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DARK DAYS: SOCIAL SCIENCE IN CRISIS DURING THE EARLY REAGAN YEARS

> [The Reagan administration] is about to destroy some of the most important social research work in the nation for "economic" reasons and the pursuit of ideological purity.
> —Journalist Roger Witherspoon, 1981[1]

In June 1981, *Washington Post* science journalist Philip Hilts reported that the Reagan administration had "begun a social science hour at the White House." Hilts continued,

> Twice a month, the president, vice president, Cabinet and senior White House staff view charts and graphs. They listen to statisticians sketch profiles of our changing society. The object is to understand the background social facts against which policy will be mapped.

At the same time, however, "budgeters at the other end of the White House are ordering huge cuts in the programs that produce the very data the administration wants to use." "Where the hell do they think these numbers come from?" wondered one perturbed social scientist working for the new administration. Presumably, "they don't fall out of the sky."[2]

Pointing to a worry that became pervasive among social scientists and their advocates during the early 1980s, Hilts reasoned that the huge cuts would probably "kill" the "hardest, most neutral and most useful basic work in the social sciences" but not the looser, partisan work carried out by some mission agencies. Hence, it seemed particularly worrisome that the proposed cuts included substantial funding decreases for NSF social science programs. Although these programs "cost little more than half the price of maintaining the Pentagon's military bands," the new administration seemed bent on decimating them, while leaving the bands in place.[3] As Hilts's article suggests, the onset of the Reagan years posed significant threats to the

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social sciences, to their position within the federal government, and to the federal science system's efforts to promote the health of basic social science research, especially through the NSF.

The largest source of trouble was the Reagan Revolution, a realignment that made conservatism dominant in American politics and public policy discourse. The previous chapter documented the mounting political pressures and especially the resurgence of right-wing criticisms that plagued NSF social science during the latter half of the 1970s. As the political landscape lurched farther rightward during the 1980s, an alliance between religious conservatives and business interests controlled the Republican Party, which, in turn, controlled the White House. In a curious twist of fate, the new president had majored in sociology and economics during his undergraduate years at Eureka College in Illinois. Nevertheless, during Reagan's two presidential terms, conservative attacks on liberal social policies and ideas together with damning assessments of their intellectual supporters in the social sciences and elsewhere—in education, the humanities, and the mass media—reached a heightened pitch. As historians of the social sciences Roger E. Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine have recently observed, during the Reagan era, many "decision makers were hostile to social science, seen as tainted by association with the left."[4]

Unrelenting partisan attacks came from an increasingly powerful conservative "counterintellectual" establishment. During the preceding years, conservative intellectual leadership had established nodes of influence in the mass media, universities, policy institutes, think tanks, business, and politics. Reagan's ascendancy to the White House enabled a burgeoning conservative intellectual network to more fully realize its power. Again and again, figures from this network charged that American social science promoted run-away growth in the size and powers of the federal government, including crushingly burdensome economic regulations, cripplingly high tax rates, and terribly costly social welfare programs that did more harm than good to those they were designed to help. Conservative critics further charged that federally funded social research frequently turned out to be useless when it came to designing effective social programs, thus accelerating the demise of the social engineering ideal. Conservative attacks on universities and their professors for promoting leftist viewpoints that undermined good old American values, the family, Christian religion, and other sources of established authority gained renewed momentum as well. A clutch of

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influential works in this vein were penned by professors, including the best-sellers *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950–1980* (1984) by Charles A. Murray, a political scientist at the conservative Manhattan Institute when he wrote this book, and *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) by Allan Bloom, a University of Chicago philosophy professor.[5]

The counterrevolution also drew sustenance from changes within the social sciences themselves. As late as 1968, a note from the editor of *Social Research*, a scholarly journal published by the New School for Social Research, could make the following observation without being accused of exaggeration: "it may safely be said that conservative approaches are not currently in vogue in the human sciences and that the general climate of opinion in these disciplines ranges from liberal to left."[6] But in the following years, research supporting right-of-center viewpoints about human nature, the social order, and public policy matters gained ground. Of particular interest to the Reagan administration was a macroeconomic framework called supply-side economics, whose advocates championed the benefits of the free market, deregulation to minimize government interference with the supposedly natural flow of economic resources, and lower tax rates as the keys to healthy capitalist accumulation and economic productivity. These ideas reached a broad audience through the mass media and popular writings, including yet another best-seller, *Wealth and Poverty* (1981), by George Gilder, a successful investor, economic pundit, and Republican political speechwriter.[7]

For American science and science policy, the conservative ascendancy had far-reaching implications. Here, the dominant framework during the Reagan years privileged matters of economics and national security. In a 1984 book called *The New Politics of Science*, the journalist David Dickson observed that amid the "reemergence in the U.S. of an almost religious belief—dormant for much of the 1970s—in the powers of science-based technology," industrial leaders claimed that only worldwide supremacy in science and technology would allow the nation to thrive economically. At the same time, U.S. military leaders together with the White House argued for greater spending on military research, which was needed to develop increasingly sophisticated weapons. Of special interest to the NSF story, the Reagan administration also placed a "renewed emphasis" on supporting basic research, although this emphasis was now coupled with a belief that input from the private sector, especially from business, would be valuable in shaping the directions of scientific investigation.[8]

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The new science policy framework had implications for the social sciences, too, as it gave short shrift to work oriented toward "social objectives," such as the protection of the natural environment, public health, and social welfare. Consequently, federal support for "various aspects of science, in particular science education and social science research" suffered. Not long before, the federal science system had given those matters greater emphasis. But by the early 1980s, one could hear only a "few echoes of the calls for relevance to social—as opposed to military and industrial—needs in federal research programs."[9]

The broad changes sketched above are crucial for understanding how NSF social and behavioral sciences fared during the early 1980s. The first section of this chapter analyzes the White House's 1981 proposal for a massive reduction in funding for those sciences and an ensuing widespread sense of crisis in American social science. The rest of the chapter considers the harried responses by social scientists and their supporters, as they tried to comprehend what was happening and developed strategies to curtail the impending damage. The second section turns to the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), which, in a surprising manner, emerged as a formidable force in the struggle against the proposed budget cuts. The last section considers how social scientists and NSF leaders defended the agency's work in the face of sharp challenges from the White House and conservative circles more generally.

The 1970s had been a difficult transitional decade. But the early Reagan years promised to be even more problematic. So much so, in fact, that the very survival of the social sciences at the NSF emerged as a serious question for the first time in the agency's history.[10]

EYE OF THE STORM

In the 1980 presidential election, the team of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush received 489 electoral votes, crushing the Democratic contenders Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro, who received only 49. Four years later, Reagan and Bush won again, in an even bigger landslide with an astounding 525 electoral votes. In the 1980 national elections, Republicans also gained 12 seats in the Senate to obtain a majority, 53 to 46. They gained 33 seats in the House as well, although Democrats retained a strong 243 to 192 advantage.

