

TWO CHALLENGES, TWO VISIONS:
THE DADDARIO AND HARRIS PROPOSALS

As it has taken us many billions of dollars to solve some of the health problems that face us through medical research and application, so we are going to need comparable sums in social science. We are going to need many billions of dollars.

—Fred Harvey Harrington, historian and University of Wisconsin president, 1967¹

It is a regrettable consequence of the criteria that the National Science Foundation and the Congress have established for the support of social science research that, in principle, NSF must constantly determine if proposals in these fields are or are not “scientific,” whereas in the natural sciences, NSF need only determine if they are good.

—Harold Orlans, sociologist, 1967²

During the mid-to-late 1960s, the social sciences had considerable influence on major governmental policies and programs, from the War on Poverty to the War in Vietnam. “More than anything else, the vision of the Great Society has called for the insights of the behavioral sciences,” declared a 1966 *Newsweek* article on “The Proper Study of Mankind.” Further elaboration came from Joseph Kershaw, an economist who directed the Office of Economic Opportunity’s planning division and was thus responsible for coordinating and administering federal programs supporting the War on Poverty: “We want to make 32 million people better, richer, happier and more productive, and that is a behavioral-sciences problem.”³ In this context, the question of whether federal policies and programs for the social sciences were sufficient to meet the great challenges of the day acquired a special urgency in political, scientific, and academic circles.

At the same time, however, leftist critics of the so-called Establishment argued that closer ties between the federal government and the social sciences

undermined the freedom of scholars and compromised their ability to speak truth to power. Joy Rohde and other historians have examined the questionable involvement of social scientists with military and intelligence agencies as well as associated efforts to reform the politics-patronage-social science nexus. During the 1960s, the notion that “knowledge was influenced by the matrix of power relations in which it was produced” became widespread, observes Rohde.⁴ While this notion was certainly not new, the claim that the substance of modern social science was and should be free of ethical judgments, social ideology, and political agendas now faced an avalanche of leftist criticism both inside and outside the academy. As shown in the previous chapter’s discussion of behavioralism in political science, such criticism included sharp challenges to the scientific approach because it seemed to undermine the social scientist’s ability to critique the unjust and antidemocratic status quo and promote progressive goals based on substantive inquiry into the good life and the good society.

Notwithstanding the important contributions made by historical studies on military and intelligence agencies during the 1960s, this literature has tended to obscure the increasing importance of NSF social science. Although this was far from the only agency that came under scrutiny, its special role vis-à-vis these sciences made it one of the main focal points of concern and debate. This chapter seeks to better understand the trajectory of NSF social science as well as its larger significance in the context of shifting political and intellectual currents associated with 1960s liberalism and leftist criticism. To do this, we will focus on two legislative initiatives that had far-reaching implications. The first section begins by examining the legislative history of Representative Emilio Daddario’s proposal to amend the NSF charter by making its mandate regarding the social sciences more explicit and by giving it authority to support applied research. The rest of this section explores the position of the social sciences in the first NSF venture in applied research as it took shape in the late 1960s. The second section examines the history of another legislative proposal from Senator Fred Harris that sought to give the social sciences an agency of their own.

By placing these two stories side by side, it is clear that the two politicians and their respective proposals advanced rather different views about the social sciences. While Representative Daddario accepted the NSF’s view of them as immature and needing to catch up to the natural sciences, Senator Harris questioned the very premises of that view. This basic difference

informed other significant differences in their proposals as well, concerning the standing of social sciences at the NSF and in the federal science system more broadly, their social relevance, and their relations with the natural sciences, on one hand, and the humanities, on the other. Moreover, the fates of these proposals—Daddario’s succeeded while Harris’s failed—would have deep implications for the future of NSF social science and for the place of the social sciences in the federal science system and wider society.

THE PROMISE AND PERILS OF APPLIED RESEARCH:
FROM DADDARIO TO IRRPOS

Following the vision laid out in *Science—The Endless Frontier*, common wisdom in the early postwar and early Cold War years said that progress in basic science led to practical applications of great value. But any effort to establish a timeline for this process would resist precision, as would any effort to specify the nature of the practical applications themselves. Following this line of thinking, the NSF charter gave the agency a mandate to support basic science, but no responsibility for supporting applied studies. This gave the agency a strong academic orientation, enabling it to concentrate on scientific advances by providing financial support for research projects, advanced training, and material resources such as computer facilities, equipment for laboratory and field research, and buildings. Up through the mid-1960s, NSF leaders repeatedly upheld, and mainly without quarrel, its special basic science mandate.

Basic science ideology helped to insulate the agency from political meddling, giving elite scientists considerable control over its internal affairs and priorities. Furthermore, an oft-cited passage from an appendix to *SEF* had warned that “under the pressure for immediate results ... *applied research invariably drives out pure*. ... It is pure research which deserves and requires special protection and specially assured support.”⁵ This provided another reason for the NSF to encourage the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.⁶ Speaking to this point in 1966, director Leland Haworth noted that the country needed to exercise “great caution” because “attempts to mold basic science in the direction of immediate usefulness” might “not only harm science itself but also, at least in the long run, thwart its every purpose.”⁷

Regarding the social sciences, NSF leaders had additional reasons for maintaining a distinction between agency-supported research and any

practical benefits associated with such research. As seen in previous chapters, this distinction was a key part of the strategy—originally established during the Harry Alpert years—for separating social science from the contentious spheres of ideological conflict, social reform, partisan politics, and public policy. By the early 1960s, however, the agency was, in fact, supporting various research projects that addressed topics of practical concern, such as the social psychological studies by Stanley Milgram on obedience to authority and by Leonard Berkowitz on whether watching violence leads to increases in violent behavior. Still, within the agency, interest in providing funding for social research that promised practical applications remained muted. And NSF leaders invoked its lack of authority as a reason to keep political science funding within strict limits.

