

**TEST SHOWS MULTIRACIAL LABEL WOULD HAVE LITTLE EFFECT**

A Census Bureau study released on May 15 shows that adding a multiracial category on the next census would have a relatively minor impact on the labels Americans use to describe themselves. At issue are possible revisions to federal racial and ethnic categories, a topic that the Office of Management and Budget has been wrestling with for several years. OMB may release recommendations as early as this summer.

The 1996 Race and Ethnic Targeted Test, the third of three federal studies, found few whites or blacks would opt to describe themselves as multiracial if given the opportunity on a form. The study did find that the number of Americans who classify themselves as Asian, Alaskan Native, or American Indian would decrease under such a scenario. These groups have a higher rate of intermarriage.

To obtain a copy of the test results, call the Census Bureau at (301) 457-3030 or access the agency's web site at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

The question of revising federal racial and ethnicity categories has been the subject of two hearings recently held by the House Government Management, Information and Technology Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Stephen Horn (R-CA), a political scientist.

At the hearings, Horn who has not publicly stated a position, said the issue needs to be fully examined. OMB officials outlined their review process (slated for completion later this year), representatives of multi-racial groups have presented their arguments that the categories need to more accurately reflect society, and leaders of the Congressional Black Caucus and others civil rights groups have contended that a multi-racial category would make it more difficult to enforce existing civil rights laws.

**SOCIAL SCIENCE DATABASES FACE INCREASED SCRUTINY**

The National Science Foundation has spent more than \$300 million constructing the Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory for physicists and the Gemini Telescopes for astronomers. Are there any equivalents of NSF support for such large instruments in the social and behavioral sciences? No. Yet, as research on human beings grows ever more complex, the need for increasingly sophisticated instruments to measure brain images and to construct and support economic and other behavioral laboratories grows.

At the same time, much of the infrastructure of the social and behavioral sciences has been the development and maintenance of sophisticated data collections. In their February 1996 *SCIENCE* magazine article, Philip Smith and Barbara Boyle Torrey argue that "the development of major public-use data tapes of censuses and surveys in the United States revolutionized social science." They note that survey information has helped researchers measure the rates of return to human capital, educational progress, and the growth of the aged population expected in the 21st Century. For many years these data collection efforts have been supported by the federal government through funding for the Census, as well as major databases developed with support from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and other federal agencies.

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**INSIDE UPDATE...**

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- Science Office Sends Report to Congress
- New Cohort Joins Surveys of Labor Market Experiences
- Health Statistics Director Discusses Aging Research and Data
- Former COSSA Staff Member Joins OBSSR

## IMMIGRATION STUDY ASSESSES ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

A National Research Council study on the impact of immigration on the United States declared that the overall economic effect has been positive for immigrants and native-born Americans alike, but that some low-skilled, native workers do suffer a slight decrease in wages as they compete with immigrants for jobs. The study, requested by the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, also examined the demographic, fiscal and social effects of immigration.

The report, *The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration*, was presented at a public briefing on May 22. James P. Smith, Senior Economist at the RAND Corporation and chair of the panel that conducted the study, summarized its findings for the assembled group of congressional and agency officials and representatives of public interest groups.

The report noted that each year about 800,000 people immigrate legally to the United States. Another 200,000 to 300,000 enter the country illegally. Like generations before them, most immigrants disperse from the neighborhoods where they originally settle and assimilate themselves into the larger society. However, a majority of America's immigrants live in six states: California, New York,

New Jersey, Texas, Florida, and Illinois. In California, where many new immigrants continue to move in and require increased public services, this has created somewhat of a burden on state taxpayers, \$1,178 a year, according to the report. By contrast, in New Jersey, which has a more established immigrant population, the impact on state and local taxpayers is slight. At the same time, a majority of immigrants contribute to government revenue as working adults.

