



The Montana study : idealistic failure or innovative success
by Janice Elaine Counter

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University
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Abstract:

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The Montana Study survived from 1943 to 1947. Political pressure against the Study, fierce rivalries between Montana State College and Montana State University, and problems within the Montana Study staff led to the Study's demise. Yet the current study found that there was an impact on some of the eleven Montana Study groups. The groups developed different phases in the community development process including community awareness, group involvement, and community commitment. The commitment phase in Conrad, Montana created a longterm development in that community.

There were several factors which affected short-term and long-term community development. Leadership which came from within the groups created more active participation in the community-research process. Having a diverse group of people influenced the communities' acceptance of change. Active participation in community research and group discussion helped stimulate the formation of action groups.

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OR INNOVATIVE SUCCESS

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of

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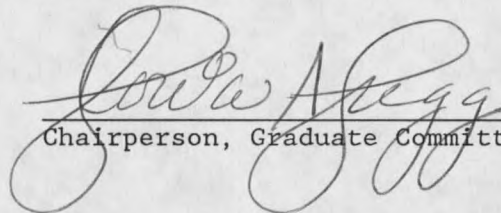
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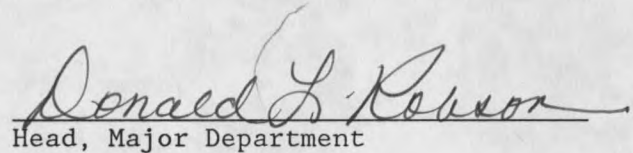
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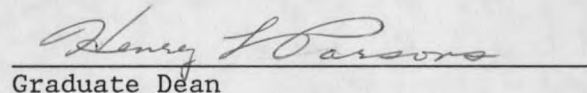
Approved for the Major Department

May 13, 1991
Date


Head, Major Department

Approved for the College of Graduate Studies

June 14, 1991
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Graduate Dean

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I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Dolores Lawrence Maykuth, who sixty years ago became the first member in her family to receive a college degree. Her dedication to learning has been an inspiration for her siblings, children, and grandchildren. It has been a guiding light for me.

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ABSTRACT

The Montana Study was a 1940s educational research project conducted by the Montana State University System and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. The project experimented with study groups and community research as a technique for stabilizing and improving community living.

The purpose of this current study was to examine critically why the Montana Study was not institutionalized and whether the Montana Study's techniques were viable methods for adult education and community development. This investigation employed a case study approach using historical analysis of primary documents and oral histories from study group participants. Primary sources used were from the Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York; Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, Montana; and Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, Montana.

The Montana Study survived from 1943 to 1947. Political pressure against the Study, fierce rivalries between Montana State College and Montana State University, and problems within the Montana Study staff led to the Study's demise. Yet the current study found that there was an impact on some of the eleven Montana Study groups. The groups developed different phases in the community development process including community awareness, group involvement, and community commitment. The commitment phase in Conrad, Montana created a long-term development in that community.

There were several factors which affected short-term and long-term community development. Leadership which came from within the groups created more active participation in the community-research process. Having a diverse group of people influenced the communities' acceptance of change. Active participation in community research and group discussion helped stimulate the formation of action groups.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The rural areas in the United States are deprived of an equitable share of the national wealth and denied a standard of living enjoyed in urban areas. Rural United States contains one-fourth of the country's population. Yet in the past two decades, rural areas have experienced declining economies, higher percentage of poverty, poorer housing standards, poorer or non-existent medical facilities, fewer educational opportunities, and limited public services. A 1989 report estimated that rural children were more likely to face failure due to social and economic strains. "Services from prenatal care to recreation are limited, and unfortunately, poverty is the common denominator for the lack of services."¹ The inequalities in living standards pose a challenge to citizens living in rural areas. How can rural people achieve a better standard of living?

One vehicle for improving the quality of life has been education in the community setting which helps to empower people to solve their own problems. Empowering community members can be done through a joint effort of all educational institutions and agencies. Educational

¹Denise Alston, "Risk of Failure Highest for Rural School Children," Billings Gazette, 23 May 1990, 2.

programs and training help rural people balance jobs, family, and community responsibilities.²

However, lower income levels, higher tuition cost for outreach programs, and long distance travel to higher education institutions often limit accessibility to such opportunities. Rural residents are unlikely to take advantage of formal or traditional higher education programs because they tend to feel uncomfortable in developing study skills, lack confidence in their learning abilities, or fail to see the relevance of programs to their everyday life situations.³

In problem-solving, rural adults are creative, resourceful, and have a high energy level. Individual resourcefulness creates independence, which must be dealt with in the methods and delivery system employed by adult educators.⁴ People who participate in adult education or outreach programs need to have a voice in directing their learning geared toward practical outcomes which meet the community's and their needs. The program curriculums need to provide opportunities for rural adults to become change agents in their communities.⁵

The Montana Study, a 1940s humanities research project, used study groups and community research for community development. Organized by

²Douglas Treadway, Higher Education in Rural America, Serving the Adult Learner (New York: College Entrance Board, 1984), 19.

³Ibid.

⁴Emmalou Van Tilberg and Allen B. Moore, "Education for Rural Adults," ed. Sharan Merriam and Phyllis Cunningham, Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989), 544.

⁵Ibid.

the Montana University System and the Rockefeller Foundation in 1944, the Study looked for ways in which the humanities in higher education could "contribute to improvement of life in small rural communities, by helping these communities assess and develop their economic, social, and cultural resources."⁶ Study groups such as those in the Montana Study are useful in helping people solve their own community problems. Such groups have been organized throughout the world, including the countries of Denmark (Danish Folk Schools), Sweden (Study Circles), Great Britain (Education Priority Areas Project), and Canada (Farm Forums). With the expressed purpose of acquiring new skills and knowledge for managing their community situation, learners establish the groups or educators help stimulate them. Members within the group do the teaching while the trained educator acts as a facilitator in helping the group find resources.⁷

In the past, the study groups in the United States were used extensively as an informal adult education method. In 1727, Benjamin Franklin formed the Junto, an informal study group. The Lyceum movement started in 1832. Jane Addams formed study groups for immigrant adults in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Hutchins and Adler utilized study groups in The Great Books Program in

⁶Baker Brownell, "First Progress Report of the Montana Study, 1945," [mimeographed], Montana Study Collection, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana.

⁷Stephen Brookfield, Adult Learners, Adult Education, and the Community (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1983), 114.

the 1940s. These types of study groups were organized to broaden the participants' knowledge of the world.⁸

The Montana Study employed a community research process which was very similar to the present day participatory research.

Participatory research is an old idea with a new name. Cooperative Extension agents in North America advocated its use in the first part of the century. Participatory research is a process where those who control [the] research determine the content (what is studied) as well as the outcomes of the research (who benefits).⁹

The participating members actively investigate and analyze their community through an educative process. This type of research involves participants in defining the research problems, gathering data, analyzing the data, and taking action on it. The groups are oriented toward social, political, and economic change.¹⁰

People who are engaged in the research simultaneously enhance their understanding and knowledge of a particular situation as well as take action to change it to their benefit.¹¹ Through the new

⁸Malcolm Knowles, The Adult Education Movement in the United States (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1962), 18.

⁹David Deshler and Nancy Hazan, "Adult Education Research: Issues and Directions," ed. Sharan Merriam and Phyllis Cunningham. Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1989), 153.

¹⁰Brookfield, 114.

