
CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH AT NIH CHALLENGED

In the last few months, the scope and appropriateness of behavioral research being conducted at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in particular at the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), have come under increasing scrutiny. COSSA has been following this development with growing dismay. It is now apparent that a threat to appropriations for or the continued conduct of this research could be forthcoming.

The public attack has come from syndicated columnist Donald Lambro, author of books recommending ways to eliminate waste in government (among his suggestions -- abolishing the National Science Foundation). Lambro derides 'wasteful' spending on behavioral research, when there are enormous biomedical research problems to spend money on. On Capitol Hill, the old bane of social science research, Senator William Proxmire (D-WI), has asked NIA and NICHD for grant lists, from which those with 'inappropriate' titles have been singled out for closer scrutiny. Lambro has also quoted Sen. Proxmire to buttress his own contentions. A member of the Senator's staff has told COSSA that although Proxmire believes that these might be useful research projects, he questions whether they belong in NIH, which is supposed to be concerned with health research.

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Risa I. Palm, President

David Jenness, Executive Director

Within NIH itself there has also been increasing questioning in some quarters of the role of behavioral research at the Institutes. Pressure from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) in the White House has led NIH Director James Wyngaarden to increase his skepticism about this research. NIH claims it is spending \$134 million in FY 1985 for social and behavioral research, \$20 million in NIA and \$40 million at NICHD. The total budget of NIH is \$5.1 billion; the social and behavioral research share thus amounts to 2.6%.

All this scrutiny reflects the kind of activity that occurs in a tight budget era. As resources become scarcer, many people look around for easy ways to cut budgets. Yet there is much support for this research at NIH among some institute directors, senior program staff, and advisory councils. Moreover, the law establishing NIA specifically notes that its general purpose includes the conduct and support of "... social and behavioral research." At NICHD, demographic and immigration studies were specifically mandated by Congress when the Center for Population Research was established. In these specific cases, NICHD is the only government agency carrying out research, since neither the Census Bureau nor the Immigration and Naturalization Service conducts research per se.

In addition, two government reports, the Surgeon General's Healthy People and the Institute of Medicine's Health and Behavior, and a host of non-government-generated evidence, have suggested linkages with and the need for research into the social and behavioral aspects of the treatment and prevention of illness. In this area Senator Proxmire supports behavioral studies of smoking, exercise, diet, etc., as long as they relate to biomedical factors and conditions.

The immediate consequences of these challenges by Lambro and Proxmire are unclear. In Congress, there is in some places strong support for the notion that 'scientists, not politicians, should decide what science does.' Yet a Senate staff person also told COSSA that behavioral research will always be under attack, because it makes itself such an easy target.

To COSSA, the malaise among NIH officials and skepticism among high federal science managers is more serious. In the NIH context, social and behavioral science is in multiple jeopardy. Behavioral research, which seems so often to have 'funny titles' or to 'verify the obvious,' is an easy target, while the 'funny titles' of biologists and chemists are less easy to spot, and the champions of behavioral research are perceived as less powerful than the biomedical research community. Top NIH officials are being consistent in their belief that all basic research there should ultimately relate to health and illness; for example, they are resisting administration efforts to force NIH to move deeply into support of biotechnology, with its

commercial and other non-health aspects. NIH officials also believe that due to the decline in funding of behavioral research at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), proposals that are only marginally related to health are being directed to the NIH agencies instead.

In the next few months COSSA, working with other groups in the aging, child and human development, and behavioral research community, will answer this challenge. In particular, we ask those in the community of scientists, practitioners, and social policy analysts to bring to our attention evidence of the impact of behavioral research on health.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Although the Congress has not resolved the differences between the House and the Senate on the budget resolution to reduce the deficit, legislators are moving ahead on various fronts as they scramble to accomplish something before they recess for five weeks on August 2.