If immigration continues at its present levels, Smith noted, the U.S. population will grow to 387 million people by 2050 --124 million more than today. Immigration would account for two-thirds of this growth. By 2050, if immigration policy remains the same, the Hispanic portion of the population will grow to 85 million from its current 27 million and become 26 percent of the population. About 8 percent of the U.S. population in 2050 will be of Asian heritage. Yet, the boundaries between ethnic groups will become increasingly blurred through intermarriage. The population will also be distinctly older, although immigration will increase the number of children, continuing to impact school systems.

### Economic Impact Complex

The economic benefits to the nation from immigration occur in several ways, according to Smith. Immigrant labor allows cheaper production of goods and services and provides the workforce for some businesses, such as restaurants, that would not exist on the same scale without these workers. Most immigrants benefit economically by coming to the United States, since their wages, although generally low, are much higher than the typical wage from their country of origin. Despite the overall benefits to the economy, those native-born Americans with less than a high school education have lost about 5 percent in their wages during the past 15 years because of competition with immigrant workers. The panel concluded, however, that many factors, including savings and investment rates and the educational level of workers, may have had a greater impact on falling wages than immigration. Overall, the panel concludes, "in the massive and complex U.S. economy, immigration is unlikely to have a very large effect on relative earnings or gross domestic product per capita."

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), an advocacy organization for federal support for the social and behavioral sciences, was founded in 1981 and stands alone in Washington in representing the full range of social and behavioral sciences. *Update* is published 22 times per year. Individual subscriptions are available from COSSA for \$65; institutional subscriptions, \$130, overseas mail, \$130. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA, 1522 K Street, NW, Suite 836, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: (202) 842-3525, Fax: (202) 842-2788.

In examining the social dimensions of immigration, the report concludes that with the exception of Mexican Americans, immigrant groups do not concentrate geographically, especially after the first generation. The panel also reports that many immigrants already speak English when they arrive and virtually all second- and third-generation descendants have good English skills. The panel concludes that it is extremely difficult to determine the relationship of immigration and criminal activity despite perceptions of a strong association. Finally, increasing rates of intermarriage, particularly for children and grandchildren of Asian and Hispanic immigrants make current projections of the future ethnic proportions of the U.S. population uncertain.

For more information about the report, contact Molly Galvin at 202/334-2138 or visit the Webpage at [www.nas.edu](http://www.nas.edu). Prepublication copies of the report may be ordered at 202/334-3313 or 1-800-624-6242.

## **SCIENCE OFFICE SENDS REPORT TO CONGRESS**

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) recently sent its biennial report to Congress on science and technology. The report examines the Clinton administration's policies for maintaining U.S. leadership in this area and seeks to identify what it calls "key areas of opportunity" for the future.

A major section of the report is devoted to the administration's concern for the nation's children. To achieve the government's core responsibility in human capital development, the report calls for more sound research on early childhood education. It notes: "We now know that [children's] biological, cognitive, social, and emotional development, beginning at birth, is a major determinant of their ability to learn and flourish." The report also indicates that research on families and communities, and on healthy behaviors "represents a critical investment in human capital."

Research in this area, according to OSTP, should: focus on developmental processes beginning before birth and extending through adolescence; discuss the relationships among biological, cognitive,

social and emotional aspects of development; distinguish minority from majority populations; and address the influences of families, peers, schools, communities, media, and social institutions on development. Important research areas include: the influence of families and communities on development; health and behavior; children and environmental hazards; learning and intelligent systems; policy research on the effects of social policy changes on children; and longitudinal studies such as the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, funded by the National Center for Educational Statistics. In addition, other major areas of opportunity are mentoring in science and mathematics, improved pedagogy, educational technology, expanded access to higher education, child development and university-government partnerships.

In discussing scientific research, the report distinguishes cognition/neurobiology, space science, molecular biology, earth and ecological sciences, structure of matter, materials, and major scientific facilities as the important areas for further investment. Focusing on health research, OSTP states that investigations in this area must also address the links between disease and ecological change, population growth and human behavior.

