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CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

# COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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Volume IV, Number 10  
May 17, 1985

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## TESTIMONY URGES MORE RESEARCH ON HEALTH AND BEHAVIOR

On May 9, Dr. Robert S. Daniels, Dean of the College of Medicine of the University of Cincinnati, presented testimony, developed in conjunction with COSSA, calling for increased visibility for the Health and Behavior initiative at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA).

Testifying before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, chaired by Rep. William Natcher (D-KY), Dr. Daniels asked the Congress to "insist that the Public Health Service (PHS) accelerate and make more visible its research and training efforts in health and behavior." He suggested a "cross-agency mechanism must be created and publicized to attract the best investigators and the best proposals..." and to foster "the interdisciplinary expertise and cooperation needed to capitalize on the emerging opportunities" in this area. In previous years both the House and Senate appropriations subcommittees have included language in their reports urging the PHS to set aside sufficient sums to reinstate the initiative on health and behavior.

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COSSA Washington Update is published 20-24 times per year, normally biweekly, by the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), 1200 Seventeenth Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202/887-6166). Individual subscriptions are available from COSSA for \$25.00; institutional subscriptions, \$90.00; overseas airmail, \$40.00. ISSN 0749-4394 COSSA Members, Affiliates, and Contributors are listed on the back.

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In a related development, NIH Director James Wyngaarden has responded to questions proposed by COSSA and submitted to the Director by Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), a member of the appropriations subcommittee. Wyngaarden's response reiterated points made in an earlier letter to Rep. Hoyer (see Update, March 22, 1985). The Director claimed that NIH was already spending \$137 million (of a \$5.1 billion budget) on research relating behavior and lifestyle to health. Furthermore, he noted that the NIH Working Group in Health and Behavior was active in examining research issues in this area. COSSA is concerned that these efforts are simply not enough in an area where there is growing evidence on increasing linkages that need to be investigated.

#### SENATE BUDGET VOTE INCREASES NIH AND ADAMHA GRANTS

In the early morning hours of Friday, May 10, the Senate, by a vote of 50-49, passed a Budget Resolution that included a compromise on the issue of the number of grants at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA). (For background see Update, April 19, 1985). Senator Lowell Weicker (R-CT) convinced the White House to support a grant level of 6000 for NIH and 540 for ADAMHA in FY 1985 and 1986. The White House-Republican leadership package had targeted NIH for 5500 grants and ADAMHA for 500 grants. Although the grant levels are below the 1985 appropriated numbers, the compromise seems to have satisfied Sen. Weicker, the most vociferous critic of the administration's plan to reduce funding for research at NIH and ADAMHA. The House is working on its version of the Budget Resolution this week.

#### OJJDP ISSUES PROPOSED PEER REVIEW REGULATIONS; REISMAN REDUX

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has issued proposed regulations to implement the competition and peer review requirements of its reauthorization statute. Congress enacted these requirements after hearings last year revealed that most of the research and demonstration awards made by OJJDP had been issued without competition and/or peer review. These included a number that have generated negative publicity for the agency (see below).

The proposed regulations do not offer much information as to how OJJDP will conduct its peer review process. They note that a "Peer Review Manual" is being developed that will discuss those procedures. The Congress insisted that OJJDP consult with the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) in devising these rules and procedures. A source at NSF stated that the only consultation that occurred was the mailing of the proposed regulations, which were received by NSF a few days after they appeared in the Federal Register. Alfred Regnery, Administrator of OJJDP, implied at Senate hearings on May 7 that the "Peer Review Manual" was in the hands of NSF for review, a claim the NSF source denied. However, it

now appears that OJJDP and NSF will begin communication soon. Comments on the proposed rules are due at OJJDP by May 29, 1985.

At the same hearings, called by Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA), Chairman of the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee, Dr. Judith Reisman's study of the relationship between sex magazines and child sexual abuse, awarded \$734,000 by OJJDP, was intensely scrutinized by Sen. Specter and Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH). Dr. Reisman's study had undergone a review by OJJDP since August, when strong criticism was levelled at it in previous Subcommittee hearings, and in light of negative publicity in the media. The study has now been changed so that it will only attempt to conduct a content analysis of cartoons, pictures, and articles that portray children, in every issue of Playboy, Penthouse, and Hustler magazines ever published. Previously, Dr. Reisman had planned to use 'experts' to assess the damage of pornography on children. Both Senators were astonished that the new scaled-down study, which they described as a "counting," would cost over \$700,000 and would still not answer the key question of the causal linkage between "pornography and child sexual abuse." Both advised Administrator Regnery to reconsider the decision to continue the award.