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In February 1981, just a few weeks after Reagan was sworn in as president, the new administration presented its budget plans in *America's New Beginning: A Program for Economic Recovery*. Concentrating on "the most serious set of economic problems since the 1930s," including run-away inflation, high unemployment, and anemic economic growth, this report identified "the most important cause" of these problems as none other than "the government itself." Promising to revive the nation's ailing economy, the White House proposed a four-part plan, including "a substantial reduction in the growth of Federal expenditures … a significant reduction in Federal tax rates … prudent relief of Federal regulatory burdens … and … a monetary policy on the part of the independent Federal Reserve System which is consistent with those policies."[11]

The White House also called for deep cuts in NSF social science. At that time, its Directorate of Biological, Behavioral, and Social Sciences (DBBSS) had five divisions. Compared to the agency's FY 1981 budget, the administration's plans for FY 1982 included increases of 6.4 percent for the physiological, cellular, and molecular biology division; 6.7 percent for the environmental biology division; and 1.1 percent for the informational sciences division. In contrast, the social and economic sciences division —SES, which at this point had programs for economics, geography, history and philosophy of science, law, measurement, methods and data resources, political science, and sociology—would be shrunk by a stunning 70 percent, from $33.6 million to $10.1 million. In addition, the behavioral and neural sciences division—BSN, with programs for anthropology, cognitive and behavioral science, and neuroscience—would be shrunk by 26.3 percent, from $39.6 million to $29.2 million. On top of this, the administration singled out specific BSN programs for larger cuts, including a 33 percent reduction for anthropology and a 61 percent reduction for cognitive and behavioral science. Yet neuroscience, the division's only other program, was targeted for an 8.2 percent increase, making it crystal clear that the administration had singled out the social and behavioral sciences for aggressive cuts.[12]

With MACOS still a target of conservative wrath, the new administration also took aim at NSF programs for science education, by proposing a gigantic reduction in funding from $112 million to $10 million. At a conservative gathering in March 1981, Reagan himself called for an end to "the manipulation of schoolchildren by utopian planners."[13]

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Shortly before the announcement of the proposed budget cuts, a *New York Times* article reported that the Reagan administration was taking aim at the "soft" sciences.[14] Now that the precise magnitude of the cuts was known, an article in *Science* reckoned that "dark days for social research" had begun.[15]

To appreciate the importance of the proposed cuts, we need to remember that the NSF still provided a substantial share of federal funding for basic research in the social and behavioral sciences, much of which continued to be carried out in the nation's universities and colleges. According to a 1981 NSF document, the percentage of total federal research support provided by the agency for the established disciplines remained significant: 25 percent for psychology, 36 percent for sociology, 37 percent for economics, 91 percent for political science, and 95 percent for anthropology. NSF support also accounted for 49 percent of federal funding for "other" social research, a nondescript category for studies outside of the established disciplines.[16]

Not surprisingly, many experienced social scientists and national science administrators found the proposed cuts startling. "Reductions of comparable magnitude in federal funding for specific fields of science were unprecedented in the history of the relationship between the federal government and the academic community," claimed the psychologist and former high-level NSF administrator John T. Wilson.[17] The University of Chicago political scientist and SSRC president Kenneth Prewitt opined that the Reagan administration's actions threatened to "make the social sciences an even smaller corner at the NSF," perhaps "just a few desks."[18] Although the president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science D. Allan Bromley was not a social scientist but a nuclear physicist, he too observed that the anticipated "brutal reductions suffered by the NSF social science programs" had produced a "shock wave of uncertainty and confusion" in the relevant scholarly communities.[19]

The administration's stated rationale for the cuts concerned the elimination of nonessential federal expenditures. On the surface, this seemed straightforward enough and fell in line with the president's overall economic message: in his inaugural address, Reagan promised to confront "an economic affliction of great proportions."[20] With this in mind, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) explained that social science funding had "relatively lesser importance to the economy than the support of the natural sciences."[21]

In the early 1980s, newspapers of various types kept the matter before the American people, often accompanied by sarcasm and sensationalism that

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readers would have been familiar with from Senator Proxmire's Golden Fleece Awards and the jibes of conservative journalists such as Donald Lambro. A 1981 article in the respectable, business-oriented *Wall Street Journal* noted that it was unclear whether funding for social science produced anything of much value. Inspired by blistering attacks on "eggheads who get lucrative contracts for fuzzy theoretical studies and then write jargon-laden reports that few people read and fewer comprehend," the nation's new president was thus "clipping the wings" of the social sciences.[22] The less-respectable but still widely popular *National Enquirer* jumped on the bandwagon with a 1982 article "They're Really Monkeying Around with Your Taxes," which stated that "ape-brained federal bureaucrats have gone bananas with your tax dollars again—flushing more than $70,000 down the drain on a study of a monkey's sex life!" That year, another article, "Playing Possum with Your Taxes," proposed that instead of using federal money to support scholars "studying opossum brains," this money "could be channeled in some other, useful direction—like trying to find out if the bureaucrats who authorized this inane study have any brains at all!" In a letter to the NSF, a self-identified "irate octogenarian taxpayer" from Shreveport, Louisiana, asked how he could apply for a $50,000 grant to study the reasons why the agency "dissipated taxpayers' money in such lackadaisical ways," adding that the results would "benefit President Reagan."[23]

At one point, the electrical engineer and NSF director John Slaughter indicated that he too accepted the administration's cost-cutting rationale. Speaking before a congressional appropriations committee in 1981, Slaughter observed with dismay that the OMB had not asked NSF leaders for their views before making its budgetary recommendations. Nor had the OMB bothered to ask anyone at the agency if the cuts should be distributed in another manner, rather than targeting a particular area such as the social sciences. Despite this irritating failure to consult, Slaughter stated that in light of the "severe financial crisis," NSF leaders understood that the proposed cuts were "not motivated by either a lack of understanding of the importance of these areas or by any plan for anything more than a temporary reduction in these areas."[24]

Yet many others deemed the cost-cutting rationale fishy. After all, given the enormous size of the federal budget and the administration's promise to cut all excess expenses, the anticipated savings in this particular case were, as the journalist Hilts noted, miniscule. In the months and years to come,

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this point, together with recent criticisms of social science from conservative quarters, would lead many to conclude that the administration's real concerns emanated from partisan ideology, not neutral cost-cutting imperatives.

Efforts to identify the individuals most responsible for the proposed cuts reinforced that conclusion. Presumably, Reagan himself was not involved in determining the specific level of social science funding. So, who was?