In the environmental area, OSTP expresses its hope that the government's Global Change Research Program "will provide the foundation for mitigation and adaptive measures at regional, national and global levels." The report also touts the use of advanced modeling of the human impact on the environment for yielding "significant benefits." Yet, it also cites the influence of human activity on global systems as an example of a federal investment that does not seem to enjoy the bipartisan success afforded most other parts of the basic research portfolio. It also calls for more economic research on U.S. agriculture to support decision making at multiple levels "from what to plant on the family farm to negotiations of international trade agreements."

## **NEW COHORT JOINS SURVEYS OF LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCES**

The National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences (NLS), through a series of national sample surveys conducted at multiple points in time, has gathered information since 1966 on American men, women and children over significant segments of their life span. In February 1997 researchers began collecting data on a new cohort, the NLS Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). The new survey, with a sample of 10,000, will examine the school-to-work transitions of youths born during the years 1980 to 1984. This is the first new cohort since the NLSY79, which began in 1979 and now has completed data for five rounds of interviews through 1994.

For the new survey, the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago will conduct the interviews. The Center for Human Resources Research at the Ohio State University will document and release the data, and provide user support. The data from Round I of the NLSY97 are scheduled for public release in December 1997. Round II interviews will begin in the winter of 1998. The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides significant funding for the project and has responsibility for administration and oversight.

### **Focus on School-to-Work Transitions**

The goal of the NLSY97 is to collect extensive information on these youths' labor market behavior and educational experiences to provide researchers information to assess the impact of schooling and other environmental factors on career and family decisions. Data collected will include detailed information on the youths' background -- residence and educational histories, family income, and parental employment. The survey will also seek data on household structure, school characteristics, marriage, fertility, health, time use, and attitudes and expectations. An important focus will be the school-to-work transition period. To assess that stage in a youth's life, the survey will collect information on educational, training and employment experiences. In addition, the respondents will be asked about their experience with crime and delinquency, substance

use, and for those 14 and older, sexual activity. Over time, comparisons to the NLSY79 cohort will become available.

The NLSY97 also includes a parent questionnaire to gather extensive background information from one of the youths' resident parents or guardians. In addition, for those parents with children born in 1980 and 1981, questions about parental expectations for their offspring will be part of the survey. These will mirror items in the youth questionnaire concerning the expectations of the young person.

In addition, with the emphasis on school-to-work transitions, administrators of the schools attended by the youth respondents will participate in a survey. This instrument will seek to ascertain information about the characteristics of the school, the staff, the student body, and graduation policies. It will also ask about gang activity, vandalism, weapons possession, and the use of alcohol and drugs on school property. Further inquiries will seek information about the influence of certain groups, including the State Department of Education, school district, principal, teachers, parent association, on issues such as establishing the curriculum, teacher hiring, and school budgetary policy. The youth respondents will also be given the computer-adapted version of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery as well as the "Interest Finder," an inventory designed to measure occupational preferences.

For more information about the NLSY97 and other NLS data collections contact Michael W. Horrigan at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 202/606-7386 or [Horrigan\\_M@bls.gov](mailto:Horrigan_M@bls.gov).

## **SOCIAL SCIENCE INFRASTRUCTURE UNDER REVIEW**

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Now much of this infrastructure is under examination. The Census has become a prime target, with some in Congress calling for the elimination of the long form, which provides important information for social and behavioral science research. After 18 years, the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences has finally begun a new cohort (*see previous story*), but the continued study of earlier cohorts has been severely limited or, in some cases, totally eliminated. In addition, questions are now being asked about the usefulness and necessity of continuing federal support for three long-term data bases supported by the NSF. These surveys, the Panel Study on Income Dynamics (PSID), the National Election Studies (NES), and the General Social Survey (GSS), have come under increased scrutiny and recently the GSS has suffered reductions in its support.

