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**March 3, 2005**

Dr. Nina Fedoroff, Chair  
NSB Taskforce on Transformative Research  
c/o Dr. Michael Crosby - NSB Secretariat  
National Science Foundation  
4201 Wilson Blvd., Ste 1225  
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. Fedoroff:

Your Taskforce might be interested in an example of Transformative Research that continues to be derailed by the NSF system because it might be too transformative.

The line of investigation is outlined very briefly on pp. 19-20 and Box 4, appended at the end of the enclosed chapter (“Wisdom in Public Policy”) that will appear this summer from Cambridge University Press. It involves an NSF infrastructure investment in the mid-range (\$10 million - \$100 million) to develop and validate measures of hierarchical images, their properties, physiological effects, and emotional responses.

I developed this framework as a young scientist in the late 1970s, after receiving interdisciplinary training in psychology and political science at Yale with an NIMH fellowship, and receiving my first major NSF grant (as a junior faculty member at MIT) to develop the interdisciplinary study of government learning.

Hierarchical images were implicit in Plato. They become explicit in Freud’s theory of the realm of the “Over-I” as an important feature in collective and individual behavior, especially nonrational behavior and psychopathology. The later clinical traditions (Kleinian, later Kohut) refined the analysis. The theory that cognitive and motivational inhibitions are induced by hierarchy-defined identity was initially explored (for Blacks) by Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey in The Mark of Oppression. An exciting discovery of physiological psychology is that vivid images are processed in the brain in pathways that link directly to the central nervous system, and partially bypass the neocortex - thus giving plausible support to the psychoanalytic/clinical model of nonrational behavior and psychopathology (while suggesting the difficulties of its traditional talk therapy to affect the phenom-

enon).

The approach links literatures across several disciplines in a common framework, and is especially helpful to bring the psychoanalytic tradition (+ measurement) into a conversation with other social sciences. It is *transformational*: a.) because most social science has been based on the study of *attitudes* toward an external reality, rather than the *objects of perception* - e.g., in this case, higher images that create power relationships and affect emotion and motivation (and, perhaps, some cognitive functions). And it is transformative b.) because it deepens our empathy for the passionate agendas of ideologues, renders the claims testable, and allows us to develop better evidence-based dialogues about key perpetually-recycling arguments of social and economic policy. (One such area is economics, where both liberals and conservatives imagine a group psychology and that government actions can, by different mechanisms, affect individual motivation.)<sup>1</sup> And c.) it may improve our understanding of how to empower individuals, and d.) improve the labor force and political participation and education attainment of lower status groups, e.) improve our understanding of the maturation process, and f.) refine our understanding of the physiological mechanisms of psychopathology (including anomic behavior and anomie-related addictions) and improve psychotherapy.

The potential to develop Michelson-Morley tests of ideological assumptions created panic in the NAS/NRC system. The proposal arrived at exactly the time that the first Reagan Administration was advocating policy ideas that could be understood and engaged by the new measures. (The economist Robert Solow wrote that I was “exactly right” about their model of the economy.) The story of the (several and continuing) rounds of aggressive derailment and suppression, through cycles of NSF infrastructure-planning exercises since the 1980s - and including the most recent round of NSF infrastructure planning - is recorded on [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net) and I will not recount it here.<sup>2</sup>

You should know, however, that this proposal for transformative research arrived with an excellent pedigree. I had vetted it with a working group of leading psychiatrists and psychoanalysts when I served as Ittelson Consultant to the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. One of our most distinguished psychiatrists, Dr. David

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<sup>1</sup> Thus, it also will be transformative g.) of status and power relationships, because somebody is right, and somebody is wrong, about key issues. For example, if group psychology/motivational effects are non-zero, the beloved neo-classical paradigm of economics collapses along with the claim of economists that their models/professional advice should determine national policy. If a new paradigm and set of measures, that take Plato and Freud seriously (and integrates them and grounds them in physiological psychology) is productive, the scientific status of older work represented in election to the NAS may be affected.

<sup>2</sup> The analysis was in “President Reagan’s Counseling,” on the [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net) Website. There also are companion pieces applying the framework to liberal activism.

