

Vagaries and Politics of Funding: Beyond "I Told You So"

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struction

Abstract: In an earlier contribution to the debates, I provided an analysis of the vagaries and politics of funding in one national agency. The study, which combined sociological and autobiographical texts, showed social science in the making, for the particular appeal of a decision not to fund a particular proposal had not been made. In the present contribution, I analyze the subsequent events, including the outcome of the appeal and the results of the subsequent competition. I conclude with a comment on the responsibilities of authors and their readers in the constitution of interpretations of texts such as letters to funding agencies and the ensuing responses.

Table of Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. Case History](#)
- [3. When is a Factual Error?](#)
- [4. On Historical Precedents](#)
- [5. All's Well that Ends Well?](#)
- [6. Signatures](#)
- [Appendix A: Adjudication Letter 2002 Selection Committee \[Interdisciplinary\]](#)
- [Appendix B: Adjudication Letter 1999 Selection Committee \[Education I\]](#)
- [Appendix C: Section of Appeals Letter pertaining to Research Record](#)
- [Appendix D: Response to Appeal](#)
- [Appendix E: Adjudication Letter 2003 Selection Committee \[Education I\]](#)
- [References](#)
- [Author](#)
- [Citation](#)

1. Introduction

Seeking funding to support research activities is a central part of scholarly activity in the social sciences. Funding agencies generally draw on multi-level peer review—external reviewers and funding committee members—to arrive at decisions about which projects among the pool of applications to fund. Although many recognize that the peer review process is not ideal, few would admit that it is open to bias and personal animosity (Roth, 2002a; Tobin & ROTH, 2002).¹ In a previous contribution to the *FQS* debate focusing on the ethnography of the social sciences, I provided both third- and first-person analyses of the decision process and products and their impact on the researcher who receives a rejection

1 Together with Ken TOBIN, I edited a special issue of the journal *Research in Science Education* 32(2) on the topic of peer review in science education. Collectively, the different contributors pointed out structural problems in the peer review process and provided many concrete instances of peer review going awry.

(Roth, 2002b). I also analyzed the ways in which a funding agency shores up its decision-making process to mediate appeals in its favor. My analysis of one funding agency's procedures predicted that any appeals process would lead to a negative result for the appellant. However, my own appeal process was under way so that my analysis was also from a "first-time-through" perspective mid-way through a process—which inherently cannot use the outcome of a process to construct, in teleological way, causes that bring about (only a posteriori) known effects. It inherently was an example of social "science-in-the-making" (LATOUR, 1987). [1]

In the following, I first provide a brief history of the situation and then analyze parts of the letter from the funding agency in response to my appeal; its president had personally signed the letter, which I will take up in the conclusion of this article. I provide some of the original documents as appendices, thereby hoping to open up a process that for too long has been hidden from view. Applicants do not like to talk about it, because admitting that they were not successful might be embarrassing. Agencies do not talk about it, because their power is maintained through secrecy. I report on some of the apparent ripple effects my original article had in the funding agency, before finally signing and signing off. Before beginning, let me articulate a word of caution and a word of method. First, as writing, communication "is not the means of transference of meaning, the exchange of intentions and meanings" (DERRIDA 1988, p.20). This pertains to my reading of the events as well as, reflexively, your reading of this text. Second, in my reading of different texts, I attempt to deconstruct, that is, to "revers[e] and displac[e] a conceptual order as well as the nonconceptual order with which it is articulated" (DERRIDA 1988, p.21). Meaning and truth are but effects of the more general use of writing; and there cannot ever be one meaning, not because of polysemy, but because of the "essential alienation in language—which is always of the other—and, by the same token, in all culture" (DERRIDA 1998, p.58). [2]

2. Case History

In 2001, I had submitted a proposal entitled "Navigating knowledge boundaries between formal education and workplace" for funding to a national funding agency for the competition that was adjudicated in March 2002. Because I was chairing the committee in the selection committee responsible for educational psychology and learning in the content areas (where I usually had sent my proposals), I had sent my proposal dealing with transitions from formal schooling to the workplace to the committee dealing with interdisciplinary research. Nevertheless, given that I had a substantial research record across a number of disciplines (linguistics, science studies, applied cognition, education) I was confident that I would be funded. It turned out otherwise. At the same time that I chaired the adjudication of about 140 proposals, a committee in an adjacent room decided not to fund my own. I therefore had a pretty good idea about how much other scholars published and how their records were evaluated. [3]

