentage of people reported as giving a particular response to a question. There are others, perhaps reacting against too zealous enthusiasts, who retreat into agnosticism about all such figures.

It is a fact that no number reported in this study is exact. This is also the case with numbers reported in official statistics like the United States Census. No one really knows the actual population of New York City within plus or minus 100,000 or more. But this does not mean that Census figures are useless. One learns to take them for what they are—approximations. And normally they are closer approximations than somebody's guess.

Numbers in the present study are, of course, even less adequate approximations to unknown and unknowable "true national figures" than are most Census data. For they are based on a sample which, though larger than is customary and obtained with meticulous care, is still only a sample.

Even if the people whose opinions we report constitute a truly random sample of the population, we would expect the percentages in several such random samples to differ. The laws by which they would differ are well known—in fact, they constitute the basis of the science of mathematical statistics. Some of our percentages, calculated on the entire national cross-section, would fluctuate by chance only slightly. Others, based on sub-samples with much fewer cases, could have a theoretical variation of as much as 15 or 20 percentage points 5% of the time. In Appendix D we have sought to provide a compact rule-of-thumb guide. The reader may not want to bother often with such a guide. Therefore, we have sought to be careful not to stress the importance or implications of findings which theoretically could have occurred fairly often by chance alone.

In addition to instability attributable to chance, there are other sources of error which could happen even in a total enumeration of a population, as in the Census. For example, even slight variations in the wording of a question can produce variations in response, just as is the case with questions used by the Census to ascertain whether a person is in the labor market and seeking work. In this book we have tried to pin a finding not upon one question alone but upon a variety of questions.

When we report that one class of persons has different attitudes from another class of persons—say, women as compared with men—our best test is the *consistency* with which we find this result in differ-

ent parts of the country, or in different ages, or in different educational groups. The reader will encounter again and again in this book a sentence in effect like this: "Individual percentages wobble around for various reasons, but note how consistent the *pattern* is." Consistency of a repeated finding is not a sure guarantee, because of some possible systematic error, but it adds considerably to our confidence.

A book like this should be read with just as critical an eye as a book based solely on impressions garnered here and there unsystematically. In the present study, impressions can be checked by actual counts based on scientifically selected samples, and therein lies much of its significance. But there will be times when the author necessarily offers his interpretation of what these counts mean, and this interpretation may be wrong. The author has tried earnestly to be objective—to keep his own convictions about the danger of assaults by both Communists and anti-Communists upon the dignity and freedom of the human spirit from coloring his judgment as an analyst and reporter. Yet unconscious bias can occur. Readers will and should watch for it and supply their own correction factors in interpretation.

There are some people who have a humanist's dislike of tables and charts, even though they may be daily readers of a sports page or the financial sections of a newspaper. They recoil against statistical findings, even when thoroughly documented, especially if these should fly in the face of preconceived impressions as to what Americans think.

One could only wish that such a skeptic would sit down for a day with his own random selection from among the original questionnaires and read them through. When he sees the detail with which the data are recorded, when he sees the frank outpouring of personal problems in this confidential relationship with a skilled interviewer, he can have little doubt as to the integrity of almost all the documents—whether from the storekeeper in Nebraska, the semi-literate grandmother in a mountain cabin, or a leader of the American bar. There are human foibles of overstatement which may have crept into the responses, but there was little holding back and, in view of the sensitive character of the questions, surprisingly little evidence of suspicion once the interview got under way. (See Appendix A.)

Because of the importance of satisfying oneself on what has just been said, the following invitation is issued to bona fide scholars or journalists. Any who wish to read at their leisure some or all of the original questionnaires are invited to do so. (Data, such as name of the city and state, which might identify respondents have, of course,

been removed.) The documents are on file at the offices of the Fund for the Republic in New York City.

If the skeptic who reads this book cannot avail himself of this offer, we have only one further suggestion. That is to beg of him the boon of at least a suspended judgment until he sees what the next two or three chapters have to offer.

We believe that they open a window into the mind of America.