¹¹Rajesh Tandon, "Participatory Research in the Empowerment of People," Convergence XIV, 3 (1981): 23-26.

understanding, participants become aware of their abilities and resources in doing community action.¹²

Participatory research emphasizes dialogue which "develops critical thinking, historical knowledge, and social inquiry."¹³ The dialogue seems to be crucial in developing the community. Community has been defined as

A group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision-making and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it. It [the community] almost always has a history defined in part by its past.¹⁴

One of the benefits of participatory research is the development of popular knowledge.¹⁵ Popular knowledge is constantly being created in the daily experiences of work and community life.¹⁶ Such knowledge has provided people in their everyday setting with "practical, vital, and empowering knowledge which helps them survive, interpret, create,

¹²Budd Hall, "Participatory Research: Popular Knowledge and Power: A Personal Reflection," Convergence XIV, 3 (1981): 14.

¹³Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogue on Transforming Education (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1987), 185.

¹⁴Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton, Habits of the Heart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 333.

¹⁵Popular knowledge has been defined as the process of knowing, conceptualizing, and disseminating information by people in their everyday life. "It is the knowledge belonging to people at the grassroots and constituting part of their culture heritage." Quote of Orlando Fals Borda by John Gaventa, "Participatory Research in North America," Convergence XXI, 2/3 (1988): 23.

¹⁶Ibid., 23.

produce, and work over centuries."¹⁷ Participatory research helps the participants to take

the "raw" and somewhat unformed, or at least, unexpressed knowledge of ordinary people into a collectable whole through discussion, analysis, and reflected knowledge gained with or without allied intellectuals and those who have both broader and deeper insights.¹⁸

Study groups and participatory research have been used extensively in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. This approach has been less developed in North America particularly in the United States.¹⁹ Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee, for example, has used this type of research for helping Appalachian communities solve community problems.²⁰

In North America, there seem to be social and cultural assumptions that participatory research does not fit in with the prevalent ideas of rugged individualism, mobility, and the success ethic. Levine in 1945 wrote:

The United States with its heterogeneity, individualism, and success ethic may never have been a fertile soil for the growth of Gemeinschaft culture characterized by permanence, intimacy and binding traditions.²¹

Even in the days when community research was being used, Stanley Rand, an evaluator of the process wrote:

¹⁷Ibid., 24.

¹⁸Hall, 12.

¹⁹Gaventa, 25.

²⁰Frank Adams, Unearthing Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, 1976), 206.

²¹Lawrence Levine quote in Carla Homstad, Small Town Eden: The Montana Study (Master thesis, University of Montana, Missoula), 98.

Among the farmers generally is the growing awareness that individual action is not meeting some basic needs of life and that only by overcoming isolation and engaging in team work and cooperative action can the desired goals be attained The evidence, however, was that cooperative activity is not accepted in the United States as in Canada and to some extent is looked upon with definite suspicion.²²

In a recent thesis on the Montana Study, Homstad questioned whether the methods used in the Montana Study developed the community.

While there is much of a positive nature that can be identified in . . . the study group process--community self-analysis and expression, appreciation of indigenous culture, a degree of local control of social and economic problems--the study fundamentally never enjoyed genuine grassroots support.²³

Historical Overview of the Montana Study

In 1943, President Ernest Melby of Montana State University, Missoula, was appointed chancellor of the Montana State University System. Melby's mission as chancellor was to reform the economically burdensome system. He came to Montana State University in 1941, and, as president, had been increasingly disturbed about how the system was financed and administered. He was also disturbed by the lack of support the general population gave to higher education. Convinced that the reason the university system stayed underfunded was the taxpayers' lack of understanding of higher education, Melby pushed for adult education and university outreach. If people could receive more

²²Stanley Rand, "Northern Plains in Change Project in a World of Change: A Report on the Use of the Study, 1942," (mimeographed), Northern-Plains Collection, Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York.

²³Homstad, 74.

educational services in their communities, they would better understand the higher education system and support its needs.²⁴

The Board of Education appointed a 19-member commission on higher education. Melby and the commission studied the problems of the university and post-war education. The commission also investigated building stronger links between the university system and Montana communities.

The opportunity to form such a link came when the university system received a three-year grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1944. The \$25,000 grant established a research project to examine ways higher education and the humanities could contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in small rural communities.²⁵ The three objectives of the study were as follows:

1. The Montana Study was to research ways whereby the true community in Montana and the family could be stabilized.
2. The Montana Study was to find ways to get the university off the campus and to bring facilities of higher education directly to the people in their own communities and within their occupational situation.
3. The Montana Study was to research ways to raise the appreciative and spiritual standards of living of able young people in their home communities.²⁶

²⁴H. G. Merriam, University of Montana, A History (Missoula, Montana: University of Montana Press, 1970), 99.

²⁵Ernest Melby, "Proposal for Rockefeller Foundation Grant, 1944," (mimeographed), Montana Study Collection, Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana.

²⁶Brownell, 1945, 3.

The grant supported three staff members, Baker Brownell, a philosopher from Northwestern University; Paul Meadows, a rural sociologist from Northwestern University; and Joseph Kinsey Howard, a Montana journalist and author. Brownell was the director for the project.

The main part of the research project focused on using community study groups to research life and traditions in each community. A ten-week study guide used in the research was piloted in Lonepine, Montana. Other communities which had community research groups included Darby, Stevensville, Woodman, Hamilton, Victor, Conrad, Lewistown, Libby, Dixon, and a Native American group from the Salish-Kootenai reservation.

The Montana Study had problems from the very beginning. It lost its administrative ramrod when Melby left the state for a position at New York University. Adding to the difficulties, two staff members, Howard and Meadows, became embroiled in a political controversy which brought about opposition to the study.

Most of the staff left the project by 1946 leaving Ruth Robinson, a member of the Conrad Study Group, as acting director for the final year. Attempts by the new chancellor, George Selke, and the Board of Education to gain funding from the legislature and Rockefeller Foundation appeared to be unsuccessful. The Montana Study research project came to an end in July 1947.

Poston summed up the Montana Study in this way:

From the stimulus to establish home industries, local incomes had been raised by hundreds of thousands of dollars, and from scores of community projects, both cultural and physical,

local citizens had found the meaning of creative living. Adult men and women had gained a deeper feeling for American democracy and had become alert to the needs of their local society. Through their influence, this kind of planning will go on and on until the original stimulus has been lost in time. Perhaps it is this kind of planning that will help rural Montana to emerge from her cultural frontier.²⁷

Statement of the Purpose

The major thesis for this current study was that the Montana Study failed to reach its stated goal of finding ways humanities and higher education could contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in small rural communities. A second thesis was that the Montana Study succeeded in achieving unstated or unanticipated outcomes by demonstrating that study groups and community research were appropriate adult education techniques for rural community development.

In order to investigate the stated theses, the following questions were explored:

1. What was the motivation for developing and implementing the Montana Study? How was the Montana Study implemented?
2. What were the political, economic, and social factors at the time of the study? How did those three factors impact the study?
3. What were the strengths and/or weaknesses of the organizational and administrative processes in the study?
4. Did the academic community in higher education in Montana support the Montana Study? What evidence was there for support or the lack thereof?

²⁷Richard Poston, Small Town Renaissance (New York: Harper & Brother, 1950), 92.

5. In regard to the three original objectives of the Montana Study, did the humanities study stabilize the small communities in Montana and raise the "appreciative and spiritual standards of living of the people of the state"? What was the impact on the communities of the Montana Study? What role did units of higher education play in bringing higher education to the communities?

6. Beyond the monetary impact, what influence did the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation have on the development and the implementation of the Montana Study?

7. Though the Montana Study seemed to fail, in what areas could the Montana Study be deemed a success?

8. What were the changes in the communities which could be attributed to utilization of the study groups?

A. Which features associated with the study groups contributed to community development?

B. Which features of the study groups did not adapt well to rural areas?

C. Which features of the study groups were satisfying to the participants in the study?

D. Which features of the study groups were frustrating to the participants of the study?

9. Can the study group and community research designed for other societies and cultures survive the assumptions of the United States' rural culture and traditions?