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, chaired by Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT), on July 17 reported an authorization bill for the National Science Foundation (NSF) that would freeze overall spending at the FY 1985 level. Similar action was taken by the House of Representatives earlier in the year. For the Directorate of Biological, Behavioral and Social Sciences the Committee provided an increase of \$9 million over the FY 1985 level. It is still anticipated that the dispute about which Senate committee has jurisdiction over NSF will preclude an NSF authorization bill emerging from the Congress this year.

The Senate passed its version (S. 1309) of the NIH reauthorization bill on July 19. A conference committee will be necessary to resolve the differences with the House bill (H.R. 2409). The biggest stumbling block will be the creation of the Nursing Institute. Of interest to COSSA is the differing language regarding the placement of social and behavioral scientists on NIH advisory councils; the House version is more favorable. The House version also includes language that will include 'population research' as a 'purpose' of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

The resolution of the number of new and competing grants at NIH in 1985 still awaits the agreement of the conference committee on the FY 1985 Supplemental Appropriations bill (H.R. 2577). The Senate-White House agreement for 6,000 grants still needs adoption by the House. In the meantime, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has prevented NIH from moving ahead with any more grant awards until this issue is settled.

On July 18, Chester Finn was confirmed by the Senate as the new Assistant Secretary for Research at the Department of

Education. Finn will preside over the new structure for research unveiled by Secretary Bennett (see Update, July 12, 1985).

Hearings on the nomination of Edward Curran, former Director of the National Institute of Education, to be the Director of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), have been postponed until September. Concerns about Curran's management style and qualifications for the position have been raised by various groups in the humanities.

AGENCY HEADS TO ADDRESS HEALTH AND BEHAVIOR ISSUES

Directions for research on health and behavior will be addressed by three Public Health Service (PHS) agency directors at a special session, open to the general scientific community, at the forthcoming meetings of the American Sociological Association (ASA).

The speakers on "Health and Behavior in Three Federal Institutes" will be Shervert H. Frazier, Director, National Institute of Mental Health; Duane Alexander, Acting Director, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; and T. Franklin Williams, Director, National Institute on Aging. The special session will take place on Tuesday, August 27, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., in the Lincoln West Room of the Washington Hilton. The public is welcome to attend this individual panel session without registering with ASA.

Moderator of the panel will be Matilda White Riley, chair of a National Institutes of Health cross-agency group on health and behavior. Dr. Riley is president-elect of ASA.

The focus of the session will be on scientific priorities and opportunities, not on funding levels or grant mechanisms. While many of the research agencies within the Public Health Service are exploring and presently support research on the linkages between behavior and health -- with regard to prevention of illness, etiology, health management, and cure or alleviation -- a number of Members of Congress, along with groups such as COSSA (see Update, May 17, 1985), have been urging the top officials of these agencies to devise more visible mechanisms for coordinated research and training efforts in this broad scientific area.

MARSHALL ROBINSON TO LEAVE RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

Marshall Robinson, President of the Russell Sage Foundation since 1979, has announced his resignation, effective at the end of this year. Robinson, an economist, plans to work full-time on a research project focusing on the use of cross-national comparisons in the social sciences.

A Presidential Search Committee has been formed, and it is hoped that a new president will be named by January, 1986.

EUROPEAN SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Dr. Jostein Mykletun, Secretary of the Standing Committee for the Social Sciences of the European Science Foundation (ESF), visited the Consortium's offices on July 16. ESF, established in 1974, acts as a coordinator for the major western European academies and research councils that support research at the national level. Although funded mainly by organizations which are themselves supported by governments, the ESF describes itself as non-governmental.

Operating through five standing committees (medical sciences, natural sciences, space science, humanities, and social science), ESF is organized to:

- assist its member organizations to coordinate their research programs and define priorities;
- identify areas needing stimulation, especially interdisciplinary topics;
- further cooperation between researchers by facilitating movement between laboratories, mounting workshops, arranging joint use of equipment, etc.;
- collect and disseminate data and information;
- foster more effective dissemination by other organizations;
- respond to initiatives aimed at advancing European science.

ESF is not normally a grant-making body. Central operations including small projects are supported by regular contributions from member organizations, while special projects (generally larger in scale) are funded by those member organizations particularly interested in a selected topic. ESF also administers research projects for other organizations on a cost-plus basis.