According to the sociologist Otto Larsen, "after much detective work," national social science leaders had identified the libertarian economist and prominent Republican policy adviser Martin Anderson "as the person … most responsible for pinpointing the severe cuts."[25] An industrial engineer and management expert by training, Anderson taught finance at Columbia University's business school during the 1960s, worked on Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign, and obtained an appointment, starting in 1971, as a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. Subsequently, as an assistant to President Reagan from 1981 to 1982 and as a member of the President's Economic Policy Advisory Board from 1982 to 1989, Anderson helped shape economic and national security policies. Anderson was also a prolific author of works attacking big government. His first book, *The Federal Bulldozer*, published in 1964, provided a blistering critique of government-supported urban renewal projects whose "admirable goals," Anderson wrote, could really only be accomplished by "free enterprise."[26] In addition, Anderson approached social research from a perspective with substantial appeal in conservative circles. For example, he advocated the use of evaluation research to measure the costs and benefits of government programs, with the expectation that the results would be used not to expand programs judged to be working well but to scale back or eliminate programs judged wasteful.[27]

Although circumstantial evidence made Anderson a likely suspect, the weight of evidence indicates that it was David Stockman who played the key role. Raised in a midwestern Republican family, Stockman developed a taste for leftist thinking and protest activities during his student days at Michigan State University in the late 1960s. He soon embraced a more conservative outlook, however, as he came under the influence of scholars known for their critiques of liberal social engineering, including Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan; at one point, Stockman worked as a live-in babysitter for the Moynihan family. From 1977 to 1981, Stockman served in the House of Representatives. Toward the end of that period, he prepared a model coun-

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terbudget to the Carter White House's plans that would have eliminated all NSF social science funding, an idea suggested by the Ohio Republican Representative John Ashbrook as well. Stockman also became a major advocate of supply-side economic policy and an adviser to Ronald Reagan.[28] President Reagan appointed Stockman to the powerful position of OMB director. According to William Wells, a science policy analyst at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, "Stockman issued detailed, specific 'guidance' on reducing or eliminating social and behavioral research in the NSF and other agencies."[29]

Years later, John Slaughter recalled how he learned of Stockman's role in this episode. After becoming NSF director in early 1981, Slaughter and his deputy director, Don Langenberg, walked over to the OMB. There they met with Hugh Loweth, the person who handled the NSF budget and someone with whom Slaughter had worked well before and even considered a good friend. Loweth explained to them that Stockman said the NSF would have to close its programs for science education and for the social and behavioral sciences. Hoping to control the damage, Slaughter asked if it would be possible, instead, to reduce budgets elsewhere within the agency, thereby leaving some money to keep these programs alive. Looking Slaughter straight in the eye, Loweth replied, "John, any effort on your part to do that will be unquestionably denied."[30]

Known in some quarters as the grim reaper, Stockman, who remained Reagan's OMB director until 1985, defended the proposed funding cuts by appealing to standard conservative positions. "Overreliance on the pet theories of econometricians, educators, and social science 'fixers'" had "created the vast gulf between federal spending and resultant social benefit," claimed Stockman. The Reagan administration aimed to close that gap. "Given present fiscal realities," Stockman continued, "such research is a very low priority, and funding should be cut back drastically in the short term."[31] As can be seen in figure 7.1, a cartoon published in the *Washington Star* presented Stockman's plans with dark humor.

Given the prevalence of such concerns about social science fixers, other people deduced that the proposed cuts represented a veiled ideological attack on the social sciences. The biochemist and National Academy of Sciences (NAS) president Philip Handler suspected that the large reductions were "dictated not so much by financial constraints as by social philosophy."[32] His statement was supported by a NAS resolution expressing "deep concern

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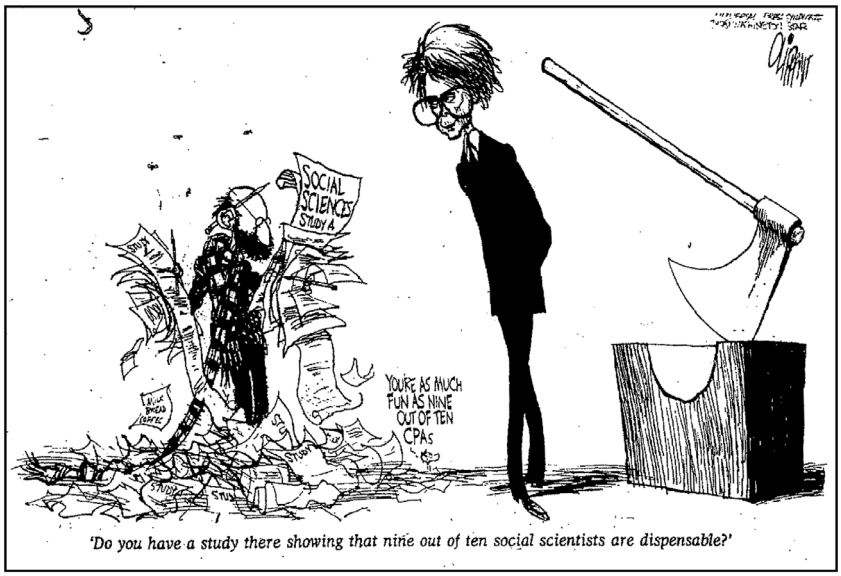

Figure 7.1
David Stockman, looking like the Grim Reaper, scrutinizes a social scientist who is hopelessly tangled up in his studies, while a chopping block nearby awaits its next victim. The cartoon caption reads, "Do you have a study there showing that nine out of ten social scientists are dispensable?" Cartoon appeared in the *Washington Star*, June 30, 1981.

over the proposed severe reductions in federal support for basic research in the behavioral and social sciences."[33] The anthropologist Robert McCormick Adams pointed out that conservatives harbored a "political vendetta" against these sciences because of their contributions to Lyndon Johnson's Great Society.[34] Roberta Balstad Miller, a historian with extensive knowledge of federal funding policies, added that the proposed cuts were inspired by the identification of the social sciences with liberal social programs, lifestyles, and ideas.[35]

Concerned scholars also noted that the proposed cuts represented a potent challenge to the social sciences' scientific identity. Over the decades, the NSF had been "symbolically important" in this regard, Miller emphasized. Continuous NSF support had "provided institutional acknowledgment" of the social sciences' "scientific nature." The proposed cuts thus challenged the notion that they belonged together with the natural sciences in a unified scientific enterprise.[36] The British sociologist Martin Bulmer, whose writ-

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ings documented the enormous importance of Rockefeller philanthropy in advancing the social sciences during the early twentieth century, understood that the Reagan administration's effort to "emasculate" the NSF's budget amounted to a "direct attack upon the [scientific] standing, credentials and funding of the social sciences."[37] Skepticism about their scientific bona fides and their place within the federal science establishment threatened to haunt these sciences for the foreseeable future.

