Social Science Research Council

Social and Behavioral Sciences in the Field of Aging
Planning Meeting
11 June 2004

FINAL REPORT

8 September 2004

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SUMMARY:

This document highlights the discussions of a meeting hosted by the Social Science Research Council on June 11, 2004. The objective of the meeting was to explore the "successes" (advances, breakthroughs, etc.) and "failures" (weaknesses, shortcomings, etc.) of the social and behavioral sciences in the field of aging in the last 30 years.

The meeting provided a forum to define necessary terms, identify specific examples, and assess the potentialities and priorities for further research on social and behavioral science advances in aging.

In addition to providing a summary of these discussions, this report presents a follow-up plan of action. A copy of the meeting agenda as well as a list of invited attendees and participants is also attached (See Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

BACKGROUND STATEMENT OF NEED:

In late 1999, the National Institute of Aging program on Behavioral and Social Research proposed (NIA/BSR) a National Research Council (NRC) planning meeting to explore how the findings of the 1971 K. Deutsch et al. article "Conditions Favoring Major Advances in Social Science" (among other sources) could be used to inform the agency's research and funding priorities in the social and behavioral sciences. This planning meeting, held in November 2001, resulted in NIA commissioning the NRC to produce a report on the assessment of vitality and progress in the social and behavioral sciences.

Prior to the 2001 Planning Meeting, the NRC organized a meeting with regard to possible implications for National Science Foundation strategies in the social and behavioral sciences. This meeting (attended by Craig Calhoun, President, SSRC) had an extensive discussion on the Deutsch et al. (1971) article that had been included in the agenda book. As a result of this meeting, the National Institute on Aging program on Behavioral and Social Research funded the SSRC to discuss possible projects related to understanding and improving social and behavioral science contributions[1], including exploring specifically how the Deutsch et al. article (1971) mentioned above might be

[1] Please note that the NRC (with some funding from the NIA/BSR) is undertaking research in this same topical area. In effort to ensure coordination, both the lead staff and the committee chair of the NRC project on Assessing Behavioral and Social Science Research on Aging were invited to and in attendance at the SSRC June Planning Meeting.

updated and modified to give a more current analysis of behavioral and social science trends in the context of aging.[2]

To date, the ability of funders such as NIA/BSR to assess the quality and probability of inventive social and behavioral science proposals has been constrained by a lack of systematic information and indicators. NIA/BSR believes that a methodical analysis of past social and behavioral science advances would strategically enhance its capacity to estimate and evaluate the potential for future social and behavioral science discovery and thereby strategically innovate the NIA/BSR portfolio.

Ideas about what design and direction a larger and longer-term project of this nature might take were developed over the course of a 1.5 day planning meeting held at the SSRC on June 11, 2004. The highlights of this meeting discussion and the outcomes of this project formulation follow.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

With the exception of the meeting's first presentation (Theodore Porter, "Cases, Conditions, and Contributions of the Social and Behavioral Sciences in a Historical Perspective"), the meeting agenda was focused on discussions pertaining to where, when, and why social and behavioral science advances have occurred in the area of aging specifically On many occasions during the meeting, however, participants elevated these discussions to broader more macro-level conversations about the state and status of social and behavioral science research generally.

We do not mean nor want to suggest that a discussion centered around the successes and failures of the social and behavioral sciences in the field of aging – however amended or expanded it may be – is or can be representative of a fully elaborated discussion of the opportunities and challenges facing the social and behavioral sciences overall. However, we do find it worth noting that, in many instances, participants in this meeting found it difficult to disentangle an analysis of the breakthroughs and shortcomings of the social and behavioral sciences in the field of aging from the need to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the social and behavioral sciences at large.

Major summary points from these discussions (as they apply to the social and behavioral sciences in the field of aging specifically as well as to the state and status of social and behavioral sciences generally) included the following:

- Scientific "successes" should not be thought of just in terms of theoretical breakthroughs in scientific paradigms but also in terms of material advances to scientific practices. For example, newer forms of longitudinal data collection and analysis, enabled by the development of new practical computer tools as well as the application of modern statistical techniques, have expanded not only the descriptive but also the predictive capacity of social sciences in various areas, including aging.

