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Carnegie Results **Is A Quarterly Newsletter Published By Carnegie Corporation Of New York. It Highlights Corporation Supported Organizations And Projects That Have Produced Reports, Results Or Information Of Special Note.**

The Lasting Legacy of *An American Dilemma*

The fiftieth anniversary of the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*—which said that the segregated schools of the South were damaging to black children, and thus began to dismantle the system of legalized segregation—was an occasion for assessing the last half century's progress in the lives of African Americans. While there remains deep disagreement about the current state of black America and the policies that ought to follow from that, most would agree that the status of African Americans has changed dramatically, if insufficiently, since *Brown*. Not only has the system of legal segregation been eliminated and widespread prejudice diminished, but the economic, political and educational status of many blacks has significantly improved.

Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, generally viewed as one of the most important results of grantmaking by Carnegie Corporation of New York, played a major role in the story that led from an America, which after World War II still had a legal Jim Crow system in the South—along with a segregated army—to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It was cited as the social scientific evidence justifying the Supreme Court's decision that what had been deemed separate but equal education for black children was, in fact, detrimental to their development.

Published in 1944 (by Harper & Bros.; reprinted in 1996 by Transaction Publishers), *An American Dilemma* served to crystallize the emerging awareness that racial discrimination and legal segregation could not endure in the U.S. Its moral wake-up call for Americans to live up to the democratic ideals of the "American Creed" became a powerful justification that united the major groups responsible for the civil rights movement. It has been called one of the most important works of social science of the twentieth century. Never before had so comprehensive and wide-ranging a study of the state of black Americans and interracial relations been carried out.

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While thousands of pages have since been written on related issues, and hundreds of studies funded and commissions convened, it might well be true that no single work since *An American Dilemma* has combined comprehensive social scientific research with a path-breaking argument that could define a consensus and drive policy. As noted scholar and long-time *Daedalus* editor Stephen Graubard provocatively commented, "It is extraordinary that there has been no successor study to that of Myrdal, that no foundation or corporate group has to this date recognized the need for a fundamental reinvestigation of what is incontestably the most serious problem that plagues American society today" (Clayton, ed., *An American Dilemma Revisited,* p. 1). Whatever one's views on that subject, a look back at what made the Myrdal study uniquely possible in its day, and more difficult to imagine now, tells us a lot about the continuing battle to improve the lives of African Americans and the possibilities of advancing the still-polarized debate about race.

The Study's Content

Myrdal argued that there was a fundamental dilemma within individual Americans, who were torn between the ideals of what he called the American Creed—values of democracy and equal opportunity—and the realities of discrimination and segregation. "The American Negro problem is a problem in the heart of the American. It is there that the interracial tension has its focus. It is there that the decisive struggle goes on..." (*An American Dilemma,* Introduction). In Myrdal's view, it was due to this struggle that change would inevitably take place.

The study was also a clarion call for Americans to live up to the ideals of the American Creed or face a deterioration of the values and vision that unites the country and makes it great. "The Negro problem is an integral part of, or a special phase of, the whole complex of problems in the larger American civilization" (*An American Dilemma,* Introduction). Framing it this way dovetailed well with the ideas later expressed by Martin Luther King, Jr.; it helped black Americans and the white liberals who would join together in the civil rights movement articulate the urgency of addressing what Myrdal called "a century-long lag of public morals" (Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* p. 58).

Another key facet of Myrdal's argument was to set the study in an international context, predicting that, for Americans, having defined World War II as a struggle for liberty and equality and against Nazi racism would force a redefinition and reexamination of race in the United States. Myrdal also thought that the treatment of blacks in the U.S. would affect its international prestige and power.

The book's argument was supported by extensive sociological research and data that demonstrated the dire state of blacks and the depth of discrimination. This gave the framing, which resonated on a moral level, a heft and persuasiveness that increased its impact. *An American Dilemma* drew upon thirty-one commissioned research memoranda on every aspect of black life and interracial relations. And Myrdal carried out extensive field research, touring the country and talking with black and white leaders, journalists, schoolteachers, clergy, academics, labor union members, businessmen, farmers, law enforcement officers and many more.

