

1. National social science

It has been basic United States policy that Government should foster the opening of new frontiers. It opened the seas to clipper ships and furnished land for pioneers. Although these frontiers have more or less disappeared, the frontier of science remains. It is in keeping with the American tradition - one which has made the United States great - that new frontiers shall be made accessible for development by all American citizens.

Vannevar Bush (1945)

Conceived at the close of World War II, Vannevar Bush's vision of government patronage in *Science - The Endless Frontier* has provided an enduring and powerful narrative for American science. Federally funded nuclear fission had ended the war, and Bush foresaw that extended support for science in peacetime would yield unending progress to "all American citizens." The National Science Foundation (NSF) was designed to embody Bush's vision.¹ The NSF was to receive government funds and direct them to research activities according to the demands of scholars, since "scientific progress on a broad front results from the free play of free intellects, working on subjects of their own choice" (Bush 1945).

The social sciences were initially not included within the NSF purview.² In the interwar period social research was financed by universities and a number of philanthropies, notably the Rockefeller Memorial Fund. In the 1950s, research patronage for the social sciences was balanced between universities, the government, and the philanthropies, with the Ford Foundation taking a leadership role (Goodwin 1998, Fosdick 1989). Funding increased apace with the expansion of higher education and the growing importance of the liberal professions in American society and economy. At the NSF the commitment to the social sciences grew from 1957 onwards and, in 1968 culminated in the creation of a Division of Social Sciences. By 1970 federal funding of social research seemed established within the NSF, so much so that a proposal to create a National Social Science Foundation floundered as redundant (Gieryn 1999; Solovey forthcoming). While government support for the social sciences increased throughout the 1970s, funding from the

¹ For a wider perspective on the regimes of science funding see Mirowski and Sent (2007). For an analysis of the early decades of the NSF see Kleinman and Solovey (1995).

² The literature documenting the inclusion of the social sciences within the NSF is quite extensive with the classic contribution being Larsen (1992), other works include Riecken (1986), Kleinman (1994) and Wells (1982).

philanthropies was decreasing over the period, as seen in table 1, whereby at the close of the decade the government was the dominant patron to social scientists.

Table 1

With this appreciation of the magnitude of patronage for the social sciences, in the decades immediately after WW II, one is directed to question what influence patrons had over the social scientists they funded and what influence, if any, social scientists had over patronage decisions. The bulk of the literature documenting patronage patterns has focused on how patrons are able to acquire control over and shape a discipline's research agenda. Hunter Crowther-Heyck, for instance, identified two overlapping systems of patronage at mid-century. The first, backed by the private foundations and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), promoted research that was "behavioral-functional, problem-centered, and interdisciplinary." The second system, sponsored by federal agencies, the NSF but also the National Institutes of Mental Health and other agencies, promoted disciplinary research, and in Crowther-Heyck's argument, privileged "methodological individualism" over the "systems-based framework of the behavioralists" (Crowther-Heyck 2006). The so-called "fragmentation" of the sciences in 1970s can seemingly be attributed to a change in the dominant patron. As many interdisciplinary ventures failed to meet the expectations of their sponsors, the Foundations withdrew, and only the public system remained (Geiger 1988).³

Our claim in this essay is that the role played by scholars in shaping patronage has been underestimated. Neither has the literature addressed the most striking feature of post-1970 patronage landscape: the contested status of government funding. The NSF provided approximately 9% of federal funding for the social sciences with funds increasing from \$88.4 million in 1970 to \$146 million in 2001 (in 2009 dollars). The increase for social science research fell well behind increases in the general NSF budget. Social science spending represented 7.1% of total spending in 1970, but only 3.9% by 2001. Moreover, the funding for specific disciplines within the social sciences has been stagnant in inflation-adjusted terms for sociology and anthropology, had a minor

³ Similar views were expressed by a former officer of the Ford Foundation and later President of Russel Sage, Marshall Robinson (1984).

increase in the case of economics, and a dramatic decrease in the case of political science (as seen in table 2).

Table 2

Further to this, the presumed “disciplinary” bias of NSF seems countered by the evidence. Patronage for the social sciences during the latter part of the twentieth century has been directed not to the traditional disciplines but rather for research in social science areas ‘not elsewhere classified’: linguistics, education, history and philosophy of science, law, and socioeconomic geography have increased from 35% of total social science funding in 1970 to 60% in 2001 (from \$31.6 million in 2009 dollars in 1970 to \$87.8 million in 2001).

This essay examines how economists individually and collectively have developed close relationships with NSF officials, and engaged in lobbying campaigns in Congress and government to assert their membership to the *Endless Frontier*. Far from being passive agents to their patrons, social scientists have forcefully shaped a system of public patronage that even if stagnant in its generosity, would accord them autonomy and entitlement.

The 1970s and 1980s debates between Congress, the government and the NSF over the value and appropriateness of research funding often focused on the practical value of social research. We begin by showing how early in our period of study, NSF funding of social science was aligned with an emphasis on applied research with the agency setting out areas of action for social scientists. We argue that the failure of applied research, in the late 1970s, was seized upon by scholars as an argument for basic (pure) research, asserting their control over the content of research. In 1981, when Ronald Reagan’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) outlined budget cuts that were severe for the funding of social research, scholars coalesced in a lobbying campaign that successfully reversed those plans. By 1983, all the features of an advocacy network for social science research was in place. The American Economic Association (AEA) and other scholarly societies coordinated amongst themselves to present their case to Congress. Out of the efforts of the crisis years emerged a tightly knit group of lobbyists, prominent association officials, the disciplines’ elites, and NSF program officers. Crucially, while NSF was asked to articulate the usefulness of social science research to the polity, it was barred from shaping its content.

2. Focus on Applied Social Sciences in the 1970s

Funding of social science research, and of economics specifically, increased throughout the 1960s at a rate faster than the rate of growth of the total NSF budget. The social sciences thus captured a larger share of the total NSF budget, from 3% in 1960 to 6% in 1969. As we will show, although patronage from the government would continue to increase throughout the 1970s (see figure 1), such patronage came only after research was identified as having immediate applications.

Figure 1

The importance given to applications to justify increased appropriations for the social sciences in the late 1960s was a change from previous funding decisions that were based on objectivity, verifiability, and generality. In the case of economics, there was a surfeit of problems calling for targeted attention, notably sluggish economic growth, international monetary instability, and a refocused public debate on economic competitiveness. In response to these challenges, President Richard Nixon ordered federal agencies to stimulate economic activity (Larsen 1992, 94). Troubled by disruptions at colleges and universities, Nixon expressed a preference that the NSF spend less on block grants to institutions and on fellowships and instead invest in problem-oriented research. Scholars in the social sciences were able to capture funding by offering to resolve environmental destruction, unemployment, economic inequality, decline in worker productivity, and social unrest. Social scientists received additional research patronage from the NSF not only from their own discipline's program, but also from a newly created office in 1971 called Research Applied to National Needs (RANN). With research funded by RANN being incorporated into the NSF portfolio, the agency which for decades had devoted over 90% of its funds for basic research found itself in 1974 at an all-time low of 80%.