[2] The idea of updating the Deutsch et al (1971) article was abandoned relatively early on in the SSRC Planning Meeting process (as well as at previous NRC Planning Meetings) due to overwhelming reservations about the methodological value of the Deutsch exercise and any replication thereof.

- Participants noted, for example, that the interplay between ideas about life-course theory and approaches to data collection techniques have fed off each other for decades, together creating an iterative cycle that has resulted in major breakthroughs in how research in this area is done. Some participants felt, however, that the breakthroughs were finally and will ultimately be dependent on whether or not the ideas are there more than the approaches.

- In addition to theoretical and/or material advancements, scientific "successes" can and should also be thought of in terms of financial investments. In so many words, whether the right research investments are being made in fields that can and will yield progress.
    - Although federal money has at times seeded the development of new fields (e.g., material sciences), it has at other times been spent trying to fertilize fallow and semi-fallow fields (e.g., personality research, social indicators project, and biomarkers of aging).

- Analysis and assessment of scientific advances must involve asking about the evolution of four things: (a) data, (b) methods, (c) ideas, and (d) questions. Scientists report that the process of "cracking open a field" and creating a place where new questions can be asked, new ideas explored, new methods employed, and new data examined is critical to scientific breakthroughs.

- Given lags in the publication process – which in the social and behavioral sciences can extend, by some estimates, up to 2 years – such research must also ask how advances in data, methods, ideas and questions can be identified in a timely fashion, not only by those researchers seeking to analyze and assess scientific progress but by others who also want to augment and elaborate this progress.
    - Some participants pointed out that, typically, exploratory or developmental research is not what tends to be accepted to and reported in social and behavioral science journals. And, all agreed that social and behavioral sciences would gain from a weekly and interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal like *Science* or *Nature* that published significant original scientific research as well as analyses of current research and science policy issues.

- Incentives for and reviews of research, both at the institutional and individual level, tend to emphasize "quantity" more than "quality" of research. These practices tend to perpetuate "normal" science more than they generate "extraordinary" science, and the former is less often a source of scientific breakthroughs than is the latter.

- To supplement these practices, standardized procedures and indicators for identifying and measuring past performance and future potential as related to research "quality" should be developed. Examples of indicators that could be used quantitatively and qualitatively might include: (a) publications, (b) citations,

(c) contributions (e.g., committees, services), (d) recognitions (e.g., publicity), (e) distinctions (e.g., awards), and (f) innovations (e.g., patents).

  - Participants at the meeting suggested designing a cover sheet with these (or other) indicators of past performance quantity and quality with the assumption they will also serve as predictors of future potential. This cover sheet could be used conjointly with current NIA/BSR review forms.
  - Participants also argued for the design and development of new multi-method approaches that analyze and assess research production and innovation through the combination of more common quantitative approaches (e.g., bibliometric methods) supplemented with less conventional qualitative methods (e.g., retrospective peer review).
  - While participants agreed that research "quantity and quality" should be reviewed differently, they also recognized that strategizing to conduct a study of research review is distinct from strategizing to change the structures and strategies of such review. The group was cautious but curious about what could ultimately be done with respect to the latter.

- Within the research community, there is a lack of agreement about what the "right" questions or the "key" problems are for the social and behavioral sciences in general and in aging specifically. More critically, perhaps, is the problem that social and behavioral scientists have difficulty in reaching consensus as to what is "top notch science" versus what is "mundane study." Differences among the social sciences are substantive and substantial, in part reflecting the resistances of disciplines like sociology and political science to the hegemonic tendencies of economic or those using economic models. This ambiguity lends itself to significant fragmentation and serious dilution of both the social science research fields and the social science research funds, thereby handicapping opportunities for potential breakthrough.
  - Participants believed there is a need for some greater institutional leadership and institutional structure around which social and behavioral science research and researchers might be able to better coalesce. Ideas for what form that might take included the establishment of a national social and behavioral science research center.

- The state and status of social and behavioral sciences represent a major science policy question facing the country in all areas, not just aging. There is a need to bring better consensus around indicators of research quality and quantity as well as better strategies for innovation and production to these fields as a whole.
  - The majority of participants felt that the timing is right – intellectually, politically, and financially – for a large-scale critical analysis of the state and status of social and behavioral sciences.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH:

The meeting participants agreed that the research community would benefit from a larger, longer-term systematic analysis of social and behavioral science "successes" and "failures" in the area of aging specifically as well as in other arenas more broadly.