But by the mid-1960s, national science policy figures were questioning the wisdom of those limitations on the agency's responsibilities and activities. Nobody pushed harder than Emilio Q. Daddario. A Democrat and lawyer from Connecticut, Daddario had served in the armed forces during World War II and the Korean War. He first won election to the House of Representatives in 1958. The following year, he obtained a position on the recently created House Committee on Science and Astronautics. And in 1963, he became chairman of that committee's new Subcommittee on Science, Research, and Development. In the coming years, Daddario became one of the nation's leading science policy authorities. Years later, he attributed his "great interest" in this area to his wartime years when "leadership in science and the applications of technology" had been "so important." Daddario's position as subcommittee chair also made him responsible for overseeing annual hearings on NSF appropriations.⁸

In 1966, Daddario introduced "A Bill to Amend the National Science Foundation Act of 1950," which called for a number of changes. Two of them involved the social sciences directly. First, Daddario proposed changing the charter so that it explicitly mentioned them—up to this point, the charter's original wording regarding "other sciences" was still seen as the basis for the agency's authority to support them. Second, he called for expanding the agency's mandate to include support for applied science. In the 1966 NSF annual report, Director Haworth drew attention to these proposed changes by noting that Daddario's subcommittee recommended "greater emphasis" on the social sciences and the "important role they can play in the development of solutions for the problems of society."⁹



Figure 4.1

Emilio Daddario (Center), U.S. Democratic Representative from Connecticut and Chairman of the House Subcommittee of Science, Research and Development, with U.S. Astronauts Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin, and Michael Collins, September 16, 1969. Courtesy of Wesleyan University Library, Special Collections & Archives.

Hearings held by Daddario's subcommittee before and after the introduction of his bill revealed a range of views regarding NSF social science. Some of the strongest advocates of expanding its mandate focused not only on supporting work that would yield practical benefits but also on understanding the particular character of the social sciences in ways that the natural science-oriented NSF had not yet done. California Representative George E. Brown Jr. complained that "a certain 'attitude' had taken hold" within the federal science establishment, which recognized the natural sciences as "the sciences" while denying "other fields of science ... full [scientific] status or stature." Yet the nation desperately needed these other fields to address "the whole problem of pathology in our society today," such as criminology. To Brown, more robust support for social research seemed just as important as more funding for "high-energy physics."¹⁰

Much as the politician Brown found the reigning scientific hierarchy problematic, the political scientist Pendleton Herring, though he supported the Daddario amendment, suggested that a stronger commitment to the social sciences would be more likely if people stopped trying to force them into an inappropriate natural science mold. Herring, as noted before, was the SSRC president and the chairman of the NSF social sciences advisory committee. Because agency leaders were “predominantly concerned with the natural sciences,” “very often,” observed Herring, “those in charge of the social sciences have to think: ‘Now, what would be an equivalent?’” Thus, “you start off in the language, let’s say, of physics, and try to find some counterpart to that in the field of sociology.”¹¹

Director Haworth also favored Daddario’s proposal, although without criticizing the established scientific hierarchy as Brown and Herring did. According to Haworth, the time had come to give the agency an explicit mandate to support the social sciences. He also favored giving the agency the authority to encourage these sciences to “play an increasingly important role in coping with some of the major problems facing society today.”¹² However, Haworth parted ways with Brown and Herring when it came to the relationships between the social and natural sciences. He was particularly concerned about the possibility that alleged differences between the two branches of science would undermine their ability to work together on research relevant to practical problems. Thus, he warned that increased federal support, which he favored, should not be used to encourage the social sciences to work separately from the natural sciences. Working in isolation would yield piecemeal and fragmented approaches. To avoid this danger, he proposed that researchers concerned with practical applications should adopt a “broad systems-type approach,” one that would “draw upon and unite in one common effort” the natural and social sciences.¹³ It seemed to him “particularly appropriate” for the NSF to fund applied social research “in coordination with physical sciences and engineering.”¹⁴

Beyond revealing conflicting views about the social sciences and their relationship with the natural sciences, discussion of the Daddario proposal exposed worries within the NSF and the federal science establishment about giving the social sciences a bigger role. The agency’s governing board told Congress that “expanded efforts” in this field had to be informed by a “clear awareness of the many difficulties inherent in such studies.”¹⁵ In addition, Guy Stever, a physicist who served on a science advisory panel to Daddario’s

subcommittee and subsequently became the NSF director, recalled years later that while he supported the effort to strengthen support for the social sciences, some other panel members disapproved, saying, basically, that “the social sciences aren’t really sciences at all, and worse, they’ll take money away from the physical and biological sciences which are really important.”¹⁶

Sharp criticism came from the chemist and influential science policy figure Donald Hornig as well. A member of the Manhattan Project generation and one of the youngest scientists elected to membership in the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), he was arguably the nation’s most powerful science adviser during the mid-1960s. The number of high-level positions held by him simultaneously is remarkable: president’s chief science advisor, chairman of the President’s Science Advisory Committee, director of the Office of Science and Technology, and chairman of the Federal Council for Science and Technology. Commenting on the notion that the social sciences had grown into adulthood and were finally ready to take their place alongside the natural sciences, Hornig argued that the former were, in fact, woefully immature. They had “not yet evolved the kind of basic laws and principles” found in the natural sciences. Furthermore, social researchers were “only learning to become quantitative and predictive.” Hornig therefore proposed, much as Haworth did, that federal science policy should encourage the social sciences to “develop more productively through close interaction with the physical and biological sciences.”¹⁷

Tempered enthusiasm characterized Daddario’s own views as well. This is not surprising considering that the Connecticut representative worked closely with the NAS, NASA, and other natural science-oriented nodes of power inside the federal science establishment.¹⁸ In agreement with some of the skeptical views, Daddario emphasized that any additional federal support for the social sciences needed to be kept in check. Lest he be misunderstood, Daddario specified that “the intent” of his amendment was “by no means to direct a disproportionate amount of total NSF support for the social sciences.” For good measure, he added that these sciences, although “extremely important to human welfare,” were “still relatively primitive.”¹⁹