RANN primarily funded social science research through its Division of Social Systems and Human Resources (later restructured into the Advanced Productivity Research and Technological Division). Other social science research within RANN was conducted in the divisions of Advanced Technology Applications and in Environmental Systems and Resources.⁴ Initially, applied social

⁴ RANN would be adjusted over the years such that in the waning years of the program, as a response to the changing demands of Congress and the President, the areas of research focus were altered and

science research went towards social indicators, data and community structure research, and the development of evaluation methodologies for social programs. In a time of decreasing tax revenue, growing expenditures, the assessment of welfare expenditures was a priority. This application of social science research was in line with RANN's mission of organizing research efforts around problems instead of disciplines and identified NSF as a patron supplying multi-disciplinary problem-oriented insights to policy-makers.

For the social sciences basic research came to represent as little as 63% of NSF expenditures in 1976, as the share of RANN funding increased. Whereas in 1972 the social sciences through RANN received \$28.9 million in 2009 dollars (approximately 13% of RANN expenditures), by 1977 this had grown to \$87.2 million in 2009 dollars (approximately 48% of RANN expenditures) (see table 3) (Larsen 1992, 98).

Table 3

The social sciences increasing bounty courtesy of RANN was not a marker of appreciation. Rather, the status of the social sciences within the NSF was coming into question. In 1975 the social sciences were downgraded from their directorate status and combined into the newly-created Biological, Behavioral, and Social Science Directorate. The definition of social science itself changed with anthropology and psychology, two disciplines generously funded by the NSF, being classified as behavioral and cognitive sciences. And finally to make matters worse, RANN was dismantled.

3. The Simon Report and claiming control of research

The closure of RANN in 1977 and the de-emphasis of applied research was prompted in part by a National Academy of Sciences report that dealt with the subject of the appropriate balance between basic and applied research. The report, written by a committee headed by the economist Herb Simon, concluded that government funding directed towards applied research was "highly variable in quality and, on the average, not impressive." Although the report did not recommend an end to RANN, it called on the NSF to re-structure the program such that social scientists were given more

simplified to 'Resources,' 'Environment,' 'Productivity,' 'Exploratory Research and Technology Assessment,' and 'Intergovernmental Science and R&D Incentives.'

control over defining research problems (Simon et al 1976). In March 1977, the House Science and Technology Committee issued a report strongly supporting RANN, and stating that “The nature of applied research is such that, if successful, the RANN program should surpass basic research in dollars expended.” Here was cause for alarm, as the NSF's new Director Richard C. Atkinson recalled a maxim from the *Endless Frontier* that “applied research invariably drives out pure” (McNinch 1984). For social scientists, the concern was that their allocation of funding would decrease if RANN were to be dismantled. Hence while the Simon report called for the NSF to reform its applied programs, it also envisioned a transfer of funds to basic research. At issue was social scientists' equal right membership to NSF, the report remarked that while 58% of natural and physical scientist applicants were receiving support, social scientists were victims of discrimination, getting funding for only 30% of their bids.

In the 1970s, in the midst of an ailing economy, economists found their NSF funding (both basic and applied) rising from \$18.5 million in 1970 to \$24.3 million in 1979 in 2009 dollars. Economics throughout the 1970s was the best funded of the social sciences (approximately 25% of the budget for the individual disciplines within the social and behavioral sciences).⁵ Grants to economists focused on four areas of research, endeavors that would both satisfy the priorities of the scholarly community and be demonstrably of public worth: econometric forecasting, game theory, experimentation, and development of longitudinal data sets. The elite within the economics profession was confident of the usefulness of their toolkit and in its collective judgment in selecting new problems and leading them to a conclusion.

Economists were confident that their research was of national importance and there was frustration expressed among them that public patronage did not match this perceived importance. The closing years of the 1970s were occasion for economists, through the American Economic Association (AEA) to reflect on how to bolster the profession's public image and patronage. As seen in table 4, government-funded applied research in economics (NSF and other agencies) was uneven, with significant increases and decreases from year to year. As for basic research, all fields, the social sciences, and economics found stagnant or only mild increases in funds. Economists were dissatisfied with the balance between applied and pure research, their control over the subjects of

⁵ Despite economics receiving the bulk of NSF social science research funding in the 1970s, it bears mentioning that the entire NSF social science budget represented only 5% to 6% of the total amount the NSF spent on research and development across all disciplines. Consequently, the amount devoted by the NSF to research in economics represented only slightly over 1% of the total NSF budget. *NSF Annual Reports*, various years.

the funding and the precarious nature of the funding allocations. In an unprecedented discussion about whether economists should lobby the government, the AEA's Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Funding of Economic Research reported in 1977 that the scholarly society should take steps to stimulate economic research and that such stimulus wouldn't be a violation of the scholarly society's prohibition of engagement in the political partisanship.⁶ The committee subscribed to the conclusions of the Simon report believing that government patronage for basic research and data collection should be expanded.⁷ The Committee did not believe that the AEA should advocate for the funding of applied research, a subject that they believed should arise out of the entrepreneurial activities of individual scholars in partnership with government, society and business. It further concluded that because many members of the AEA were deeply involved in questions surrounding research funding, organization, utilization, and evaluation, that the AEA as a scholarly society should not directly involve itself in lobbying for research. Its recommendation was that committees be appointed to advise federal agencies in its data collection and form a standing committee

... to serve as a line of communication with the Economics Program of the Social Science Division of the NSF. We believe that the basic research funded by the program is of unique importance to the overlapping interests of the AEA and the federal government in advancing the discipline of economics. At the same time, this type of research is most likely to be underfunded. We believe that such an AEA committee, by supplying members of the Association with information about this NSF Program, could assist them in their individual efforts to defend and improve that program. (AEA 1977)

The committee produced a report, in 1980,⁸ reviewing that the federal government provided half of the \$52 billion spent on research and development with only 11% of that amount devoted to basic research (AEA 1980). Despite this small share, the federal government was the dominant patron for basic research providing nearly 70% of such funding.

⁶ Members of the committee included Milton Friedman, Gary Fromm, Zvi Griliches, Robert Solow, and Stanley Lebergott (AEA 1977).

⁷ If the AEA's calls for the expansion of basic research was to have any impact, a minority of the committee believed that specific areas of basic research should be identified but that such identification would be improper as the AEA both represented and administered research.

⁸ The questions the committee outlined for itself were: Should the AEA be asking the federal government to spend more money on economic research? Should it help its members to obtain more research funding? Should it serve as a trade association or guild in expanding the market for its members' professional skills? Should it have a Washington office and should direct its officers and staff to represent the AEA at various stages of the research funding process?