Significance of the Study

This current case study, using historical analysis of the Montana Study, was based on the assumption that the community study groups and research process are viable in rural adult education and community development in today's society. In contemporary adult education, there has been renewed interest and advocacy for community research in social problem-solving and action. Many adult educators including Brookfield, and Freire have all advocated forms of group study in creating a new social awareness.²⁸ Yet this type of research has primarily been used in developing third world countries rather than for the United States.

The Montana Study was one of the few and earliest documented examples of this type of research done in the United States. Serving as a root of community development and the community education movement, the Study used community research to create social and economic change as well as to enhance the cultural aspects of the community.

Darkenwald observed, "Adult education can ill afford to lose touch with its historical roots, its traditions, and the forms and forces which shaped its development."²⁹ Another adult educator, Brookfield urged examination of adult education history, "One wonders how long educational policy makers can afford to ignore history in general and

²⁸Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1972).

²⁹Gary Darkenwald, "Editor's Notes," Adult Education Quarterly 26, (1976): 21.

that of adult education in particular."³⁰ The Montana Study, an example of the application of the progressive education philosophy to adult education, received little recognition for methods incorporated in it.

Today, contemporary adult education literature has renewed interest in adult learning through study groups and participatory research. Participatory research has been suggested as a way not only to empower citizens to solve community problems but to maintain the democratic processes in the United States as well. In examining the procedures and processes used in the Montana Study, adult educators can gain knowledge and insights into the Montana Study's processes and the long-term effects the Study had on communities which participated.

The present case study is a revisionist's look at the Montana Study. Though there has been other research done, this present study is the most comprehensive examination to date done on the Montana Study. Poston in 1950 received a Newberry Award to write on the project. The present research after fifty years candidly and objectively investigated the Montana Study, a limitation which Poston faced. Homstad's 1983 master's thesis examined Brownell's progressive philosophy and the failure of Brownell to save small rural communities in Montana. The present study was different from Homstad's in that it focused on the short-term and long-term impact of the study group process on community action.

³⁰Brookfield, 6-7.

This historical research of the Montana Study gives new insight into how community research affected communities and people who participated in the research over a forty year period. The value of historical research is that it

enables solutions to contemporary problems to be sought in the past; it throws light on the present and future trends; it stresses the relative importance and effects of various interactions which are found within all cultures"31

Finally, the words of Chancellor Selke should be heeded,

. . . the Montana Study is water over the dam except as we learn to profit from the situation that now is history and improve the organization, administration, and procedures of similar projects in the state.³²

For these reasons, a thorough historical examination of the Montana Study, the community research process, and study groups can contribute to the a better understanding of the processes used in the context of United States society and culture and their effects on community action and development.

Methodology

The methodology for this current study used the case study approach with historical research and oral histories. Historical research can be defined as:

the systematic and objective location of evidence in order to establish and draw conclusions about past events. It is an act to achieve reconstruction undertaken in the spirit of

³¹Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion, Research Methods in Education (Dover, New Hampshire: Croom-Helm Publishing, 1985), 48-49.

³²George Selke to Baker Brownell, 15 April 1948, Montana Study, Record Series 72, Box 18, Folder 12, Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, Montana.

critical enquiry designed to achieve a faithful representation of previous times.³³

Carlson³⁴ urged that researchers in historical study define a consistent philosophy of life and let the research reflect that philosophy. The conceptual framework for this study was the progressive education philosophy.

The contextual framework for this study was the Montana political, social, and economic history between 1898 and 1955 and the progressive adult education movement in the United States up to 1955. It analyzed the relationships among the Montana Study, the Montana University System, the Montana political system, and the communities involved in the Montana Study.

Historical Analysis

The research methodology used traditional historical techniques examining primary and secondary documents from the following archives. The Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, Montana, housed the original files of the Montana Study including letters, evaluation, and day books of the staff; records from meeting and reports written by the community research groups; and reports and articles written on the Study. The personal files of Joseph Kinsey Howard were investigated. Montana Study files, located in the Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York, contained documents and records, interview notes, foundation

³³Cohen & Manion, 48.

³⁴Robert Carlson, "Humanistic Historical Research," ed. Huey Long and Roger Hiemstra, Changing Approaches to Studying Adult Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1982), 44.

meeting notes, correspondence between foundation staff and Montana Study staff; and the foundation's own personal insights and evaluation on the progress of the Montana Study. These files were significant because they contain the pertinent correspondence between Brownell and Stevens not available in the Montana Historical Association Archives. Montana State University, Bozeman, holds the letters and records of three presidents including Strand, Cobleigh, and Renne. Burlingame and Kraenzel records located at Montana State University archives, as well as records on the university system, were used.

Secondary documents included two books: The College and the Community (1952) and the Human Community written by Brownell as part of a project done at Northwestern University. A case study, done on the Montana Study in 1950 called Small Town Renaissance by Richard Poston, provided comparison in the analysis of information that was gathered.

External and internal criticism became critical not so much to prove authenticity of documents but to establish the total picture of what happened in the Montana Study.³⁵ A series of questions were employed to help establish the accuracy of the documents and records. This became very important as many documents were missing from the official Montana Study files. The questions were as follows:

1. What was the history of the document?
2. What was the source of the document and the record?
3. Was the document complete?
4. Was the document edited?
5. Who was the author?

³⁵It became obvious early on in the investigation that pertinent correspondence was left out of university system files turned over to the historical society. Such omissions tended to color some participants in a rosy light which in fact they did not deserve.

6. What was the author trying to accomplish?
7. What was the author's source of information?
8. What was the author's bias?
9. To what extent was the author likely to want to tell the truth?
10. Why was the document produced?
11. Do other documents exist that will shed additional light on the same story?³⁶

Oral Histories

Oral histories were also used in this study. To help determine what were effective approaches to community action and development, the oral histories were used for evaluating the study group techniques, community research, and educative processes employed in the Montana Study. The oral histories focused on the recollections of those who had participated in the ten-week Montana Study groups and the action groups which came out of the study groups. Though the events happened more than forty years before, the oral histories served as valuable primary sources and helped to fill in information lacking in available documentation.

Fourteen participants of the study groups were interviewed in Libby, Conrad, Darby, and Hamilton. The interviews helped to reinforce information gathered from other sources and added new insights into the community, institutions, the personalities of those involved in the study, and into the process used in community research. The personal reminiscences often unveiled attitudes and opinions which were not

³⁶Egon Guba and Yvonne Lincoln, Effective Evaluation (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1981), 238.

usually expressed in the official documents.³⁷ "Personal reminiscences are what add substance and feeling to any study--they help us understand how people lived, what they thought and felt about their work, family, and community."³⁸

Oral histories for this study were semi-structured. The following questions were asked, as well as follow up questions which seemed appropriate at the time of the interview.

1. How long have you been a part of this community?
Tell me about yourself and your family.
2. How did you get involved in the Montana Study?
3. What were your impressions of the Montana Study?
4. What part did you take in the study?
5. What did you learn from the project?
6. What projects did your study group undertake in your community?
7. What happened in your community because of the projects? Do you think the Montana Study affected you community?
8. Who were the leaders in your study group? How did they become leaders?
9. Did you have someone from the Montana Study staff help you with your study group? What role did they play and what were your impressions of him/her?
10. Do you feel that the Montana Study had any lasting results in your community? If you do, what were these?
11. What were the differences between learning in a study group and other types of learning you had experienced? What did you like about learning in a study group? What did you not like about it?