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The book also had something to say about the purpose of social scientific research: it contained a cutting critique of the dominant view of social science of the time. As Leslie Dunbar said in "The Enduring American Dilemma," an article written in 1983, "He [Myrdal] was against the view that was then weighty and authoritative in social science...that social problems had best be left alone to work themselves out and that intervention by government to direct or speed up the process is futile and productive of much harm. Myrdal argued the case for the possibility of change and for the necessity of conscious action in order to achieve it."

Origins of the Study

The book that was ultimately published in 1944—over six years after Carnegie Corporation president Fredrick Keppel invited Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal to "lead a comprehensive Study of the Negro in the United States" —was not the one intended (Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, p. 135). Instead of what the foundation had planned as a limited study that would help guide Corporation grantmaking beyond its historic involvement in black education in the South, Keppel got a treatise that recast the very paradigm within which the Corporation staff who were responsible for the idea were operating. The problem of race, for Myrdal, was a moral issue, not just a matter of preventing racial clashes or modernizing the South.

At the time, although Keppel and his advisors were aware that black-white relations were changing and needed a new kind of attention, they did not aim to end segregation or take on the economic and social conditions of blacks. But they did begin to see that social changes such as the migration to northern cities, the crisis of southern agriculture, the devastating effects of the Great Depression in the cities of the North and the South, and the rising militancy among blacks were making it increasingly necessary to move beyond the dominant philanthropic approach of the time: educating rural southern blacks within the context of segregation.

In 1935, Keppel's adviser, Newton Baker, who had been mayor of Cleveland 1913-1916, and Secretary of War under Woodrow Wilson, questioned the foundation's policy of using the funds it devoted to issues of race to support "Negro" schools in the South. He argued that more needed to be understood about race, which was no longer just a southern problem and that the Corporation should concern itself with the condition of blacks in northern cities (Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and*

America's Conscience, p.17). He suggested that a study was needed to help the Corporation decide how to spend its money in such as way to have the most impact on the black minority (Southern, p. 3).

While Baker spoke publicly against discrimination, he referred to blacks as an "infant race" and his views still reflected the fact that he was from a Confederate family in West Virginia. These inconsistencies demonstrate the dilemma Myrdal would write about. Keppel's views were less overtly inconsistent on the issue of blacks, but he did not have a developed alternative to the reigning paradigm of the day (Lagemann, p. 132).

Black leaders such as W.E.B. Du Bois had already questioned the dominant approach to black education in the philanthropic community, which was based on the assumption that blacks should be trained for agricultural and industrial work. He complained that this technical training would teach blacks "to be thought for, not to think; to be led, but not to lead themselves" (Lagemann, p. 126). But within philanthropic circles, the dominant focus remained rural education in the South, although increasingly higher education was included.

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The main players were the Rockefeller Foundation, through support of the General Education Board (GEB) and the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial Fund; the Julius Rosenwald Fund and the Phelps Stokes Fund. Of these, GEB worked on the premise that educating whites in the South was the primary way to help blacks. Their work focused on universal education, though they accepted separate and inferior schools for blacks. The Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial and Rosenwald funds supported both black and white scholars in social scientific and cultural studies of black Americans. They were increasingly moving into supporting black health and economic welfare. Rosenwald was the most progressive, and was responsible for establishing the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, which brought together leading white and black citizens in communities across the South to work on common problems (Nielsen, *The Big Foundations*, p. 340). Carnegie was less involved than were these other foundations and its grants had been mostly for black colleges in the South. But it had also contributed to organizations such as the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and the Urban League.

While Keppel remained a product of the times in his own attitudes, he did understand that there needed to be a breakthrough in the constraints and interests that surrounded the issue of race in the American scholarly community. He came to believe that race was such an emotional and fraught issue that neither a northerner, nor a southerner, neither a black nor a white scholar, would be able to achieve a sufficiently objective study and one that would get a fair hearing once it was done.