The economists dramatized an unbalance between applied and basic research as an attempt by the government to steer social science.⁹ Economists could report, as seen in table 4, that federal funding of applied science was on the rise in all fields, while grants for basic research were stalling or falling in real terms.

Table 4

At the close of the 1970s the economics profession, even though graced with increased support, was asking for more. In their estimation, not only would opening up a line of communication with NSF leaders and officers aid in securing patronage but would also guard against external attempts to set the agenda of research. What economists did not anticipate in 1976-77 was that they would be called to Congress to justify the public merit of their research and defend the funding they deemed insufficient.

4. Congressional controversy in 1978-1980

The resistance by elected officials to fund the social sciences was a political asset in the 1970s. The most notorious cases of social science bashing were the “Golden Fleece awards” of Senator William Proxmire (Democrat - Wisconsin). These awards singled out behavioral and social science projects at the NSF as wasteful or worse, absurd.¹⁰ The ‘Golden Fleece’ awards were a highly publicized critique of social science patronage, other critics included Representatives John Ashbrook, Robert Bauman (Republican - Maryland), and John Conlan (Republican – Arizona) (Johnson 1992).

The floor debate in the House of Representatives in March 27, 1979, was illustrative of the prevailing mood at the time. In a discussion of the NSF budget, John M. Ashbrook, a Republican from Ohio, objected to the authorization to fund the biological, behavioral and social sciences. He

⁹ The categories of basic and applied research date back to the nineteenth century, and the term “pure” research is even older, as Jane Calvert (2006) has argued they have served in multiple instances of boundary work. For the 1970s economists the budget terms “basic” and “applied” were meant to signify research governed by the interests and values of scientists and research dictated by political expediency.

¹⁰ <http://www.ucop.edu/pres/comments/gfleece.html>; accessed 1st June 2010, see Shaffer (1977).

also presented amendments for cuts to the NSF budget in 1978 and 1980. Ashbrook mocked the subjects of research stating that:

During this last year the NSF used its authorization, which is our tax dollars, to find out the reason for cooperative breeding habits among the white-front bee-eaters, it also contributed its monitoring of taste preferences in sheep, and it polished off a study on “the masking of pure-tone thresholds by pure tones and narrowbands of noise and their relation to basilar papilla function in the parakeet.” (...) The intellectual snobbism that is displayed in these examples is obvious.

But Ashbrook's principal concern was not wastefulness and irrelevance, but the potential uses of social science. He added that,

If the NSF funded small esoteric projects that kept scientists busy in their labs, I would still oppose the waste of funds, but I would find the projects laughable examples of Government extravagance. However, the NSF is also funding projects that could set the stage of social engineering and Government intervention. [then mentioning the example of a study on the social structure of the Legal Profession]¹¹

The episode testifies to a widely-held suspicion that social science research when relevant, was disruptive of traditional values, religion, family, capitalism, and a partner of statist political projects.

George E. Brown, head of the House Subcommittee on Science, Research and Technology, in response to the 1979 objections hosted a February 20, 1980 hearing on the funding of the social sciences. In attendance were the Director of NSF (Atkinson) and his deputy; Eloise Clark, assistant Director for Biological, Behavioral, and Social Sciences, and the program directors for neurobiology, linguistics, anthropology, and economics. Other witnesses had no NSF connection, such as Herbert Simon, Judith Rodin (psychology), Reynolds Farley (sociology), Kenneth Prewitt (Social Science Research Council) and Frederick Mosteller (American Association for the Advancement of Science). This was an impressive and authoritative cast.

While defending all research in the social sciences was the primary objective, economists found themselves with a convincing case of why patronage for their discipline was particularly

¹¹ *Congressional Record – House*, March 27, 1979, p. 6316. Consequently the Division of Social Sciences was renamed to Division of Social and Economic Sciences.

important.¹² Clark mentioned that the 1979 Nobel laureates in Economics had received NSF grants, and so had all John Bates Clark medallists (the bi-annual award given to the best economists under 40) before they received the accolade.¹³ She mentioned how funding of basic social science had yielded an accounting system for tracking GDP, cost-benefit analysis, and econometric modeling, even though the NSF could only claim credit for the development of the latter in the support for the SSRC-Brookings model. Clark also highlighted the work of Robert Lucas and his critique of econometric estimation, which in fact implies that earlier and contemporary econometric work funded by the agency was meaningless. Lucas's contributions were conveniently re-interpreted as insights on how to include expectations in macro-econometric modeling.

Simon, speaking later that morning, the principal writer of the NAS report that ended RANN in 1976 and Nobel laureate in economics in 1977, was critical of economics and spoke ill of the rational expectations model which only a few hours earlier had been singled out as an example of the insights enabled by NSF backing. But while he critiqued the economics profession, he argued that NSF was not party to such mistakes and that its contribution was to fund work to test such dubious propositions.¹⁴ Clark's and Simon's testimonies did not match, neither in terms of the merits and interpretation of “rational expectations” nor in NSF's role in its development.

If Brown noted the contradictions he did not voice it. His expressed concern, shared by the NSF Director, was that social science was caught in a dilemma. Social scientists either “are engaged in basic research which obviously is not relevant to any practical thing, or they are engaged in some form of behavior modification which is anathema to the public.” Simon countered that representation saying that social science developed tools to monitor the environment, racism, inequality, and to facilitate collective action, not to direct it. Research on information techniques

¹² At the 1979 floor debate, Brown had used economics as a firewall against the cuts, arguing that within the social science directorate “the largest percentage, well over 50 percent, goes to economic research. It goes to a study of the productivity of the American economy, for example: research on the question of why we are not doing better in this country to meet the competition of foreign countries; research on new types of economic indicators, which will allow us to measure our progress more effectively.” *Congressional Record – House*, March 27, 1979, p. 6317. Economics of course never took 50% of the directorate's funds.

¹³ Biology was Clark's field of expertise and it took up most of her testimony, in 1980 and in other years.

¹⁴ Dan Newlon, associate director of the economics program, offered “decision making in small groups” as the exemplar of NSF funding, a subject that he argued overlapped with economics, sociology, political science and geography. This was the emerging experimental economics that the NSF economics program would continue to nurture in later years. Its practical applications were joining with the Civil Aeronautics Board in testing the efficacy of different regulations to allocate space in airports.

and data collection and processing had long been a subject of NSF attention, and a convenient example to counter Congressional critics, even if it was thin in breakthroughs.

Brown's hearings ultimately achieved little. They were occasion for a show of solidarity between social and behavioral scientists and the NSF leadership. But the only advice they produced was borrowed from a contemporary report by the Government Accountability Office, which argued that much of the bad publicity of social science could be prevented with better titles in grant applications.

