



**NSF SUPPORT  
OF THE  
SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND  
ECONOMIC SCIENCES**

Pat White

# The NSF Mission

- To promote the progress of science
- To advance the national health, prosperity and welfare
- To secure the national defense

(from the NSF Act of 1950)



**Office of the Director**

**Directorate for Social,  
Behavioral & Economic  
Sciences**

**Social and Economic  
Sciences**

**Behavioral and Cognitive  
Sciences**

**Science Resources Statistics**

# Role of the SBE Sciences

- Increase fundamental understanding of human social development and interaction; of how people behave, as individuals and as members of groups and more formal organizations
- Contribute knowledge that has societal relevance and can inform critical national areas such as terrorism; business failures; climate change; America's educational system; and ethnic and cultural diversity and equality
- NSF SBE is the primary steward of Federal support for basic SBE sciences in academe



# Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences

- Supports research to develop and advance scientific knowledge focusing on human cognition, language, social behavior, and culture
- Supports research on the interactions between human societies and the physical environment



# Directorate for Social, Behavioral, & Economic Sciences (SBE)

## Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences (BCS)

- Archaeology
  - Cultural Anthropology
  - Physical Anthropology
  - Geography & Spatial Sciences
  - Cognitive Neuroscience
  - Developmental & Learning Sciences\*
  - Endangered Languages
  - Linguistics
  - Perception, Action, & Cognition
  - Social Psychology
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- \* = Interdisciplinary Programs for Sociologists in BCS



## Division of Social and Economic Sciences (SES)

- Supports research to develop and advance scientific knowledge focusing on economic, legal, political and social systems, organizations, and institutions
- Supports research on the intellectual and social contexts that govern the development and use of science and technology



# Directorate for Social, Behavioral, & Economic Sciences (SBE)

## Social & Economic Sciences (SES)

- Decision, Risk, & Management Science\*
  - Economics
  - Innovation & Organizational Sciences\*
  - Law & Social Sciences\*
  - Methodology, Measurement, & Statistics\*
  - Political Science
  - Science Technology, & Society\*
  - Sociology
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- \* = Interdisciplinary Programs for Sociologists in SES



# Sociology Program

- Supports theoretically-grounded research on systematic patterns of social relationships on the causes & consequences of human behavior, social structure, & social change. Studies range from micro to macro levels of interaction. Topics include:
  - Stratification, labor markets, social change, organizations, networks, crime, race/ethnicity, social psychology, culture, education, family, gender, population, immigration, social movements, political processes, & globalization
- Supports research using a range of social science methodologies:
  - quantitative & qualitative including survey, experimental, & ethnography
  - a combination of multiple methods for original data collection & secondary data analysis



# Programmatic Emphasis

- Interdisciplinary Research
- Research Infrastructure
- Transformative Research
- Foundation-wide Funding Competitions
- Next Generation- Education and Training
- Leveraging/Partnering



## Dear Colleague Letter - 2009

- **Infrastructure Development:** Creation of shared research resources and instruments
- **Large-scale Interdisciplinary Projects:** Integrative projects in more than one discipline that advance an understanding of the dynamics of human systems
- **Complexity Science:** Dynamics of complex system such as “tipping points” or “emergent phenomena”; tools such as agent-based modeling are used



# Benefits of Interdisciplinary Research

- Sharing of funding across NSF programs thereby opening up more funding for the Sociology Program & the scholar.
- Broadens the scholar intellectually & develops a wider tool-kit of skills.
- Encourages an intellectual & personally-enriching relationship with a broader scientific community.
- Could develop a stronger community of scientists.
- Studying a phenomenon in a multi-dimensional manner may lead to important discoveries.

# Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences Programs

## Disciplinary

- Cultural Anthropology
- Physical Anthropology
- Archaeology
- Linguistics
- Social Psychology
- Economics
- Sociology
- Political Science

## Inter-Disciplinary

- Cognitive Neuroscience
- Developmental & Learning Sciences
- Documenting Endangered Languages
- Perception, Action & Cognition
- Human Origins (Moving in New Directions)
- Geography & Regional Science
- Environmental, Social & Behavioral Science
- Decision, Risk & Management Sciences
- Science of Science & Innovation Policy
- Innovation & Organizational Sciences
- Methodology, Measurement & Statistics
- Science & Society
- Law & Social Sciences



# Infrastructure for Research & Training

## Large-Scale Social Science Data Resources

- American National Election Survey (ANES)
- General Social Survey (GSS)
- Integrated Public Use Data Series (IPUMS)
- Luxembourg Income Study (LIS)
- National Historical Geographic Information System (NCGIS)
- Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)
- Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS)
- School Attendance Boundary Info System (SABINS)



# Merit Criteria

- **Intellectual Merit:**
  - How important is the project to advancing knowledge & understanding within its own field or across different fields?
  - How well qualified is the investigator (individual or team) to conduct the project?
  - To what extent does the proposed activity suggest & explore creative and original, or **potentially transformative** concepts?
  - How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity?
  - Is there sufficient access to resources?
- **Transformative** – Promise of extraordinary outcomes such as revolutionizing entire disciplines, creating entirely new fields, or disrupting accepted theories & perspectives
- Sometimes transformative involves risky work that may yield high pay-offs, or engaging in untraditional approaches demonstrative innovative thinking, or projects with unique collaborations/partnerships

# Next Generation: Research & Training

- Research Experiences for Undergraduates
- Dissertation Research Support and Graduate Assistantships
- Postdoc Program in Economic Sociology
- Small Grants Program –ASA/NSf

# Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Awards

Small grants to provide funds for items not normally provided through the student's institution

- Archaeology
- Cultural Anthropology
- Decision, Risk, & Management Science
- Economics
- Geography & Regional Science
- Law and Social Science
- Linguistics
- Physical Anthropology
- Political Science
- Science and Society
- Sociology





# Funding Opportunities

- **Science of Science & Innovation Policy (SciSIP)** - Supports research that creates explanatory models & analytic tools designed to inform public & private sectors about how science & engineering research is transformed into social and economic outcomes
  - Proposals may focus on components of the innovation system; models that can assess & inform science & technology investment decisions; agent-based & network models; organizational studies of discovery & innovation; & frameworks of how intellectual, social & physical organization influence creativity & innovation



# Myths about NSF

- Only funds scholars at elite graduate institutions
- Only funds “famous” academics
- Once declined, you are likely always to be declined
- Only funds “normal science”
- Advisory committees make funding decisions



# What "we" (NSF) want

- We have funds to invest.
- We want a range of options from which to select.
- We are looking to invest in a portfolio that will maximize returns.

"Potential Bang for the Buck"- **Likelihood** of **significant** contributions to **general** scientific understanding and **broader impacts**



**QUESTIONS??**

**Contact Pat White, Jan Stets  
and Regina Werum**

**(703) 292-8762**

**[pwhite@nsf.gov](mailto:pwhite@nsf.gov)**