Social science leaders, their supporters, and NSF officials also questioned whether the proposed cuts made much sense if the real goal was to revive the economy. After noting that social science was "scorned by natural scientists as 'soft'" and "lampooned by yahoos in Congress," a *New York Times* letter to the editor challenged the notion that it was primarily natural science research that led to greater economic advances. Better "understanding of how an economy works" also improved economic performance, while behavioral scientists contributed "to efficiency and safety in many businesses," asserted the anonymous author.[38] But even when commentators challenged the administration's cost-cutting rationale, their remarks, as seen in this case, often reinforced the salience of economic considerations in research funding policy. These terms of discourse thus helped to legitimate the new politics of science and its relevance to NSF specifically.

Some wondered as well how cutting the agency's social science budget, which provided 37 percent of the government's total support for basic research in economics at the time, could seem reasonable. Similar to the anonymous author above, U.S. Representative Robert Shamansky, a middle-of-the-road Democrat from Ohio, identified a troubling contradiction within the new administration. President Reagan regularly claimed that professional economists supported "his economic message." And policies based on that message would surely have an enormous impact on "the whole country, if not the whole world." Yet the president also planned to cut funding for these "very fine economists because they represent," as the Ohio Democrat put it, "a soft science."[39]

Though he accepted the need to eliminate unnecessary federal expenses, Director Slaughter underscored the value of maintaining adequate support for economics as well, a point of the utmost importance in light of the White House's questionable embrace of the new-fangled "supply-side" economics. The heart of the supply-side approach was the Laffer curve, named after the Chicago economics professor Arthur Laffer. According to the basic idea,

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often illustrated visually with a curve on a graph, "high marginal tax rates, at some [critical] point, destroy incentives to work, save and invest, and thereby cost the Government more revenue than they generate." Although in the abstract, this idea made intuitive sense, its actual relevance remained uncertain. In congressional testimony, Slaughter explained that "the curve, as it applies to the U.S. economy," had "not yet undergone extensive empirical tests." Without such a "sound scientific basis," it was impossible to say whether the nation's economy fell within "the prohibitive range of the curve (as Laffer contends) where tax rates stifle work activity so that total tax revenues fall" or whether the economy fell below "that negative segment of the curve." So, without additional research, debate over proposals for substantial changes in taxation and spending would continue "without an adequate factual or analytic base."[40]

Further elaboration came from leading economists, including Zvi Griliches, Lawrence Klein, and Robert Lucas, all of whom had received extensive NSF funding. Hoping to educate legislators and the public about the agency's great importance, each of them invoked longstanding claims about its special role in the national funding system and its support for cutting-edge work in their discipline.

Griliches had been a member of the NAS since 1975, the chairman of Harvard's economics department from 1980 to 1983, and a world leader in mathematical and statistical analysis in economics. Through his work on committees of the American Economic Association and the NAS as well as his collaboration with the group that produced the 1976 Simon Report, Griliches had ample knowledge of federal funding programs, including the NSF, which as of 1979 had given him fifteen grants. When called to testify in 1981, Griliches explained that the agency had become "the major source of financial support of fundamental—both basic and applied—disinterested research in economics." The administration's proposed cuts thus threatened to "cripple economic research for years to come." More generally, the Harvard scholar attacked "the proposed differential deep cuts" in NSF funding for economics and the social sciences more generally as "both unjust and unwise."[41]

That threat, Griliches emphasized, seemed particularly grave in light of broader changes in the extra-university funding landscape. During an earlier era, large philanthropic patrons, including the Rockefeller and Ford foundations, had played leading roles in supporting academically oriented, basic studies. But more recently, these large foundations had abandoned any

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general commitment to support scholarly resources per se. Meanwhile, the interests of nearly all federal agencies that provided social science funding were "very topic specific, directed to today's fashion, and with many strings attached." As an example, Griliches pointed to the Social Security Administration, located in the Executive Branch. Could one really believe that this agency would fund research that seemed likely to reveal that the Reagan administration's policies had a "negative effect on the U.S. saving rate"? Other funding sources had limitations as well, added Griliches, especially "corporate sources or specific foundations" that tended to support research favorable to certain viewpoints.[42]

Griliches then came to the punchline: when seen as part of the overall national funding landscape, "the NSF is one of the very few sources of research money whose allocation is made almost entirely on the basis of scientific merit." Such support had already been crucial in advancing many important fields, including one of his specialties, econometrics. The "detailed statistical and economic analysis of large data sets" simply could not "be done on a shoe-string, after hours, on a pocket calculator." A sharp decrease in NSF funding for such work could be—and he believed would be—devastating.[43]

Lawrence Klein, another accomplished economist, extended the argument by discussing NSF contributions to the nation's economic health and global leadership. Awarded the 1980 Nobel Prize in Economics for his work on econometric models, which had received extensive NSF funding since the early 1960s, Klein was a University of Pennsylvania professor and past president of the American Economic Association. Like fellow econometrician Griliches, he was also a NAS member. Testifying before Congress, Klein claimed that in economic science, the U.S. was "preeminent," playing a "leading role" in "economic thinking" around the world. Furthermore, the NSF had contributed to this exalted position by providing the discipline with valuable support. Unfortunately, however, the level of federal funding, including NSF funding, had deteriorated in recent years.[44]

In addition, regarding the worrisome state of the economy, Klein placed the blame partly on the federal government's recent neglect of economic science: "some significant part of our productivity slowdown and general loss of competitiveness" could be traced "to the disappointing program of federal research support of the 1970's." If the Reagan administration insisted on additional cuts, then "the productivity of economists" would deterio-

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rate further during a time of many "challenging problems." Klein asked, "How can we finance social security?" "How can we deal with stagflation?" "What are the causes of the productivity slowdown?" "How can we stabilize the exchange value of the dollar?" "What should be the shape of the future world monetary system?" "How can we best preserve our exhaustible resources?" Although the NSF had funded valuable research on these very problems, the new administration's indiscriminate, reckless attack on wasteful federal spending placed this crucial source of support in jeopardy.[45]

Robert Lucas, a third star in economics, inveighed against the proposed cuts as well by deploying the catchy rhetoric of capital accumulation. As a graduate student at Chicago in the early 1960s, Lucas had been profoundly influenced by Milton Friedman's approach to economics and his libertarian social philosophy. Later, while Lucas was a professor at the Carnegie Institute of Technology and then the University of Chicago, he worked on the rational expectations hypothesis—that is, the notion that people make economic decisions based on a rational utilitarian calculus that includes their expectations about future events, such as the course of inflation, interest rates, and government policies. The extension of this hypothesis in macroeconomics, which included work by many other NSF-funded scholars, provided a severe challenge to classical Keynesianism and the notion that government could manipulate and control the economy in desirable ways. As with Griliches and Klein, Lucas, who would receive the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1995, benefited from NSF funding over many years, starting with his first grant back in 1964. Of special interest here, his NSF-funded work provided support for the Reagan administration's supply-side economic policy. Nevertheless, the administration's proposed cuts now threatened continued funding of such work.[46]