Appendix A

HOW THE SAMPLES WERE SELECTED  
AND HOW CLOSELY THEY CONFORM  
WITH KNOWN POPULATION  
CHARACTERISTICS<sup>1</sup>

The samples used in this study were described very briefly in Chapter One. We present here a more detailed accounting. Two kinds of samples were used: (1) a national cross-section of the population and (2) a special supplementary sample of local community leaders. Each will be described separately.

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THE NATIONAL CROSS-SECTION

The cross-section, using the probability method, sought to be representative of the American population 21 years of age and over, living in private households. Excluded were persons in hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, hotels, and military establishments.

How closely the final sample of respondents who completed interviews corresponded with the national figures is shown by the following tables:

	PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION	
<i>By Region</i>	<i>U.S. Adult Civilian Population (Latest estimates from Census data)<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Completed Interviews in Cross-Section Sample</i>
East .....	27.6%	25.6%
Midwest .....	29.9	29.8
South .....	28.9	31.3
West .....	13.6	13.3
	100.0%	100.0%

<sup>1</sup>For much of the substance of this appendix the author is indebted to Paul Sheatsley of the National Opinion Research Center and Paul Perry of the American Institute of Public Opinion.

<sup>2</sup>The national population characteristics are estimates for June, 1954, based upon the latest Census releases, especially Series P-25 No. 101, dated August 29, 1954, and Series P-25 No. 106, dated Dec. 6, 1954.

	<i>U.S. Adult Civilian Population (Latest estimates from Census data)<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>Completed Interviews in Cross-Section Sample</i>
<i>By Urban &amp; Rural</i>		
Urban .....	64.0%	66.0%
Rural .....	36.0	34.0%
	-----	-----
	100.0%	100.0%
<i>By Sex</i>		
Males .....	47.7%	46.6%
Females .....	52.3	53.4
	-----	-----
	100.0%	100.0%
<i>By Age</i>		
21-29 .....	18.8%	18.4%
30-39 .....	23.5	23.8
40-49 .....	20.9	21.5
50-59 .....	16.4	16.1
60 and older .....	20.4	20.2
	-----	-----
	100.0%	100.0%
<i>By Color</i>		
Negro .....	9.2%	8.9%
All others .....	90.8	91.1%
	-----	-----
	100.0%	100.0%
<i>By Education</i>		
College .....	15.4%	17.1%
High School .....	43.5	45.4
Grade School or none .....	41.1	37.5
	-----	-----
	100.0%	100.0%

It will be seen that the sample is a quite satisfactory reconstruction of the population on these characteristics. There are some biases, but seldom more than 2%. The most serious, possibly, is in the case of education, where there is a deficit of 3.6% in grade school people. This may not be a sampling error, however, for it may reflect a tendency for people to overstate their schooling even more to an interviewer on a poll than to an interviewer on the Census. None of the sampling discrepancies above noted could have made an appreciable

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

difference on the over-all percentages of people reporting a particular opinion.

#### *How the Sample Was Drawn*

Methods of drawing the sample differed slightly between the two survey agencies, the American Institute of Public Opinion and the National Opinion Research Center, but the following concise description by one of the agencies outlines the essentials of the process:

The sample was selected by these stages in the following manner:

- a. The U.S. was divided into 26 regions consisting of single states (12 of the larger ones) and groups of states. Each such area was processed independently, but the steps taken within each were identical.
- b. Within each of these regions the population was ordered by the Census state economic areas, listing metropolitan state economic areas in one group and non-metropolitan state economic areas in another. Within each of these two groups the areas and counties within areas were listed in geographic order.
- c. Within each of the counties the population was divided into three rural-urban strata (urban 50,000 and over, urban 2500 to 49,999, and rural).
- d. Within counties, cities and minor civil divisions were left in the order in which they appear in Census reports, which is, in most cases, alphabetical order.
- e. From this array of the data, from a random starting point, a systematic sample of places (cities and minor civil divisions) in each of the 26 regions was drawn, proceeding through the list in serpentine fashion, with the probability of selection of the places proportional to population in the 1950 Census.
- f. Within cities so selected for which household data were reported by minor divisions such as Census tracts or wards, minor divisions were drawn with probability proportional to population. Within the minor division selected, a block was drawn at random.
- g. Cities and minor civil divisions selected which were not divided into Census tracts or wards were divided into segments on the

basis of maps. These segments were delineated so as to be roughly equal in size of population. Segments were then drawn at random.