Daddario also did not seek to rock any boats regarding research on explosive political and social issues. At one point, Pennsylvania Republican Representative James Fulton asked if proposed changes would lead to NSF supporting social research on sensitive topics such as segregation, civil rights, transportation, urban renewal, or housing. “Just where does it

stop?” Fulton queried. In response, Daddario explained that, no, the intent of his legislation did not “lend credence” to such fears.²⁰

On July 8, 1968, after a few years of consideration and debate, Congress passed the Daddario amendment,²¹ also known as the Daddario-Kennedy bill, in recognition of Massachusetts Democrat Edward Kennedy’s role in sponsoring a companion Senate bill. The standard account of the NSF’s efforts to support the biological sciences, by the historian of science Toby Appel, reveals that this legislation marked a key inflection point for the agency.²² More recently, science studies scholar Janet Abbate explains that the Daddario amendment contributed to an emerging understanding during the 1960s that “categorized applied research as a form of science rather than technology.”²³ Regarding the social sciences, the agency’s new responsibility to support relevant research could hardly have been anticipated when its original charter was approved back in 1950 or at any point during the agency’s first dozen years or so. Note as well that although the Daddario amendment succeeded in the sense that it was approved and became law, that success had not put to rest conflicting views raised during the legislative hearings regarding the social sciences’ scientific nature, their practical promise, and their position at the NSF and in the federal science system more generally.

With the Daddario amendment’s passage, uncharted waters lay ahead for NSF social science. Seeking guidance, the governing board set up a Special Commission on the Social Sciences, tasked with producing a report about increasing “the useful application of the social sciences in the solution of contemporary social problems.” The commission, led by Orville G. Brim Jr., a sociologist and the president of the Russell Sage Foundation, published its final report under the apt title *Knowledge into Action* (1969). At all “levels in the federal government where major policy is made, the social sciences should be deeply involved,” stated the Brim Report. In addition, since “disciplinary structures” often compromised the “attack on social problems,” greater support for interdisciplinary work was needed to address “complex social problems.”²⁴ Following that line of thinking, as well as suggestions from an advisory committee on engineering, in 1969, the NSF created a new program called Interdisciplinary Research Relevant to Problems of Our Society (IRRPOS).

The agency’s first “catalyst effort” in this area, IRRPOS provided support for “projects involving several disciplines but with a central engineer-

ing component and closer to ‘action’ than had been customary during the agency’s first two decades.”²⁵ The program’s leader was Joel A. Snow, a physicist with a PhD from Washington University in St. Louis who first joined the NSF as program director in theoretical physics. (After nearly a decade with the NSF, Snow would move on to the White House Office of Science and Technology and then the Department of Energy.)²⁶

From the outset, the role of the social sciences in IRRPOS seemed problematic, for a few reasons. For one, the new program’s strong physical science and engineering orientation, evident at the levels of vision and personnel, meant that the social sciences would probably not be well represented or well integrated.

In addition, as the bold social science–informed policy initiatives launched under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations turned into battlegrounds marked by political, social, and ideological conflicts, the practical value of the social sciences came under increasing scrutiny, even by many figures who had recently looked to them for guidance. To take just one example from what soon became a large body of scholarly and more popular literature, consider the shifting position of Daniel Moynihan, a prominent figure when it came to thinking about the policy-making value of the social sciences. A sociologist, national policy adviser, and in later years New York Democratic senator, Moynihan was a well-known but also controversial figure due to his role in crafting the 1965 governmental study *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, commonly known as the Moynihan Report.²⁷ Here, Moynihan relied heavily on social science statistics, research, and analysis as a basis for understanding and addressing the problems of family life in black communities. He sought to deploy the social sciences on behalf of the “general assumptions of optimistic, ‘can-do’ liberalism,” notes his biographer Godfrey Hodgson.²⁸

But a few years later, in 1969—just as IRRPOS was getting off the ground—Moynihan published *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding*, which included a scathing assessment about social science expertise in the War on Poverty. He wrote,

Social science is at its weakest, at its worst, when it offers theories of individual or collective behavior which raise the possibility, by controlling certain inputs, of bringing about mass behavioral change. No such knowledge now exists. Evidence is fragmented, contradictory, incomplete. Enough snake oil has been sold in this Republic to warrant the expectation that public officials will begin reading the labels.

The truth might seem harsh, Moynihan argued, but “forward vision” generated by the social sciences remained “rather blurred.”²⁹

Furthermore, the NSF’s own social science advisory committee warned that failure to meet overblown expectations could hamper the agency’s efforts. In his 1968 annual report to Director Haworth, the advisory committee chairman, M. Brewster Smith, pointed out that “some of the same spokesmen who call upon social science to produce near-magical solutions to highly intractable problems” will probably be “vehement in their criticism when no magical solutions are forthcoming.” Throughout a long and successful career, Smith, a social psychologist, was steadfast in his pursuit of publicly oriented scholarship in such areas as race relations, social justice, and international conflict. He also served as president of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (1958–1959), helped create the field of peace psychology, and received the American Psychological Association’s 1988 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest. Nevertheless, in 1968, at a time of growing attacks on federal initiatives informed by social science expertise, Smith warned that “inappropriate expectations” for the NSF’s nascent applied research activities could pave the way for “disillusionment and rejection.” (In his academic writings, Smith also criticized the effort by social scientists to adopt a natural science model of inquiry, with its strong emphasis on quantitative methods and a value-neutral, objective approach. It is not clear, however, if Smith critiqued the NSF’s scientific approach specifically.)³⁰

Also worrisome was the possibility that the new mandate to support applied science would compromise the NSF’s longstanding commitment to basic research. This threat, which had already aroused some concern during the Daddario subcommittee hearings, informed further worries toward the decade’s end due to mounting budgetary pressures. As part of the broader expansion in federal science funding since Sputnik, national support for applied research, including applied social research, had grown dramatically—as had national support for basic research. But expansion ended in the late 1960s. In fact, when measured in constant dollars, federal science support began to decline in 1967. Although nobody could have known so, another seventeen years would pass before the federal science budget once again reached the level achieved in 1967.³¹