#### ASPE: ASPIRING OR EXPIRING?

In recent congressional testimony, F. Thomas Juster, professor of economics at the University of Michigan and director of its Institute for Social Research, called attention to steeply declining funding for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Juster testified on behalf of COSSA before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education, chaired by Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-CT).

ASPE, which sponsors policy research, is the only research agency within HHS with the authority and flexible mandate to examine issues of national policy significance in health, health care financing, income security, and social services in a long-range or far-reaching fashion. But ASPE's policy research budget has been reduced from \$24.0 million in FY 1980 to a proposed \$6.0 million for FY 1986, a drop of 75 percent.

Juster noted the importance of a centralized research office in HHS: "...while different administrations will have different preferences about how much research and information they want, all administrations need a certain amount, and all administrations ought to provide for the future knowledge and informational needs of administrations to come...DHHS is responsible for something like \$375 billion of public expenditure...a \$6 million budget request seems rather modest, to put it mildly."

As an example of a research area where ASPE's resources are clearly insufficient, Juster pointed to a single national panel study investigating the savings behavior of U.S. households, an obviously crucial element in the analysis of retirement policy. To continue that one study, which provides only a piece of information in a complex of inter-related decisions by

individuals, employers, and government -- "will cost about twice as much as next year's total ASPE budget in the retirement policy area."

Another, independent illustration of the problem was provided by a Request for Proposals (RFP) from ASPE's Income Security Policy program that appeared in the Federal Register, April 30, 1985. The RFP states the following: "How do characteristics of older workers' jobs affect their decisions to retire, given the financial incentives they face, their health status, and other relevant variables?" As befits this complex empirical question, the RFP is clear and sophisticated in its explanation of what is wanted from the research community. The successful study or studies must take into account specific characteristics of the workplace, financial considerations, health status, demographic factors, and other aspects -- all in one design. The request makes it clear that an expensive, long-term panel study -- e.g., following a national, representatively drawn sample before, at, and after retirement -- is currently out of the question. Yet secondary analysis studies are unlikely to succeed, since existing "data sets tend to lack either detailed information on job characteristics or the financial and other attributes of the respondents." One solution might be to focus on one industry or firm -- but such a study must "allow for generalizability to large segments of the national population."

ASPE is an important, well-run agency with a problem; it knows what it needs, but can't afford it. The total grant amount in the project is \$150,000, but it "is expected that most awards will be for single projects of less than \$75,000." A leading expert in the research community told Update, "You'd need ten years and \$1 million to get good data."

As the RFP points out, "potential users of the research include policy makers at Federal, State, and local levels of government, employers, unions, financial institutions, investors, and providers of health insurance, pensions, and other fringe benefits." Exactly.

When questioned by COSSA, officials of ASPE admitted that the best they hoped for was a provocative 'first cut': a study that would demonstrate what research could go after if the proper level of funding were available. ASPE officials also reported that they hope funding for such studies could come from industry, labor, or some other non-government sector.

#### PREWITT RESIGNS SSRC PRESIDENCY

Kenneth Prewitt, President of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York, since 1979, has announced his resignation from the presidency, effective in the early fall of 1985. He will become Vice-President for program at The Rockefeller Foundation. A Presidential Search Committee is now being formed. It is hoped that a new president will assume office no later than January 1, 1986.

FEDERAL RESEARCH SUPPORT: INSIDE NICHD

In the April 19 issue of Update we began a series of in-depth profiles of certain federal programs of particular significance for the social and behavioral sciences. The following article is the last of a three-part series focusing on the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). It examines the Center for Research for Mothers and Children, one of two extramural research divisions of NICHD.

Center for Research for Mothers and Children

The Center for Research for Mothers and Children (CRMC) is the primary extramural program of NICHD supporting research and research training on maternal and child health and development. Reorganized in 1984, five branches now constitute the CRMC research program: Human Learning and Behavior; Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities; Endocrinology, Nutrition and Growth; Pregnancy and Perinatology; and Genetics and Teratology. The first three branches support research on a variety of topics in the social and behavioral sciences; the latter two are largely biomedical in nature.

The Human Learning and Behavior Branch (HLB) has as its primary mission the development and support of research that maximizes child development. The HLB research portfolio in the aggregate is designed to determine how the interaction of biological, psychological, and socio-environmental factors result in normative development. Processes and behaviors from the prenatal period to the beginning of adulthood are investigated across a wide diversity of research. The core of the HLB Branch will continue to be descriptive and experimental studies in developmental psychology. Special consideration will be given to research on children born at biological risk for a variety of behavioral disabilities and to investigations of accidental injuries and risk-taking behavior.