- h. Rural areas were segmented in the same manner as described under g. and segments drawn at random.
- i. When the block or segment had been drawn in the manner described, a random starting point was determined, and the route to be followed in listing dwelling units was laid out.
- j. Listers were instructed to start listing dwelling units at the designated point and, in urban areas, to follow the designated route until 75 dwelling units had been listed. Where one block or segment was not large enough to supply 75 dwelling units, designated adjacent blocks or segments were to be taken.
- k. In rural areas listers were told to list 50 dwelling units in the same manner. Fewer dwelling units were listed in rural areas because of the greater distance between such units and consequent increased listing cost per unit.

Therefore, the primary sampling units consisted of groups of 75 dwelling units in urban areas and 50 dwelling units in rural areas.

From each primary sampling unit a systematic sample of 10 dwelling units was drawn from a random starting point.

Adults within each occupied dwelling unit drawn into the sample were ordered by age and sex (first males in order of age, then females in order of age) and one chosen by a process of random selection.

If the individual so selected was not reached on the first call, interviewers were instructed to call again and to continue to do so until a total of five calls had been made. Actually some interviewers called back ten or more times.

The other agency followed essentially the same procedure, with minor modifications. For example, all dwelling units within the sampling area were listed, rather than the specified number of fifty or seventy-five; the sampling "take" varied slightly from segment to segment rather than remaining constant, etc.

A total of 537 interviewers from the two agencies conducted the field investigation. The time required for the interview varied from half an hour to over three hours, but the average was about an hour and a quarter.

### *Analysis of the "Fish Which Were Not Caught"*

For this study a total of 4939 interviews were completed, of which 4933 were usable for purposes of analysis. If every person specified in the original sample had been interviewed, the total would have been 5881. It is very important, therefore, to analyze the reasons for non-completion. Actually, the completion rate is one of the best on record and was achieved by instructing every interviewer to make at least five attempts before giving up.

A breakdown of attempted interviews by the two agencies combined is as follows:

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<u>Completed interviews</u> .....	<u>4939</u>	<u>84.0%</u>
Not at home, no contact made .....	340	5.8
Too sick to be interviewed .....	64	1.1
Interviewer could not speak respondent's non-English language .....	52	0.9
Refused to be interviewed .....	415	7.0
Broke off interview .....	71	1.2
	<u>5881</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

Even though it is reassuring that the completed interviews in the cross-section sample reproduced the population characteristics of the nation as closely as we have seen they did, we still must be concerned about the introduction of bias because of the "fish which were not caught."

By far the most important fact for our purposes is that only 1.2% broke off the interview after it began. If this number had been very large—say of the magnitude of 10%—we would have real grounds for worry. Why? Because these are the only people who could have failed to co-operate as a consequence of knowing what the questionnaire was driving at. Those who refused to be interviewed at all are a much less serious problem, since they could have had no idea about the contents of the study. Actually, even among the 1.2% who broke off the interview after it began, the majority of reasons were clearly unrelated to the content of the study. For example, a neighbor or friends might drop in during the middle of the interview. The interviewer would stop at this point and make a date for a return engagement, which eventually could not be kept because of circumstances beyond the control of either party.

Let us examine each group in turn among those not completing interviews.

