

# THE POLICY SCIENCES CENTER, INC.

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October 25, 2012

Dr. William Press, President and Executive Committee Members  
AAAS  
1200 New York Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20005

**Re: Restoring the Eminent Scientist Standard at NSF**

Dear Dr. Press and Board Members:

Concerning NSF issues that I have brought to your attention I enclose a press release from the NIH Website, "**Rutgers Researcher Exploring Effects of Racism on Immune System.**" The New Innovators Award from the NIH Director's Fund honors the research as "exceptionally creative."

We are slowly realizing how successful the National Science Foundation (across 30+ years and a range of topics) has been to neutralize the dangerous political Left in American social science Departments. By contrast, NIH's award is informative because it refutes the claim that credible political threats and pressures in Washington have compelled the National Science Foundation to kill the study of racism.<sup>1</sup> Rather the problem is the human beings at the top of NSF. NIH's award is from the NIH Director's Fund of Dr. Francis Collins: In the best interest of the country, AAAS should demand personnel changes and restore governance of NSF and appointment to the National Science Board to the "eminent scientist" standard that is sustained at NIH.

NSF's unacceptable behavior also may reflect ignorance. The scientific study of prejudice and racism (and anti-Semitism - e.g., The Authoritarian Personality (1950)) has been a defining accomplishment in the field of social psychology. At current issue is the transformative potential of a new theory of a **Primate Subordination Syndrome** that, when tested, could illuminate an unrecognized brain mechanism that plays a causal role across an extraordinary range of unsolved and puzzling societal problems of economic, social, and political participation and educational attainment affecting lower-status populations (motivational and cognitive inhibitions, endocrine, health status, and other effects). Yes, this new connect-the-dots theory is bold, but the prediction of a brain adjustment syndrome builds on such prominent scientific accomplishments as Kardiner and Ovesey's The Mark of Oppression (1951) study of Blacks and induced changes in modal personality (including motivational

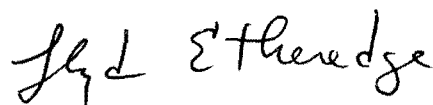
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The Center was founded in 1948 by Myres S. McDougal, Harold D. Lasswell, and George Dession in New Haven, CT

URL: <http://www.policyscience.net>

and cognitive effects). This pioneering and honored research was cited in the Presidential Initiative of our recent President of the American Psychological Association: I read the book as a graduate student at Yale in the early 1970s and it helped to stimulate my own thinking and political psychology contributions to hierarchical psychodrama models and to propose this new theory.

Yours truly,



Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director  
International Scientific Networks Project

Attachments: Fredda Sacharow, "Rutgers Researcher Exploring Effects of Racism on Immune System," January 20, 2012. Available online at <http://commonfund.nih.gov/news.aspx>.

cc: AAAS Council Members and Section Chairs

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## **Rutgers Researcher Exploring Effects of Racism on Immune System:**

Professor studying African-American neighborhoods to gauge link between bigotry and body  
January 20, 2012. [Downloaded from <http://commonfund.nih.gov/news.aspx> Science News Around the Nation, 2012, October 5, 2012]

By Fredda Sacharow

Environmental factors in many predominantly African-American communities – neighborhoods fortified with bullet-proof glass and barbed wire, for example, and bus ads aggressively pushing the glories of alcohol -- have long been suspected of playing a role in residents' mental and emotional health.

Now, armed with a \$1.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, a Rutgers researcher is exploring the effects of multiple layers of racism on an individual's immune system as well.

Naa Oyo Kwate, associate professor in both the Department of Human Ecology in the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and in the Department of Africana Studies in the School of

Arts and Sciences, is leading a team conducting the Black LIFE (Linking Inequality, Feelings, and the Environment) Study.

The NIH Director's New Innovator Award Program, which underwrites what the agency describes as exceptionally creative new investigations, is funding the project.

Kwate's study aims to address two unanswered questions confronting biomedical and behavioral researchers: What effect does racism have on the body, and what can society do about it?

"Most people don't think of racism as a social construct that affects health," says the trained clinical psychologist, who came to Rutgers last year from Columbia University. "They think of behaviors like diet, doctor visits, and the like, not so much about how the broader processes of inequality affect a person's ability to engage in healthy behaviors."

The summer of 2010 found Kwate and her team biking through central Harlem in Manhattan and Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, shooting videos with cameras mounted on the handlebars to document signs of institutional racism. They are now coding the videos to identify such features as the retail environment and the proliferation of vacant lots.

The two predominantly African-American neighborhoods were chosen because they are similar in demographics and land-use characteristics. The researchers are interviewing a random sampling of 450 residents about their experiences with racism.

The study will measure the respondents' immune system and metabolic function over two time points through physical tests.

Participants also will be asked whether they've personally experienced racism: Have store managers followed you around, presumably because of the color of your skin? Do cab drivers refuse to pick you up? Responses are expected to provide a record to help the researchers determine to what extent racial discrimination affects psychological and physical wellbeing.

"We're not talking about race in terms of genes, but in terms of what resources and opportunities people have access to," she says. Social factors such as housing conditions and food availability are among the factors contributing to higher levels of diabetes, heart disease, and asthma in predominantly African-American and lower-income urban areas, she notes.

As a follow-up to the interviews and medical tests, Kwate's study will explore a "counter-marketing"

campaign designed to help neighborhood residents combat the dangers of internalizing racism's destructive messages.

Although the details have not yet been ironed out, Kwate envisions using outdoor advertising in minority neighborhoods to deliver unembellished facts about American inequality. In the same way that concerted anti-smoking activities of the 1980s and 1990s turned a generation against Big Tobacco, she hopes the billboards will raise consciousness and counter any stressful – potentially deadly -- effects of prejudice.

Kwate's work with the NIH reflects her longtime interest in the psychological and social determinants of African-American health. As an assistant professor at Columbia University, for example, she determined that a higher saturation of alcohol ads in black neighborhoods was associated with 16 percent higher odds of black women being problem drinkers.

In addition to the NIH, backing for her work has come from the U.S. Department of Defense and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

To learn more about Naa Oyo Kwate's research, visit her web site: <http://www.rna-lab.com>

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### Notes

1. The research also is supported by the Department of Defense.