Writing in the *New York Times*, Lucas challenged the cuts at a more general level as well, by advancing an imperative to provide "incentives for ideas" and adequate resources to promote the accumulation of knowledge. Making clever use of concepts and rhetoric common within the Reagan administration, he declared that the government was about to commit a "serious policy blunder on an issue involving the incentive to accumulate a centrally important kind of capital," namely, capital in social science knowledge. Growth in this area, Lucas explained, depended on the pursuit of basic studies and the availability of ample funding, needed to entice first-

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class researchers to engage in this pursuit. The results of such work could have tremendously valuable practical applications.[47]

In short, the new Republican administration's proposed cuts had set off alarm bells. While the White House presented funding reductions as motivated by the goal of reigning in a massively bloated federal budget, other pieces of evidence suggested that the more fundamental goal had a partisan undercurrent and involved slashing support for the social sciences in particular. With the NSF budget lying at the eye of storm, a number of supporters rose to its defense, including the economists Griliches, Klein, and Lucas, who argued that NSF funding for high-quality and nonpartisan scholarly studies had tremendous value. Moreover, it seemed very unlikely that any other public or private patron could take over the agency's special role.

With so many individuals from the political, academic, and science policy arenas expressing their opinions forcefully, the case against the proposed funding cuts at the NSF became clearer. It was also clear that mounting an effective case against the cuts (and addressing associated threats to the scientific identity of the social sciences and their standing in the scientific community) would require an effort that was better organized and sustained. But were the social sciences themselves up to this task? Arguably, the historical record since World War Two did not provide much reason to be hopeful.

COSSA TO THE RESCUE

On June 4, 1981, just four months after the proposed cuts were announced, SSRC president Kenneth Prewitt chaired a symposium on "strategies for the social sciences." Participants at this event, held at Rockefeller University in New York City, included officers from the NSF and the National Institutes of Health, representatives from NAS's Assembly of Behavioral and Social Sciences, and other figures from the social sciences and private funding organizations. According to Prewitt's summary, the discussions focused on "the importance of demonstrating that social science is an integral part of the national science system" and the need to strengthen "cooperation with natural scientists." Social science leaders also agreed that the future of federal funding had become crucial, especially since funding policies at private foundations emphasized programmatic goals, a point mentioned by the economist Griliches and confirmed at the New York meeting.[48]

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Figure 7.2
Kenneth Prewitt, former U.S. Census Bureau director (1998–2001) and former SSRC president (1979–1985), receives the SAGE-CASBS Award, in recognition of his important contributions to the understanding and advancement of the social and behavioral sciences as applied to important social issues, November 6, 2015. Left to right: Margaret Levi, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences executive director; Kenneth Prewitt; and Sara Miller McCune, cofounder of SAGE Publishing. Courtesy of Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences.

But containing the impending damage seemed difficult, partly because social scientists appeared poorly equipped for the task. Later that year, in his SSRC president's report, Prewitt observed that these scholars, by and large, were not well organized or very persuasive when it came to promoting their work in the political arena. He called them "politically naïve," for they had not realized "the need to be a political presence in Washington," a startling failure in light of the more vigorous public relations efforts undertaken by engineers and natural scientists. Prewitt also accused social scientists of being "indifferent toward their own intellectual and practical accomplishments and correspondingly timid about telling their own story."[49]

Commentaries along these lines proliferated, for example, in an essay on "politics and the uses of social science research" by the political scientist Donna Shalala. In the late 1970s, Shalala served as assistant secretary for policy development and research in the Department of Housing and Urban

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Development, then became president of Hunter College in New York. Regarding the beleaguered state of the social sciences in the early 1980s, Shalala said she found it hard to think of "a more politically disorganized—and so, politically impotent—group."[50]

At the same time, such worries provoked social scientists to organize themselves on an unprecedented scale. A number of advocacy organizations formed or became more active around this time, including the Consortium of Professional Associations in Federal Statistics and the Federation of Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Sciences. But the largest and most important one for the social sciences was the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA).

COSSA's origins lay in the early 1970s, when executive secretaries from professional social science associations began meeting to discuss common interests and concerns. In early 1981, after learning about the proposed cuts, COSSA convened an emergency meeting. Subsequently, the historian Roberta B. Miller and Joan Buchanan, a classicist, came aboard as staff members to run the organization on a continuing basis and develop a strategy to oppose the cuts. Miller also became COSSA's first executive director, from 1981 to 1984—and subsequently held positions at the NSF, as will be discussed. As a scholar, she published on urban and regional development, science indicators, and the history of social science policy. She taught at Catholic University, the University of Minnesota, Oberlin College, and Hiram College. In addition, she worked at SSRC's Washington office on social indicators from 1976 to 1981, giving her a deep understanding of the politics of funding and using social science in the nation's capital.[51]

Several changes elevated the consortium's stature and made it a leading national advocate for the social and behavioral sciences. In 1982, COSSA was incorporated and became a permanent, nonprofit advocacy organization. After incorporation, its staff members registered as lobbyists with Congress. COSSA headquarters moved from temporary housing in Washington, D.C., provided by the American Psychological Association to a more permanent space in an annex of the Brookings Institution provided by the SSRC. COSSA now had a president, a twenty-four-member board of directors, a ten-member executive committee, and a three-tier membership structure: with ten primary member associations, including all of the major social science associations; twenty-two affiliate organizations, including specialty social science associations; and twenty-one contributors, including research

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Figure 7.3
Roberta B. Miller participating in a COSSA-sponsored international outreach event held in Paris, 1992. Left to right: SSRC president David Featherman; former COSSA executive director and former director of the NSF Division of Social and Economic Sciences Roberta B. Miller; Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences director Philip E. Converse; and COSSA executive director Howard Silver. Courtesy of COSSA.

universities and organizations. Henceforth, COSSA represented a huge number of social scientists, about 140,000 in the early 1980s and 185,000 a decade later, by which point the original ten-member associations had been joined by another thirty-two affiliate organizations and fifty-seven contributors.[52]

COSSA's mission was to establish a "unifying voice for the social sciences in relation to legislation, public education, and science policy." To do that, COSSA worked on various fronts: promoting and protecting federal social research funding programs, increasing the visibility and use of the social sciences in policy making, mobilizing members to take action when needed, and keeping them informed of federal actions that had an impact on researchers and research. Through various activities and annual meetings COSSA facilitated scholarly "communication about such issues across disciplinary lines."[53] Publication of a biweekly newsletter, the *Washington*

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Update, provided interested parties with more timely information. Although the SSRC engaged in such activities before, its effectiveness in the science policy arena had been sporadic and limited, a fact made painfully clear during the postwar NSF debate four decades earlier. COSSA thus set out to do what no other broad-based social science organization in the postwar era had managed to do—or even seriously attempted to do on a sustained basis.