Not too much is known about the 5.8% who were not at home or not contacted. We can report that the proportion "not home" was somewhat higher in large cities than in smaller towns and rural areas, and we can surmise that the group is younger rather than older than those interviewed. On the other hand, the combined "not home, no contact" group includes also about 100 sample households which were never called on for an interview at all—and these were chiefly in rural areas—owing to impassable roads or to the lack of a substitute for an interviewer who became unable to finish his assignment. The "big-city" bias of the group who could never be found at home is thus largely compensated for by the rural bias of the group who were never even approached for the interview. This study, however, probably penetrated as fully into the mountain fastnesses and the "Tobacco Roads" of the nation as any survey in recent times, except for the Census itself.

The 1.1% who were too sick to be interviewed are an inevitable loss to any study. This number was kept as low as it was by spreading out the interviewing period long enough to make contact with some of the non-chronic cases after they had recovered.

In areas where no English was spoken, bilingual interviewers were used where possible, but it was thought better to miss a small proportion of cases (0.9%) rather than risk the hazards of a translator.

With respect to the refusal groups—the 7% who would not be interviewed and the 1.2% who broke off the interview after it began—some extraordinary pains were taken to discover whether the failure to get such cases would introduce a serious bias in our analysis. Our considered conclusion is that it would not.

Interviewers were instructed to record verbatim the respondent's stated reason for refusing to co-operate. Interviewers were then asked whether, in their view, this was the real reason he refused, and if not, what they considered to be the true reason. Special attention was given to the possibility of *fear*. The Communist issue directly could not have been a cause of fear among those who refused to be interviewed at all, since none knew that it would be discussed. Also, more than half of the breakoffs came before the subject of Communism was introduced. But some people fear talking even on ordinary market-research surveys, and it is important to know how many such people there are.

The reports from the interviewers are analyzed in two columns below; first in terms of reasons given by the respondent for not co-operating, and second in terms of the "real" reasons as inferred by the interviewers:

	<i>Percentage expressing a given reason for refusal or breakoff</i>	<i>Percentage distribution of "real" reasons as inferred by the interviewer</i>
No fear present	6.5%	5.7%
Fear present	.8	1.7
Not ascertainable	.9	.8
Total	8.2%	8.2%

When it is considered that the larger of the figures on fear is only 1.7%, and when it is also considered that very few even of these cases are attributable to the particular content of the questionnaire, the results are most encouraging. There were only seven cases in the entire survey where fear was explicitly expressed in the context of Communism, and only a dozen or so where the interviewer felt that this was an element in non-co-operation. Where no fear was thought to be present, a more detailed breakdown of "reasons" is presented as follows:

	<i>Percentage expressing a given reason for refusal or breakoff</i>	<i>Percentage distribution of "real" reasons as inferred by the interviewer</i>
No interest in surveys, can't be bothered	2.7%	2.3%
Too busy, can't talk now, haven't got the time	3.7	4.0
Not feeling well, don't feel up to it	.7	.5
Not smart enough, don't follow current events	.8	.8
Spouse or parent won't permit it	.3	.4
Miscellaneous	.2	.3
Total	6.5%	5.7%

These figures add to more than 6.5% and 5.7%, respectively, because more than one reason was applicable in some cases.

Analysis of the demographic characteristics of the refusals shows that in the main they do not differ greatly from the population who were interviewed. Interviewers classified the majority of the refusals as "average" in their standard of living, with 15% better than average and 28% lower. This is normal. Somewhat more refusals were obtained from women and from the older age groups, but the differences are not at all striking.

The only respect with which those who refused appears to differ significantly from those who were interviewed is their place of residence, for refusal rates were markedly higher in the largest cities. In rural areas, for example, only 4% of the respondents refused to be interviewed, but in cities of more than 100,000 population the refusal rate was 13%. This phenomenon has been reported in many other surveys as well.

Any loss from a probability sample naturally introduces a possible bias. In general, however, it may be said that the loss rate in the current survey was of no different nature from nor any higher than the loss experienced in any survey inquiry, and that detailed analysis of the groups who contributed to the loss fails to reveal any special characteristics which would affect the over-all interpretation of the findings.

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#### THE SAMPLE OF LOCAL COMMUNITY LEADERS

A unique feature of this study is its special sample of people in certain positions of civic responsibility.