The questions opened the discussion, and the participants discussed at length what they could remember about the Study. The last question on their own learning often became awkward because the purpose of the Study for them was more socialization and community service.

³⁷Montana Oral History Association, Oral History of Montana: A Manual (Helena, Montana: Montana Historical Society, 1983), 34.

³⁸Guba and Lincoln, 162.

They usually associated learning with schooling and, therefore, did not think of the research and discussion process as a learning activity.

Procedures for the Oral Histories

The interviews were conducted using procedures recommended by the Montana Oral History Association. A list of names of participants from the five communities were taken from the minutes of the study groups. The list was sent to people in the communities who helped identify survivors. Contacts were made through association with the Kellogg Extension Education Project and the Oral History Division of the Montana Historical Society. A letter was sent to people identified as participants of one of the study groups. The letter explained the purpose of the interview, how the interview would be conducted, and how the transcripts of the interview would be used. Permission to record the interviews and use the transcripts was obtained from those who were interviewed. Twenty-seven people were contacted about doing an interview. A total of fourteen people were finally interviewed in Conrad, Hamilton, Libby, and Darby.

The researcher transcribed the interviews. The transcriptions were done according to the manner suggested by the Montana Oral History Association. Interviews and notes were audited for theme areas and a summary was done of each interview. The themes included specific events and ideas relating to the Montana Study and the questions being researched. The summary was entered on d-Base, a computer data base program, along theme areas. The information on each community was

compiled as a composite, using the specific theme area, and for each person who gave an interview.

Limitations of the Study

The context of this historical analysis was the Montana social, economic, and political history of the 1940s. The Montana Study illustrated practical application of the progressive education philosophy for the 1940s. Comparing the study with present day participatory research was not valid because of the difference in cultural and social context between then and now.

The oral histories created a challenge in proving trustworthiness because the information gathered was the personal perceptions of those folks being interviewed. Perceptions also were influenced by the passage of time, errors in recollection, unconscious bias in memory and reporting. This proved especially true for those participants of the Montana Study who were now in their late eighties. Information gathered in the interviews was cross-checked with other interviews and with primary source documents. The second problem encountered was the unwillingness of participants to do interviews.

Definitions

The following definitions are pertinent to this study.

Board of Education--the name given the governing body of the Montana State University System, an appointed board with the governor, attorney general, and superintendent of schools as ex-official members. The Board of Education also handled public-school policy

and took care of institutions such as Warm Springs, Boulder, and Twin Bridges. The governing board was changed later to the Board of Regents with responsibility for only Montana's higher education system.

Community Study Groups—a model of adult education adopted from Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, and Canada. The study groups were lead by participants and the method used for learning was discussion for mutual understanding and enlightenment. Study groups used in the Montana Study were designed after the Danish Folk Schools and the Canadian Farm Forums. The Study used a guide, yet it had no set learning outcomes, examinations, or grades. The leader was a member of the group and did not assume the traditional role of teacher/lecturer. Educators provided information when requested, taught process for problem solving, and helped facilitate the group dynamics when needed.

The Company—a term used to refer to Anaconda Copper Company and Montana Power Company. By the 1940s, these companies were managed separately, yet in the minds of many people in Montana, they remained as one powerful unit.

University of Montana—the combined six units in the Montana University System. Both names were used by Melby, who envisioned the six units as one university under one governing board and one administrator.

Humanities—a term defined by Baker Brownell to mean an approach to the human experience in

human values as contrasted with institutional values, supernatural values, or scientific values. This human experience emphasized human living as it was found among neighbors and in small communities.³⁹

For this study, humanities should not be considered as a series of academic disciplines.

Montana State College—the name used until July, 1965 for the campus at Bozeman, Montana.

Montana State University—the name used until July, 1965 for the campus at Missoula, Montana.

Montana Study—a research project to find ways higher education and the humanities could help stabilize the rural population and improve the standard of living in rural communities. Community groups researched information about their community, the history, traditions, values, and ways to help improve their community.

³⁹Brownell, 1945, 2.

CHAPTER 2

THE MONTANA STUDY: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

A case study might be compared to a tapestry with patterns made of the threads of history, people, events, politics, with economics interwoven to make up the unique design that becomes the case study's story. The Montana Study is such a tapestry.

The Montana Study (1943-1947) was a research project the purpose of which was to find ways higher education and the humanities could improve life in small rural communities by helping communities assess and develop their own social, economic, and cultural resources. The project, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and implemented by the Montana University System, was unique in that it used the Danish Folk School model of discussion groups and community research similar to participatory research. Community members were involved in defining the research problem, gathering data, collectively analyzing the information, and interpreting it for community action.

The purpose of this chapter is to develop an overview of Montana's economic, social, and political history and an overview of the Montana University System as related to the Montana Study. The final part of the chapter is an overview of the Montana Study's projects done between 1944-1947.

Overview of Montana

Montana, a remote and sparsely populated area of mountains and plains, became a state in 1889. Montana's history has been described as a story of "too much too soon."⁴⁰ When Montana became a state, the land, climate, and remoteness from the rest of the country greatly influenced the patterns which developed economically, socially, politically, and culturally. The western section of the state was settled first starting with the gold rushes in the 1860s. Gold was discovered at various sites such as Grasshopper Creek, Alder Gulch, and Last Chance Gulch. The towns of Butte, Helena, and Virginia City grew from the gold, silver, and copper booms. Eastern Montana continued to be sparsely populated when the government offered acreage and the railroads offered transportation to land-hungry homesteaders. An estimated 70,000-80,000 people⁴¹ came to Montana during 1900-1919.

The Montana economy, supported basically by mining and agriculture, depended on the whims of nature and humans. A pattern emerged in the economy of "exploitation, overexpansion, boom, and bust."⁴² This pattern was repeated through the eras of fur trapping, ranching, mining, lumbering, and homesteading.

⁴⁰K. Ross Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 5.

⁴¹K. Ross Toole, Twentieth Century Montana (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 26.

⁴²Toole, 1959, 5.

The politics had as many extreme conditions as the economy. It went from "fiery wide-open violence to apathetic resignation."⁴³ Montana politics were formed on the ideas of rugged individualism of the frontier, yet were greatly influenced by new and powerful industries which were developing in the early stages of the state's history. Montana was an area of abundant natural resources. However, a great amount of capital was needed to extract the wealth of the state, and the capital came from Eastern and sometimes foreign investors. The capital brought about development and a measure of prosperity. But the state ". . . had to pay a high price for copper [and it could be added other resources] which came to dominate its economy and to rule the roost politically."⁴⁴ The political wars among the three copper magnates—Clark, Daly, and Heinze—illustrated graphically how money influenced Montana's politics. Clark bought a United States Senate seat, Heinze bought judges, and Clark and Daly paid roughly \$56 a vote in a battle over the state capitol.⁴⁵ Their battles for power created a condition and tradition which would contaminate Montana's politics for many decades.

A new force came into play in the political scene in 1899 when Standard Oil purchased Daly's Anaconda Copper Company. Renamed Amalgamated Copper Company for a time, the company grew to include most of the copper mining and smelters in Butte; refineries in Great Falls,

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Michael Malone and Richard Roeder, Montana: A History of Two Centuries (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 152.

⁴⁵Ibid., 161.

Butte, and Anaconda; timberland and lumber mills in Western Montana; and a chain of newspapers throughout the state. Montana politics commenced to be influenced by a "corporation controlled from Wall Street and insensitive to the concerns of Montanans."⁴⁶

Amalgamated formed the Montana Power Company in 1912. John D. Ryan was president of both companies until his death in 1932. Though Montana Power was not a subsidiary of Amalgamated, in the minds of many Montanans the corporations were perceived as one and nicknamed "the Company."