In opting to look for a foreigner to do the study, Keppel consciously overlooked another project that was being considered for funding at the time—the Encyclopedia of the Negro. The ambitious project, with W.E.B. DuBois as editor, was to be supervised by a board of leading black and white scholars and reformers. DuBois had hoped to use the project to "reformulate the problem of the century" (Lewis, *W.E.B. DuBois*, p. 446). It did not however, meet Keppel's criteria of objectivity given DuBois' two decades of civil rights advocacy in the NAACP. Carnegie Corporation staff involved in the encyclopedia were also concerned about discord among the black and white collaborators.

Keppel's choice of using a foreign scholar and one who was not an expert in the field was also viewed skeptically by some of the other established scholars of black life in America and interracial relations of

the time, who did not believe that a non-American would be able to say anything new about the subject.

After a search through a list that included twenty-five names, Keppel chose Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish economist, then thirty-nine years old. In the invitation to Myrdal, Keppel wrote that Carnegie Corporation wanted “someone who would approach the situation with an entirely fresh mind. We have also thought that it would be wise to seek a man in a non-imperialistic country with no background of domination of one race over another” (Jackson, p. 33).

Myrdal, who would go on to win the 1974 Nobel Prize in Economic Science (which he shared with Friedrich von Hayek) arrived in New York to begin the work in September 1938.

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What Gave the Study Impact

The unique combination of Myrdal and Keppel made the project bolder and better able to affect public policy than it otherwise would have been. Keppel was an unusual foundation president: personally involved, operating on intuition, he employed only a small staff and received many grant applicants himself (Jackson, p. 14). Keppel sent Myrdal off on a two-month tour of the South as soon as he arrived in the U.S., before he could do library research and be influenced by "the experts." While Keppel had little knowledge of the social sciences, his instinct continued to be to lay the groundwork for as fresh a view as possible. As Walter Jackson points out, it was, paradoxically, because Carnegie Corporation had largely ignored black issues that there would be few institutional checks and obstacles to Myrdal's intellectual freedom:

> "The Swedish visitor would be able to chart a more liberal course on race relations because the Carnegie Corporation had no southern trustees, no elaborate educational programs that depended on the good will of southern white elites, and no staff specialists on Negro education whose watchword was caution" (Jackson, p. 35).

Myrdal felt no constraints about personally shaping the study's scope, nor did he feel that he had to pay great attention to the original mission of providing the underpinning for foundation programs. Once he returned from his first tour of the South he commented that he found the situation more shocking than he expected and was overwhelmed by how little he knew. But he wrote in his report that he would need to redefine the scope of the study since "The American Negro as a social problem is included in, and includes all other American social, economic and political problems" (Lagemann, p. 138). While Keppel must have worried that the mission was expanding, in the tradition of Andrew Carnegie, he had invested in a "great man" and was willing to give him the latitude he thought he deserved (Jackson, p. 13). Keppel later said that he staked his reputation on the book.

In addition, after going to great lengths to find an "objective" foreigner to do the work, Keppel inadvertently chose a social scientist who did not believe in objective social science and who was deeply committed to

social engineering. Myrdal, as an outsider, was not beholden to the American social science establishment with its commitment to value-free social science. He did not need to submit to peer review. And it was Myrdal's very departure from an orthodoxy that made social scientists hesitant to develop policy recommendations about race relations that would allow the study to have impact beyond narrow academic circles.

Although Myrdal was given great freedom to go about his work as he saw fit (and Keppel encouraged him to remain the sole author, even when he had doubts about his abilities to accomplish the task) and he wrote the text alone, he relied on the input of a broad range of collaborators—as respondents to his original framework for the study and then as authors of research memoranda.

Myrdal went to great lengths to include scholars from several disciplines, both black and white. Using the lure of the Carnegie Corporation name and the possibility of future funding from the foundation, he attracted the best minds in the field. His collaborators were from all of the main centers of research on race relations in America: the University of Chicago, the University of North Carolina, Atlanta University, Yale's Institute of Human Behavior, Howard, Fisk and Columbia universities (Jackson, p. 109).