Away from Congressional chambers, M. Kent Wilson, head of the NSF's Office of Planning and Resource Management, was drawing plans to relocate applied research within the NSF and to address social sciences's contested fortune. On September 5, 1980, Donald Lagenberg, the new NSF Director, presented the new organizational structure including the creation of an engineering directorate, creation of a social science directorate, and the distribution of applied research throughout the NSF. Only a week after, SSRC hosted a summit where NSF officials, university administrators, and scholarly society representatives discussed the proposal. Shortly after it was revealed that in the new structure anthropology and psychology would be separated from the other social science disciplines. SSRC voiced opposition to this plan out of a belief it would place the social sciences in a weakened position because a renewed applied research emphasis would favor those disciplines (anthropology and psychology) located outside of the directorate. On October 21, on the eve of the election of Ronald Reagan, Langenberg's reorganization task force concurred with the SSRC that a social science directorate without anthropology and psychology was not advisable.

While unable to find a more secure home for social science within the NSF, Langenberg elected to address the multiple criticisms placed upon applied research in a September 1980 memo. Officially, the OMB Directive A-11 required research to be classified as basic or applied and compelled the NSF to collect and record such data, but the categories and definitions were considered dubious at best and consequently very little attention was placed on categorizing research properly.

Langenberg gave new force to this neglect by arguing that what mattered was research's contribution to knowledge. He thus argued that all research was useful (hence applied) albeit over different time periods, and that research that maximized contributions to knowledge was always peer reviewed (hence basic). To economists Langenberg's message was that they should not fear applied research since it would be guided by scholarly judgment.

In 1979, the President Jimmy Carter's budget requested a 22% increase in funding for the social sciences with total expenditures slated to be \$57 million in 1982 (the largest budget ever). The National Science Board, the OMB, and three of four committees of Congress approved the budget increase. The proposal however faltered in the House Appropriations Committee which limited the increase to only 5% (an amount that, when adjusted for inflation, represented a decline in real terms). As disappointing as this state of affairs might have been, no one predicted that with the election of Ronald Reagan to the Presidency, plans would be drawn for a dramatic decrease in research patronage for the social sciences in general and economics specifically.

5. The budget crisis of 1981 and the origins of lobbying

The principal protagonist in the budget crisis that struck the social sciences in 1981 was the precocious head of the OMB, David Stockman. Previously a Republican Congressman from Michigan, Stockman was a member of a group of journalists, politicians, and economists, coalesced around Congressman Jack Kemp, that argued for "supply side" economic policy. These individuals were members of and advisors to Reagan's Presidential transition team with Stockman installed in the post best suited to pursue the group's fiscal agenda. Contrary to traditional Republican wisdom of balancing the budget with low taxes and cuts in spending, "supply-side economics" as practiced by Stockman expected that substantive cuts in taxes would lead to a rapid economic expansion that negated the need for expenditure cuts.

To gain Congressional support for the Kemp-Ross tax cut, ceilings were to be imposed on spending for Medicare, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Amtrak. However, no plan for the reform of other federal expenditures had been designed. In his budget, Stockman rejected the forecasts of conventional economic models and mainstream economists, and predicted, following "supply side" convictions, that the economy would "take off" by mid-year. When the opposite happened and Stockman had to hold his ground on the tax cuts, he was forced to hastily identify new items of savings. The President had deemed military expenditures and the welfare "safety net" out of bounds, but he extended no such protection to social science patronage. For Stockman, whereas research in the natural sciences could foster innovation and bolster American competitiveness, research in the social sciences offered no positive economic contribution and subsequently was undeserving of funding (Stockman 1986).

Throughout early 1981 it was rumored that the social sciences were going to experience a drastic decrease in funding. The anxiety was well justified. The OMB proposal was most dramatic with

regard to the NSF, where it envisaged a 75% reduction by 1982, in the rubric of social and behavioral research (taking the Carter budgetary figures as baseline).¹⁵ What worried and angered social scientists of various disciplinary stripes was that Stockman was issuing specific guidance on eliminating social and behavioral science patronage while he was issuing only general guidance on cutting other budget items.¹⁶ This argument, as we will show, was used by social scientists as evidence of a campaign against them and to contradict the administration's claims that budget priorities were part of a reasoned framework to engineer an economic recovery. Faced with this grim prospect, social scientists had no choice but to organize in protest, and they redesigned existing professional structures to that aim.

The growth of the social science associations, and the complexity of political issues affecting its membership, had prompted the executive secretaries of the societies in the early 1970s to form a luncheon group called Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA). Its original design was to serve as a structure for informal cooperation. Until 1980, COSSA had a muted status with the members preferring to activate the organization only when problems presented themselves. Although overtures were made to having scholarly societies utilize the COSSA's infrastructure to achieve cost savings by sharing resources, such plans never came to fruition (unlike physics where various scholarly societies merged their operations under the American Institute of Physics). COSSA in 1981 was reinvented as a lobbying organization for the social sciences.¹⁷

The prime mover to bring about a unified response by the disciplines was the same organization, the SSRC, which only a year previously was holding council over how best to organize an expanded social science research patronage environment. On June 4, 1981, in a "Symposium on Strategies for the Social Sciences," representatives from all of the social sciences, the NSF, the National Research Council, and all of the major private research foundations met to "review the current crisis in basic research in the behavioral and social sciences brought by the sudden, sharp reduction in federal funding." The sixty individuals in attendance reached consensus on five points. First, they deemed that it was "ironic" that reduction in funding of the social sciences was based in a misunderstanding

¹⁵ To put the figures into perspective, the proposed budgetary cuts to the NSF social science program were comparable to the cuts made to the highway beautification program.

¹⁶ When social scientists finally achieved authorization and then increased appropriations for the NSF, the OMB staff pressured the NSF leadership to distribute the increased funds to the natural sciences only. William Baumol Papers, Duke University Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, box C2, folder "NSF Amendments 1981".

¹⁷ Psychology and neighboring disciplines did not join COSSA, and joined with neighboring disciplines (behavioral, psychological and cognitive sciences) to form in December 7, 1980, its' own lobbying organization: Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (FABBS).

of these disciplines. Second, they believed that scholars should not be forced to define research priorities on the basis of research questions imposed from outsiders. Third, research priorities should be set by scientists themselves, and it should be the NSF together with scholars to define program allocation, not the OMB. Fourth, there was “unity of science” and the government was creating a fallacious distinction between natural and social sciences. Finally, that social scientists should endorse the lobbying activities of COSSA. This meeting outlined the issues that were to animate COSSA in its first decade: the assertion of social scientists’ control over research priorities through lobbying.

COSSA began its activities with a staff of two: Joan Buchanan and Roberta Balstad Miller. Neither Buchanan nor Miller had experience as lobbyists.¹⁸ Miller was a Ph.D. historian who had extensive knowledge of the social sciences and familiarity with the political process from her employment at the Social Science Research Council’s Washington, D.C. office. Miller had two time-sensitive tasks. The first was to convince scholarly societies in the social sciences to underwrite COSSA’s lobbying activities. The second was that the OMB’s budget guidance was being enacted and funding agencies like the NSF would soon need to adjust their programs unless the proposed budgetary cuts were repealed.