The Amalgamated wielded an economic-political strength which no opposing coterie of groups could match for long. Allying with its Siamese twin Montana Power, with railroads and other corporations, and with instinctively conservative stockman of the plains, it ruled the roost as a giant faction in a small commonwealth Montana.⁴⁷

This group evolved into an effective political network, with the help of the company-owned newspapers, which impacted the election of state officials over several decades. The political power of this group was potent and its influence was felt on all aspects of the public sector including higher education, and ultimately on what happened to the Montana Study.

The groups opposing the conservatives and especially "the Company," were the progressive grassroots organizations such as the Farmers Union, the American Federation of Labor, and the Congress of Industrial Works. This coalition helped to elect many progressive and

⁴⁶Ibid., 176.

⁴⁷Michael P. Malone, The Battle for Butte (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 210.

liberal United States Senators such as Welch, Wheeler, Murray, and Mansfield.

Overview of the Montana University System

Politics and the economy greatly influenced the formation of the Montana University System. The four separate units, the University in Missoula, the agricultural college in Bozeman, a normal school in Dillon, and the mining college in Butte, were created to "gratify several ambitious cities and keep hard feelings to a minimum."⁴⁸ This system, concocted out of political expediency, became economically burdensome to the state, a situation that continues today.

The constitution of 1889 set up provisions to establish a system of higher education and a governing body to manage it. The legislature however delayed setting up the system until 1893. The delay was due to the political maneuvering among the various politicians who were trying to get the state capitol or an institution into their home communities. Bozeman, for example, was trying to get the state capitol in that community. The Great Falls Tribune accused The Helena Independence of supporting Bozeman as the site for the agriculture college in exchange for Bozeman pulling out of the capital race and supporting Helena as the capital.⁴⁹ Helena became the state capital and Bozeman soon hosted the agricultural college.

⁴⁸Malone & Roeder, 276.

⁴⁹Edward Chenette, "The Montana State Board of Education: A Study of Higher Education in Conflict, 1884-1959" (Ed.D. Dissertation, University of Montana, 1972), 44.

When the 1893 legislature finally established the higher education system, debate in both the newspapers and on the floor of the legislature focused on whether the colleges—agriculture, normal and mining—should be separated or on one campus. Paris Gibson, senator from Great Falls, introduced a bill which would have placed all the colleges in one location and under one management system.⁵⁰ At the same time, a bill was introduced to place the four colleges at separate locations; the university in Missoula, the agricultural college in Bozeman, a normal school in Twin Bridges, and the mining college in Butte. The Great Falls Tribune pleaded with the legislature to consolidate the university system and support Gibson's bill.

In Heaven's name do not let them (the colleges) be scattered about to become the puny laughing stock of the world and a constant source of irritation and fruitless expense to the state.⁵¹

Unfortunately, the legislature ignored the plea and established campuses in Bozeman, Butte, Dillon, and Missoula. Twin Bridges received the orphans' home rather than the normal school.

The Montana Board of Education,⁵² established at the same time as the higher education system, was a "complicated and politically dominated supervisory system."⁵³ The governor controlled the Board through appointment of members and by being an active ex-official

⁵⁰Ibid., 45.

⁵¹Ibid., 48.

⁵²The Board of Education was the governing body for the Montana Higher Education System.

⁵³Ibid., 58.

member. This Board over a forty-five year period, was responsible for "book-burnings, suppression of academic freedom, firing without hearing of both professors and presidents."⁵⁴

It would seem that the Board of Education had broad governing powers. But in fact, the Board was given limited powers over the university units. Each campus unit had an autonomous administration and budget, as well as separate funding from the legislature. The lack of unity in governance led to competition among the unit presidents for state funding and to the university system being susceptible to political maneuvering from outside the university system.

Early in the history of the system, the units launched campaigns to build facilities to carry out their own private missions and to protect their academic turf. The university units, especially those in Missoula and Bozeman, "rapidly developed courses and degrees, lobbied individually for state funding, and recruited students."⁵⁵ The competition between Missoula and Bozeman was often aggressive and bitter. Some historians have described the competition as "guerrilla warfare."⁵⁶

A few presidents of the units recognized that the competition among the units was creating a weakened university system. Craig, the first president of Montana State University (now the University of Montana) recommended that ". . . each [unit] be employed on its own and

⁵⁴Ibid., 96

⁵⁵Malone & Roeder, 277.

⁵⁶Ibid., 277.

the work can be accomplished with the resource in its command."⁵⁷ Duniway, the president who succeeded Craig, proposed administrative unity for the system which would give the Board of Education a great deal of control over all units. Greater control, Duniway reasoned, would help to build cooperation, unity, and discourage duplication. Craighead, the president who followed Duniway, urged consolidation which he felt would remedy the duplication which "created a needless waste of money in a state which could not afford the waste of even a penny."⁵⁸

A bill to consolidate the units was introduced into the legislature in 1913. The people at Bozeman, Dillon, and Butte suspected that the campaign for consolidation was actually a campaign to eliminate their own campuses. The legislature defeated consolidation at a ratio of three to two.

Undaunted by the defeat in the legislature, the proponents of consolidation lead by Craighead brought an initiative to the voters in 1914. The main opposition against consolidation came from the Bozeman unit and from the farmers and ranchers who supported the agricultural college. Many Montana people distrusted the academic types who they feared would have unpopular influence on the politics of the state if they were united on one campus. An editorial in the Forsyth Times-Journal charged that "the supporters of the consolidation scheme, for scheme it is, seemed to represent the educational cult, caste, or

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

highbrow theorists of the State."⁵⁹ The voters defeated the initiative by a vote of 46,311 to 30,465.⁶⁰

Many educators, politicians, and concerned citizens reasoned if consolidation was impossible, at least the system could be improved by better coordination of the units and by putting a stop to expensive duplication and expansion. The Leighton Act was passed as a result of this concern. This law attempted to "bring a measure of administrative unity to the four institutions."⁶¹ The Act gave the State Board of Education the power to eliminate unnecessary duplication and to create the position of chancellor. The appointment of the chancellor did not cure the problems of the system.⁶²

Even though the university system was plagued with financial woes, the legislature from the beginning, pressured by Eastern Montana, created two more higher education units in Billings and Havre. Problems for the system expanded when the homesteading boom ended in 1919. The state economy plummeted into a depression when falling prices for raw materials and agricultural products, plus a severe drought struck the eastern plains. Farmers, who had over extended during the prosperous years, now lost their land. Businesses and banks failed, and unemployment gripped the state. The population drastically

⁵⁹Jules Karlin, "Conflict and Crisis in University Politics: The Firing of President E. B. Craighead, 1915," Montana, The Magazine of Western History 36, 3 (Summer, 1986): 50.

⁶⁰Ibid., 48

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Malone & Roeder, 277.

dropped and most of the population loss came from small rural communities in Eastern Montana.

A result of the agricultural depression was that the conservative legislature failed to fund the six units of the higher education system adequately. Efforts to close the smaller units were met with strong political opposition from the communities where the units were located. Unable to close the smaller colleges, the legislature reduced appropriations to the units and cut funding for the chancellor's position. The system remained without a chancellor from 1933-1943.⁶³

The conservative political block greatly affected the higher education system.

The four institutions were adversely affected by the insistence of Amalgamate Copper Company that they be strongholds of economic and social orthodoxy. The powers of the company were considerable, and its recommendations could not be ignored.⁶⁴

Two professors, who questioned the influence of "the Company" were fired by the State Board of Education. Levine, an economics professor, was fired over a paper on the Montana tax system which favored the mining interest. Fischer, an instructor at the law school, was fired after getting into a dispute with The Missoulian, a company-owned newspaper.⁶⁵

⁶³Malone & Roeder, 278.