Recipients of support from NSF for many years - the NES since the mid-1970s, the PSID and the GSS since the early 1980s -- the three have provided social scientists the equivalent of a radio telescope to view political, social, and economic behavior. Both the NES and PSID have data that predates their NSF support: NES goes back to the 1952 elections and PSID began in 1968. The GSS began collecting information on Americans' social attitudes and behaviors in 1982. The PSID and NES are both housed at the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan, and the GSS is situated at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. All three have oversight boards made up of distinguished social scientists from around the nation. They undergo NSF peer review each time they come up for renewal. Each of the surveys has undergone significant transformation over the years.

### **Large, Long-Term Projects Questioned**

Bill Butz, the new leader of the Social and Behavioral Research Division, has expressed the view that large, long-running projects must face

increasingly vigorous examination that focuses on whether these databases, which consume more than \$1 million a year of the political science, sociology, and economics program budgets, are still the highest priority projects in the field or are there other large projects worth supporting? Another area of inquiry is whether the institutions currently conducting the surveys are the best places to house this research or should other institutions be provided an opportunity to take them over? And third, should NSF continue to provide the bulk of the funds for these surveys, given the constraints on funding and the need to find dollars for new scientific opportunities? The new Assistant Director for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences, Bennett Bertenthal, has also raised similar questions about these three projects.

In addition, the infrastructure could include a place for social and behavioral scientists to conduct individual research and also interact with a cohort of peers from many disciplines. For many years, with NSF support, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University has served this purpose. The Center has also come under increased scrutiny recently. It has been accused of fostering elitism and using an old-boy network to select its fellows. It too has had its federal support from NSF reduced.

### **Commission to Conduct Study**

All of this has led the National Research Council's Commission on Behavioral and Social Science and Education (CBASSE) to appoint a subcommittee to study the issue of infrastructure in the social and behavioral sciences. The Commission hopes to provide a report within a year focusing on criteria for determining infrastructure needs in these sciences. They hope to sponsor a public meeting in the Fall to explore this topic with members of the scientific community.

The question of continuing support for "old" projects always creates dilemmas. Should you discard what people feel are important data collections with historical significance? Are there newer more significant data providing answers to more important questions in the social and behavioral sciences that need collecting and deserve federal support? Are dollars so squeezed that these kinds of

choices are imperative? These are questions that need further exploration -- simply cutting existing funding before there are answers seems premature.

## **HEALTH STATISTICS DIRECTOR DISCUSSES AGING RESEARCH AND DATA**

Edward Sondik, Director of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), recently appeared before the advisory council to the National Institute on Aging (NIA). He said that the goal of NCHS is to promote the use of its "data systems to address important research and policy issues in aging and health and to stimulate more creative cross-survey research activities within the research community."

The NCHS, a component of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), collects data on the nation's births, deaths, health status, lifestyle and exposure to unhealthy influences, the onset and diagnosis of illness and disability among other things. The Center, said Sondik, has a \$90 million budget, but obtains 25 percent of that budget from other agencies, including the NIA, the rest of the National Institutes of Health, and the CDC through the office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. Sondik said the NCHS' interests include:

- ◆ **Health Status** - physical and mental health status, ability and disability, biological and physiological attributes, and genetic makeup and risk factors.
- ◆ **Health Systems** - supply and distribution of health care resources, organization of providers, financing arrangements (health insurance coverage, risk relationships, etc.) and population-based public health.
- ◆ **Treatment And Care** - prevention services, delivery of public health and patient care services, and encounters with practitioners.
- ◆ **People, Environment, Behaviors** - personal health habits, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, socioeconomic determinants of health, environmental determinants of health, social norms and influences, and access to health care.

NCHS relies on four techniques to obtain this information, said Sondik. They are the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), the National Health Care Survey (NCHS), and Vital Statistics.

