
CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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GAO TO INVESTIGATE RESEARCH PROGRAM AT OHDS

In the wake of newspaper stories charging that the Office of Human Development Services (OHDS) was ignoring the recommendations of peer reviewers, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) has been asked to investigate the discretionary grants program at OHDS. Rep. Ike Andrews (D-NC), Chairman of the Education and Labor Subcommittee on Human Resources, requested the GAO study.

The Subcommittee has legislative jurisdiction over four major social programs administered by OHDS -- the Head Start program, the Administration on Aging, the Administration on Native Americans, and the Runaway Youth programs. The OHDS research budget of close to \$30 million funds studies in these as well as in several other federal social programs administered by OHDS.

Rep. Andrews and the Subcommittee on Human Resources will be holding hearings on OHDS programs early next spring and will then consider legislation to reauthorize the OHDS programs under its jurisdiction. The Subcommittee will hear testimony from the GAO investigators during the hearings.

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LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE RATES (AND SURVEY RESEARCH)

The House Energy and Commerce Committee last week approved legislation that would repeal the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulation permitting telephone companies to charge access fees for long-distance telephone service. The regulation, which is currently scheduled to go into effect on April 3, if it is not withdrawn, could cost private consumers as much as \$10-\$12 per month by 1990. More important to researchers, the cost of long-distance access would undoubtedly lead many rural, poor, or elderly consumers to discontinue long-distance service and would seriously bias the representativeness of telephone surveys. In addition, increases in the costs of alternative long-distance companies would raise the cost of conducting surveys.

The most recent entrant into the controversy is the Reagan administration. Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige wrote to the FCC this week requesting that the Commission lower the long distance rates of non-AT&T long-distance carriers. With this opposition from the administration and the action of the Energy and Commerce Committee, it is possible that the proposed regulation will be withdrawn. Interested social scientists are urged to contact their Representatives to ask them to support the legislation of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. For additional information on this issue, see Attachment 1.

POSSIBLE REORGANIZATION OF NIJ, BJS STILL PENDING

Several controversial proposals to alter the structure of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) are still awaiting action by the Senate. The proposed changes within the Senate version of the Justice Assistance Act (S. 53) would eliminate the NIJ Advisory Board and subordinate the agency within the Department of Justice. The criminal justice research community fears that the quality of criminal justice research and its administration will suffer if these changes are implemented. A similar bill in the House (H.R. 2175) does not contain these proposals.

Delay in Senate consideration of S. 53 is due to the desire of the Senate leadership to pass a controversial crime control package, a portion of whose provisions are essentially identical to the whole of S. 53. Should the Justice Assistance Act be passed in the Senate, however, a House-Senate Conference Committee will be convened. At that time, COSSA will urge members of the Conference Committee to adopt the provisions of the House bill for NIJ and BJS.

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SOCIAL SCIENCE -- WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The recent excision of the word "social" from the title of a research program at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) prompts questions about whether the term "social science" is politically too vulnerable for use in federal agencies. It also raises the question of whether social scientists should accede in attempts, however well intentioned, to disguise social science or in other ways make it less visible by changing the names of programs.

The most recent case concerns the change in the name of a branch in the Center for Population Research at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) from Social and Behavioral Sciences Branch to the Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch. A similar change was ordered in the National Institute on Aging (NIA) two years ago, when the name of what had been the Social and Economic Sciences Program was changed to the Behavioral Science Program. The recent rechristening of the British Social Science Research Council to the Social and Economic Research Council is a third case in point. In this case, however, the word eliminated was "science," not "social."

In all cases, the change of name was purely cosmetic, that is, no alteration was made in research programs after the new name was adopted.

One potential problem that may result from such facile name changing is that the term "behavioral sciences" will eventually become as offensive as social science. At such a time, should still a third name be adopted? More important than surface name changing is a focus on strengthening the content of research programs and a commitment by social scientists to inform and educate federal officials and the general public about the nature, validity, and importance of research in the social sciences.

It is worth noting to those who use "behavioral science" as a less offensive form of "social science" rather than as a term describing specific research disciplines that "behavioral science" did not provide much protection in early 1981. When the newly ascendent Reagan administration decided to cut research budgets, behavioral science programs in the Division of Behavioral and Neural Sciences at the National Science Foundation (NSF) were cut by almost the same proportion as budgets in the NSF Social and Economic Science Division.

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COSSA WELCOMES NEW NIA DIRECTOR

Congressional staff, social and behavioral scientists, and NIH officials and staff attended a COSSA reception on October 24 to honor Dr. T. Franklin Williams, the new Director of the National Institute on Aging (NIA). The reception was also intended to introduce Dr. Williams, who comes to NIA from the Center on Aging, University of Rochester Medical Center, to social and behavioral scientists in the Washington area. In July, Dr. Williams became head of NIA, which has a congressional mandate for the "conduct and support of biomedical, social and behavioral research and training...". At present, roughly 80% of the agency's research budget is spent on research in the biomedical sciences.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT ENDORSES SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The British Social Science Research Council (SSRC), now formally called the Social and Economic Research Council but still referred to informally as the SSRC, has been given an unexpected boost by the Thatcher government in a letter to the new SSRC Chairman from Sir Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for Education. In the letter, Sir Keith said that there will be no further inquiries into the need for social science research and that the SSRC will be treated like the other science research councils after 1985. He further wrote that the social science disciplines are "unquestionably important, inherently difficult and properly find a place in higher education, research and scholarship."