The onset of the decline, due to a downturn in the national economy but also to increasing tensions in government-science-university affairs—

marked by the antiwar movement, campus protests over military funding, and frustrations in the Congress and White House with the nation's scientific elite—naturally worried NSF leaders. In the 1968 annual report, Director Haworth explained that due to budget cuts, the agency had been “compelled to limit its support for new projects and to reduce the funds for its programs, especially graduate facilities, specialized equipment . . . fellowships and traineeships.” At the same time, the costs of scientific research, education, and instrumentation were soaring. Although Haworth himself did not make the inference, these “converging pressures” made it all but inevitable that any new social science ventures requiring significant resources would receive even closer scrutiny than they would have had budgetary conditions been more favorable.³²

Still, whether those concerns and trends would have a lasting impact on national science policy and federal funding priorities could not be discerned in the late 1960s. Similarly, how the contradictory forces of enthusiasm for relevant social science, on one hand, and criticism of the practical effectiveness of social science, on the other hand, would shape the overall balance of NSF social science activities in the coming years remained unclear.

It was also not clear that the changes based on the 1968 Daddario amendment were sufficient in light of other concurrent challenges regarding the social sciences, their standing within the federal science system, and their broader social relevance. Perhaps the time had come, as SSRC president Pendleton Herring proposed, to stop viewing social research as an underdeveloped version of the type of inquiry associated with a hard science such as physics. Perhaps as well the federal science establishment should stop treating social scientists as second-class citizens, as Harry Alpert had proposed in the wake of Sputnik and as Representative Brown told Daddario's subcommittee in the mid-1960s. As it turns out, while discussion of the Daddario amendment was still under way, these challenges gained a powerful advocate in the figure of Senator Fred Harris.

RETHINKING THE UNEASY PARTNERSHIP: SENATOR HARRIS'S NSSF PROPOSAL

During discussion of the Daddario amendment, NSF leaders expressed interest in supporting social science with practical as well as scholarly aims in view, but this did not challenge the scientific approach. Nor did passage of

that amendment provide any such challenge. However, during the mid-to-late 1960s, more and more voices inside and outside the academy suggested that to address matters of human welfare and social policy effectively, social scientists had to abandon various tenets associated with the scientific vision, including the disinterested investigative stance and the commitment to value neutrality. In addition, social movements focused attention on the nature and uses of the natural sciences in ways that made their status as a purportedly objective and apolitical model of inquiry worth emulating more problematic than before. From the antiwar and environmental movements to those for racial and gender equality, critics charged that the natural sciences had an elitist and antidemocratic character; that they supported unjust social hierarchies, rapacious capitalism, and murderous militarism; and that they preferred mechanistic explanations and technical solutions at the expense of humanistic values and democratic reforms.³³

Against this complex background, Oklahoma Democratic Senator Fred Harris developed a proposal to create a National Social Science Foundation (NSSF). As we will see below, the case advanced by Harris in support of this proposal presented a powerful challenge to the Cold War federal science system's scientific commitments, its treatment of the social sciences as second-class citizens, and the NSF's approach to them in particular.³⁴

Born in 1927 into a poor Oklahoma sharecropper family, Harris developed a thirst for knowledge and a passion for helping individuals, communities, and regions that faced special hardships. After completing high school during the Great Depression, Harris did his undergraduate studies with a major in government at the University of Oklahoma, followed by legal studies at the same institution. The year 1954 proved to be big, as he graduated from law school, got married, established a law firm, and entered politics as a Democrat in the Oklahoma State Senate. A decade later—in 1964—he moved into national politics as a U.S. senator. Bright, hardworking, and ambitious, Harris became close friends with prominent liberal Democrats, including Senators Robert Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, and Walter Mondale. He had good relations with President Johnson and Vice-President Hubert Humphrey as well.³⁵

At mid-decade, Harris established himself as an expert on science and government affairs. When, upon Harris's urging, the Senate Government Committee on Operations created a Subcommittee on Government Research, he was appointed chairman. Besides attending to a wide range of

policy issues, the so-called Senator for Science revealed a willingness to challenge the “science establishment,” for example, by criticizing federal research policies that dramatically favored some regions of the country over others.³⁶

Harris also became involved in the raging controversy over Project Camelot, a massive, unclassified social research project designed by the Army’s Special Operations Research Office. Couched in the language of social systems analysis, Camelot’s grandiose goals included developing a scientific model of revolutionary movements to help the U.S. influence the course of such movements around the world, from South America to Southeast Asia. In 1965, when political communications and media exposure raised worrisome questions about Camelot’s implications, the project became a key focal point in a widespread debate about the nature and impact of the growing military–social science partnership. According to many critics, Camelot and a slew of related studies showed that scholars were willing to sell their souls to the highest bidder—the military. The following year, Harris used his new subcommittee to investigate these problems, including the question of whether civilian sources of federal funding should be augmented to complement, and perhaps in some cases replace, military patronage.³⁷

In October 1966, Harris introduced a Senate proposal for a new social science agency (S. 836), accompanied by a statement about the need to improve the militarized image of the U.S. abroad. A recent trip to Latin America—where criticisms of Project Camelot and other projects funded by U.S. military, intelligence, and propaganda agencies had erupted—convinced Harris that the nation desperately needed to “civilianize” its image and protect its scholars working there. With this in mind, he put forth a proposal for a new civilian agency that would provide the social sciences with the funding they needed. The suggestion to create a separate social science agency had initially arisen twenty years earlier, during the postwar NSF debate. As we saw, that suggestion had received little attention during discussions that placed an overwhelming emphasis on the natural sciences and inspired a range of anti-social science sentiments from powerful and mainly conservative natural scientists and politicians. But now, in the mid-1960s, a time of growing national interest in social science–informed solutions to domestic and foreign policy problems, Harris and his staff leader Steve Ebbin, who had a doctorate in political science from Syracuse University, anticipated that the idea of giving the social sciences an agency of their own would receive serious consideration.³⁸



Figure 4.2

Fred R. Harris, U.S. Democratic senator from Oklahoma, with members of the Kerner Commission, created in 1967 by President Johnson to study the problems of racial unrest and develop solutions. Harris is seated in the center and looking at the camera. Courtesy of Fred R. Harris.