### **Longitudinal Study Highlighted**

Sondik also highlighted the Longitudinal Study of Aging (LSOA) "designed to measure changes in health status, functioning, and health care utilization in two cohorts of older Americans as they age." The LSOA cohort comparisons, said Sondik, "identify changes in health status between the 1980s & 1990s, provide explanations for the changes, and evaluate their consequences." He also related that the sample of the elderly population was surveyed in 1984 as part of the Supplement on Aging (SOA) to profile the health status, functional abilities, family and community support, and the use of health services by older Americans. This sample was recontacted through the LSOA in 1986, 1988, and 1990 "to measure change and identify those social, health, and demographic characteristics that may impact the need and use of health services." A second supplemental (SOAII) is being conducted similar to the first, said Sondik.

Sondik also informed the Council about the NCHS database on aging and health. It "is an electronic archive of key indicators of health of the elderly," said Sondik. The database, updated annually, is available on the NCHS and NIA web sites. ([www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov) and [www.cdc.gov/nchswww/ncshome.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchswww/ncshome.htm)) It includes data on population distribution and life expectancy, underlying and multiple cause of death, morbidity rates, risk factors and health behaviors, functional limitations and disability, hospital discharge, ambulatory care and information regarding nursing and home hospices.

The Center co-chairs the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics "which encourages communication and cooperation among 30 Federal agencies that produce and analyze data on aging." According to Sondik, the Forum has fostered development of data on aging, improved data quality and methodology, provided mechanisms for exchange

and collaboration, and produced key policy and data reports.

### COSSA Invited to Present

COSSA Executive Director Howard J. Silver was invited to address the NIA Advisory Council as part of the Institute's efforts to highlight the activities of its constituency organizations. Other groups invited were the American Heart Association, the American Society of Immunologists, and the American Sleep Disorders Association.

Silver informed the Council of COSSA's annual efforts on behalf of the Institute, including testifying and/or submitting testimony to the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittees, making congressional visits to promote NIA's research, and leading groups such as the Coalition for the Advancement of Health Through Behavioral and Social Science Research.

Silver informed Council members that COSSA monitors more than 18 advisory council meetings at the NIH on an annual basis, including the three NIA Advisory Council meetings and reports on them in the *COSSA Washington Update*. Silver also noted that COSSA helped ensure representation of social and behavioral scientists on NIH advisory councils.

An integral part of COSSA's legislative strategy, Silver continued, has been to promote social and behavioral science research results as important inputs to the policy-making process through congressional breakfast seminars. One recent event, *Aging Well: Health, Wealth and Retirement*, outlined the demographic, economical and social changes in the age structure of the population of the U.S. and examined policy challenges these changes would create. Copies of the proceedings of the breakfast were given to Council members.

### FORMER COSSA STAFF MEMBER JOINS OBSSR

Former COSSA Associate Director for Government Affairs Susan Persons has joined the staff of the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) at the National Institutes of Health. Prior to joining the OBSSR, she served as the Director of Government Relations at the American Psychological Society. Persons, a former legislative assistant to former Rep. Bill Green (R-NY), holds a Masters in Public Policy with a concentration in Women's Studies from George Washington University and was a Congressional Fellow for the Women's Research and Education Institute.

Congress, in recognition of the importance of behavioral and social factors in health, established the OBSSR to coordinate these areas of research across the NIH. Persons' responsibilities will include helping the public to better understand behavioral and social factors in health. Since officially opening in July of 1995, the OBSSR has undertaken several initiatives to fulfill its mandate including increasing the scope and support of the behavioral and social sciences across the NIH and to achieve its "three principal goals." These goals include: "increasing support for the behavioral and social sciences at NIH; integrating the behavioral and social sciences more fully with the biological science; and communicating behavioral and social science findings to the scientific community and the public."

Persons joins another former COSSA staffer, Judy Auerbach, at NIH. Auerbach is the Behavioral and Social Science Coordinating Chair in the Office of AIDS Research at NIH.

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