The group did not seek final consensus around any one specific project to be pursued in this vein. Rather, the group rested by proposing the following range of various possible projects to be prioritized.

Each of the proposed projects is described briefly below and classified as one of two types: (a) research-based or (b) action-based.

(a) Research-Based Projects

- *Stories of Discovery*. Prepare a series of brief histories related to advances that have been made by the social and behavioral sciences that have led to recent or critical findings in aging. It was noted at the meeting that, in the past, stories of discovery have often been selective advocacy pieces. It was agreed that if this project is pursued, the stories of discovery should be prepared as critical analytic pieces.

- *State and Status of Social Sciences Report*. Prepare a national report looking at trends and developments as well as challenges and opportunities in the social and behavioral sciences, giving consideration to these elements along the following dimensions: (a) intellectual, (b) epistemological, (c) methodological, (d) institutional, and (e) fiscal. The report should seek to assess the utility of the social sciences to scientific progress at large and to evaluate specific examples of where social sciences are connecting to natural and life sciences and to what end. This report should not be approached as an advocacy document but rather as a scholarly study targeted toward multiple audiences, including but not limited to government agencies, universities, foundations, and non-profit research organizations. If necessary, the idea could be tested with an exemplar report focusing on the state and status of social and behavioral sciences in the field of aging . Such an alpha- report would result in a qualitatively smaller audience, but it might also reveal methodological issues and insights for ramping up to the larger study.

- *Modified Delphi Panel Study*. Run a modified Delphi study experiment with the goal of (a) generating a list of the major advances in the social and behavioral sciences as applied to aging, and (b) testing the effects of different variables on the probability of consensus around examples advances. To do so, a panel of experts varying by institution, disciplinary affiliation, professional position, and research application in the scientific research community – including university faculty, government policy makers, funding agency personnel, journal editors, etc – would be assembled. Using a table like the one prepared for the June 2004 meeting by Rhoten to seed and stimulate responses (see Appendix 3), panel members would be asked to identify, from their perspective, the critical social and behavioral science successes and failures in aging. Once the panel member lists were collected, an aggregate list would be compiled and circulated for final reviewing and rating by panel members. The list, the reviews, and the ratings would then be analyzed for variance.

- *Changes in Aging, Changes in Aging Research*. Conduct exploratory research to examine whether, and if so how, the upward trend in aging and the resulting

extension of the life cycle correlates with new trends in research on aging. Examples of potential research in this area might include (e.g., how has the upward trend in aging influenced new directions in research on palliative care).

- *Retrospective Peer Review/Experimental Peer Review*. The peer review process performs the gatekeeper function in science. As such, examining the dynamics and decisions characterizing this stage of the research cycle can reveal important insights about whether the right research investments versus the right research assessments are being made in fields. Two possible approaches to examining peer review were proposed here. First, carry out a retrospective review of a random sample of the NIA/BSR proposal review results from the last 20 years. This process would entail (a) comparing contents of successful versus unsuccessful proposals, (b) examining what was promised versus what was produced with regard to successful proposals, and (c) and analyzing the reviewers' ratings and comments for their power to predict research quality and productivity. Second, conduct a peer review experiment using clinical trials to test the effects of different indicators and instruments on reviewers' decision criteria or consequence.

(b) Action-Based Projects

- *Social and Behavioral Science Journal.* Create a weekly and interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal like *Science* or *Nature* that publishes significant original scientific research as well as analyses of current research and science policy issues related specifically to the social and behavioral sciences.

- *National Social Science Center*. Explore the establishment of a "supra-institutional" research platform that can help concentrate and integrate a portion of social and behavioral science research energies and monies around "right" scientific questions and "key" social problems. The process of establishing such a Center would begin a series of workshops to identify (a) approximately six to 10 questions and problems to start, (b) the proper organizational mechanisms for conducting research on these questions and problems, and (c) terms of research "solutions" and scientific "success".

PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT PRIORITIES:

Two key conclusions from the meeting were: (a) not enough is known yet about how to measure research quality – either in terms of vitality (past performance) or viability (potential performance) – in the social and behavioral sciences; and, (b) while anecdotal evidence and intuitive sense seem to suggest that the most interesting advances by the social and behavioral sciences are currently being made at the overlapping fringes of different disciplines, there is not yet sufficient empirical data or scientific proof to support this point.

The SSRC proposes developing a multi-method, multi-phase research model that will address both of these issues by identifying cases of scientific advancement, analyzing their enabling conditions, and assessing the social and behavioral science contributions. SSRC seeks to develop and apply this model of to a series of specific problem areas in

the public health arena, beginning with aging and expanding to others such as, for example, HIV/AIDS and obesity.

We believe that by pursuing a series of comparative analyses of social and behavioral science advancements in a variety of specific topical domains (such as the above) which are then contextualized in a larger and more general assessment of the state and status of the social science and behavioral sciences,[3] we will best address the specific discussions around the social and behavioral sciences in aging as well as the more general questions raised about the social and behavioral sciences raised in the meeting.

The three stages of our proposed model – (a) Design and Development, (b) Modified Delphi Panel Study, and (c) Map of Scientific Advances – are described briefly below using the field of aging to demonstrate. These descriptions should be seen only as very preliminary concept sketches, the details of which will be developed later in full research proposals to the NIA/BSR based on interest.

By virtue of the multi-phase nature of the proposed research model, the Modified Delphi Panel Study and Map of Scientific Advances stages are not dependent on one another. They can be pursued as discrete or complementary pieces depending on interest and funding.

Stage I – Design and Development

The design stage will be dedicated to establishing a project advisory committee, reviewing the literature, and developing data collection materials.

Project committee members will be selected to represent a range of disciplinary backgrounds, institutional expertise, and theoretical and empirical insights into contemporary research initiatives being undertaken – as well as current research needs being overlooked – in the field of aging.[4] Because we are interested in first charting the full 20-year old landscape of scientific advances across the field of aging and then mapping the zones of social and behavioral science influence, members of this committee will necessarily include individuals working in the social and behavioral sciences as well as the biomedical and health sciences and the neurological and gerontological sciences in positions of policy, academia, and funding. Candidates for the committee and for the committee leadership team will be identified through a review of the literature and on the basis of recommendations by institutions and individuals who can speak to the various fields and organizations from which we seek representation.

In addition to consulting the literature for the purposes of identifying project committee members, the literature will be examined for examples of scientific advances and authors in aging. First, using databases such as ScienceDirect, Web of Science, MEDLINE, JSTOR, and Ingenta, we will search and review highly-cited English journal articles on aging for examples of methodological and technical as well as theoretical and

[3] The SSRC is currently seeking funding for a larger assessment of the state and status of the social sciences, and would welcome the opportunity to discuss possibilities of funding from NIA or elsewhere within NIH to co-support this broad effort.

[4] For the purposes of the proposed project, by current and contemporary, we are referring to the last 20 years.

empirical advances in both basic as well as applied research from a variety of fields and subfields. A small cross-section (n = 10) of these representative examples drawn from the literature will be used to create a preliminary version of the *seed advances table* to be used in Stage II of the project.[5]

Second, at the same time that this *seed advances table* is being developed from the literature, a parallel *researcher list* will also be compiled, tracking the names, home institutions, professional positions, disciplinary affiliations, and (co-)publications for those researchers who have published results on the examples of scientific advances taken from the literature. This *researcher list* will be used in Stage II and Stage III of the project.

A meeting of the project advisory committee will be convened to refine the preliminary *seed advances table* and the *researcher list*. This committee meeting will also serve as an opportunity to review a full research proposal for Stage II and/or Stage III of the project.

Stage II – Modified Delphi Panel Study

This stage of the project will experiment with modifying the traditional Delphi Panel Study as a way of identifying the key cases of scientific advancement (and lack thereof) in aging.

The RAND Corporation developed the first Delphi method in the 1950s to estimate the probable effects of an atomic bomb attack on the United States. In the last 50 years, use of this procedure has become widespread in technological, business, and scientific forecasting. In short, the Delphi method can be described as a technique to elicit individual opinions from a panel of experts with the goal of obtaining a final group response. And, it can be characterized by three distinguishing features — anonymity for all respondents, iteration with controlled feedback, and statistically interpretable group response.