As was stated in Chapter One, the selection of the 14 categories of community leaders was made arbitrarily and was limited by the funds and time available for the research. The major criteria for selection were that the leader be easily and unambiguously *identified*, that he hold some position of *influence* in the community, and that his position hold some *relevance* to the content of the study. These criteria precluded selection of informal leaders who could not readily be *identified by the interviewers*; of *highly informed or experienced individuals* who held no formal leadership position; and of leaders in such areas as sports, medicine or finance, which bear no special relevance

to the problems studied. Time and cost considerations prevented the interviewing of additional categories of leaders whose views would have been worth while: religious leaders, college presidents, minority-group leaders, etc.

In sampling the leaders it was agreed to eliminate all of the largest cities and also all rural areas. Inclusion of the largest cities would have introduced difficult problems of identification and also of relative weights. Thus, how identify the "local" American Legion commander or P.T.A. head in a city the size of Chicago or Philadelphia? And should the mayor of New York be given equal weight with the mayor of a small town in Idaho; or, if not, what weights should be assigned? The rural areas also posed a problem in that the designated leadership positions were often found only in county seats or other urban places nearby.

For these reasons, community-leader interviews were assigned only in cities of 10,000 to 150,000 population. The randomly selected sampling areas of the two research agencies, which had been used for the larger population study, included a total of 123 such cities. They represent an accurate cross-section of all U.S. urban places of this size. They include cities from all geographical regions, country towns and county seats, suburban communities and large cities, state capitals, industrial cities, college towns.

Within each of these 123 cities, interviewers were assigned to identify the 14 specified leaders and to send their names and addresses to the research agency. Detailed instructions were provided where the identification might prove difficult. In most cases where more than one such leader existed, interviewers were told to select the one with the largest "constituency"; e.g., the publisher of the newspaper with the greatest circulation, the commander of the largest Legion post. Special instructions were provided for determining the labor leader to be interviewed, so that the two or three largest national unions would not be selected in every case. Where the actual category specified did not exist, the nearest equivalent was usually taken. Thus, if there was no Chamber of Commerce in the city, interviewers were asked to choose the head of the largest businessmen's or merchants' association. Most of the 14 leaders had for their constituency only the local community, but a few—the Republican and Democratic county chairmen, for example—represented the county or other larger areas.

When the names of the selected leaders had been received by the research agencies, letters were addressed to them explaining the purpose of the study and inviting their co-operation when the local interviewer called for an appointment. As with the general public, the leaders were not informed in advance of the precise content of the questionnaire; it was described only as "a survey of public opinion about current issues." The leaders, furthermore, were not told that they had been selected as representative of a particular group, but rather that they were chosen simply as "prominent members of the community." In this way it was hoped their responses would come in terms of their individual opinions rather than the "official line" of their particular group—labor, business, Republican, Democrat, American Legion, or whatever.

It is obvious from the foregoing that no claims can be made that the present sample is representative of "leadership opinion" in the United States, or even that the 14 separate samples adequately reflect local opinion within each group. We have noted that the largest cities as well as the rural areas are generally not represented in these samples. Some of the leaders interviewed represent only one of several such leaders in the community. And there remains the problem of "weights." In our tabulations, every leader interviewed has been given equal weight, so that the views of the small-city newspaper publisher or school board chairman count just as much as the views of his opposite number in a larger city.

It will be best to evaluate the sample for exactly what it is: the opinions of local leaders of the specified types in a representative cross-section of more than 100 small and medium-sized cities. We cannot say that our sample of Chamber of Commerce heads, for example, represents "American business opinion" or even grass-roots Chamber of Commerce opinion. But we can say that the opinions of those we interviewed in this group accurately reflect the opinions of all leaders of the most influential business association in cities of the designated size. And as such, their views—and the views of the 13 other leadership groups who were interviewed—command some attention and respect.