Indeed, Harris's proposal became a major item of consideration in political and scholarly discussions about national funding for the social sciences and their position in the federal science establishment. After he introduced S. 836, the Senate took no official action before the year ended. However, behind the scenes, Harris convinced many of his peers to support his bill. Thus, when he reintroduced it in February 1967, S. 836 had the approval of nineteen cosigners, among them Senators Edward Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Walter Mondale.³⁹

Later that year, Harris's subcommittee held hearings on the proposal. About 100 witnesses from civilian and national security agencies, scientific organizations, higher education, and the social sciences testified over the course of twelve days.⁴⁰

The following year, Harris's subcommittee approved the NSSF bill, as did the parent committee on government operations. The latter issued a supporting document called a committee print, which presented an extensive defense of the bill based on points Harris had assembled between 1966 and

1968.⁴¹ Harris also made sure his initiative received widespread attention by giving speeches on the Senate floor and writing articles for *Science* and various scholarly journals.⁴²

Harris's NSSF legislation, which went through a number of iterations in the late 1960s, drew heavily on the NSF example while also advancing an ambitious vision for stimulating progress in social science as a scholarly and socially engaged enterprise. The proposed agency's structure would be similar to the established NSF, with a twenty-four-member governing board, a director, and a deputy director, all to be appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate. Regarding fields of interest, the new agency would seek to promote social science scholarship broadly, including but not necessarily limited to the following disciplines and fields of study: political science, geography, linguistics, communications, and international relations. The agency would also encourage social science contributions to democracy, based on the premise that "democracy demands knowledge and insight into the problems that man and nations face in interacting one with the other." Furthermore, the agency would promote these sciences because it seemed clear that the nation's strength depended not only on "superior power, wealth, or technology" but also on "leadership in the realm of knowledge and ideas."⁴³

Harris's initiative also addressed questions of scholarly freedom and political sensitivity that had become so worrisome during the Camelot controversy. In general, the proposed agency would strive to establish "a climate encouraging freedom of thoughts, imagination, and inquiry," based on the premise that the country's "long-range interests" would be "best be served by a free and independent academic community." Although the agency could support international activities, NSSF-funded projects in foreign countries would require prior notification of and approval by their governments. The results of NSSF-funded research would be made freely available to the public as well. No security restrictions would be permitted.⁴⁴

Regarding the agency's budget, Harris suggested that first year appropriations would be capped at \$20 million, although he expected much larger budgets in the future.⁴⁵ Dankwart Rustow, a political scientist at Columbia University's School of International Development and a RAND consultant, suggested that a higher starting budget of \$50 million would be more appropriate.⁴⁶ An even bolder suggestion came from the historian and University of Wisconsin president Fred Harrington, who spoke—as seen in the opening quote by him—of needing billions for the social sciences and mentioned a

starting budget of \$.5 billion, which, he added, would represent but “a small percentage” of the “nation’s annual investment in the repair of social damage.”⁴⁷

As Harris’s thinking matured, his pro-NSSF case developed into a substantial challenge to the federal science establishment. Although initially the Oklahoma senator focused on protecting the image of the U.S. and the social sciences from foreign criticism, his subcommittee’s investigation of federal support for and use of these sciences led him to a more critical viewpoint that incorporated ideas associated with the New Left. This group of organizations and individuals found inspiration in various advocates of critical social inquiry, including members of the Frankfurt school and the American sociologist C. Wright Mills, who charged mainstream social science with upholding and obscuring the realities of power and exploitation in the modern world—points we encountered before in the postbehavioralist challenge within political science.⁴⁸

Harris modified his NSSF proposal accordingly. In 1966, he had suggested that because of its status as a civilian funding agency, the NSSF would help to soften the militarized image of the U.S. and its scholars abroad. However, his initial proposal stated that the agency could carry out studies requested by other governmental units such as the military on a reimbursable basis, with total support from such transfers capped at 25 percent of the agency’s annual expenditures. But in later versions of his bill, Harris eliminated this possibility, because he now understood that transfers from mission-oriented agencies and especially national security agencies would threaten scholarly freedom and intellectual integrity in the social sciences, which, in turn, would harm the agency’s reputation.⁴⁹

In addition, although Harris always supported expansion in NSF social science, he grew critical of the established agency’s cautious approach. Because of the NSF’s special role in looking after the general well-being of American science, Harris saw its carefully circumscribed funding policies and practices as a special problem. The NSF had helped to place the natural sciences “at the center of the stage,” while the social sciences, in his words, had been “left out in the cold.” Agreeing with the political scientist Rustow, the historian Harrington, and many other critics of the NSF, he charged that its support for the social sciences was paltry. He blamed the agency for relegating them to “second class citizenship.” He also found its adherence to the “unity of science theme,” as “interpreted” from the perspective of the natural scientist or physical scientist, stifling.⁵⁰

As the 1968 Committee Print supporting Harris's NSSF proposal put it, the NSF had "given very little or no support at all to certain disciplines and methodologies within the social sciences."⁵¹ More generally, its cautious approach had hampered the intellectual progress and practical contributions of the social sciences, Harris noted, thus limiting their ability to help the nation "confront its myriad social problems." The latter included unacceptably high levels of "discontent and alienation" and serious problems of "unemployment and indigency," which persisted "despite increased efforts to solve them."⁵²

In making his case, Harris drew attention to limited NSF support for political science. We have already seen that the struggle for inclusion of this discipline had been rather difficult in the preceding years. In light of the perception that political science, perhaps more so than other disciplines, dealt with matters that were likely to attract unwanted political scrutiny, agency leaders appealed to established hard-core funding criteria to ensure that various lines of inquiry within the discipline would not be eligible for funding. Even after the agency created a political science program, the level of support remained low, as Harris noted. Remember that in 1966, the year when Harris first introduced his NSSF proposal, the NSF had approved funding for only seventeen applications, amounting to only \$336,000, as Harris himself pointed out.⁵³