The key to a successful Delphi study lies primarily in the selection of participants. To help ensure that a representative distribution of institutions, professional positions, disciplinary affiliations, research applications, etc is represented in our panel, a descriptive attribute matrix will be formed. The names of the prospective participants from the Stage I *researcher list* will be entered in the first column, and, for each name, the cells in the corresponding rows will checked to indicate the "coverage" that each nominees is expected to provide. The original *researcher list* will be modified as necessary, and a final list of 60 nominees will be created. With an anticipated acceptance rate of about 60-65%, we will seek to establish a panel of between 30 and 40 individuals from this modified list.

While our proposed use of the Delphi method varies in that the immediate results will be primarily retrospective and only secondarily predictive, the essence of the traditional procedure remains largely intact.

[5] The *seed advances table* will be an expanded version on the table Rhoten developed for the June 2004 planning meeting (see Appendix 3).

NOTE: The process described below will be repeated with three different panels and analyzed for patterns of cross-panel convergence and divergence as a way testing for the reliability of the procedure.

The procedure will begin with mailing or emailing the *seed advances table* created in Stage I along with a short demographic survey to the selected panel of experts. First, each panel member will be asked to answer a brief series of questions about themselves. Second, using the *seed advances table* to stimulate thought and illustrate examples, each panel member will also be asked to append the table with a list of as many additional examples of scientific advancement (and lack thereof) in the field of aging from the last 20 years as they deem worthy of mention. In this round, panel members will not be required to justify or qualify their suggestions beyond the descriptors asked for in the table.

Once the appended versions of the *seed advances table* have been received from each panel member, an *aggregated advances table* reflecting the collective suggestions will be synthesized and re-circulated to panel members with a brief summary of the first round results. In this second round, panel members will be asked to rank each scientific advance (and lack thereof) on the *aggregated advances table* according to factors such as (a) impact, (b) relevance, (c) speed, and/or (d) originality and to order them according to their influence on the evolution of (a) data, (b) methods, (c) ideas, and/or (d) questions. Additionally, individual panel members will be encouraged to provide open-ended explanations for their selections and opinions in this phase of the process. If necessary, interviews will also be used to elicit more details about individual decision making processes and criteria.

Using panel member responses to the *aggregated advances table*, a *refined advances table* will then be developed and disseminated to all panel members, along with the anonymous justifications and explanations for rank and order decisions. In this third round, panel members will be asked to review the *refined advances table* and reconsider their former responses in light of the opinions and options of others. Upon receipt, responses to the *refined advances table* will be summarized and analyzed for consensus around the identified advances. This process of table preparation, transmission, and analysis will be reiterated until it becomes clear that no new ideas regarding scientific advances (and lack thereof) in aging are emerging and a final *dominant advances table* is agreed upon by panel members.

The results of the *dominant advances table* will be used in several ways. First and most obviously, the results will generate a list of the major scientific successes and failures in aging that is based on expert group judgment and consensus and thereby more complete and balanced than any other current list. In and of itself, the generation of this list will serve as a valuable topological map of the scientific breakthroughs and shortcomings in this field and an interesting methodological test for other fields.

Second, the table will be used to analyze the effects of different variables on the spread of opinion between panel members and the probability of consensus around examples, indicators, and characteristics of said advances. This should reveal interesting insights about the interpretation and appreciation of research “quality” by different audiences (e.g., Do senior research scientists engaged in biomedical research on Alzheimer’s disease and dementia value methodological advances associated with “discovery”

science more than data advances in “public” science? What about psychologists engaged in clinical trials on Alzheimer’s disease and dementia?).

Stage III – Map of Scientific Advances

The focus of this stage of this project will be to gain a better understanding of the conditions favoring the cases of scientific advancements identified in Stage II and the contributions of social and behavioral sciences to these advances.

From the *dominant advances table* developed in Stage II, we will select a representative subset of the examples of scientific advances. For each advance in this subset, we will begin mapping the associated scientific network by revisiting the databases of ScienceDirect, Web of Science, MEDLINE, JSTOR, and Ingenta to review all English journal articles related specifically to our subset of advances. For each advance, we will generate a list of all authors and co-authors who have published an article related to that advance since 1985. As "article" we will consider the following publication-types: normal articles (including proceedings papers published in journals), letters, notes, and reviews (but not meeting abstracts, obituaries, corrections, editorials, etc.). Similar to the *researcher list* created in Stage I, the *author/co-author list* will include basic attributes such as discipline, institution, and position for each entry.