⁶⁴Karlin, 50.

⁶⁵Toole, 1972, 231.

Overview of the Montana Study

In 1941, a number of events took place which would change the course of the university system in Montana. Sam Ford, a Republican elected as governor in 1940, was determined to reorganize the state government so as to make it more efficient and economic. Ford appointed a committee to study the entire structure of state government including higher education. The firm of Griffenhagen and Associates surveyed the institutions and departments and made recommendations for reforms.

This study of higher education listed forty-one recommendations on governance of the six units. A major recommendation was that the six units be organized into one university with one president as the administrator of the system with one business and registrar's office. Staff and students could shift freely among all of the units.⁶⁶ The study also called for the status of Dillon, Havre, and Billings to be changed to two-year programs. Finally the report suggested a reconstruction of the Board of Education in order to reduce undo political pressure on the decision-making process.⁶⁷

Near the same time, Ernest Melby, the Dean of Education at Northwestern University, became the president of Montana State University. The Board of Education fired the previous president because of rancor and discontent at the Missoula campus. Melby's

⁶⁶Chennette, 383.

⁶⁷Ibid., 302.

mission was to help correct the morale problem of the faculty and students.

Melby was a progressive educator, a contemporary of John Dewey and William James. Melby was described as an optimist, idealist, and a dreamer.⁶⁸ Melby believed strongly in the democratic way of life and in citizen participation in keeping the democratic process going. He committed the University to lifelong learning, adult education, and extension. Melby believed higher education should relate to the everyday life of people and the faculty should serve the communities of the state. In his inauguration address as president, Melby asserted:

Universities have given nurture to science which has made the world, but they have not equipped man to live in the world. They have given wings to his mind without beauty and love in his heart.⁶⁹

When Melby came to Montana, he was appalled by the conditions of the Missoula campus and the poor morale of students and faculty. Melby was convinced that the adult education and higher education connection could build the necessary grassroots support for funding of the higher education system in Montana. He wanted to expand extension work, but he realized such an expansion would be impossible with the funding system that was in place. "The development of a program of higher education which promotes the creative living for all of the people is a project which needs only to be understood by the people to win their support."⁷⁰

⁶⁸Merriam, 99.

⁶⁹Ibid., 100.

⁷⁰Chennette, 390.

Melby soon became a leader on the Executive Council of Presidents.⁷¹ He was articulate and very concerned with the problems of the whole university system. Melby supported the other presidents in their attempts to get funding for repairing the campuses and increasing the salaries of the faculty. Even before his appointment to the chancellor's position, he tried to unify the presidents in securing the support of the legislators in their districts for all the units. As Melby wrote to President Cobleigh, "A meeting with the legislators would give each president a chance to present the needs of his own institution and the need for solidarity in the legislative groups of the six communities."⁷² The five other presidents reacted positively to Melby's suggestion.

The Board of Education appointed Melby to the position of chancellor in April, 1943. The appointment came after Governor Ford had pressured the legislature to fund the position. Ford noted higher education had suffered from underfunding and the physical plants had deteriorated from inadequate support. Ford requested funding for the chancellorship and a commission to study the problems of the higher education system. The legislature appropriated \$10,000 for the chancellor's salary.

Melby became chancellor July 1, 1943. His mission was to help a commission of higher education find solutions to the problems in higher

⁷¹The Executive Council, an advisor board to the Board of Education, was made up of the six university presidents.

⁷²Ernest Melby to William Cobleigh, 19 November 1942, Renne Collection, Reorganization Files, Record Series 0030, Box 28, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, Montana.

education. He took the position with the stipulation that he could take a leave-of-absence as president of Montana State University.⁷³ The presidents of the other units were suspicious of Melby's continued connections to the University.

Melby got his financial opportunity to link the university system and Montana communities when the Rockefeller Foundation gave the university system a research grant in 1944. The project became known as the Montana Study.

David H. Stevens, Director of the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation, visited Montana State College in May, 1943. The meeting involved a proposal for implementing the work of Dr. Carl F. Kraenzel, a rural sociologist with the Montana Extension Service. A previous project, the Northern Plains Regional Study, a joint effort of the extension services in North Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota, Montana, and the Prairie Provinces of Canada, developed a study outline of the plains region for use in adult forum groups. The purpose of the groups was to bring together people in the Northern Plains area for "free, full panel discussion of all the problems of the region."⁷⁴ The forum groups were suppose to challenge the participants to think, study, plan, and act in making the communities of the region better places to live. The objectives of the forums were listed as follows:

⁷³Chennette, 390.

⁷⁴Carl Kraenzel, The Northern Plains in a World of Change (Canada: Gregory-Cartwright LTD., 1942), 5.

To build a rural society to which the sons of the region will wish to return because it holds the possibility of a decent and secure livelihood and creative life and to plan for social reconstruction after the victory of democracy in the field of battle, is the business of those who stayed on the home front, and the plans must satisfy the rightful demands of those who have risked their lives for democracy's survival.⁷⁵

Kraenzel was delighted when Melby attended the meetings with Stevens and supported the project. Kraenzel felt confident the new proposal would be funded with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.⁷⁶

But even though Melby gave support to the Northern Plains project, Stevens decided not to fund the project. Stevens suggested that Kraenzel needed to find another funding source to support for the project.⁷⁷

Stevens was impressed, however, with the new chancellor's vision for the university system. He wrote to Melby shortly after the meeting about the possibilities of a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.

This is to report my pleasure at the chance to talk with you regarding the educational matters in Montana. I know that you had little suggestions of my feelings after the day at Bozeman, therefore I am sending this note It was a satisfaction to find that there is prospect of movement beyond the study of economic questions This means that my personal interest in your planning for the

⁷⁵Ibid., 4.

⁷⁶Richard Poston, Small Town Renaissance (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 18.

⁷⁷David Steven's notes on the 15 May 1943 meeting in Bozeman, Record Group 1.2, Record Series 200 United States, 200R Montana State University-Regional Studies, Box 381, Folder 3330.82, Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York.

institutions of the State might be defined in other ways than through the recent publication of your men in Bozeman.⁷⁸

Stevens encouraged Melby to develop ideas the Humanities Division of the Foundation could support. Melby first proposed setting up an educational service center for groups of all ages. This was not an acceptable idea to the Rockefeller Foundation, which did not support adult education projects. Stevens then suggested a project which focused on the traditions, history, and culture of small rural communities. He discussed a model like a project done by Cornell University in community drama and culture.⁷⁹

Stevens wanted to try techniques from study-discussion groups he had observed in Denmark, England, and Canada. As the director of the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation,⁸⁰ Stevens became involved with Saint Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia and A. B. MacDonald, the rector of the school. The work being done in Nova Scotia was known as the Antigonish Movement. While working with

⁷⁸David Stevens to Ernest Melby, 24 May 24 1943, Record Group 1.2, Record Series 200 United States, 200R Montana State University-Regional Studies, Box 381, Folder 3330.82, Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Stevens received his English doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1914. In 1930, he was appointed to the General Education Board of Rockefeller Foundation and became the director of the Humanities Division in 1932 where he remained until his resignation in 1950. He said of his resignation, "This leave-takings were speedily followed by chances to exercise my new freedom of choice. Some of them had been on my mind awaiting their release form the rules of 'fair play' that govern the Foundation." Ironically his project was a documented article on Joseph McCarthy. Bibliography Files, Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York.