Functioning as a political lobby, COSSA made defending the NSF's budget a high priority, for many reasons. Not only did the agency support research in all of the disciplines and fields represented by COSSA, but the proposed cuts here were the deepest of any federal agency. In addition, NSF programs were widely considered to be, as Roberta Miller put it, the "flagship of the social science enterprise." So, if those cuts were implemented, funding at other agencies would probably be more vulnerable as well. In preparation for the challenges ahead, COSSA cultivated relations with several congressional committees that dealt with social science appropriations and arranged for scholars to present testimony at congressional hearings.[54]

During the summer of 1981, COSSA focused mainly on the so-called Winn amendment, put forth by Kansas Republican Representative Edward Lawrence Winn Jr. during NSF authorization discussions. Back in the late 1960s, Winn had been a member of Emilio Daddario's science and research subcommittee—which put forth and promoted the successful 1968 Daddario amendment. Now Winn served on the House Science and Technology Committee. As the early months of 1981 passed, the White House, the NSF, and congressional committees in both legislative branches engaged in the labyrinth process of budget making. At one point, it looked like social science funding cuts might not be as deep as the White House had proposed. But Winn, seeking to restore the full weight of the cuts, called for a $70 million reduction in NSF social science funding, accompanied by the explanation that his amendment embodied "the spirit of a responsible federal budget."[55]

In confronting this threat, COSSA aimed, in Roberta Miller's words, to "depoliticize the issue." Staking out the nonpartisan high ground, the consortium concentrated on persuading recently elected members in the House of Representatives—since new members might not yet have a firm position on this issue—and also all other legislators who seemed undecided. COSSA also targeted legislators who had major research universities in their congressional districts. To reach this last group, COSSA encouraged social scientists to reach out to their political representatives. COSSA

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also asked legislators who opposed the Winn amendment to write "Dear Colleague" letters signed by both Democrats and Republicans. To further strengthen the bipartisan message, COSSA arranged for supportive Republican and Democratic legislators to stand at the voting room entrance door so that they could encourage colleagues heading inside to vote against the amendment.[56]

It would have been impossible to eliminate all opposition. During the hearings, Republicans Edwin Forsythe from New Jersey and Walter Johnston from North Carolina expressed support for Winn's initiative. Citing the right-wing journalist Donald Lambro's 1980 book *Fat City*, Johnston claimed that Americans were "sick and tired of letting some intellectual dilettante dispense money to some intellectual ineffectual who wants to maintain his sojourn in academia for another year at their expense." In an approving manner, Johnston added that a memorandum circulating in the government called for the total elimination of "all basic social science research" within the next several months—perhaps a reference to the alternative budget prepared by David Stockman in the late 1970s that recommended an end to NSF funding for social research.[57]

But many more legislators spoke out against the cuts, including James Leach, who, moreover, was not a Democrat but a centrist Republican from Iowa. Leach had done graduate studies in international relations at Johns Hopkins University and attended the London School of Economics, educational experiences that one suspects inspired his appreciation for modern social research and its policy uses. Echoing the worries voiced by others, Leach warned that "to eliminate virtually all remaining NSF support for the behavioral and social sciences carries grave consequences." "The health of our citizens, our commercial vitality, and our national security" would be compromised. A "profound imbalance in scientific inquiry in this country" would be created. In addition, Leach reminded his fellow legislators that the "politicization of scientific inquiry" in the Soviet Union had "stunted economic and social progress" and "led to the stultification of free thought and free inquiry." Congress should thus ensure that "scientific merit alone rather than religious and social philosophy remains the basis for research funding decisions." Furthermore, Leach found it unrealistic to think that "profit-making enterprises" could replace federal funding for "most research at the 'basic' end of the spectrum"—precisely where the NSF's vital importance lay.[58]

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Joining the centrist Republican Leach was the Michigan Democratic Representative Jerome Traxler, who declared that the Reagan administration was seeking "drastic, ideological, and completely disproportionate cuts" in the social sciences. The administration's proposal to battle run-away federal expenditures by reducing the NSF's already modest social science funding seemed absurd, like a promise to slim down "an overweight giant by removing his eyes, ears, and brain."[59]

In the end, COSSA's campaign paid off nicely. The Winn amendment was defeated decisively, with 264 votes against, 152 for, and 17 abstentions.[60]

This victory also revealed modest success in the effort to establish bipartisan support for social science funding. Legislators who voted against the amendment included an unusually large number of Republicans, sixty-nine to be exact. This included more than one-third of all Republican Representatives in the House, which was the largest Republican opposition to any White House budgetary proposal during Reagan's first year in office.[61] One telling case involved New York Republican Representative John LeBoutillier. Although he had completed his college degree at Harvard in 1976 and his MBA at Harvard in 1979, LeBoutillier was hardly a cheerleader for the country's oldest and most famous university, as seen in his scathing anti-liberal, anti-elitist 1978 book entitled *Harvard Hates America: The Odyssey of a Born Again American*. Yet in 1981, even he claimed that the proposed social science funding cuts "went too far."[62] In another case, Massachusetts Republican Representative Margaret Heckler promised that she would vote against the Winn amendment if COSSA would "tell them [the advocates of social science funding] to stop calling me."[63]

Placed in historical perspective, this episode marked a big advance in the efforts by scholars and politicians to address persistent challenges regarding effective organization and public relations in American social science. COSSA's response to the 1981 budgetary crisis became, in the words of the sociologist James McCartney, a "watershed in the politics of the social sciences." The newly energized and better-organized community of schoars, professional associations, and academic organizations had "moved from a condition of political naivete … to one of surprising effectiveness."[64] Consider the case of psychology. According to one report, mobilization against the proposed cuts had resulted in "thousands of letters, calls, and telegrams." Individual psychologists had made more than fifty visits to their representatives. Communication with congressional staff members and analysis of

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the voting record revealed that of the seventy-one representatives singled out for attention, forty-six of them (65 percent) ended up opposing Winn's amendment.[65]

In a letter to COSSA's Roberta Miller, the chairman of the House Science, Research and Technology Subcommittee Doug Walgren expressed his "thanks and admiration." In his view, COSSA played "an invaluable role" by helping Congress understand various issues regarding the "proposed deep cuts" and by mobilizing the social science community "to reach directly to their own local representatives," which, Walgren added, had been "enormously successful." Obviously impressed, the subcommittee chairman said he would be "citing" COSSA efforts "as a model for participation in the budget process by other scientific groups."[66]

Yet the Winn amendment's defeat was not the end of this story. When the discussions, debates, and voting finally finished, the amount set aside for NSF social and behavioral sciences in 1982 was only $32.6 million, a notable drop from the 1981 budget of $43.7 million. And this latter figure was already considerably lower than the previous year's $52.5 million.[67] Moreover, social scientists still faced major hurdles in defending themselves and their work within American political culture and the national science policy arena.