In its notification ([Appendix A](#)), the committee justified its decision to attribute a score 7.45 out of 10 on my research record—which counts for 60% of the

weighted score on which funding is contingent—by making reference to the comments of one reviewer (assessor 8). Table 1 shows the qualitative descriptors used by the committee in evaluating the appropriateness of a score. In particular, the committee highlighted the fact that my "research papers appeared to be repetitive," that I "borrow extensively from others' more original contributions," and that "since becoming assistant Professor in 1988 (Indiana University), Roth appears to have produced only one Ph.D." The committee drew on the same reviewer's comments—the other reviewer had been overwhelmingly positive—to support its claim that "a number of theoretical and methodological points should be addressed." Whereas I found the evaluation of the proposal debatable, and found that the reviewer's comments were contrary to the information provided in my appeal, my main issue was the evaluation of my research program. In the course of my career, my scores had increased from 8.5 to 9 out of 10 (e.g., [Appendix B](#)). The 7.45 attributed by the current committee was not consistent with the evaluations of earlier committees. I felt that possibly the negative reviewer was biased and that an appeal was warranted; in my appeal, I articulated the problematic nature of the comments by the reviewer ([Appendix C](#)). [4]

In September 2002, one month before the deadlines to submit proposals for the competition adjudicated in March 2003, I received the response to my appeal from the president of the council, informing me that my appeal was not allowed ([Appendix D](#)). I then decided to submit two proposals to the same Education committee of which I had been a member for two years and which I had chaired one of these years. The first proposal was a new one, which I submitted to the regular competition. The second, rejected proposal was submitted to a special program focusing on issues arising from changes in the economy because my proposal was to look at knowing and learning as people move back and forth across the boundary between workplace and formal schooling.

Score Range	Regular Scholars
9.0 – 10	Recognized nationally and internationally for the outstanding quality and importance of their continuing contributions to knowledge.
8.0 – 8.9	Have made and continue to make substantial contributions; work is influential, within and often beyond the discipline, on a national and perhaps international scale.
7.0 – 7.9	Widely acknowledged to have had a substantial impact on the direction of research and on the intellectual development of new researchers in the discipline; influence of their work may extend to other disciplines and outside the academic community.

Table 1: Score range and description for evaluation of record of research achievement [5]

In April 2003, I received notice that both proposals were funded, the previously rejected one coming in first in its competition ([Appendix E](#)). More important in the present context is the fact that the score attributed by the committee to my research record was 9.5 out of 10, consistent with the previously indicated

upward trend but inconsistent with the evaluation by the interdisciplinary committee during the previous year. [6]

In the meantime, I had published my double, first- and third-person analysis of the vagaries and politics of funding in the September 2002 issue of this journal, prior to receiving the letter informing me about the outcome of the appeals process (ROTH, 2002b). I had published the article with some trepidation, because I was unclear about what its repercussions would be and how it would mediate the adjudication process of any future proposals. Despite my belief in the independence of the adjudication committee, I could not foresee whether other processes might intervene between the decision and the announcement of the result of the two applications I subsequently submitted. I did not feel vindicated but relieved when both proposals were funded. [7]

3. When is a Factual Error?

The funding council, I argued in my analysis (ROTH, 2002b), has constructed its rules such that any appeal is likely to fail. The appeals procedure hinges to a great extent on showing that factual errors had been committed. In its explanations of the appeals process, the relevant Council document reads:

"Factual error exists where there is compelling evidence that the committee based its decision not to recommend an award on a conclusion which is contrary to information clearly stated in the application. An example of such an error would be a committee statement that an application was not recommended due to the applicant's lack of any peer-reviewed publications, where in fact, the application lists several publications in media universally acknowledged to be peer-reviewed." (SSHRC 2000, p.7; also available at URL: http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/policies/appeals_e.asp) [8]

In his letter, the president noted:

"My understanding is that the committee engaged in a very thorough discussion of your application, taking into account the views of both assessor 5 and assessor 8. I did not find an over-reliance on one assessor over the other, nor any lack of careful consideration by the committee." [9]

He did not find an over-reliance on assessor 8, but where might he have looked? He had not been in the committee meeting, so he had to search as you, dear reader, and I, in the committee's rendition of its deliberations:

"Members found the candidate's record quite respectable, though it noted assessor 8's concern that some of his research papers appeared to be somewhat repetitive. The committee found the supporting document to be of good quality." (see [Appendix A](#)) [10]

Here, the committee takes note that it was concerned the research papers were repetitive, though neither reviewer 8 nor the committee stated where repetitiveness occurred. The committee drew on assessor 8 and there is no

mention of assessor 5. "I did not find over-reliance," but the committee notes having noted the concerns of assessor 8. Let us now see the president's in the light of the comments by the other assessor, which, according to him, equally entered the deliberations:

"His previous works equally testify to originality and to the interest to more than one discipline of appearance, which accentuates the pertinence of the research project proposed here all the while permitting testimony of the continuity of the researcher's interests in his quest for new research objects in science education."² (Reviewer 5; my translation) [11]

"I did not find," wrote the president, "an over-reliance on one assessor over the other." Perhaps the committee relied—as it stated in its notification—but not overly so on assessor 8? How does one come to the conclusion that there is concern of repetitiveness in the papers? In fact, apart from a table summarizing research publications, the list of published articles listed included 7 books on such varied subjects as science teacher preparation, elementary science curriculum, science education as sociopolitical action, and a phenomenological analysis of teaching. The research articles fell into 6 distinctive fields, (a) sociology, history, and philosophy of science, (b) applied linguistics, (c) applied cognitive science and educational psychology, (d) science and mathematics education, (e) education general, and (f) epistemology and cybernetics. The topics addressed in the cited publication equally vary including graphing, enculturation in science, environmental activism, proxemics, deixis, semiotics, situated cognition, conceptual change, representations, and epistemology. Thus, the comments of assessor 5 are based on information presented in the application, the comments of assessor 8 are inconsistent with the information provided. [12]

The president writes, "I was unable to find evidence of factual errors." Where might he have looked? In my letter of appeal ([Appendix C](#)), I noted "the committee based its decision on the opinion of one assessor, who construes my record in a way that is inconsistent with the facts without presenting evidence to support his/her case." So assessor 8 makes claims that are inconsistent with the evidence submitted. "I was unable to find evidence of factual errors." Perhaps the emphasis in this statement is on being unable, not having the capacity to, which would render any search futile whether there are factual errors or not. [13]

Let us take a look at the record of achievement and the qualitative description of the categories used for evaluation. The facts (if we can speak of such) as stated in the application include that "I had 7 Best Paper/Article awards from international organizations, 2 career awards, and held 4 international research fellowships" (application and also [Appendix C](#)). The qualitative descriptor of the evaluation I had received early in my career reads,

2 The original statement reads: Ses travaux antérieurs ont aussi preuve d'originalité de même qu'ils intéressent plus d'une discipline par leur incidence, ce qui accentue la pertinence du projet de recherche proposé ici tout en permettant de témoigner de la continuité des intérêts du chercheur dans sa quête de nouveaux objets de recherche en éducation aux science.

"Have made and continue to make substantial contributions; work is influential, within and often beyond the discipline, on a national and perhaps international scale."
(Table 1) [14]

Summarized in the form of Table 2, the overall record includes numerous publications over a six-year period in book and article form that had undergone peer review.

Refereed			Other refereed		Non-refereed		
Books	Chapters	Articles	Proceedings	Papers	Professional	Reviews	Lectures
7	19	118	20	149	5	5	49

Table 2: Publication record as per proposal [15]

The president writes, "I have no evidence of factual errors" but there is no evidence for the assessor's claim that papers are repetitive, and there is no evidence for the committee's assessment that the record is only at the national level. A score from 8 to 8.9 corresponds to a record that is "perhaps international" whereas a score from 9.0 to 10 corresponds to a record that is "recognized nationally and internationally" (Table 1). "To recognize" and its often synonymously used "to acknowledge" both have etymological roots to the Greek *γιννωσκειν*, "to know by the senses" (OED, 2003). In giving the awards, which were explicitly listed in my application, several international organizations repeatedly recognized or acknowledged assessed my record by using their senses. Interestingly enough, the word "award" itself has etymological origins in the Anglo French *awarde-r* and in the old northern French *ewarder*, *eswarder*, to observe, look at, consider, examine, decide, ordain, fix (OED, 2003). Again, award implies having looked at, examined, considered, and decided upon the merits of the materials that they had available. Members of these international organizations had observed and looked at a dossier, and decided that it was worthy to be marked by an award. Five of these awards were given for a "paper with greatest significance and potential in the field of science education." Does "greatest significance" pair up with "outstanding quality and importance of their continuing contributions to knowledge"? Five different committees of the international organization decided so, but the president could not find factual errors in the assessment of my research record. [16]

4. On Historical Precedents

Precedent has its roots in the Latin *præcedere*—to go before, precede (OED 2003). A *historical precedent* is an instance or case that has happened in the past and is taken as an example or rule for subsequent cases.³ Because records are inscriptions produced in time and reflecting time, and because decision processes historicize themselves in written decisions, each adjudication process, as any event, therefore involves a folding or convolution:

"Every historical event is multi-temporal, *simultaneously* sends back to the past, present and future. This object, this circumstance each is polychronic, multi-temporal, exhibit an embossed time, folded over and over again."⁴ (SERRES 1992, p.92, my translation) [17]

A scholarly activity and a record of research achievements are not singular events that occur at some point in history but are cumulative. Furthermore, the Council uses a six-year reporting window for scholarly achievements. Thus, not only is the research record cumulative but also (under normal circumstances given the three-year duration of regular grants) two consecutive committees evaluate overlapping periods: the upper three-year period evaluated by one committee will be the lower three-year period by the subsequent committee. The manual instructs the adjudicating committee members:

"In evaluating applications from regular scholars, place greater weight on the quality of their research achievements than on their program of research. Past research achievements are an essential indicator of productivity and capacity to advance knowledge." (SSHRC 2000, p.22) [18]

The Council policy states, "past research achievements are an essential indicator of productivity and capacity to advance knowledge." This makes the work of an adjudication committee doubly historical in the sense that it not only evaluates an applicants record but also it places itself at the end point of a historically developing series of evaluations. With decisions by subsequent committees, its decision is again historicized as it can now be seen in a context. How then can one committee be so much out of line with previous assessments by Council committees and research associations? The president wrote:

"The committee was particularly careful in relation to the score assigned for record of research achievement, having been advised that your scores for record before previous adjudication committees had been significantly higher." [19]

Different international organizations had decided in giving awards that I had contributed significantly to the advancement of knowledge in their respective

3 Although precedent and president sound similar, they have different etymological roots, the latter in the Latin *præcidere*, to sit before.

4 The original reads: n'importe quel événement de l'histoire est ainsi multitemporel, renvoie à du révolu, du contemporain et du futur *simultanément*. Cet objet, cette circonstance sont donc polychroniques, multitemporels, font voir un temps gaufré, multiplement plissé.

fields. Past adjudication committees apparently came to a similar recognition by *awarding* scores that reflected the "substantial contribution" and the "international" recognition. Not only had previous "scores for record ... had been significantly higher" but also, and as evident in the materials submitted, the record had substantially increased. This is the evidence, but of course, "committees are not bound by the decisions of earlier committees." Nor can they ever be bound by the decisions that subsequent committees will make. The president writes, "Having examined the process, I have come to the conclusion that the committee was scrupulous in considering all factors before assigning the score for record" ([Appendix D](#)). How did the president "examine [a] process" that he has neither seen nor a record of other than what the committee itself had recorded: "Members found the candidate's record quite respectable, though it noted assessor 8's concern that some of his research papers appeared to be somewhat repetitive." [20]

5. All's Well that Ends Well?

In the end, the appeal was not granted. Before I knew this, I had written:

"Thus, although there may be errors, the Council—or rather, the small network of people making the relevant decision—does not have to accept appeals on the grounds of error. Here, again, the appeal is a fluid object and though there might be evidence that errors have been committed, the appeal is pathological itself, insufficient to bring about a change in the original decision." (ROTH 2002b [74]) [21]

It is not surprising, then, that the appeal was neither granted nor allowed ([Appendix D](#)). The appeals procedures were such that any attempt to deal with a decision would fail. Consistent with this assessment, an insider had written me:

"Concerning all your queries, you need to know that the decisions taken by a committee cannot be questioned by the division director or even by the president. In its 25 years of existence, there has never been a Council president who has undone a committee decision." [22]

Neither this president nor any president had overturned a decision. In fact, the president does not even consider overturning a decision but, as I described in some detail (ROTH 2002b), leaves the decision to overturn to the committee—which would therefore overturn its own decision. Nevertheless, the entire episode might be considered as having ended positively in that I was awarded the requested grant during the following year. The president had wished me "every success," and perhaps it is this wish that had been come true for me? But he wished success with my research, which I could not do because he "did not therefore allow [my] appeal." Nevertheless, we might say, "All's well that ends well," especially because the article I wrote in the process of waiting for a council decision on my appeal had effects in the council. [23]

A knowledgeable insider wrote to me that the officer for the program that had rejected my proposal has moved on to a different division. The new program

officer for interdisciplinary research "is fast becoming our main resource person and coordinator on evaluating and improving our peer review system." My informant noted that the program officer is probably going to waste little time in sharing this with the entire division. When I asked whether the directors in the Council were angered when they found out about my article (ROTH 2002b), I received the following answer.