MacDonald on a library-service grant, Stevens met Father Coady, the founder of the movement. Stevens wrote in a report:

Father Coady . . . during seven years has made adult study groups, credit unions, and consumers stores the source of new self-reliance for the northern part of Nova Scotia. Buying and selling together, borrowing from common savings at moderate rates, study of current ideas affecting their lives, the workers have developed their own substitute for dependence and poverty.⁸¹

In his discussions with Father Coady and Rector MacDonald, Stevens saw a great deal of merit in Coady's community work, and urged him to take a leave of absence in order to write manuscripts on his experiences. "These would record seven years of work under his inspiration and would give his philosophy of community education to other areas."⁸²

Also in 1937, Stevens traveled to London where he met with Sir Walter Moberly, chairman of the University Grants Commission. The two discussed support for regional programs for study groups maintained by Universities. Stevens noted in visiting Liverpool that "workers in England exercised their abilities through group meeting . . . talking on labor conditions."⁸³

These visits seemed to have a lasting impression on Stevens. He wrote in 1940 after a conference,

To strengthen the culture of Democracy, we need to . . . introduce such concepts as those of humanity, integrity,

⁸¹David Stevens' interview notes on Canadian trip, Diaries of D. H. Stevens, (August 12-14, 1937), 436-438, Record Series R612.1 Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York.

⁸²Ibid., 438.

⁸³Ibid.

loyalty, and services to one's fellows We have failed to supply necessary information to aid citizens in solving their problems of living.

Stevens saw the study group as a method of doing this. Stevens suggested to the Rockefeller Foundation's General Education Board that the use of the adult education methods used in Nova Scotia might be applicable to the rural and Southern States.⁸⁴ During the period of 1940-1950 under Steven's direction, the Humanities Division moved toward regional studies emphasizing community building through history, art, drama, and study groups.⁸⁵

Stevens arranged for the Humanities division of the Rockefeller Foundation to send two history professors, Burlingame from Montana State College and Merriam from Montana State University, to Canada to examine Canadian adult education programs and community study forums. Their reviews and ideas on community study groups became the basis of the proposal submitted to the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation.

With Burlingame's and Merriam's information, Melby submitted a proposal to the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation in March, 1944. The proposal stated:

The University of Montana wishes to undertake a research program to determine the contribution of the humanities to a program of higher education designed to improve the quality of living in the State of Montana. Through such a study, the University hopes to develop its educational program so as to meet the needs of the state more fully. If education in the humanistic field is to have validity and effectiveness, it must be closely attuned to the cultural background and

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

present environment of the people whose education we seek to further. If, therefore, the University of Montana wishes to improve the quality of living in the state, it should have available an adequate basis of fact regarding the quality of living in the state, the people of the state, and their needs.⁸⁶

The proposal called for a director to coordinate the research and "integrate the activities of the existing staff members and facilities of the University of Montana."⁸⁷ Councils were to be formed in the rural communities and resources in the communities were to be "mobilized in doing research."⁸⁸ Educational programs were to be developed after the data had been collected by the councils. The eleven areas of research were as follows: ethnic patterns, folk development, evolution of the Indian civilization, literature and life, aspects of education, influences on stability of community life, influence of topography and climate, land tenure patterns, political party directions and influence, artist and art forms, and other policy influences.

The Rockefeller Foundation approved the proposal with a grant-in-aid of \$25,000 over a three year period. The grant gave full funding of \$12,500 for the first year. The university system would pick up equal shares for the last two years.

Baker Brownell, philosophy professor at Northwestern University, actively campaigned for the position of director. Brownell was one of

⁸⁶Melby, 2.

⁸⁷Ibid., 5.

⁸⁸Ibid.

the nation's outstanding authorities on problems of rural America during his time.

Brownell, a Harvard University graduate, with a doctorate in philosophy, had studied under eminent progressives William James, Josiah Royce, and George Santyana.⁸⁹ Except for the short period when he was the director of the Montana Study, Brownell instructed at Northwestern University from 1920-1953. Like many progressives of his time, Brownell saw the changes created by science and technology as important to the growth of the country. However, technology created a movement to cities which developed strong individualism, fragmentation, and alienation. All of these were threats to democracy. Brownell wrote:

Cities to a great extent are parasitic and disintegrative. In themselves, they seem incapable of survival except increasingly unbalanced exploitation of areas and folks within and without their borders The suicide, the crime, the insanity, and the drunkenness are old and sickening stories The moral responsibility in massive, anonymous societies is one of the seeds of disaster The increasing tendency toward authoritarian controls is another. The indifference, callowness, the strong egotism, urban speed, and competition are others.⁹⁰

Brownell believed the small town to be the salvation of the democratic system. The face-to-face relationships created strong democratic communities. "The decline of the primary communities is probably the most critical problem in American life Our basic

⁸⁹Homstad, 29-32.

⁹⁰Baker Brownell, The Human Community (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1950), 25.

order, our freedom, our democratic way of life depends on the small communities."⁹¹

Brownell placed the blame for the decline of the small communities partially on higher education. "The modern general college is partly a cause of the drift of educated youth toward the city and its customs."⁹² The colleges were killing small towns because the country boys and girls were "drained by the colleges into the urban districts where their family life and culture soon became extinct."⁹³

Brownell urged higher education to take a more active role in preserving small towns. "Liberal education in our Western culture is associated inextricably with the culture of small communities and with the democratic order that we have learned to association with small communities."⁹⁴

When Brownell heard about Melby's search for a director of the Montana Study, he saw this as an opportunity to field test his philosophy of small communities. He wrote to Melby,

If it is the kind of research that I think it is, I would be very much interested in undertaking leadership in it The kind of humanities program that might reach into and become a part of this regional culture, are fields that I

⁹¹Baker Brownell, "Project in Educational Reorientation," Religious Education (July-August, 1944): 2.

⁹²Brownell, 1950, 19.

⁹³Ibid., 20.

⁹⁴Ibid., 25.

would be glad to explore with the prospect of making a real contribution.⁹⁵

Brownell was appointed director of the research project. Two research assistants, Joseph Kinsey Howard, a Montana journalist, and Paul Meadows, a rural life sociologist, completed the project's staff.

Stevens and Melby meet with Brownell April 28, 1944 to iron out the problems Stevens saw in the proposal. The three discussed problems that faced Montana and how the humanities could help find ways to stabilize the family and the rural communities in Montana and the United States.

The Montana Study was a strange mix and practical application of two educational philosophies: progressivism of James, Dewey, and Lindeman and the liberalism of Meiklejohn. The progressive educational leaders believed strongly that a strong democratic society required strong community ties and citizens involved in community problem-solving. They saw science and technology producing a mass society that brought about isolation, fragmentation, and impersonal, professionally run communities and finally the collapse of democracy and the democratic process. Urbanism, industrialism, and specialism were throwing the democratic experiment off track.

The solution for this dilemma could be found in people in small communities. A person had significance only to the extent that he/she

⁹⁵Baker Brownell to Ernest Melby, 17 January 1944, Record Group 1.2, Record Series 200 United State, 200R Montana State University-Regional Studies, Box 381, Folder 3330.83, Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York.

was a member of a functioning group. Participation and involvement were integral parts of the process.

In a fact-finding process, the facts become the common property of all, used to help participants clarify their purposes and to identify functions needed to achieve them. The only true learning occurred as participants gained insights and understanding derived from facts and feelings combined. [The end result of this process was] intelligence applied to life, exercise of freedom and power, self-expression, creativeness in the conduct of life, overcoming dependence on experts, and making collective life responsive to individual needs.⁹⁶

The second major philosophical influence came from the liberal-education philosophy. Advocates of this philosophy included Adler, Hutchins, Maritain, and Meiklejohn. The purpose of a liberal education was to develop a rational person with an intellectual capacity to move from information and knowledge to wisdom.⁹⁷ Secondly, a liberal education was suppose to develop a moral person who pursued "prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude." Finally the liberal education developed the spiritual nature of the person and the aesthetic senses. "Appreciation of beauty in nature and in art led to the quest for the true, the good, and the holy."⁹⁸

Alexander Meiklejohn was the most influential of the liberal educators on the Montana Study. Meiklejohn believed in the creation of

⁹⁶Harold Stubblefield, Towards a History of Adult Education in America (London: Croom-Helm, 1988), 142-144.

