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To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>

From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@polycyscience.net>

Subject: 153. Behavioral Science: What Do You Need in Order to Best Carry Out Your Mission?; The DNI and Fast Discovery R&D; NSF, DARPA/IARPA, and other models

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

The new DNI, James Clapper, may assume that the nation's academic behavioral scientists - via NSF funding and peer review - are working as hard and productively as possible, with funding to do their best work on their best R&D ideas, to advance our understanding of human behavior as quickly as possible. . . .

As you know, this assumption is inaccurate. However, as a former General, with a lifetime of experience as a first-rate government manager, General Clapper traditionally was concerned to communicate with people throughout his organization and to ask the kind of question that good leaders/managers often ask: "What Do You Need in Order to Best Carry Out Your Mission?" He might (wrongly) assume that the National Science Foundation and National Science Board, and Presidents at our leading research universities, etc. ask the nation's behavioral scientists the same question.

I raise this issue with your study group because - for the long term - the DNI, with a \$75 billion/year budget and wide responsibilities, may be the only senior government official with an institutional interest who can be a catalyst and leader [beyond the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity program (IARPA)] to secure a better system for support of good ideas.

An Example: NSF Limitations - Political and Institutional

I have no comments about the peer-review system at NSF for individual grant applications. But the higher-level strategic planning has eroded since the early Reagan years.

For example I was told, by the still-serving (Bush era) appointee as NSF Assistant Director (SBE) - re potential breakthroughs from brain science and the study of hierarchical imagery - that "NSF does not study racism!" This - one of many applications, alongside evaluating some important core Republican (now Tea Party) sensibilities about the threat of hierarchical psychology in America - is apparently why these lines of investigation continue to be quietly and effectively derailed in the higher, agenda-setting, behind-closed-doors processes at NSF. <1> <2>

- Another institutionally-limited area at NSF is the comparative study of voting (including predictive models and understanding of minorities and social change movements): NSF traditionally has had funds only for one national probability sample/voting project (in the US). Even by the 1990s it was widely understood that researchers interested in comparative political behavior - or even innovative US models - were wasting their time even to apply for funds. There is fierce competition and the social scientists who study US electoral politics are many and have a priority claim.

More broadly, the last major effort even to survey behavioral social scientists with the standard kind of question that first-rate managers ask - "What Do You Need in Order to Best Carry Out Your Mission?" (the Luce Commission) - was a complex disaster, neutralized by Republican pressures and threats and - then - the untoward Kuhnian pressures of self-interested Establishment leaders who gave "leading edge" funding status to their already-known ideas, methods, and data needs. At the time of the last NSF Five Year Plan, the National Academy of Sciences merely designated a mostly-token liaison for the behavioral sciences: the national R&D system was so disorganized and demoralized that needed leadership did not seem to be available. Etc.

[I am not recommending additional funds for NSF *per se*. NSF may not be the right organization for future leadership, given its internal politics and very limited representation of the behavioral sciences on the National Science Board. And a tradition of poor choices for leadership positions. Physical scientists also have been too willing to protect their own budgets and priorities by marginalizing behavioral science research priorities and potentially disruptive, or anxiety producing, or capable-of-evidence-based criticism-of-Republican policies lines of investigation. <3>]

We need a better national system. Is there anything that you can do?

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<1> The application of hierarchical psychology models to understand political behavior in many countries of the world and arenas should be a great benefit.

<2> My answer, re these questions of scientific integrity and political courage - is the reverse. It was a source of great pride to me, as a young scientist, that America's NSF funded, during the Cold War, studies of arms races. And testing the truth claims of the political Right or evaluating residual effects of status hierarchies and discrimination to illuminate faster pathways to recovery should be respected and supported by NSF without question: It is NSF's/NSB's job to defend scientists against attacks by zealots, not to deflect the research itself.

<3> Even tho' these can be deeply informative and precisely where a clinical psychologist (for example, with an interest to encourage political learning) might recommend looking.

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