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Other key organizations, such as the NAACP, the National Urban League and the Commission on Interracial Relations, all of which had received earlier grants from the Corporation but which had been told that they would not be funded further until after the Myrdal study was completed, were eager to cooperate with the author. By the time the book came out, most of the key potential critics were invested in it. Guy Johnson of the University of North Carolina, who was deputy director of the study said, of Myrdal:

> "He was basically a politician...besides being a great scholar...If you hadn't involved all these people and spent all this money and had athousand names on the list of people that had helped, the reception might not have been as enthusiastic" (Jackson, p. 113).

Each collaborator was encouraged to publish the memorandum independently and to use whichever methodological—and ideological—approach they found comfortable. Some have argued that the work of collaborators, particularly ones that were intimately involved, like Ralph Bunche, who was part of the core staff, was not sufficiently acknowledged. Still, Bunche, who later went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize, was one of several of the African American contributors to the study whose careers were launched through their participation in the project.

The fact that Myrdal alone was responsible for the final text meant that the collaborators' memoranda did not need to agree fully with his argument. There was very little attempt from the Corporation to censor the final product. The one area in which Keppel did intervene was in a chapter where Myrdal made an analogy between racism and sexism. Myrdal moved this chapter to an unobtrusive appendix called "A Parallel to the Negro Problem." This did not stop numerous feminist scholars from drawing upon the chapter to make the case for women's rights.

The Importance of World War II

Without the context of World War II and the social changes it drove forward, the message of the Myrdal book would not have been nearly as

powerful. It became acutely obvious that the fight against Nazism was being carried out in the context of racism at home and was being fought with a still-segregated army. This became an increasing source of frustration, not just for blacks but also for white liberals. In addition, the draft and black employment in war industries accelerated the move from the rural South to the cities of the North, South and West. All of this resulted in increasing militancy in the black community. In 1941, A. Philip Randolph organized a movement to protest against discrimination in the war industries. He only called off a march on Washington of 100,000 blacks after President Roosevelt issued an executive order to establish the Fair Employment Practices Committee, in which the federal government for the first time recognized equal opportunity in employment as a civil right. Riots broke out in 1943 in Detroit, New York and Los Angeles. The NAACP grew to nearly ten times what it was in 1940 during this period (Jackson, p. 236). More generally, the cause of civil rights and the black protest movement drew more support from northern white liberals than it had before the war.

Fredrick Keppel (in his foreword to *An American Dilemma*) commented on how much had changed since the beginning of the Myrdal project, saying that no one could have foreseen, in 1937, that the study would be made public at a time when the place of blacks in America would be a subject of such greatly increased interest because of the social questions that the war raised. Nor had anyone anticipated the new global position of the U.S. and its implications for the increasing importance of, as Keppel pointed out, “dealing at home with a major problem of race relations.”

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Responses to the Study

While the study was published before the end of the war, and received less attention than it might have in the months following, over the next years it was reviewed widely and favorably by both black and white com mentators and in public policy and academic circles. *Time* magazine said "Perhaps not since Bryce and de Tocqueville has the U.S. had such an analytical probing by a sharp-eyed foreigner" (Southern, p. 73). W.E.B. DuBois praised it as a "monumental and unrivaled study" (Jackson, p. 245). One Columbia University sociologist said *An American Dilemma* was "the most penetrating and important book on our contemporary American civilization that has been written" (Jackson, p. 242).

It was treated very carefully by southern liberals and it was not reviewed widely in the South. Social scientists were some of the early critics. The main complaint was about Myrdal's theory of change: did Americans really share the beliefs of the American Creed? Could the discord between the American Creed and lasting discrimination be sufficient to bring about the level of change Myrdal talked about? Other early critics were Marxists who decried the book for underplaying the class dimension of racial discrimination.