Major projects in the social sciences currently include:

- second language acquisition by adult immigrants;
- migration (cultural identity of second-generation descendants of foreign workers); and
- comparative law (medical responsibility, summary adjudication, and legislative process).

In the discussion with COSSA staff together with representatives of the American Anthropological Association, American Sociological Association, and other organizations, Mykletun emphasized the modest size of both ESF and its budgets (e.g., the social science enterprise has a total of six professional staff members). After ten years of experience, the ESF is placing increased emphasis on networking activities and correspondingly de-emphasizing sponsorship of joint research projects. Mykletun noted that American scientists have been involved in a number of ESF projects and are welcome in most ESF activities.

ESF's address is: 1, quai Lezay-Marnésia, 67000 Strasbourg, France.

NEW PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Scholarly Communication is a new publication of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). The newsletter contains information on publishing, library trends, and research in the humanities and related fields. Information about the publication can be obtained from the ACLS Office of Scholarly Communication and Technology, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

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Two new publications are available from the Committee on National Statistics, National Research Council:

Part I of "Sharing Research Data," edited by Stephen E. Fienberg, Margaret E. Martin, and Miron L. Straf, examines the "benefits, problems, controversies, and other consequences of sharing research data."

"Immigration Statistics: A Story of Neglect," edited by Daniel B. Levine, Kenneth Hill, and Robert Warren, concludes that the federal system for collecting data on immigration is inefficient and incomplete, precluding formulation of sound immigration policy. The study also reports that there are far fewer illegal immigrants in the U.S. than has been estimated, and that their numbers are not growing as rapidly as has been thought. Recent stories in the Washington Post (June 30) and Science (July 12) have reported the conclusions of the study.

Publications of the National Research Council are available from the National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20418.

COSSA STAFF ADDITION

John H. Hammer joined the COSSA staff in July as Executive Associate. Prior to joining the Consortium, he served for several years as Associate Secretary of the Linguistic Society of America, a COSSA member. He was also Deputy Director of the Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Hammer has extensive experience in association management; the facilitation, funding, and coordination of research; publication production and management; and public information and public policy activities.

Responsibilities at COSSA will include close liaison with Affiliates, Contributors, and other cooperating organizations, and coordination of public information activities.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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

National Sea Grant College Program

The National Sea Grant Program is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the Department of Commerce. It was created to accelerate national development of marine resources, including their conservation, proper management, and maximum social and economic utilization.

Through the Sea Grant Program, grants and contracts are made to universities, institutes, laboratories, and public and private industry for research, education, and training activities. Currently there are 29 institutions receiving support from the Sea Grant Program. Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact a participating Sea Grant institution (a list of institutions may be obtained from the Sea Grant office) or they may apply directly to NOAA. Two-thirds of the funds for a proposed project may be derived from federal appropriations; the remaining one-third must come from non-federal sources.

The Sea Grant Program encourages broad participation of traditional social science disciplines, along with natural science, business, engineering, and law. Areas studied by social scientists include recreation and tourism; commercial fisheries; aquaculture; coastal zone studies; marine transportation; and planning and institutions.

Budget: The FY 1985 budget is approximately \$39 million. Of that amount, approximately \$1.3 million goes to marine economics research and \$1.2 million to other social science research.

Funding Mechanisms: Grants

Review Process: Project applications are reviewed by panels of federal and non-federal scientists.

Disciplines Supported: Social science disciplines include cultural anthropology, economics, geography, history, law, political science, sociology, and others.

Restrictions on Awards: Most awards are for 1- or 2-year projects. There are no limitations on dollar amount.

Deadlines: None. Unsolicited proposals may be submitted at any time.

Contact: Director, National Sea Grant College Program
NOAA
6010 Executive Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20852
301/443-8926

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Society for the History of Technology
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for the Scientific Study of Religion
Society for Social Studies of Science
Southwestern Social Science Association
Speech Communication Association

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