To address these problems, COSSA pursued public relations, lobbying, and educational activities, directed at politicians, federal agencies, and the science policy community. For example, the consortium sponsored breakfast and luncheon seminars with legislators and their staffs to educate them about the nature of the social sciences and their contributions to society. These events focused on such timely issues as "Innovation and Productivity: A Human Perspective" and "Black Youth Unemployment: A National Crisis." Some of these events naturally took place in the D.C. area. But many others took place throughout the country, in hundreds of congressional districts.[68] COSSA also invited high-ranking members of the federal science policy community to luncheons, where they learned about the consortium, its activities, and its goals.[69]

In addition, COSSA leaders recognized that social scientists themselves needed knowledge of political realities on a continuing basis. To help scholars who, as Roberta Miller put it, were generally "not adept in politics on their own behalf," COSSA produced instructional materials about how to do basic things such as calling a member of Congress, visiting a legislator,

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and writing a press release. To keep members informed and in communication with one another, COSSA published the *Washington Update* and held countless seminars at universities and scholarly meetings. And at a time when Democrats controlled the House of Representatives but Republicans controlled both the Senate and the White House, COSSA regularly reminded social scientists to cultivate bipartisan support for their work.[70]

THE UNITY OF SCIENCE, ONCE AGAIN

Although COSSA's transformation could not have been anticipated before the 1981 budget crisis, a second line of response by social scientists was predictable. As noted by SSRC president Kenneth Prewitt, during the New York strategy symposium held in June, the "importance of demonstrating" that "social science is an integral part of the national science system" emerged as a central concern. The difficulties ahead were serious, because national science leaders had often "failed to view the social sciences as part of the scientific resources of the society" and thus "assumed no responsibility for protecting and enhancing them."[71] Hence, the funding crisis prompted social scientists and those who represented them at the NSF to focus, once again, on seeking support from natural scientists and establishing their position within a unified scientific enterprise.

This focus on scientific unity came across clearly during a symposium discussion about the 1960s' effort to create a National Social Science Foundation (NSSF). The general understanding among leaders from the social sciences, federal agencies, and private foundations was that Senator Fred Harris's initiative had been set aside "primarily on the grounds that there is a single standard of competent scientific inquiry and that [having] separate federal foundations … would contradict this conception of the unity of the sciences." However, as we know from the discussion of his initiative in chapter 4, that general understanding failed to acknowledge the complexity of the NSSF debate, especially the extent to which social scientists disagreed among themselves over several questions. These concerned the similarities and differences between the natural and social sciences, the advantages and disadvantages of trying to fit social research into a natural science mold, and the ways in which giving the social sciences an agency of their own might bolster or undermine their influence within the federal science policy arena and wider society. Nevertheless, such a blinkered perspective of

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the late 1960s' debate reinforced the dominant sentiment that social scientists needed to redouble their efforts to strengthen "cooperation with natural scientists."[72]

Social scientists reasserted the unity-of-science stance for the benefit of NSF leaders as well. At a board meeting in April 1981—two months before the New York symposium—a group of scholars tried to reassure the natural science–oriented leaders that the agency had historically followed a wise path, by concentrating on the hard-core end of the social research continuum. Philip Converse, director of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, declared that present-day social science theory was "harder, clearer and less ambiguous" due to the advance of "more quantitative efforts." Herbert Simon declared, as he had done many times before, that he favored close ties between the physical sciences and the social sciences, among other reasons because he believed the former had contributed admirably to the research directions of the latter.[73] On a complementary note, a June document prepared for the governing board asserted that "all sciences, including the social and behavioral, share a commitment to norms regarding evidence, verification, inference, rigor, etc."[74] In this view, the criteria for deciding what counted as good science were the same in all of the sciences.

In presenting their case to NSF leaders, social scientists also took care, once again, to separate their work from social action and social reform, an issue that had acquired special urgency due to mounting conservative criticisms and interest in defunding the left.[75] The June document mentioned above explained that the social sciences are "neither therapies, nor social engineering, nor action programs." In a passage reminiscent of numerous previous statements designed to draw a sharp boundary of this sort, the document declared that "the social and behavioral sciences are not social studies, social work, social action, social reform, or socialism. They are sciences. As such, they produce conditional 'if-then' propositions, not normative 'though-shalt' statements."[76]

The NSF itself, in turn, reasserted its commitment to this approach. That same June, the agency's governing board approved a statement that emphasized its special role in providing "the major support for all social and behavioral sciences where the focus is enhancing the objectivity of the sciences and improving the quality of data collection and analysis." The agency thus continued to concentrate on the advance of useful techniques and tools needed for measurement and analysis of social phenomena, though also

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anticipating that the results would have significant practical applications. The latter included helping federal agencies to improve "the quality and usage of national statistical information" and strengthening activities in the private sector that used "economic forecasting, demographic projections, survey research, cost benefit analysis, marketing analysis, and personnel selection and training." In September 1981, this NSB-approved statement appeared in *Science* for all interested parties to see.[77]

As had happened many times in previous decades, this effort to clarify and purify the social sciences' scientific identity included a valuable assist from the NAS. In response to the latest in a long list of requests from the NSF over the decades, the Academy published a 1982 report that reaffirmed the value of the scientistic approach. Addressing the matter head on, the introduction included the following quotation from Philip Morrison, a physicist and member of the NAS commission that produced the report: "it does not seem possible to draw any clear line between the scientist looking out at the physical or biological world and another kind of scientist concentrating instead on his or her own species." Thus, Morrison continued, "the natural sciences must be extended in the same spirit … to the study of the extraordinary qualities of the species Homo sapiens and its richly diverse works."[78] The report went on to define basic research in the familiar ways, claiming that its "primary aim" was to advance "the understanding and explanation of human behavior and social arrangements," which involved establishing "empirically verified descriptions" and discovering "laws that govern their occurrence." In short, "the behavioral and social sciences" had to be "judged by the same criteria as other sciences."[79]

As if to accentuate the point that this approach followed a well-worn path, the report's title—*Behavioral and Social Science Research: A National Resource*—bore a striking similarity to the title of the late 1940s' report by Talcott Parsons, "Social Science, A Basic National Resource." The latter, as we saw in chapter 1, had been commissioned by the SSRC during the postwar NSF debate, had followed the council's strategy of presenting the social sciences as junior partners to the natural sciences in a unified scientific enterprise, and had emphasized that the modern social sciences were maturing in healthy ways that fortified their nonideological, apolitical, and technical character.

