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August 2, 2003

Dr. Virginia S. Cain Ph.D., Acting Director
Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research
National Institutes of Health - Office of the Director
1 Center Dr. - Bldg. 1, Room 256
Bethesda, MD 20892-0183

Dear Dr. Cain:

The enclosed paper, "Wisdom in Public Policy," will appear in a forthcoming volume from Cambridge University Press that is being organized by Dr. Robert Sternberg, current President of the American Psychological Association. I am writing to call to your attention a discussion of vivid hierarchical images, on pp. 20-24 and pp. 43-44 (concerning anomie). The potential of this new line of investigation to clarify mechanisms in mental illness is discussed in the enclosed correspondence with Dr. Thomas Insel.

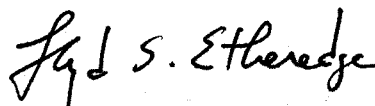
I am writing to you because a wide range of behavioral and body-mind problems studied at NIH might be clarified by this line of investigation. For example, anomie can be understood as a disorder of internal structure and hierarchical relationships pictured in the diagram on p. 22. If we were to measure the distribution of hierarchical images of Blacks in America, in relation to their self images, I think we might find a key mechanism by which inequality is internalized, its stressful effects are intensified, and the addictions and other self-injuring behaviors triggered by anomie are continually activated in brain processes partly independent of language.¹

I know that NIH has been concerned with several of these issues. I attended an exciting, recent conference in Bethesda organized by your office on the health effects of social status.

New types of measurements will need to be developed. As you know,

behavioral science typically explains behavior via individual differences in *attitudes* or in the kinds of affect-free *cognitions* that could be stated in sentences. To study the *objects of perception* involves a fundamental shift and (for the imagination) spatial dimensions. If we use our powers of empathy to generate hypotheses, there are likely to be several properties of vivid higher images (and attributes of the self & of the relationships) that interact to induce and sustain physiological arousal, motivation, or stress - higher location (& in front of the self), vividness and/or emotional intensity, solidity (reification), whether a person experiences them to be under voluntary control, etc. In the long run, the basic psychometrics alone might be a larger research program than any single scientist could undertake.

With best wishes,



(Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director
Government Learning Project

cc: Dr. Thomas Insel, NIMH
Dr. Norman Anderson, APA
Dr. Ronald Abeles, NIH-OBSSR

1. And partly resistant to talk therapy alone.