Some other fields of social research had fared even worse though. For example, the miniscule level of funding for research in law seemed extreme. Neither the NSF nor any other federal agency had a program dedicated to supporting this work. Yet many figures in the legal and social science communities had recently argued that law, or at least certain types of empirically grounded legal research and practice, deserved recognition as an important field within the social science enterprise.⁵⁴ At one point during the 1967 NSSF hearings, Harry Eckstein, a Princeton University development studies expert, went so far as to declare that the existing NSF treated not just his discipline, political science, but all of the other social sciences as well "as poor and stupid stepchildren."⁵⁵

Also worrisome, the NSF seemed unduly hesitant to support social research relevant to social problems, due to a fear that controversy over such research might jeopardize the agency's core commitments and its "natural science orientation." According to the Committee Print on Harris's bill, in order for social scientists to address the nation's "growing social problems" effectively, they needed encouragement to undertake "innovative

and, perhaps, controversial thinking and research.” Such work could offer “a critical assessment of our social values, our priorities, and the existing national programs and approaches for implementing them.” Seen in this light, a new agency, with a “strong legislative mandate,” was needed to support social researchers investigating the “root causes of social problems.”⁵⁶

The pro-NSSF case developed by Senator Harris also noted that relatively meager support for the social sciences at the NSF and elsewhere in the federal science system was the result of massive changes privileging the natural sciences since the 1940s. Not long before that, during the New Deal era, the position of the social sciences vis-à-vis the natural sciences had been much stronger. For example, in 1938, the social sciences had received 24 percent of the total federal support for scientific research. But during World War II and the Cold War years, shifts in American science policy rendered support for the social sciences “relatively superficial.” The decline in the percentage of funding seemed alarming. In 1966, of the total federal support for basic scientific research, the social sciences received only 2.4 percent. And of the total federal support for applied research, they received merely 3.5 percent.⁵⁷

With this historical perspective in mind, Harris anticipated that the proposed agency would tackle a number of vital issues. With an initial budget of \$20 million, followed by substantial increases in subsequent years, the agency would provide a “quantum leap” in federal social science funding. Substantial NSSF support would, in turn, “revitalize” social research programs in other agencies. Harris explained that he hoped the existing NSF would beef up its social science efforts as well. However, it seemed unrealistic to expect it to undertake the deep reforms needed to make the social and natural sciences “coequals.”⁵⁸

Historical commentary has typically claimed that Harris’s bill had little support from social scientists themselves. Consider the remarks from the early 1990s by the eminent Harvard historian I. B. Cohen and his Harvard colleague Harvey Brooks, a physicist and a former member of the NSF governing board and of the President’s Science Advisory Committee. In a published interview with Brooks, Cohen asserted that social scientists who testified on the NSSF bill at congressional hearings expressed “serious misgivings.” Brooks concurred, declaring that “most” social scientists “opposed” Harris’s proposal. Harris’s biographer, Richard Lowitt, also claimed that the response among social scientists, as well as among natural scientists, was

“tepid.” More recently, Joy Rohde, in her book on the militarization of the social sciences, has stated that “most social scientists were unreceptive to his proposal.”⁵⁹

Yet this viewpoint is not supported by my review of the relevant bodies of evidence. Consideration of social science testimony at congressional hearings, correspondence from social scientists to Harris’s subcommittee, and academic and government publications reveal the presence of deep disagreements and a wide division of opinion within the social science community. Interestingly, this division of opinion was noted at an early date by the sociologist Harold Orlans. One of the most knowledgeable commentators on the social science–government partnership during the 1960s, Orlans had been an analyst at the NSF in the late 1950s and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution from 1960 to 1973. After careful study of the NSSF debate, Orlans reported, in 1971, that “as a group, social scientists” were “thoroughly divided” over Senator Harris’s proposal.⁶⁰

The proposal’s supporters included many accomplished scholars and scholar-administrators who understood the political, institutional, and intellectual contexts that shaped social science funding. In addition to the political scientist Rustow and the historian Harrington, as mentioned above, this pro-NSSF group included the following: the psychologists Launor Carter, Rensis Likert, and Gardner Murphy; the sociologists Kingsley Davis and Daniel Moynihan; the economists Samuel Hays and F. Max Millikan; the anthropologists Paul Bohannon and Margaret Mead; the political scientists Don Price, Warren Miller, and Evron Kirkpatrick (who, as we saw in chapter 3, led the push to include political science in the NSF in a constrained manner that did not sit well with his more eclectic vision for the discipline); the historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and the physicist-turned-historian of science Gerald Holton; and the legal scholars Wex Malone and Myres McDougal.⁶¹

The largest contingent represented the “have nots” at the NSF and within the federal science system more generally. Some were from disciplines that received little funding, such as law, political science, and history, as well as more recently established specialties, including Latin American studies, Asian studies, and African studies. Some of them, such as the political scientist James Robinson (who, as noted in the previous chapter, complained that studies about the good life and the good society were not eligible for NSF funding), saw value in investigative approaches including historical and normative inquiry that seemed suspiciously soft, if not altogether unscientific,

to the natural science-oriented establishment and to social scientists who themselves were committed to the hard-core end of the social research continuum.⁶²

Also noteworthy, a number of scholars who did not support the NSSF initiative were nevertheless adamant about the need for dramatic improvements in the standing of the social sciences at the NSF. Some of them also voiced deep skepticism about the NSF's scientific approach. Unlike Harris, who thought that only a new agency could accomplish those goals, these individuals proposed that, with sufficient encouragement from the political and scholarly spheres, the existing NSF might be able to. Thus, even when they had doubts about whether this would actually happen, they recommended giving the agency a chance to change its ways.