The first challenge was met with Miller making the case for COSSA’s existence before the officers of the scholarly societies. With all but one of these offices being located in Washington, DC, Miller’s task was an easy one. The economists however were based at Vanderbilt University, in Tennessee, and Miller had to wait for their December, 1981, Executive Committee meeting to secure their backing. Despite all misgivings and long-held traditions against lobbying, the promotion of research was deemed too important and the AEA’s Executive Committee voted to join COSSA and pay a \$35,000 membership fee. The AEA, for its part, declined to characterize COSSA’s activities as lobbying but instead said the purpose of the organization was to “...monitor the federal budget, and educate legislators and executive officials on the nature and significance of such research.” (AEA 1982, 399) In contrast to the statement in the minutes of their meeting, economists were well aware of the character of the organization. Upon consultation with their legal counsel over whether the AEA’s tax exempt status would be threatened by the payment for

¹⁸ According to Balstad-Miller (interview, 2009) professional lobbyists were unavailable to work on behalf of social scientists feeling that their cause was a hopeless one.

lobbying activities, the AEA decided that the benefits to ‘educating lawmakers’ far outweighed the risks.¹⁹

With sufficient funding and support from the scholarly societies, COSSA focused on defeating the Winn Amendment of July 1981 – an amendment that would have reduced the NSF budget by \$70 million. COSSA published a newsletter instructing social scientists on to whom and what to write to Congress. It also organized participation of social scientists in Congressional hearings (reviewed in the next section).²⁰ The success of the campaign can be observed in the “Dear colleague” letters sent by the Representatives of the House Committee on Science and Technology to other Representatives so as to sway votes in favor of a larger appropriation. On July 14, one such letter spoke of the NSF’s practical importance remarking that “the Foundation not only provides the Nation with much of the Federal basic research funding but is also concerned with technological innovation in small business and industry.” A letter on the following day reported the budget numbers to stress how Social and Economic Science was being targeted. It remarked “I have neither read nor heard any justification for cuts of these magnitudes” except for the “unexplained and unsupported assertion that “support of these sciences is considerably of relatively lesser importance to the economy than support of the natural sciences.” I disagree with, and reject that assertion.” A week later, a letter affirmed that NSF was good value for money, and “although the overall funding of the Foundation is small in comparison with many other agencies, the broad impact of these science and engineering research and education programs on our economic and strategic interests is very large.”²¹ While in previous years Congress had been the threat, it had become social scientists’ last defense against an uncharitable administration.

The actions of COSSA were successful, aided by the fact that Stockman and the OMB lost control of the budget process under a pile of rushed amendments. A polemical piece in *Atlantic* opened with his words that: “None of us really understands what’s going on with all these numbers.” (Greider 1981) The economic outlook against the White House’s expectations, worsened throughout the year of 1981, and an unanticipated fall in inflation further shrank the projected tax base. As

¹⁹ In the counsel’s judgment the dues paid to COSSA did not fall under the “statutory definition of substantial.” Letter from from Leo J. Raskind to C. Elton Hinshaw, December 10, 1981. Box 985 Accession 2001-0118, American Economic Association files. Duke University Library, Rare Books and Manuscript Collection.

²⁰ In William Baumol Papers, Duke University Library, accession 2001-0170, box 7, folder “NSF-National Science Foundation (Budget Material)”, item “COSSA Legislative Report, February 26, 1982.”

²¹ Letter by Fuqua (Chairman committee on science and technology) and Mitchell (Committee on Small Business), July 14, 1981; letter by DeNardis, July 15, 1981; Letter of Fuqua, Hollenbeck, Brown, Dunn, Walgren, and Pursell, July 24, 1981; all in Baumol papers, Box C2, folder “NSF Amendments 1981.”

negotiations and compromises multiplied, the OMB's global perspective was lost, setting the stage for some of the largest budget deficits in American history.

6. Reagan's economics and the economists' prestige

At the core of the late 1970s and early 1980s debates about the relevance of social sciences was the economy. Anxiety over the competitiveness of American business was the justification for drawing plans to close federal programs, while increasing commitments to research and development. What then was the role of economists, the accredited experts on the economy, in the budget crisis of 1981?

The "supply-side" doctrine that guided the early years of the Reagan administration has now been condemned as pseudo-science (Krugman 1995), but at the time of its emergence not all were ready to criticize it. The best known spokesperson of the approach was an editorial writer for the *Wall Street Journal*, Jude Wanniski, who before Reagan's election had published an influential book with the immodest title of *The Way the World Works*. In a populist vein, Wanniski derided the economics profession, but the hero of the book was an economist, Arthur Laffer.²² Wanniski's circle also included Robert Mundell, who would later receive a Nobel for his work on international monetary economics. While liberal minded economists opposed the group from its inception, the more conservative economists saw the supply-side story as naïve but not wrongheaded.

That Reagan had staffed his White House with unaccredited economists helps explain why economists were so swift in reacting to the 1981 budget crisis, abandoning a tradition of distance from Washington.²³ In its 1981 Spring meeting, the AEA executive committee had the budget crisis on its agenda.²⁴ President William J. Baumol reviewed the actions already taken and solicited advice on what was to be done next. As is the standard among economists, initiative had come first and foremost from the most distinguished acting on an individual basis and without a collective mandate. The first to act were the Nobel laureates. A letter of March 6 1981, signed by Kenneth

²² Wanniski's book was followed by an even more successful book by George Gilder in 1981, *Wealth & Poverty*.

²³ One of the founding controversies of the American Economic Association was the early proposal to have its offices at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, but anxieties over partisan labeling led the Association to base itself at Northwestern and then at Vanderbilt University (Coats 1960).

²⁴ The news coming from those with Washington connections was that "Stockman and OMB plan to bring the budget down to zero, that is eliminate the behavioral and social sciences program, including economics entirely in the fiscal 1982 budget." Letter from Robert Eisner to Baumol, March 20, 1981, Baumol papers, box C2, Folder "NSF Amendments".

Arrow, Lawrence Klein, Tjalling C. Koopmans, Simon Kuznets, Wassily Leontief, Paul A. Samuelson, Theodore W. Schultz, and Herbert A. Simon, stated that

[NSF funding] is all the more important because the National Science Foundation is the only disinterested source of funds for research. Research supported by private industry and by government agencies with specific missions are very important for practical purposes, but usually are too directly targeted to permit the genuine innovation that comes only with freedom to inquire and are not without some pressure to conform to preconceived outcomes.

The letter made the remarkable statement that "the foundation of all useful knowledge in economic understanding and policy, has been supported by NSF funding."²⁵ The letter was signed only a week before Klein's and Arrow's testimonies to the Science, Research and Technology Subcommittee of the Committee on Science and Technology of the House of Representatives. Both testimonies praised economic knowledge as a source of growth and productivity. Klein stressed the benefits of his econometric work for the information industry and identified decreased funding for NSF through the 1970s as explanation for "some significant part of our productivity slowdown and general loss of competitiveness." Arrow, after going at great lengths to establish his credentials with a list of intellectual achievements and institutional honors, concluded that "in a time of troubles with inflation and productivity [among others] depriving economics of the tools for further development of knowledge can only be described as a foolish and destructive economy."