For each advance, the entries in the *author/co-author list* will be used to create a network graph of the researchers and researcher connections surrounding that advance. Any researcher who has authored at least one paper related to the scientific advance in question will be considered “included” in the network and any researcher who has co-authored at least one paper will be considered “connected” to the network. While we recognize that many scientists are often involved in and/or connected to research by some means outside the bonds of publications, we also realize that we have no systematic way of collecting data on those ties. Thus, we accept publication as a reasonable and necessarily stringent definition for participation in a scientific network.

By overlaying the different researcher attributes on to these publication networks, we should be able to discern what, if any, patterns in, for example, discipline, institution, and position surround scientific advances. For a small number of these cases, we will consider using additional qualitative and retrospective techniques (e.g., interviews, surveys) to “backwards map” the nature of these conditions and their influence on the scientific advance in question.[6] This analysis of conditions enabling past advances should be useful in terms of enhancing the NIA/BSR capacity to evaluate the potential for future social and behavioral science discovery and thereby strategically innovate the NIA/BSR portfolio.

In looking at the attributes of these research networks, we are particularly interested in assessing the contributions of the social and behavioral sciences. We know that aging presents research problems and questions that are insoluble without an understanding of the social and behavioral context, and we believe that most of the groundbreaking work is happening at the intersections between the social and behavioral sciences and

[6] This method would be the inverse of the process Rhoten is currently using to explore where scientific advances might occur in interdisciplinary research centers by using network graphs as a forward looking roadmap.

the natural and life sciences. Yet, we also suspect that the social and behavioral sciences may not as integrated with the biomedical and health or the neurological and gerontological sciences as they might be.

Thus, this aspect of our assessment of the research networks produced above focuses on three sets of questions:

- First, what fields and subfields are present in the scientific networks surrounding key scientific advancements in aging, and how are they positioned? Specifically, how present versus absent, engaged versus detached, central versus peripheral are the social and behavioral sciences in these networks?

- Second, what are the relations between disciplines representing the social and behavioral sciences and those representing the biomedical and health sciences and the neurological and gerontological sciences?

- Third, how do the social and behavioral sciences participate in the research related to these different advances? Are social and behavioral sciences assuming certain functions, making specific contributions, asserting critical refutations? Vice versa? Are the social and behavioral sciences embedded in the basic research, discovery science, and intellectual core activities of these advances? Or, are they clustered around public science, applied research, and/or educational outreach activities? Are the social and behavioral science tasks of these advances performed by social and behavioral scientists or by researchers from other fields and subfields?

Here, we will also parse and code the titles plus abstracts of the relevant publications in each scientific network for elements such as disciplinary content, methodological approach, outreach versus research, applied versus basic, etc. This procedure will allow us to gain some understanding of the content of each publication and to cluster publications on the basis of similarity measures. In so doing, we will produce what are essentially representative concept maps of the relations between various publication clusters, which when combined with the disciplinary affiliation attribute data of the researchers, will allow us to depict the position, relations, and participation of social and behavioral sciences in these scientific advances.

It must be noted that this method of assessment is based on one important assumption: the work to be evaluated must be published in the open, international journal literature. We recognize that natural and life sciences often have higher rates of publication than social and behavioral sciences. However, because we are more interested in assessing the relational structure between rather than performance rates of disciplines in these networks, we feel that our efforts will not be compromised by these bibliometric limitations. Moreover, we are aware that different publication characteristics define different fields of science, and that this is particularly true when comparing across the social and behavioral sciences with natural and life sciences. These differences will be considered and carefully accounted for taken into account.

Stage IV – Publication and Dissemination of Results

Results of the proposed analysis and assessment will be used to produce publications for scholarly journals as well as to initiate a proposed series of SSRC Working Papers on Social Sciences in Public Health. This series will include the results of other social science and public health efforts currently underway and/or under discussion at SSRC (e.g., Integrative Doctoral Programs in the Health and Social Sciences: Current Trends, Future Directions; HIV/AIDS and Social Transformation). This Working Paper Series will be disseminated by the SSRC both in print versions and electronic versions.