A good example is the economist Carl Kaysen, who had served as President Kennedy's deputy special assistant for national security affairs. Starting in 1966, Kaysen replaced the physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer as director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. Regarding the proposed NSSF, Kaysen feared that it would be more "vulnerable to the winds of political controversy" than the established NSF, but he also rejected the latter's scientific approach. The English usage of the word *science*, Kaysen noted, typically referred to the natural sciences. But a much broader understanding, which he strongly preferred, could be found in continental Europe, where the term *science* covered "the whole range of organized intellectual and scholarly activity." Kaysen wanted the NSF to adopt this broader understanding. In addition, regarding institutional representation and power within the NSF, Kaysen proposed that a social scientist should serve as deputy director and then director.⁶³

Along these same lines, Aaron Wildavsky, chairman of the University of California-Berkeley political science department, told Congress that his first inclination was to stick with the NSF. Wildavsky added, however, that "no single method or school of thought should be allowed to prevail." He agreed that major steps needed to be taken to avoid "timidity" and, more positively, to provide adequate support for "controversial projects." He recommended changing the agency's name to the "National Physical and Social Science Foundation." And he proposed that it should consider having a social scientist as its director.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, the strongest critics of Harris's proposal typically came from the "haves." The majority were "establishment" social scientists, as Harold

Orlans put it, including “influential advisers to government agencies and leaders in the affairs of the Social Science Research Council, the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Science Foundation.”⁶⁵

This group applauded the NSF’s emphasis on the unity of the sciences, even if some of them also believed that the agency should greatly increase its level of social science funding. Take the case of Herbert Simon, originally trained as a political scientist but at the time of the 1967 NSSF hearings a professor of computer science and psychology at the Carnegie Institute of Technology and also the chairman of the NAS’s Division of Behavioral Sciences. Simon testified that the unity-of-science approach was “basically sound and aimed in the right direction.” However, finding the NSF’s social science budget woefully inadequate, he proposed a 20 percent increase every year until it reached \$1.5 billion.⁶⁶ The latter figure was ninety times greater than the NSF’s 1967 social science research budget.

NSF leaders themselves defended its social sciences efforts in familiar terms. Consistent with their support for the Daddario bill, Leland Haworth noted that he agreed with Senator Harris that finding solutions to “crucial problems” required greater contributions from the social sciences. However, Haworth reasserted that success would depend on “their integration with the natural sciences and engineering.” Furthermore, Haworth argued, contrary to the pro-NSSF contingent, that the NSF had in fact been doing an excellent job. Since the establishment of the social science division in 1960, the agency’s financial commitments had grown between 15 and 20 percent annually, from \$1.8 million in 1960 to \$17.6 million in 1967. As of 1967, the agency also provided about 20 percent of the federal government’s total annual commitment to basic social science research. In light of the NSF’s central commitment to scientific advancement, Haworth reported that it concentrated on “the sorts of things that can be studied in a quantitative, objective way—in the same sense that one can do in the natural sciences.” The agency also stood out as virtually the sole source of federal funding for certain fields, including archaeology, history of science, and philosophy of science. And it remained the “major source of basic, non-mission oriented work” for political science, economics, linguistics, and demography.⁶⁷

Haworth also informed Congress that NSF leaders had “grave reservations” about Harris’s proposal. They believed that giving the social sciences their own agency would inspire an undesirable “splintering effect” between the natural and social sciences, thereby inhibiting interactions and undermining

the valuable “unity of scientific knowledge,” which the NSF worked so hard to promote. Creating a separate agency would also undermine the sort of “interdisciplinary collaborative research” needed to develop effective public initiatives regarding urgent problems such as environmental pollution and urban renewal. Furthermore, if people believed a new agency was primarily responsible for federal social science funding, financial appropriations from other agencies, including the NSF, could—contrary to Harris’s expectations—decline, warned Haworth.⁶⁸ In addition, although Haworth didn’t mention it in his testimony, the NSF social science advisory committee anticipated that “an independent NSSF would be enormously vulnerable to political attack”⁶⁹

From Haworth’s testimony and other documents, it is also clear that NSF leaders saw Harris’s proposal as a direct threat at two levels. First, regarding the crucial matter of budgets, an internal agency memorandum warned that a new social science agency “could very likely produce at best a leveling off of the NSF’s social sciences program or at the worst a steady decline and eventual elimination of this part of the NSF effort.”⁷⁰ Second, Harris’s pro-NSSF case directly challenged the agency’s longstanding claim that the social sciences would progress best within a unified scientific framework. In defense of that claim, Haworth insisted to Congress that federal science policy should fortify the effort to “integrate the social sciences with the natural sciences, not separate them.”⁷¹

In the end, Harris’s proposal failed. When the Senator for Science introduced it for the last time in January 1969, the number of cosponsors had risen to thirty-two—nearly a third of the entire Senate.⁷² But a number of factors undermined his initiative. Criticism from the federal science establishment and from the NSF certainly hurt. Had Director Haworth and other prominent science policy figures from the natural sciences supported Harris’s bill, its chance of success would have been much stronger. By mentioning the social sciences explicitly in the revised NSF charter and by including them in its expanded mandate to fund applied research, the 1968 Daddario amendment also played a role. In addition, by this point, the recently established National Endowment for the Humanities (f. 1965, NEH) provided some support for humanistic social research: in 1967, a total of \$150,000 for grants and fellowships spread across the four fields of sociology, political science, anthropology, and government, plus \$1.6 million spread across the four additional fields of archaeology, history, jurisprudence, and linguistics.

Of these eight fields, history received \$1.2 million—more than two-thirds of NEH funding for areas considered to have social science and humanistic components.⁷³ NEH funding may have led some legislators to believe that the task of supporting humanistic social inquiry could be accomplished without the NSSF proposal. In addition, in the House of Representatives, companion bills to Harris's Senate bill never attracted much interest.