The highlight of the economists' 1981 testimonies came from Zvi Griliches, an expert on the economics of research.²⁶ Griliches envisaged long term consequences to the proposed cuts, stating that the "research establishment breathes life into university training and graduate programs which, in turn, produce most of the high quality economists staffing government departments, congressional committees, and business corporations."²⁷ As to the manner by which the cuts were delivered, Griliches said that

...the motivation for such selective cuts only to vindictiveness, ignorance and arrogance: Vindictiveness, because many of the more extreme new economic

²⁵ Leontief had by then become a discontent with the state of economics, but he joined in solidarity. In a letter to Baumol on the same day he explained that "As you know, I take a very dim view of present research in most fields of social science and, in particular, in economics, but for reasons of professional collegiality, I am prepared to have my name included among the signatures." Baumol papers, box C2, Folder "NSF Amendments".

²⁶ Griliches had been a member of Herbert Simon's committee of 1975 to study the funding of the social sciences at NSF and had argued in favor of basic research.

²⁷ Klein had a similar metaphor, research was the "life blood".

proposals have found little support among established scientists. Because they have not flocked to support them, they are perceived as being captives of liberal left-wing ideologues; Ignorance, because this is just not so. It is ironic and sad that whoever came up with these cuts does not even recognize that most of the recent "conservative" ideas in economics - the importance of "rational expectations" and the impotency of conventional macro-economic policy, the disincentive effects of various income-support programs, the magnitude of the regulatory burden, and the arguments for deregulation - all originated in, or were provided with quantitative backing by NSF supported studies; And arrogance, in the sense that those suggesting these cuts do not seem to want to know what good economic policy can or should be. They do not need more research, they know the answers.

Griliches' remarks were persuasive. His words on the usefulness of economic and social science research were copied in the press. In an editorial, "Slicing through 'Soft' Science", the *New York Times* came in defense of the social sciences, echoing that "Economic performance also benefits from understanding of how an economy works."²⁸ *Business Week* also reproduced Griliches' polemics and two other economists hammering the word: "vendetta." Economists were capitalizing on the administration's embarrassment with its overly optimistic forecasts that were now labeled "voodoo economics." The cuts in the NSF were framed as pay back for what Stockman called the economics profession's "cynical and destructive" views on the economy.²⁹ Economists were playing from a complex plot of antagonism and fellowship.

Before even signing on to COSSA at the end of 1981, Baumol instructed the Secretary of the AEA to send a letter to chairpersons of economics departments informing them of the proposed cuts and inviting them, and their colleagues, to write to the appropriate members of Congress. The AEA Executive Committee envisaged appointing two committees to explore ways of being heard in Congress and communicating the public benefits of basic research: a group to head an effort to present the case to Congress and a group to present the case to the business community and solicit its support. The strategy outlined in the letter was not to oppose the administration but to argue for autonomy. Stating that Executive Committee is "more concerned about the decision-making process that allocated most of the burden of the cuts to the social sciences. Cuts in the total science budget may be warranted in the present situation, but the allocation of those cuts should be decided upon by NSF in consultation with the scientific community, not by the OMB." In its appeal for a letter writing campaign, the package included a copy of the Laureates letter of early March and a single table extracted from NSF publications that conveyed the dark message of the cuts (see figure 2).

²⁸ *The New York Times*, April 4 1981, p. 22.

²⁹ *Business Week* was seemingly prompted to look into the matter by Allan H. Meltzer, Letter by Allan H. Meltzer to Baumol, April 2, 1981, Baumol papers, box C2, Folder "NSF Amendments".

Figure 2

The letters to the department chairs were dispatched six days after the Spring Executive Committee meeting. There is no record that the two new committees even convened.³⁰

With COSSA emerging and coordinating the lobbying effort, the AEA had no need for its own liaison committee. In the early 1980s, economists were in regular attendance of hearings on the NSF budget. In May 1981, Baumol was heard by the House Committee on Appropriations in his capacity of President of the AEA. National pride and the Nobel Prize were his starting arguments, that of the eighteen awards since the inception of the Prize, nine had gone to Americans. He reported to have statements from the Nobel Prize winners showing how crucial NSF patronage had been for their success and by implication how funds were needed to maintain that leadership into a new generation. In nearly all testimonies in defense of NSF patronage that mentioned economics, the Nobel prize and similar markers of prestige were paramount. NSF officers proudly noted how they nurtured the winners before their accolades, and the winners were willing to support such claims even when they were not exactly true.³¹ The reference to the prizes and honors of economists echoed the authority and attention these symbols held in mass culture (LeBaron 2006).³² To the symbolic markers, Baumol added mentions to policy contributions, such as design of deregulation of US airlines and railroads; environmental programs, and forecasting techniques. Baumol concluded with the Griliches' framing of a "vendetta" against the economists, and stated that NSF

³⁰ Milton Friedman wrote a different sort of letter. Himself a Nobel laureate and a magazine, book and TV celebrity, he wrote in *Newsweek* (May 1981) that the social sciences should not be discriminated against, but contrary to his colleagues he called for all sciences to get a cut, and Bush's model of patronage dismantled, "a step towards the abolition of NSF".

³¹ As Baumol prepared his testimony he wrote to the Nobel economists. Paul A. Samuelson in a letter of May 1, 1981 stated that "Personally, my scientific research has benefited enormously from NSF and NIH grants. Without such grants, America would not have been the second nation to have a citizen awarded the Nobel Prize in economics." Samuelson is careful not to say explicitly that NSF funded his Nobel winning research, which it did not, the award referring to work that started in the 1940s. The suggestion however is implied. Samuelson received the second ever Nobel Prize for Economics in 1970. In fact, the USA was only the third country. The first Nobel was jointly for Ragnar Frisch, a Norwegian, and Jan Tinbergen, a Dutch. Baumol also received a letter from Koopmans, April 16, 1981, stating of that research of his cited by the Nobel Committee, was done at the Cowles Commission, funded by NSF from 1956-76. In Baumol papers, accession 2001-0170, box 7, folder "NSF-National Science Foundation (Budget Material).

³² A NSF grant is also a marker of prestige. Nobel candidates were soon making their case with evidence that they had deserved NSF support, and NSF officers making sure no prize-worthy economist was without an NSF grant.

funding was required to bring analysis and information to bear on policy making. At the same time, he established economists' authority in budgetary policy and condemning the cuts as mean-spirited and unreasoned.