PLAN OF ACTION:

- These minutes will be sent to all invited attendees, including those who were unable to attend.

- Individuals will be encouraged to offer any comments to the account of the meeting highlights or suggestions for further development of future research projects.

- Individuals will be asked to indicate their support for and/or interest in the specific research priority listed above.

- Report will be sent to NIA/BSR staff for review, and responses to Proposed Research Project Priorities and Opportunities will be sought.

- With a minimum award of $50,000, the SSRC could begin working on Stage I of this project in September as well as the preparation of a proposal for Stage II and/or III continuances.

- With a second award of $50,000, the SSRC could undertake a foray into the research with an interim step between Stage I and Stage II/Stage III. This would entail a modified version of methods proposed in Stage II and/or III were tested on one to three advances identified in Stage I before conducting a full-scale version of the research put forth.

- The SSRC will seek also funding from other sources for application of the proposed model to other topics in public health.

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AGENDA

8:30 – 9:00 **Breakfast at the Social Science Research Council**

9:00 – 9:30 **Opening Remarks: Origins, Objectives, and Outcomes of Planning Meeting**
(Commentator: Richard Suzman)

9:30 – 10:15 **Cases, Conditions and Contributions of the Social and Behavioral Sciences in a Historical Perspective**
(Presenter: Ted Porter)

This session will provide a brief historical overview of where, when, and why social and behavioral science advances have occurred in relation to medicine (and other arenas broadly speaking) but not necessarily nor specifically to aging. It will begin with a short presentation by Ted Porter, who will then moderate the group discussion.

10:15 – 10:30 ***Coffee Break***

10:30 – 12:00 **Cases, Conditions and Contributions of the Social and Behavioral Sciences in the Aging Domain**
(Moderator: James Vaupel)

This session will focus on cases and conditions of social and behavioral science "success" and "failure" in the domain of aging expressly. It will begin with a short presentation by James Vaupel, who will then moderate an open discussion drawing from but not limited to the questions and answers circulated in advance of the meeting (See Addendum A, *Advanced Thoughts.)*

12:00 – 12:15 **NAS Panel on Assessing Behavioral and Social Science Research on Aging**
(Presenters: Irwin Feller, Paul Stern)

This session will outline the charge to the NAS panel and should help identify opportunities for clarification, complimentarity, and collaboration across NAS and SSRC activities in this area.

12:15 – 1:30 ***Working Lunch to Review Morning's Sessions***

1:30 – 3:00 **The Long View: Identifying and Elaborating a Full Scale SSRC Project**
(Moderator: Edward Hackett)

The SSRC is considering a full scale project to examine cases, conditions and contributions of social and behavioral science in the field of aging (and perhaps a second domain area). In order to pursue such a project effectively, its research agenda and design needs to be focused, its terms and variables defined, its substantive and practical goals specified, etc. This session will concentrate on how to set the intellectual and methodological parameters in ways that make such a project viable and valuable. (See Addendum B, *Framing Questions.)*

3:00 – 3:15 ***Coffee Break***

3:15 – 4:30 **Next Steps: Partners, Protagonists, and Patrons**
(Moderator: Laura Carstensen)

This session will attend to thinking concretely about possible next steps. What kinds of connections – across disciplines and institutions, between researchers and practitioners – could and should be forged for such a project? What specific individuals would be appropriate to invite into a larger project? How and where could resources for this project be mobilized? What competitions and RFPs should be considered?