While most of the African American community was extremely positive about the book, Ralph Ellison, in a 1944 review, which was not published until twenty years later, complained that Myrdal had framed black culture in the U.S. as a pathological result of white racism, thereby ignoring the independent content and contribution of African American culture. This foreshadowed the criticism that book would receive from black intellectuals in the late 1960s.

Because of its heft, much of the public gained access to the book through several condensed versions and these were distributed widely to colleges, schools, the armed services, government agencies and civil rights groups (Southern, p. 105). As Southern points out, reviewers seemed to relate virtually every work on blacks to the Myrdal book. For example Richard Wright's *Black Boy,* first published in 1945, was hailed as a supplement to the Myrdal report (Southern, p. 108). With the increase in teaching of social sciences after the war; "a generation of future racial reformers in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations of the 1960s grew up on an academic diet of Myrdal" (Southern, p. 111).

An American Dilemma also had ramifications in the political sphere: in December 1946, Harry Truman became the first president to appoint a national committee to study black-white relations. Known as the Committee on Civil Rights, the group issued its report a year later, which was clearly influenced by Myrdal (Southern, p. 113-116). President Truman himself read the book, which was published just as the NAACP was stepping up its efforts to wage the civil rights battle through the courts, and it was used repeatedly in civil rights cases even prior to *Brown*.

As noted earlier, Myrdal's ideas also paralleled those of the main spokesman for the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr. In his book *Stride Toward Freedom*, which details the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, King lauded Myrdal for framing the problem of race as a moral issue. King invoked the book's title and central theme in the 1957 charter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (Southern, p. 230–231).

After its citation in the *Brown v. Board* opinion, a new set of critics emerged. During the struggle in the South that went on for ten years after the *Brown decision,* and culminated in the passage of the Civil Rights Bill and the Voting Rights Act, the Myrdal book was vilified by opponents of desegregation as a threat to the southern way of life and as Communist inspired.

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Carnegie Corporation's Postwar Role

The success of *An American Dilemma* in influencing so many areas of the growing civil rights movement was not due to the activities of the Corporation, which notably withdrew from promoting the study or related programs for twenty years following its publication. In announcing the Corporation's new commitment to social justice in a 1973 annual report essay, Corporation president Alan Pifer said:

> "Such a concern had not been totally lacking in earlier years, as evidenced by the foundation's invitation and support of the renowned Myrdal study of the American Negro. Nevertheless, from the end of the Second World War, until the early 1960's, other issues had commanded the Corporation's attention..."

Keppel had been the main advocate for the study at the Corporation and made efforts to seed a publicity effort in advance of its January 1944 publication. Charles Dollard, Keppel's assistant, who would serve as the Corporation's president from 1948–55, was also intimately involved with the Myrdal work. Keppel's death in 1943 and the absence of Dollard, who had resigned to serve in the army, meant that when the study came out there was no one at the foundation to champion it.

Walter Jessup, who succeeded Keppel as president from 1941–44, wrote in the 1944 annual report that the Corporation "never had and did not intend to have special programs in behalf of the Negro."

The foundation's distance from the study can be explained in several ways. It might well have had to do with the very fact of there having been three presidents in the period 1941–55, during a time when the international issues that followed from the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War were so pressing. As Patricia Rosenfield, Carnegie Corporation Chair, Carnegie Scholars Program, and Special Advisor to the Vice President and Director for Strategic Planning and Program Coordination points out, "One could argue that the foundation was very efficient in its spending: the book was having plenty of impact without further Corporation involvement."

An internal Carnegie Corporation conversation on the field of race relations after the Myrdal study is illuminating:

> *In the opinion of the officers, the money currently available from all sources for work in this field is already out of proportion to our knowledge of how to apply it intelligently. Not only has research lagged behind action; the research itself has been fuzzy and disconnected. Accordingly, the officers do not plan to recommend new grants either for research or for ameliorative programs until a special committee appointed by the Social Science Research Council to survey the field has reported* (Carnegie Corporation of New York Agenda for Meetings of the Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees, May 16, 1946).