The rate of interview completion among the community-leader sample surpassed even that achieved among the regular population cross-section. The 123 communities which were selected had a theoretical "leader population" of 1722, but in 34 cases no leader category of the type designated was in existence. Thus, some communities

had no Community Chest or united fund, and consequently no chairman of such a group; in some places there was no local D.A.R. chapter, etc. The actual sample, therefore, totaled 1688,<sup>4</sup> yielding the following results:

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Completed interviews .....	<u>1533</u>	90.9%
Out of town, ill, unavailable .....	73	4.3
Never contacted .....	31	1.8
Refusal or breakoff .....	51	3.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total .....	1688	100.0%

It will be noted that the refusal rate among the leaders was only about half that among the population cross-section. While the original refusal rate was considerably higher, every effort was made through personal letters, telephone calls, etc., to overcome the respondent's objection and to obtain his opinions. Considering the fact that these community leaders were in many cases extremely busy individuals, with many demands on their time, their willingness to contribute up to two hours of their time in replying to these questions is most gratifying.

Since interviewing was conducted during the early summer, a small proportion of the leaders were found to be absent from their communities. In most cases it was possible to ascertain their summer address and to interview them there, but inevitably a few were lost for this reason. A small number were too ill to be interviewed, and a few others were unavailable for other reasons. (One was in police custody, under indictment for fraud.) The "never contacted" group represents chiefly interviewer failure. In three areas most of the sample was lost because the interviewer became unavailable and no qualified substitute could be found. In a few cases the deadline expired before any interview attempts could be made, or there was no contact because it was never ascertained which of two or more individuals was the proper one to be interviewed.

<sup>4</sup>In a few instances the same individual held more than one of the 14 leadership positions. Thus, a man might be the local newspaper publisher and also the chairman of the Community Chest. Since the leader sample was designed for separate analysis of each of the 14 groups, such individuals were counted twice and their interviews were duplicated. (If they refused to be interviewed, their refusal was counted twice.) The number of individuals in the total leader sample was therefore slightly less than the 1533 interviews which were tabulated.

The interview completion rates for each of the 14 leadership categories are shown as follows:

	<i>Percentage Completed</i>	<i>Percentage Not Reached</i>	<i>Percentage Refused</i>
Mayors	92%	2%	6%
Community Chest chairmen	93	3	4
School Board presidents	91	7	2
Library Committee chairmen	93	4	3
Republican county chairmen	91	7	2
Democratic county chairmen	87	6	7
American Legion commanders	95	4	1
Bar Association presidents	92	3	5
Chamber of Commerce presidents	94	2	4
P.T.A. presidents	93	5	2
Women's Club presidents	92	6	2
D.A.R. regents	90	6	4
Newspaper publishers	80	8	12
Labor-union leaders	88	6	6

A 90% completion rate was achieved in all but three cases—the Democratic county chairmen, the newspaper publishers, and the labor-union leaders.

From the sampling standpoint, the newspaper publishers are our least satisfactory group. Twelve per cent of them refused to be interviewed, mostly on the grounds that they were too busy to be bothered, while 8% could not be reached, mostly because they were inaccessible on summer vacation. Because the newspaper publishers are particularly important at some points in the analysis in this book, a special effort was made to ascertain the editorial stands, on the subject of Senator McCarthy, of papers whose publishers could not be reached in the sample. Information was obtained in 19 cases, which showed two very favorable to McCarthy, two leaning favorable, eight which took no editorial stand, and seven which were unfavorable. This suggests that, if we had been able to make contact with every publisher, the "true" figures on publishers' attitudes probably would not differ markedly from those reported in the book.

Again, let us repeat, the most dangerous bias which can enter a study like this is through interviews broken off in the middle, *after* the respondent finds out what the study is all about. There were not more than five interviews broken off among all the community leaders—

none among newspaper publishers, incidentally—and in no cases did interviewers think that the breakoff was due to the nature of the subject matter under investigation.

All in all, there is reason to believe that the field workers assigned to the civic leaders did one of the most thorough and conscientious jobs in the annals of public opinion research.