4:30 – 5:00 **Closing Remarks: Synthetic Summary of the Day**
(Commentator: Diana Rhoten)

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PARTICIPANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Laura L. Carstensen
Professor of Psychology
Bldg. 420, Jordan Hall
Stanford University
Stanford, California 93305-2130
Phone (650) 723-3102
Fax (650) 725-5699
llc@psych.stanford.edu

Glen Elder
Carolina Population Center
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
123 W. Franklin St
CB# 8120
Chapel Hill NC 27516-3997
Phone (919) 966-6660
glen_elder@unc.edu

Irwin Feller
1426 Ridge Master Drive
State College, PA 16803
Phone (814) 237-6276
Fax (814) 237-0295
iqf@ems.psu.edu

Ed Hackett
Edward J. Hackett
Professor
Department of Sociology
Arizona State University
Box 874802
Tempe, AZ 85287-4802
ehackett@asu.edu

Robert Hauser
Center for Demography of Health and Aging
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1180 Observatory Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
Phone (608) 262-4715-2182
hauser@ssc.wisc.edu

Rose Maria Li
President
Rose Li and Associates, Inc.
6202 Melvern Drive
Bethesda, MD 20817
Phone (301) 530-5011
Fax (301) 530-4921
rose@roseliassociates.com

Ted Porter
Department of History
UCLA Box 951473
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1473
Phone (310) 206-2352
Fax (310) 206-9630
tporter@ssc.ucla.edu

Ilene Siegler
Duke University Medical Center
Box 2969
Durham, NC 27710
Phone (919) 684-6352, 684-2708
Fax (919) 681-8960
ilene.siegler@duke.edu
[*Fed Ex: Behavioral Medicine Research Center 2212 Elder St., Durham, NC 27705*]

Neil Smelser
Home address: 109 Hillcrest Road
Berkeley, CA 94705
Home phone: (510) 655-0577
nsmelser@uclink.berkeley.edu

Paul C. Stern
The National Academies
500 Fifth Street, N.W. (K-1127)
Washington DC 20001
Phone (202) 334-3005
Fax (202) 334-3829
pstern@nas.edu

Richard Suzman
Associate Director (Behavioral and Social Research)
Behavioral and Social Research Program
Gateway Building, Room 533
7201 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, Md. 20892
Phone (301)496-3131
Fax (301) 402-0051
suzmanr@nia.nih.gov

Barbara Torrey
Visiting Scholar
Population Reference Bureau
1875 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Suite 520
Washington, D.C. 20009
btorrey@prb.org

James Vaupel
Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research
Konrad-Zuse-Strasse 1
18057 Rostock, Germany
Phone +49 (0)381 2081-0
Fax +49 (0)381 2081-202
jwv@demogr.mpg.de

SSRC Staff

Social Science Research Council
810 Seventh Avenue, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10019
Phone (212) 377-2700

Diana Rhoten
Program Director, x605
rhoten@ssrc.org

Taryn Drongowski
Program Assistant, x606
drongowski@ssrc.org

Social and Behavioral Science Advances in Aging

Advances	*Researchers*	*Conditions*	*Contributions*
Development of techniques to assess the aging brain and the neuropsychological processes which underpin the (mostly) decline in human function that accompanies aging			
Analysis of how no-cost effects on use of medical care and consequences for health	Rand Health Insurance Experiment		
Development of experimental demography and biodemography and their appliation to cross-species studies	J. Vaupel		This work reveals a slowing of mortality at advanced ages and has thus resulted a better comprehension of mortality trajectories with the progression of age
Detection of reductions in disability rates among older Americans as accelerating and including more diverse groups of Americans.	K. Manton and X. Gu		
Comparative analyses of effects of incentives and public pensions on retirement rates	J. Gruber and D. Wise		The work identifies the variation in public policy as a significant cross-national explanatory factor for variations in labor force participation
Quantification of age-specific selective factors on mortality and explication that selective pressure to reduce mortality depends on intergenerational transfers such as parental and cooperative care	R. Lee		This work challenges the classic evolutionary theory of aging and thereby addresses the evolution of low-fertility in the developed world and its consequences of population aging
Analysis of the relationship between health and socioeconomic status; empirical evidence that mortality has a strong inverse association with income *and with race*	M. Marmot, G. Smith; *A. Deaton and D. Lubotsky*		
Evidence of correlation between individuals with more negative affective styles and weaker immune responses	M. Rosenkranz, D. Jackson, etc.		This work establishes a link between brain activity and immune function, which thus suggests a mechanism for why people with a more positive emotional disposition may be healthier
Positive effect of environmental changes on delaying the onset of chronic diseases and significantly increasing life expectancy	R. Fogel (and group)		This work indicates how disease contracted later in life can either be avoided or deferred based on environmental improvements and appropriate biomedical interventions in the womb or during post-natal developmental ages