Hamburg (former President of the Institute of Medicine and AAAS), tried to deal with the early derailment by off-the-record sessions of his Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government. Sidney Verba (Harvard), a senior political science member on the NAS/NRC panels told me that if he “was a younger man I would jump on this” line of research but there was nothing he could do. So far as I can tell, everyone agrees that it *is* transformative research and should go forward on scientific grounds. Dr. Henry Brady, a current member of the NSF advisory panel for behavioral science, looked into the derailment and told me that the problem was that the proposal “scared people” - a response which I relayed to Assistant Director Norman Bradburn (and received an acknowledging email - he had an early clinical M. A. degree from Harvard and knew about the ideas), but the nature of the impasse and logjam remain mysterious to me. Perhaps you can have better luck?

Because my original, youthful submission focused on the exciting possibility of evidence-based dialogues about policy ideas, it may help to say that I do not believe that the truths about social and economic policy issues lie at a single point along the current liberal-conservative dimension in American politics. And they probably do not lie along this dimension at all. For centuries, liberals and conservatives argued about the cause of the Plague - liberals favored a *miasma* theory blaming bad air in low-lying, poorer areas of cities without modern sanitation and conservatives emphasized foreign contamination and quarantine. We only could understand and solve the problem with good science.

Sincerely,

(Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge

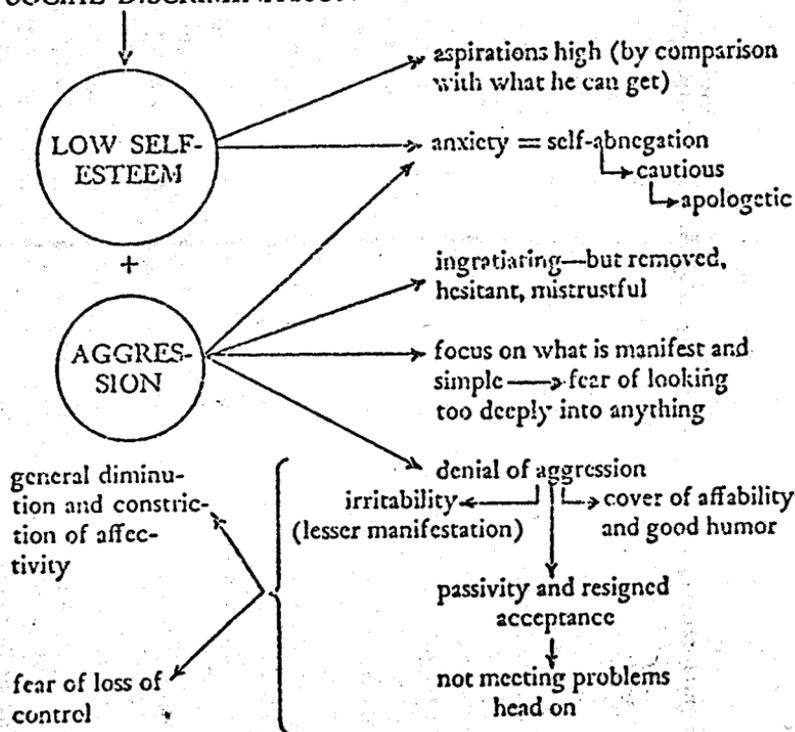
cc: Drs. Droegemeier, Lanzerotti, Leshner, Ford, Randall

from Abraham Kardiner &  
 Lionel Ovesy, The Mark of  
 Oppression, p. 303

PSYCHODYNAMIC INVENTORY OF NEGRO PERSONALITY 303

because the individual, in order to maintain internal balance and to protect himself from being overwhelmed by it, must initiate restitutive maneuvers in order to keep functioning—all quite automatic and unconscious. In addition to maintaining an internal balance, the individual must continue to maintain a social façade and some kind of adaptation to the offending stimuli so that he can preserve some social effectiveness. All of this requires a constant preoccupation, notwithstanding the fact that these adaptational processes all take place on a low order of awareness. The following is a diagram of a typical parallelogram of forces:

SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION



In the center of this adaptational scheme stand the low self-esteem (the self-referential part) and the aggression (the reactive part). The rest are maneuvers with these main constellations, to prevent their manifestation, to deny them and the sources from which they