Since 1981 social scientists have gone to Congress by the hand of COSSA, representing the collective interests of the sciences. Fitting the subjects of the public debate, the COSSA representatives in the early 1980s were either economists or scholars that could speak with authority about the productive benefits of research in the social sciences.³³ The list of witnesses included in 1982, and again in 1983, Thomas Juster from the University of Michigan, and head of the Institute for Social Research; in 1983, Elinor Olstrom (a political scientist and first woman to win the Nobel in economics in 2009); in 1984, Henry Aaron an economist at the Brookings Institution; and in 1985, the political economist Mancur Olson. Other witnesses included sociologists, and linguists, but prominently were the economists. These scholars' profile allowed them to speak of the economic benefits of social research, but they also defied simple disciplinary identification, suggesting unity and cooperation among the social sciences.

Unity of the social sciences could be achieved politically, in efforts to move Congress to increase NSF's appropriations, but to define a joint program for the social sciences proved impossible. In early 1981, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) had set up a special committee ostensibly to produce a "modern equivalent of *Science: The Endless Frontier*".³⁴ In January 1983, as its report was readied for publication, there was a companion initiative by the NSF to encourage scholarly communities to establish research priorities and solicit patronage based on them.³⁵ Juster's

³³ The NSF was doing the same. Through its annual reports, it was showcasing as "Social and Economic Science" primarily grants given to economists, examples include "Determinants of Economic Growth" in 1980; "Linking Micro and Macro levels of analysis" in 1981; "Economic Change and Family Life" and "The Theory of Industry Structure" in 1982; "An economic approach to the family" and "School and Job Mismatch" in 1983; "Money, Credit and Economic Activity" in 1984.

³⁴ In Baumol papers, accession 2001-0170, box 7, folder "NSF-National Science Foundation (Budget Material). Baumol was also involved with the "Committee on Government-University Relationships in Support of Science" of the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine (aka the National Research Council) items from February 1982 on folder "National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Relationships between University and Government" Baumol writes a one page piece on productivity as member of the Subcommittee on Principles, the piece starts "This country now faces a productivity problem which constitutes an unprecedented threat to its competitive position in the international marketplace" (...) "The available statistics constitute a most disturbing parallel with those for Great Britain during the period of its decline."

³⁵ The first volume was titled "Behavioral and Social Science Research: A National Resource" and was published in 1982, the second volume was titled "Behavioral and Social Sciences: 50 Years of Discovery" and was published in 1983, and the third volume was "Behavioral and Social Sciences: Achievements and Opportunities" published in 1988.

testimony in 1982, which was offered twice that year and which he slightly reedited for 1983, identified research futures. Areas that with NSF support, promised important new insights were study of savings behavior, productivity of the firm, organizational structure, individuals choice under uncertainty, family structure and development. Other testimonies also set out informally, without institutional sanction, research futures. But these were “examples”, not priorities, and not a contract with Congress. The coordination between the sciences and the government agents was done not by listing an agreed set of responsibilities and rights, but through personal contacts and careers that overlapped lobbying, government and professional service.

7. An advocacy network

Economists’ defense of NSF funding was surprisingly vigorous and it matched feelings of disappointment towards the funding priorities of the philanthropies. Private foundations, with indifference or suspicion towards social science, had moved to establish programs of their own design, targeting problem areas such as energy or the environment, rather than allocating patronage according to the solicitations of scholars.³⁶ Economists remained unconvinced that the appropriate response to constrained patronage was to manage the research process with the establishment and enforcement of collective research priorities. Consequently they resisted COSSA's, NSF's and NAS's attempts to establish any such commitments.³⁷ This isn't to say however that economists were unconcerned with the types of research conducted. To the contrary, the AEA exerted greater vigilance and control over the NSF throughout the 1980s convinced that the profession was the only constituency with the requisite knowledge to set the course of research.

The Economics program at the NSF throughout the 1980s was directed by Dan Newlon. A PhD economist trained at the University of Virginia, Newlon worked closely with both the AEA and COSSA to strengthen the economics program. In 1981, Newlon was under direct orders to refrain from lobbying against the Reagan administration’s proposed cuts. Newlon however was able to

³⁶ Theodore W. Schultz who had received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1979, had written forcefully against the biases of philanthropic patronage (Schultz 1979). In danger of being misinterpreted and potentially used as a supporter of the OMB, Schultz wrote to Stockman that “It is not my purpose to argue that there should be a reduction for example in the funds that are requested for the National Science Foundation. If this is done, it will indeed be exceedingly serious for economic research that is undertaken in universities where there is freedom of inquiry.” Letter of Ted Schultz to David Stockman, March 2, 1981, Baumol papers, box C2, Folder “NSF Amendments”.

³⁷ In 1985 the AEA representative to COSSA stated that “...the AEA has been relatively passive in its attitude concerning the role of the federal government in data collection and support of basic research” and suggested that the AEA do more to represent the interests of economists. The organizational inertia is however only part of the story since as we have seen prominent economists were eager to engage.

lobby indirectly through economists like Martin Feldstein who from 1982 to 1984 was chairman of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, and provided data to and consulted with COSSA. This was an approach that pleased economists. If Newlon and the NSF staff could convince Congress to increase funding, economists need not take the stage and risk be caught in partisan dispute or political pleading. Marc Nerlove, who had been assigned as the AEA liaison to the NSF, was selected by the Economics Program in 1983 to chair the Committee of Visitors (COV) – a team of scholars nominated by the NSF to periodically assess the program. Nerlove's report noted that research patronage to economics was compromised by the NSF's failure to justify the importance of economists' activities. Nerlove and other economists wanted the NSF to be its advocate. He remarked:

...the Committee notes with concern continued problems in presenting the results of research funded by NSF to higher administrative levels within the Foundation, the National Science Board, other scientists, and the public generally....The committee received information concerning the efforts of program staff to explain the results of research supported by the program and to make these results both interesting and intelligible to a wider audience, and to persuade investigators to do so. Although the staff has worked energetically and creatively at this task, the Committee believes that, even at present budgetary levels, enhanced priority and emphasis should be given to new avenues for the communication of the significance and excitement of the research supported by the National Science Foundation...(COV report 1981, 4)

The COV reports from the 1980s were also concerned with the types of research being financed. Although the budget for the Economics program had been reduced throughout the 1980s, economists could accept it so long as the patronage that remained was distributed according to their preferences. In fact, the most common complaint of the COVs over the 1980s was when grants were made for research that seemed to diverge from professional consensus. For example, the COV of 1986 admonished a richer NSF for extending too much funding for what they considered to be mere fads. Robert Solow, chair of the COV that year, worried at "some tendency for the program to respond by going overboard on hot new topics" and scolded the program for attempting to exercise such leadership (COV report 1986, 8). In the next COV three years later, the Economics program had to be defended for following the instructions of economists. The report stated that:

To be sure, some areas within economics are underrepresented in the program's portfolio, but these largely reflect the weight that the profession gives these fields. The Panel also strongly believes that it would be inappropriate for the Economics program to try to influence the profession by creating special programs to support research in special fields (COV report 1989, 10).