⁹⁷Wisdom could be defined in two ways—practical which referred to the ability to apply information and knowledge and theoretical which is the search for truth about the human condition and the world. John Elias and Sharan Merriam, Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education (Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing, 1980), 23.

⁹⁸Ibid., 26.

an active and enlightened public mind and intelligence that would become "the thinking power of the democracy."⁹⁹ In turn, the enlightened citizenry would work to improve the social condition which would then do the same for democracy. The best method for such development was through group study. "The group process, provided a dynamic-action form for realizing democracy in social behavior, education by experience in the techniques of democratic thinking."¹⁰⁰

The final draft of the proposal called for the project to research ways of stabilizing communities by helping communities assess and develop their social, cultural and economic resources. The study was suppose to help community members develop activities so that people in the community might gain "a deeper knowledge and appreciation of their own culture and historical traditions."¹⁰¹

The proposal established three objectives for the Study:

1. To research ways whereby the true community in Montana and family could be stabilized.
2. To get the university off the campus and to bring the facilities of higher education directly to the people in their own communities and within their occupational situation.
3. To research ways to raise the appreciative and spiritual standards of living of able young people in their communities.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Stubblefield, 104.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 107. Howard and Brownell in their speeches and writings on the Montana Study often pointed to Meikeljohn as a source of inspiration as they worked through the Montana Study.

¹⁰¹Brownell, 1945, 2.

¹⁰²Ibid., 3.

Brownell and his two research assistants, Meadows and Howard, traveled throughout the United States visiting people in the field of community education, community sociology, and community development as well as other projects that seemed to fit within the parameters of the research study. They met with Hugh Masters, Education Director of the Kellogg Foundation, on methods of approaching the communities and on finding a point of leverage that differed from community to community. They also talked with Misner, Superintendent of the Louisiana School Project, about dealing with community factions and methods in handling those type of problems. Curtis McDougall gave them strategies for dealing with powerful people and corporations. William and Joel Hunter, sociologists with the United Charities, suggested methods of working with small communities.¹⁰³ Interviews on techniques in adult education included Howard McClusky, Ann Arbor; Ray Cowden, head of the Writers Workshop; and Virgil Herrick, Ralph Tyler, and Cyril Houle from the University of Chicago.¹⁰⁴

Time was spent with John Barton of the Wisconsin Folk School Project in Madison, Wisconsin. Barton gathered examples of various works of art in rural districts of Wisconsin such as paintings of John Stuart Curry. Barton also developed song books and a bibliography of the regional literature. At the University of Minnesota, Howard interviewed Watson Dickerman of Extension; A. R. Holst, Continuing

¹⁰³"Montana Study Day Book, 1944," pp.8-15, Montana Study Collection, Record Series 72, Box 18, Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, Montana.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 48.

Education Center; and Ralph Casey on a project Minnesota used to develop folk humanities.¹⁰⁵

The three researchers brought their ideas back to Montana, and working with Stevens, developed a plan for the Montana Study. The Study was divided into three parts.

The first part involved the field work and fact finding projects "to get general data on the cultural patterns of Montana and find ways to find help for communities."¹⁰⁶ The project intended to research means of stabilizing communities by helping communities assess and develop their own social, cultural, and economic resources. Through a community research process, the Study would develop activities so that people in the community might gain "a deeper knowledge and appreciation of their own culture and historical traditions."¹⁰⁷ Through the process, the participants would gather data about their community, discuss the cultural and historical traditions, and find ways they could improve their lives.¹⁰⁸

Community members studied their communities and becoming more aware of their assets in the Humanities and deficiencies with the idea of encouraging spontaneous interest in development of these idea lines within the communities themselves.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Baker Brownell, "Suggestions for Rockefeller Foundation Projects in Humanities in Montana," Record Group 1.2, Record Series 200 United State, 200R Montana State University-Regional Studies, Box 381, Folder 3330.83, Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York.

¹⁰⁷Brownell, 1945, 2.

¹⁰⁸Brownell, 1946, 34.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

The hope was that the study project would develop "learning methods and techniques for application to the state and nation."¹¹⁰ Information gathered from study groups was to be used to plan ways higher education and the humanities could directly bring education to the people within their own communities and occupational situation. Humanities provided "the most available practical means of educating the common man in self-realization, largeness of understanding, and the ability to meet contemporary needs."¹¹¹

The second part of the study focused on training teachers in "the new conception of Humanities, leading to folkschools fashioned after those in Denmark."¹¹² This training particularly emphasized family-centered or community-centered education in terms of action and services to the community.¹¹³

The third area covered was the organization of the data from the field work. The staff of the Montana Study assimilated the information into reports and appropriate materials for dissemination within and without the state.

Series I--Montana Study Groups

The Montana Study project started on July 1, 1944. The first act of the Montana Study was to create a guide for the community research

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid., 4.

¹¹²Ibid., 3.

¹¹³Ibid., 2.

groups. Brownell, Howard, and Meadows using gathered information developed the study guide. The researchers used the materials Burlingame and Merriam brought back from an Alberta adult education project as a model for the study guide.

The guide developed research questions revolving around the community's social, economic, and political past, present, and future. The study group process was piloted in Lonepine, a small community in the Little Bitterroot Valley. The guide was named Life in Montana as Seen from Lonepine, A Small Community. Each week the group explored a topic area. Volunteers from the groups took questions under a topic, researched the questions, and then brought the information back to the whole group for discussion and analysis.

The study guide set down rules for the group as follows:

We are here to discuss problems of our community, our state, and our nation with the view toward finding out how living in communities many become more interesting and secure. We will use three simple methods for accomplishing these goals: discussion, cooperative research, and objective thinking.¹¹⁴

The problem for the first week analyzed "the composition of the community as to nationality, history, occupation, religion, politics, education, and recreation."¹¹⁵ The second week of the study focused on the people in the community. "One of the most important elements affecting the stability of our community is human connections. The feeling of belonging to a group of people who know each other,

¹¹⁴Baker Brownell, Joseph Kinsey Howard, and Paul Meadows, Life in Montana as Seen from Lonepine: A Small Community (Missoula, Montana: The Montana Study, 1945), 6-7.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 6-12.

understand each other and are interested in each other, seems to be necessary part of human happiness and security."¹¹⁶ Research questions focused on how churches, schools, lodges, clubs, and recreation played a part in human companionship and how human connections could be expanded in enhancing the community's life.

The third week's topic focused on different ways in which the people in the community made a living and how people utilized their resources. The fourth week examined the relationship of the community to the state. The fifth looked at the cultural differences in the community, and the sixth topic examined the relationship of the community to the nation. Topic seven explored the future of the Montana, while during the eighth week, participants researched future possibilities for the community.

The ninth week explored how action could be used to stabilize the community. Research questions called for finding ways to pool resources in the community to help facilitate change, to find ways of gaining control over means of making a living in the community, to build a stronger education system, and to develop the cultural and artistic aspects in the community.¹¹⁷

The last topic called for evaluation of the study group process. The evaluation examined the ability of the group to carry on discussion without "undue emotion and prejudice, and for the sake of solving a

¹¹⁶Ibid., 21.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 97-105.