This unity-of-science framework was also central to NSF efforts to defend its embattled social science programs before Congress. In explaining

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the agency's approach, Director Slaughter emphasized that he and other agency leaders saw a "great unity" in scientific research and scholarship, which rested on "intellectual adherence to the standards of objectivity and verifiability." Slaughter added that this general viewpoint, rather than serving as mere rhetoric, had a powerful impact on funding practices as seen in many examples, including NSF support for quantitative social science databases and archives.[80]

Slaughter also highlighted the agency's strong support for the "behavioral revolution" in political science. "Marked change" in this field had occurred in the past twenty years, resulting in major advances in the "scientific understanding of basic political processes," asserted Slaughter. Due to such progress, the discipline as a whole had changed dramatically: scholars now studied politics "as an outcome of human interaction processes and decisions rather than merely as a product of legal statements and formal rules." According to Slaughter, this new type of work was steeped in "rigorous modes of explanation and analysis," offering a sharp "contrast to conventional descriptive and literary approaches."[81]

Slaughter's remarks are especially interesting because of what we know about the story of NSF funding for political science in relation to the discipline's contentious development. Behavioralist studies did indeed fall in line with the agency's unity-of-science commitments, dating all the way back to the early 1960s when the first research grant in political scientist went to Duncan MacRae for a quantitative analysis of congressional voting behavior. Yet Slaughter's testimony obscured deep disputes about the intellectual foundations, political uses, and moral implications of such work that had wracked the discipline ever since. Indeed, his comments would have seemed curious to anyone knowledgeable about the discipline's fractured character and the sizable body of literature critical of the very behavioralism that he spoke so highly of. In a curious twist of fate, even MacRae no longer championed this approach. His views evolved so much that he had become a strong critic of the value-neutral, disinterested scientistic approach associated with behavioralism, as seen in his assertion that social science research should be "guided by clear notions of social health, i.e., by ethical criteria," and in his call for "valuative discussion among the disciplines."[82]

By the 1980s, a sense that the discipline had entered a postbehavioral era had become widespread, supported by extensive historical investigations carried out by political scientists themselves. In his 1984 book *The Tragedy of*

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Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy, David M. Ricci, a Harvard PhD and professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, documented a startling lack of common ground among his colleagues: with political scientists "increasingly unable to choose among proffered ideas," it had become impossible to "certify some of them so authoritatively as to persuade practitioners to work along common lines." The result was "vocational incoherence, literally a failure to cohere."[83] In 1985, another book by Raymond Seidelman, a political scientist at Sarah Lawrence College, drew attention to the growing multiplicity of research subfields within the discipline. Similar to Ricci, Seidelman pointed to "a widespread sense" among practitioners that their discipline had "lost its identity and a common focus."[84]

CONCLUSION

Two decades earlier, during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, relations between the social sciences and the federal government had become tighter, federal funding had increased, and optimism that scholarly advances would lead to considerable benefits had reached their post–World War II apogee. But in the following years, growing discord and disenchantment on the left in combination with the resurgence of conservatism in American political culture and national science policy making led to mounting difficulties and eventually a widespread sense of crisis. The Reagan administration's 1981 budgetary proposal, with its draconian cuts in NSF funding, became a focal point of national concern about the place of the social and behavioral sciences within the agency. For social scientists and their advocates, the assault on NSF funding naturally led to deep worries about other issues: about the future of the uneasy partnership between the federal government and the social sciences, about the position of these sciences in American society, and about their standing within the scientific community.

If participants in the mid-1940s' NSF debate had been able to observe the crisis of the early 1980s, they would have been struck by two similarities. First, as the contours of the new politics of science became increasingly legible, social scientists once again found themselves vulnerable to partisan attacks and especially conservative hostility that associated them with a leftist agenda. This time around, the main point of reference was not so much the New Deal but more recent developments associated with the Great Society and War on Poverty, which, in David Stockman's unflattering terms, had

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privileged the "pet theories of econometricians, educationists, and social science 'fixers.'" No doubt the underlying motivations went well beyond the officially stated concern with budget tightening. As COSSA's Roberta Miller and many other commentators recognized, the plan to reduce federal funding was part of a broad-based conservative attack on liberalism and its influence on everything from economic policy to social programs, education, academic culture, cultural values, and morality.

The second similarity concerns the manner in which social scientists and their supporters responded. Most obviously, in both episodes they argued that federal funding and adequate support from the NSF in particular was crucial to the health of the social sciences. Furthermore, with precious few exceptions, influential figures from national organizations, including the SSRC, emphasized the need to act strategically by building alliances with natural scientists, by presenting social science as part of a unified scientific enterprise led by the natural sciences, and by drawing a firm distinction between scholarly social research, on one hand, and social reform, social engineering, or socialism, on the other.

Comparing the two episodes also reveals a striking difference, namely, the emergence in the early 1980s of well-organized and moderately effective public relations activity on behalf of the social sciences. Amidst a rapidly spreading sense of crisis, social science leaders and organizations banded together to transform COSSA, creating what Roberta Miller aptly described as "a permanent Washington-based infrastructure for political advocacy."[85] For legal reasons, individual professional social science associations could not engage in lobbying, but COSSA could and did with gusto. Tens of thousands of social and behavioral scientists now had an active lobbying organization with a mandate to convey the "virtues" of their work "to other audiences, particularly congressional and administrative ones."[86] With the defeat of the Winn amendment in 1981, COSSA's efforts to strengthen bipartisan political support and protect NSF funding yielded some tangible benefits. Yet budgetary problems persisted, as did other related challenges. In this context, COSSA followed up by developing programs and activities for social scientists, natural scientists, and politicians with the aim of strengthening the standing of social science within the national science policy arena and American political culture.

Another significant difference between the two periods concerns the prominence of economistic lines of reasoning, advanced—not surpris-

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ingly—by leading economists themselves. Although economists including Wesley Mitchell and Edwin Nourse had played a pivotal role in developing the case for inclusion during the postwar debate, that case did not give any special place to economic reasoning—though it was common to believe that investments in basic research led to practical benefits. But in response to the cuts proposed by the Reagan administration, prominent economists who had received NSF funding in the past, including Zvi Griliches, Lawrence Klein, and Robert Lucas, emerged as vigorous defenders of the agency, especially its special commitment to support basic social scientific inquiry and its singular role in looking after the overall health of the sciences, including the social sciences. In explaining the NSF's importance, Griliches, Klein, and Lucas identified support for economic science in particular as crucial to the nation's economic health and global leadership in economic thinking. Furthermore, in discussing the NSF's importance more generally, they deployed concepts marinated in economic discourse—accumulation, incentives, and productivity.

At this point, we need to consider what happened after the crisis of the early 1980s had subsided. How did new pressures, opportunities, and constraints associated with the two-term Reagan presidency and the new politics of science influence the agency's evolving engagements with the social sciences?

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