Still, in 1947, a grant was made to University of Chicago to help support training and research relevant to the improvement of race relations. But advisers to the foundation recommended that it concentrate on its traditional area of black higher education in the South rather than give funds "in small grants to many agencies of varying purpose and degrees of effectiveness" (Jackson, p. 264).

During the 1940s and 50s, the Corporation continued to contribute in a limited way to the National Urban League, the United Negro College Fund and black colleges and universities. While there was an increase in funding in 1963, it was still to the advancement of black higher education.

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The Congressional attacks on foundations in the mid-1950s discouraged most foundation initiatives on social and racial issues. Representatives of the Corporation testified before the Congressional committee investigating foundations in 1952, and Dollard was subpoenaed, though not called to testify, to answer charges that *An American Dilemma* was the work of a foreign socialist who criticized the U.S. Constitution (Jackson, p. 330).

By the time the foundations caught up, the civil rights movement had emerged in full force. As Avery Russell, who, during her 30-year career at the Corporation served as both director of publications and as a program officer, comments, "Foundations like to think of themselves as being ahead of the curve...but foundations are social institutions and are, in general, conformist."

After 1965, the Corporation began to move beyond its traditional funding areas and explicitly framed its social justice agenda as linked to the legacy of Myrdal. Carnegie Corporation was once again on the cutting edge of funding for improving the situation of African Americans. Some of the many programs the Corporation began to fund over the next several years included promoting desegregation of northern schools, supporting voting rights, preparing black dropouts for college, training black lawyers to become active in civil rights and increasing the numbers of black students in southern law schools.

A Follow-Up Study?

By the time of the 1964 Civil Rights Bill and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, many scholars had already seen that the next phase of the civil rights movement—beyond the end of legal segregation and the decline of overt individual prejudice—would be much more difficult than the first. As scholar and author James Q. Wilson said in 1962, there is a "Negro problem" beyond white racism (Southern, p. 220).

The critique of Myrdal for being overly optimistic and not paying sufficient attention to power intensified after the Watts riots that broke out in the summer of 1965. The violence only intensified in subsequent summers. The emergence of the black power movement and the disappointment of formerly integrationist black intellectuals led to scathing criticism of the Myrdal book along the lines of Ralph Ellison's 1944 review.

All of this marked the end of the consensus to which the study contributed and which allowed it to have such impact. Twenty years of dramatic social change had made the data more appropriate for historians than as an underpinning for contemporary debates. But by this time as well, it had become much more difficult to imagine an equivalently influential single study.

Several observers have pointed out that funding for studies of race dried up for twenty years after *An American Dilemma* came out. Myrdal himself complained in 1972 that the book did "not spur greater scientific exertions to investigate the problems of race relations in America." Noting a "decisive decline of interest in the scientific study of race relations in America on the part of foundations as well as of the academic community," he said that he had begun work on a follow-up to the original work.

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Beginning in 1972, the Corporation provided funding for Myrdal to do a follow-up study, which was to be called *An American Dilemma Revisited: The Racial Crisis in Historical Perspective*. According to Eli Evans, who was a program officer at the Corporation from 1967 until 1977 and recently retired as president of the Revson foundation, the requirements of social science had changed significantly from the time the study had first come out and a project of similar scale would haveacost in the tens of millions of dollars. Thus Myrdal, and his former collaborator Kenneth Clark (well-known for the "doll study," which used white and brown dolls to examine children's attitudes about race and which, along with *An American Dilemma,* was cited as social scientific evidence to support the Brown decision), were funded by the Corporation to work on a less extensive follow up. Myrdal begged out of the undertaking because of disagreements over staffing. The project, which the Corporation supported through the Metropolitan Applied Research Center did yield a book: Dorothy K. Newman, et al, *Protest, Politics, and Prosperity: Black Americans and White Institutions,* 1940-75, which was published by Random House in 1978. While not a true follow-up to the original Myrdal study, the book was a survey of statistical information on how blacks were doing in education, employment, income, wealth, housing and health care.