Transformations in the national political landscape and in Harris's own career ultimately removed the NSSF proposal from further consideration. In the 1968 national elections, Nixon's victory ushered in a more conservative White House that would have been unsympathetic to any proposal for an agency whose mission included supporting controversial social research and studies critical of the status quo. Although those elections left the Democrats with majorities in both congressional branches, Republicans had gained seventeen positions in the House and three in the Senate. At the same time, Harris's views on hot-button issues such as race relations, poverty, and the Vietnam War moved him away from the increasingly embattled liberal center, marked him as a leader of the "New Populism," and placed him in conflict with moderate and conservative Democrats, including John L. McClellan, a southern senator from Arkansas who chaired the Government Operations Committee. At the decade's end, with the relationship between Harris and McClellan deteriorating and budgetary concerns in the Senate mounting, McClellan eliminated Harris's government research subcommittee. As a result, Harris lost the institutional base needed to promote his NSSF bill.⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

When compared to the difficult times for the social sciences associated with the original NSF debate, the postwar Red Scare, and the McCarthy Era, their standing within American political culture and within the federal science system had improved considerably, first during the immediate post-Sputnik years and more so during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Within this context, the NSF's expanding social science efforts acquired greater importance as well. In the second half of the 1960s, two legislative initiatives, put forth by liberal Democrats, focused discussion on NSF activities and their relationship to a wide range of issues regarding the social sciences: their scientific character, their relationships with the natural sciences and the

humanities, their contributions to human welfare, their position within the federal science system, and the level, scope, and aims of public funding.

The legislative history and passage of the Daddario amendment in the summer of 1968 marked a major dividing point in the history of the NSF its general and its engagements with the social sciences in particular. The NSF charter now mentioned the social sciences explicitly. Here, the change was largely symbolic, as the agency had already been supporting these sciences for many years and doing so on the basis of well-established authority. Still, in light of recurring questions about its responsibilities, NSF leaders, together with social scientists and their advocates inside and outside the agency, welcomed this symbolic affirmation. More important, the agency now had the authority and responsibility to support applied research, in the natural and social sciences. This change also received strong support from the NSF as well as from a wide array of politicians, science policy leaders, and social science representatives.

In the coming years, the agency's social science policies and programs were destined to become both broader and more complicated. Hints of these complications were already evident during the early development of IRRPOS, the first NSF program to promote scientific research relevant to national needs.

The other legislative proposal put forth by Senator Harris called for a new agency dedicated to the social sciences. The "Senator for Science" clearly favored expansion of NSF work in this area. But through his subcommittee's research and hearings, Harris became convinced that it was unlikely to make the sort of substantial changes he and many supporters of his NSSF proposal advocated. The mature version of this initiative envisioned a new agency designed to bring about major reforms: by strengthening the position of the social sciences in the federal science establishment; by making these sciences coequals with the natural sciences rather than second-class citizens; by fortifying their scholarly independence and integrity so they could withstand pressures to support the Establishment coming from powerful patrons, such as the military and intelligence agencies; by encouraging studies that could challenge the status quo and promote controversial, innovative thinking in ways often associated with the New Left; and by promoting a broader vision of social science that embraced the value of humanistic social inquiry.

Placing the stories of the Daddario and Harris proposals side by side has revealed that the success of the former would not achieve the goals of the

latter. In an important book on American psychology from 1940 to 1970, Ellen Herman has suggested that although Harris lost the NSSF battle, “it is arguable that the social sciences won their war with the federal government during the 1960s.” As evidence, she points to the Daddario amendment, increased NSF funding during the 1960s, and the agency’s initial forays into applied social research.⁷⁵ Yet we have seen that the legislative history of the Daddario amendment served to confirm rather than challenge the view that said the social sciences were rather immature compared to the natural sciences. The chemist and powerful federal science leader Donald Hornig emphasized that the social sciences had failed to establish basic scientific laws and principles and were also inferior to the natural sciences in the areas of quantitative analysis and prediction. Even Representative Daddario called the social sciences relatively primitive. Harris, in contrast, sought to undermine the reigning scientific hierarchy. But the failure of his proposal left intact the entrenched interests, structures, policies, and practices that kept the social sciences in a subordinate position.

It is thus also misleading to claim, as a couple of historical commentaries have done, that Harris’s proposal failed because it was “redundant.” According to this view, after the Daddario Amendment passed, Harris’s NSSF initiative really had nothing more to offer.⁷⁶ The truth, however, is that Harris’s initiative offered a major alternative to the Daddario Amendment and its position on the proper place of the social sciences at the NSF and within the federal science system. Furthermore, as Michael Reagan put it in his 1969 book, *Science and the Federal Patron*, with the failure of Harris’s initiative, the social sciences still had “no explicit home in government (i.e., no agency primarily concerned with their development and application), and . . . little representation in the policy-making framework of government-science affairs.”⁷⁷

The juxtaposition of these two episodes has also brought into clearer view the growing power of the NSF in articulating, cultivating, and advocating the unity-of-science approach. In the case of the Daddario amendment, NSF discussions about the agency’s new responsibilities for promoting applied science, including Director Haworth’s testimony, made it clear that the social sciences would be expected to work closely with the natural sciences and engineering on projects. Haworth also mentioned that such collaborations would be facilitated by the adoption of particular methodological approaches such as systems analysis. When challenges to the unity-of-science

stance arose during debate over Harris's initiative, Director Haworth further argued that separating the social sciences from the natural sciences would have deleterious consequences. This position, supported by other influential nodes in the federal science system, became an important factor in curbing support for the proposed NSSF.

As the decade came to a close, the future of NSF social science was uncertain. One could reasonably expect that the momentum acquired during the recent expansionary period would retain some power, especially in new programs for social science education and applied research. On the other hand, unless the nation's economic troubles subsided, budgetary pressures promised to dampen enthusiasm for initiatives that would require significant new resources, especially if this implied a redistribution of resources away from the natural sciences. With the Nixon administration now in power, federal science policy would surely be headed in a more conservative direction as well, which did not bode well for the social sciences. But what exactly this all might mean for NSF social science remained to be seen.