Sir Douglas Hague, the new SSRC Chairman, is an economist who has served as an advisor to the Conservative Party for 17 years. His personal contacts with Margaret Thatcher and other members of her government suggest that he will be able to protect the SSRC from further political problems. For example, he requested the recent letter from Sir Keith Joseph in order to restore the confidence of social scientists in the future viability of the SSRC.

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COSSA HOLDS SEMINAR ON COMPUTERS IN EDUCATION

The U.S. educational system will have to use computers more effectively if students are to compete successfully in the labor markets of the future, according to Marc Tucker, Director of the Project on Information Technology and Education. Tucker spoke at a recent COSSA Congressional Breakfast Seminar attended by fifty congressional staff.

Tucker noted that schools in the U.S. were designed to prepare students for a "smokestack" economy that no longer exists, while today's labor market requires that workers be more creative and flexible in order to increase the value of the specialized, high-quality goods and services which the U.S. must produce to remain economically competitive. Current uses of computers for drill and to teach computer programming, he contended, make little sense because they do not prepare students to meet the changing needs of the labor market. He noted that only a very few of those pupils learning computer programming will become programmers since the demand for programmers is expected to drop precipitously. And, although computers help improve students' basic skills, using older students to tutor younger ones has been shown to be more effective and less costly.

"The computer," said Tucker, "is much more like a pencil than it is like a book; but it is an intelligent pencil. And that means essentially that it is an extension of the mind. It is a tool of immense power." Seen as a tool, computers should be used with existing word processing and database software to teach writing skills and to give both students and teachers analytic experience solving real problems with real data, "in everything from history to shop, to biology, to physics, to a business course."

Co-sponsoring the seminar were the Special Interest Group on Computer Uses in Education of the Association for Computing Machinery and the House Science and Technology Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight. Representative Albert Gore (D-TN), Chairman of the Subcommittee, also addressed the group. Transcripts of Mr. Tucker's remarks may be obtained by contacting Eileen Chotiner, COSSA, 1755 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC, 20036.

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SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency rather than COSSA for more information.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
Center for Population Research: Demographic and Behavioral
Sciences Branch

The Center for Population Research represents the federal government's central effort in population research, supporting research on reproductive processes influencing fertility, research on the reproductive motivation of individuals, and the causes and consequences of population change.

Purpose of Program: The Demographic and Behavioral Science Branch supports studies of "the social, psychological, economic and environmental factors governing population growth, and the impact of population changes on individuals, families and society."

FY 1983 Budget: Approximately \$15 million was available for FY 1983. The FY 1984 budget is expected to increase by about \$1 million.

Funding Mechanisms: Primarily grants, some contracts.

Disciplines Support: Mostly sociologist demographers, sociologists, psychologists, economists. Some anthropologists, political scientists, and bio statisticians. The Branch is interested in receiving proposals from researcher across the full range of the social and behavioral sciences.

Review Process: Peer panel review.

Restrictions on Awards: Longest possible project period is 5 years.

Success Ratio: Of all proposals received by the Branch, around 18% are funded.

Contact: Dr. Wendy Baldwin, Chief
Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch
Center for Population Research
National Institute of Child Health & Human Development
7910 Woodmont Avenue, Landow Building, Room 7C25
Bethesda, MD 20814
301/496-1174

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Suggestions for Telephoning a Member of Congress

There is no need to feel intimidated about calling a Washington congressional office. Most are quite open and responsive to calls from constituents. The following guidelines offer suggestions for contacting your Senator or Representative by telephone:

- 1) Call 202/224-3121 and ask to be connected to your Representative's or Senator's office.
- 2) Once connected, ask to speak with the Congressman's (or Senator's) staff person who handles the specific issue in which you are interested.
- 3) If for some reason no one has been assigned to this issue, ask to speak with the Administrative Assistant.
- 4) Once connected to the right person, identify yourself first as a constituent, then as a professional. Try to say something positive about the Member or Senator before asking for his or her support on a specific issue.
- 5) Follow up your phone call with a short note to the staff member you spoke with, emphasizing both your original point and your appreciation of his or her attention to this issue.

October 26, 1983

RESEARCH NOTES

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Research may suffer if individuals and businesses—which include colleges and universities—have to pay an “access fee” to connect their telephones to long-distance lines, according to the executive director of the Consortium of Social Science Associations.

Beginning April 3, 1984, the Federal Communications Commission wants to impose monthly access fees of \$2 for each residential line and \$6 for each business line. The fees would rise until 1990 to a level not yet determined.

They would be imposed whether or not people at a residence or business made any long-distance calls in a given month, and would be paid to one of the seven local telephone companies that will be created as a result of the restructuring of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

If a residential access fee is imposed, scholars conducting telephone surveys, for example, could no longer reach people who are unable or unwilling to pay it, said Roberta Balstad Miller, of the social-science consortium. As a result, she said, significant groups—the elderly and the unemployed among them—might not be represented in such surveys.

At the same time, she said, the business fee would increase the cost of telephone surveys and, consequently, scholars might conduct fewer of them.

Ms. Miller said both developments would be especially detrimental to “longitudinal” surveys, which involve contacting the same people every year for a set period.

Bills now being considered in the House and the Senate would eliminate or delay the residential fee, but not the business fee.

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