Myrdal was again funded by the Corporation to do a follow-up study in the early 1980s. By this time he was old and sick with Parkinson's disease. After producing the manuscript with the help of a consultant funded by the Corporation, Myrdal remained dissatisfied and did not want it published. As Sissela Bok, Myrdal's daughter, writes in *An American Dilemma Revisited,* "...the task proved too great... increasingly immobile and blind, and unable to carry out or even oversee the research and the revisions that he knew were needed, he decided not to submit his manuscript for publication." Whether or not a second Myrdal study would have had influence comparable to the first is an open question.

In the years after *An American Dilemma's* initial political influence ebbed, and as it came to represent the liberal integrationist side of an increasing polarized debate on race, the nature of the study's impact changed. It became a benchmark of the state of black Americans against which countless studies framed their research. Examples include a volume that took the title of Myrdal's unfinished follow-up, *An American Dilemma Revisited,* published by Russell Sage in 1996.

The National Research Council sponsored a major study in 1989 called *Blacks in American Society* that was also comprehensive and in the Myrdal legacy. Other authors framed their contributions to the polarized debates on multiculturalism or affirmative action as being in Myrdal's footsteps.

An American Dilemma also remained a model of the kind of paradigm-shifting and consensus-generating comprehensive study to which others would aspire. It was primarily in this way that it continued to affect the work of the Corporation. Several foundation staff members have noted that the Myrdal project remained a model of a kind of commission or study—either by a single person or a prestigious group of people—on a topic of great significance that became a hallmark of the Corporation's work in the latter half of the 20th century. They cited its influence on the Corporation's work in South Africa, in particular the "Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa" in the early 1980s. Like the Myrdal study, it involved a multi-racial group of researchers and its devastating findings about black poverty were influential in bringing down a system of legalized segregation. (See Carnegie Results, Winter 2004, "Carnegie Corporation in South Africa: A Difficult Past Leads to a Commitment to Change.") Patricia Rosenfield says that the Myrdal study "got into the subconscious of the foundation," affecting the Corporation's work in numerous ways.

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An American Dilemma also served as a moral goad for Americans to remain true to the American Creed on a range of policy issues; it is still cited in discussions about issues as diverse as immigration and democracy-building abroad.

That it has been difficult to recreate a contemporary study on race in America with Myrdal's impact—in its sociological seriousness, its ability to articulate a new paradigm for thinking about race and in its ability to define a consensus that drives policy—might well be due to the changes in the foundation world and the polarization of the debate about race. It would be difficult to imagine a single foundation president driving forward a similarly successful venture; Keppel was acting in a different period in the history of foundations. Demands for diversity and for accountability would make it difficult to think of giving such free reign to a single scholar in current times. As Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation points out: "To carry out such a study today, you would need to involve all the African American organizations, all the Hispanic organizations, all the Asian organizations and more, so it would not be the same; the issue has expanded to one of equity for all these groups."

Eli Evans says that *An American Dilemma* was as much a work of literature as it was one of social science: "It wasn't just a report; it was the passion and insight behind the writing that allowed it to have a resonance that an ordinary single-person study by an academic or a study by a commission doesn't have...A commission study by its nature has to find a language that joins a broad constituency from all walks of American life and a consensus about a subject that makes for less of a literary report." It is also hard to imagine that a non-American, and an outsider to the subject of race, would have the legitimacy to serve as the kind of mirror that Myrdal did on such a fraught topic, especially apart from the unifying and historical context of World War II, which provided the framework for new kinds of collaboration among groups that had not previously worked together.

It is perfectly possible that a study as such is not what will be required to move the debate on race forward. However, the Myrdal project continues to stand out as an extraordinary example of how far-sighted foundation giving can introduce scholarship into the policy arena to facilitate large-scale social change.

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Corporation files and annual report essays

Also interviewed for this article:

Present and former Carnegie Corporation of New York staff: Barbara Finberg, Sarah Engelhardt, Patricia Rosenfield, Eli Evans and Avery Russell. Additional interviews with Walter Jackson and Sissela Bok

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