The less discretion by the program the better.

The 1970s and 1980s crisis of government patronage of social science enabled the development of a network of professionals that engaged in the soliciting of public funds and in their distribution to the disciplines. Dan Newlon is an example of this advocate career. The 1996 COV, at another difficult time for the funding of the social sciences, acknowledged in writing the role of Newlon's leadership that "the Economics program exemplifies a number of 'best practice' activities from which other NSF programs might profit. ... He has impeccable taste in research and intellectual quality. He also often identifies the promoting research of the new crop of assistant professors, nurtures them early on, and maintains contact throughout their careers." (COV report 1996, 9) The praised talent was one of anticipating the priorities of the professors.

In 2009, the AEA established a Committee on Government Relations with an AEA official who "...would not advocate for particular economic policies, but rather would attend to the professional interests of economists" and who would "coordinate" the flow of information between government officials and the Executive Committee of the AEA. After three decades of service at the NSF, the AEA hired Newlon for this lobbying post. The blurring of the distinction between the lobbyist and the public servant is also maintained by movements in the opposite direction. Roberta (Balstad) Miller, the original force behind COSSA, left that organization to become Director of the Social and Economic Sciences Division of the NSF in the mid-1980s, a lobbyist becoming a public servant.

The 1981 crisis of NSF funding and the Congressional controversies before and after, have worked to weave closer together the functions of the lobbyist and the public servant just as the NSF weaved together political constraints with the demands of the research community. With the nurture of the scholarly societies officialdom and the prominent members of the disciplines, public patronage has come to require a regular effort of publicity on behalf of the social sciences, while the job of selection of research subjects and methods is entrusted to the scientists. The emergence of this advocacy network sits well with the preferences of economists, in their reluctance to pursue publicity and public engagement while strengthening connections with political deciders through the bureaucracy.³⁸

³⁸ Herbert Stein, a Reagan adviser and economist at many policy think tanks, wrote in the mid-eighties on the "Washington Economics Industry" on how economists had penetrated all branches of government and public debate (Stein 1986).

8. “The most disinterested source of funds”

The Nobel economists praise for NSF as the “most disinterested source of funds” denotes the social sciences' aspiration to members of the *Endless Frontier*. Moved by grant applications, reviewed by peers, program officers are charged with interpreting the interests of the disciplines. Throughout the period of study, social scientists' claimed entitlement to public funds shaped the outcomes of the controversies. It was the lynchpin of the RANN initiative in 1976-77. It was structural to the rhetoric that economists and other social scientists took to Congress in defense of the 1981 budget crisis.

Yet, despite the active involvement and engagement of economists with the officers within the NSF, and their work in Congress, and their positions of influence in government, since 1980 patronage for research in economics increased less than 10% in real terms. The pattern is not unique to economics. Stagnation of NSF patronage can be observed for all the traditional social science disciplines. The 60% growth in real terms of the total social science budget for the NSF has instead been directed towards the catchall category of ‘social sciences not elsewhere classified.’ The interdisciplinary social science research funded by the NSF has captured an ever-larger share of the NSF’s social science budget. Whereas in 1981 social science research not elsewhere classified was \$26.9 million and represented 34% of the social science budget, by 1999 it had more than tripled to \$86.5 million and represented 63% of the social science budget.

The growing wealth of interdisciplinary programs to the detriment of discipline-specific programs has occasioned protest by social scientists. Keeping with our focus on economics, in 2004 the COV recommended that the Economics Program be granted a division status so that the federal budget might direct funds to the discipline.³⁹ Despite the factions disciplinary interests that emerged as each attempted to secure increased allocations, throughout the 1980s and 1990s the relationships between the social sciences were without fail collegial and non-competitive. Yet the unity of social sciences has also remained limited to performances of public solidarity. Even the mild proposal of establishing research priorities to bolster the case for increased funding in Congress, which was one COSSA's initial mandates, seemed too drastic a move. In part, this was a result of their easy victory in the 1981 crisis. Stockman's blunders and the ultimate dismissal of his plans seemed to be evidence enough of social sciences' strength and authority. The legacy of the controversies of the

³⁹ The Economics Program responded to this recommendation by saying that the NSF and not the officers of the Economics Program were responsible for making such decisions. No action was taken by the NSF in reorganizing the Economics Program and the 2007 COV found it ‘puzzling’ that the NSF proposed no alternative to forming a separate economics division.

late 1970s and 1980s was the development of a network of advocates for the social sciences. Their discourse and their practices have kept the peering eye of the Congress at a distance and safeguarded the interests of the disciplines.

The emerging regime of patronage is characterized by stability and inertia. As we have shown through the Committees of Visitors the elite members of the economics profession were invited to monitor the subjects of support. The result was that few changes have happened in the topics and institutions that receive funds. Looking at the NSF economics program, and ranking institutions by number of grants, the top 20 of 1981-1991 was virtually the same as that of 1969-1980 (Columbia University and Brown University were replaced by Iowa University, and California Institute of Technology). Looking at the five institutions with most NSF grants, between the two periods three of the five remained unchanged: National Bureau of Economic Research, University of Chicago, and University of Pennsylvania (MIT and UC-Berkeley were replaced by Northwestern University and Stanford University). Even though the number of institutions receiving grants increased between the two periods, from 96 and 113, the distribution is comparable, the top 10 getting over half of all grants.⁴⁰

Yet the most important and less acknowledged outcome of this regime, is that it creates stasis also in the status of the social sciences in the American polity. Social scientists were unable to address the political and public challenge set by Congressional critics and Reagan officials, and the charges have continued to haunt them. The most recent controversy was initiated by Senator Tom Coburn, a Republican representing the State of Oklahoma. In a 2009 amendment, Coburn sought to prohibit the NSF from funding political science research. He argued that NSF's "political program siphons resources away from research that promises greater scientific discoveries with real world benefits" and that its subjects "have little, if anything, to do with science." (Glenn 1999)⁴¹ Coburn's amendment was voted down 62 to 36, but as we have shown his challenge is only the latest of a long lineage. The patronage regime created in the late 1970s and 1980s enables the disciplines to avoid the difficult questions of their relevance and commitment to the public good. The social

⁴⁰ The source of this data was a query on Fastlane, the database NSF provides for online queries. Using the metric of grants awarded per institution and computing a standard measure of inequality, a gini-coefficient, we obtained a value of 0.64 for 1969-1980 and one of 0.85 for 1981-1991. The increase in inequality can be attributed to a rise in the number of grants awarded to the National Bureau of Economic Research that had 56 grants in the first period (about 8.5%) but in the later period had as many as 238 (17.2% of the total awarded).

⁴¹ The amendment was not a pointed indictment on the discipline of political science, as it did not discriminate on the basis of research methods or the affiliation of the scholars. The Senator's objection was to social scientists' participation in public debate and high on his list was economist Paul Krugman.

sciences have in the NSF budget a source of the funds that interest them, and them alone.

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