The Human Learning and Behavior Branch is divided into five major elements: 1) Behavioral pediatrics; 2) Developmental behavioral biology; 3) Learning and perception; 4) Communication; and 5) Social and affective development.

A limited number of Requests for Applications (RFAs) are issued by the HLB Branch. An RFA just issued solicits proposals for the development of definitional tools for diagnosing dyslexia (closing date is September 15).

Contact: Dr. Norman Krasnegor, Chief, Human Learning and Behavior Branch, 7C18 Landow Building, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20205; 301/496-6591.

The Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Branch (MRDD) supports research and research training related to the biological, behavioral, and social processes that contribute to

or influence the development of retarding disorders. MRDD Branch research also contributes to the understanding of other developmental disabilities, including autism, epilepsy, and cerebral palsy.

More than half of the mental retardation research funded by the MRDD Branch is conducted at 12 federally supported Mental Retardation Research Centers (MRRCs) across the country. These Centers provide facilities for multidisciplinary and collaborative research between the biomedical, behavioral, and social sciences in laboratory and field settings.

About 40% of the MRDD Branch budget supports social and behavioral science research. Research in these fields focuses on three areas: individual processes, family processes, and behavior in educational and residential settings.

In general, the MRDD Branch staff is interested in funding any research concerned with the prevention and amelioration of mental retardation and developmental disabilities. Although MRDD research has traditionally been dominated by cognitive psychology, the Branch would like to extend its support to include other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and political science. The Branch does not intend to issue any requests for applications in FY 1985, preferring instead to maintain close communication with the research community to stimulate proposals in areas of particular interest.

Contact: Dr. Theodore Tjossem, Chief, Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Branch, 7C16 Landow Building, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20205; 301/496-1383.

The Endocrinology, Nutrition, and Growth Branch (ENG) supports research and training on developmental aspects of nutrition, endocrinology, and physical growth. A small proportion (less than 10%) of the Branch's \$22 million budget supports research on the behavioral and social aspects of nutrition. Research in this area focuses on cultural and behavioral determinants of nutritional individuality and studies of eating habits, taste, olfaction, and food avoidances. Currently of particular interest to the ENG Branch are studies of social-environmental factors affecting nutrition, breast-feeding, formation of food habits, sociocultural changes as they affect nutritional status, and behavioral aspects of obesity. Also emphasized are anthropological and epidemiological studies of individuals' interaction with their nutritional environment.

A future priority for the ENG Branch will be the behavioral, neurological, and physiological development of low birth weight babies. In 1984 NICHD announced a new Low Birth Weight Prevention Research Initiative, and low birth weight babies have been a continuing focus of congressional concern.

Contact: Dr. Merrill S. Read, Chief, Endocrinology, Nutrition, and Growth Branch, 7C09 Landow Building, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20205; 301/496-5593.

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 Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke

The National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke (NINCDS) is one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The mission of the NINCDS extramural research program is to identify, stimulate, and support research and research training on the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disorders of the nervous system. Although most NINCDS research is biomedical in nature, there are behavioral science components of many areas of inquiry. Areas of research interest include: speech, language, and cognitive disorders; speech and language processes; pain control; and disorders of taste, smell, and touch. NINCDS extramural research is divided into five programs: 1) Communicative Disorders, 2) Convulsive, Developmental, and Neuromuscular Disorders, 3) Demyelinating, Atrophic, and Dementing Disorders, 4) Fundamental Neurosciences, and 5) Stroke and Trauma. Most behavioral science and linguistic research is located in the Communicative Disorders Program. As with other NIH programs, support is provided through research project and program-project grants and by the New Investigator Research Award program. Research training is provided by institutional and individual National Research Service Awards, Research Career Development Awards, and Clinical Investigator Awards.

FY 1985 Budget: \$326.2 million for extramural grants and contracts

Funding Mechanisms: Grants, contracts, fellowships

Review Process: Peer review (It takes approximately 10 months for applications to complete the review process.)

Fields Supported: Communicative disorders (multidisciplinary), physiological psychology, speech perception, speech pathology, language and linguistics

Success Ratio: About 30% of approved grant applications receive funding

Deadlines: October 1, February 1, and June 1 of each fiscal year

Contact: Dr. John D. Dalton, Director  
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NINCDS/NIH  
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301/496-9248

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