"Anger? Maybe a little bit at first, but not so much anymore. I think it came at a good time... a time when they were planning to allocate some resources to reflecting on our system." [24]

Several days later, I received a more fully elaborated answer. Answering the question whether the article angered the administrators, the email read:

At first, probably yes. So were many of the officers. The article was written with passion, and I think it is only natural that it would provoke an emotional response from the reader.

But the article was also very much appreciated. It is part of the ongoing conversation about our peer review process, and it is important.

There is a keen awareness around here that our system is not perfect. No system is. But we keep working at it, and we keep modifying it gradually over the course of many years to respond to changing needs and circumstances in our own environment and in the academic world. Changes are made in response to feedback from a variety of sources including officers, peer review committees, individual researchers, people whose life work is to research peer review procedures, other granting Councils, our own pilot projects, and more. Change is sometimes slow because it generally needs to be debated and sometimes piloted. Some changes have been tried and discarded. Others have been tried and maintained. Some changes solve some problems but create new problems. It's slow, but constant. Your article, and others like it, helps to keep the questions going. [25]

It may not come as a surprise that I have not been invited back to serve on a committee. Nobody has contacted me to find out more about my analysis, and perhaps whether I would be interested in assisting transformation and change. [26]

Today, I could feel vindicated—not only was my proposal successful during a subsequent competition and my research record evaluated consistently with my claims but also my critical analysis of processes on the inside of the Council had led to change. Should a researcher be pleased that his analysis of problems has led to a change in the world? So far, I have neither felt vindicated nor the need to be vindicated. Whether my article has made a difference, I cannot know. It does not really matter to me, for I can do my research with or without the Council's funding. But I am glad for all my colleagues out there who are now dealing with a Council that has changed. [27]

6. Signatures

The analysis of the evaluation and adjudication process of research proposals was not an unsigned editorial. Following the title of "Vagaries and Politics of Funding," appeared my full name. With writing my name below the title, I signed, I admitted authorship of the critical analysis that followed. My signature is a permanent mark identifying me, the signer and my presence to, or in, the text. That is, by reading the signature (in the future) we recognize the signer (my presence) and that the text is mine. From a traditional perspective, I (whoever that might be), admitted to have been the source of intentions and meanings (DERRIDA 1988). For this, as if I had spoken the text in the personal presence of my audience, I was responsible for the pronouncements, for my pronouncements (BAKHTIN 1993). In signing, I took responsibility not only for having written the text, but also for the consequences that it would entail. I also knew for myself that "writing is read; it is not the site, 'in the last instance,' of a hermeneutic deciphering, the decoding of a meaning or truth" (DERRIDA 1988, p.21). But I also knew that this is not how most people think about the world. I had signed an analysis that others might read as being *ad hominem*, aiming at them. It was because of possible consequences in such a perspective of acts and reactions that I was filled with trepidations until I made the final decision to publish. [28]

The president, too, signed his letter; he also used the indexical "I." It appears that "I" and the signature go together and that the person who signed and who uses the indexical is responsible for the text. But this is not so. As my texts (this and the one of which this text is the update), the letter was (and, in publishing this text, likely will be) read. But in reading, we countersign (DERRIDA 1988). In countersigning, we take responsibility for reading and its effects. And so I do here, by signing off. [29]

Appendix A: Adjudication Letter 2002 Selection Committee [Interdisciplinary]

Record of research achievement:

Members found the candidate's record quite respectable, though it noted assessor 8's concern that some of his research papers appeared to be somewhat repetitive. The committee found the supporting document to be of good quality.

Program of research:

The committee was persuaded by assessor 8 that a number of theoretical and methodological points should be addressed. It agreed that the boundary between the sites being studied should be theorized with greater precision so that it is clearer how the data collected will be interpreted to reach conclusions on learning.

Recommendation:

While the committee recommended funding for this proposal, the ranking was not high enough to permit an award from the funds available.

Scores:

Record of achievement: 7.45/10

Program of research: 7/10

Weighted Score: 72.70%

This proposal was ranked 62th of 145 applications considered by the committee.

**Appendix B: Adjudication Letter 1999 Selection Committee
[Education I]**

The committee recommended that this proposal be funded ...

Scores:

Record of achievement: 9.00/10

Program of research: 7.95/10

Weighted Score: 85.8%

This proposal was ranked 7th of 135 applications considered by the committee.

Appendix C: Section of Appeals Letter pertaining to Research Record

Research Record

The committee noted, "Members found the candidate's record quite respectable, though it noted assessor 8's concern that some of his research papers appeared to be somewhat repetitive. The committee found the supporting document to be of good quality." My research record was assessed with a score of 7.45.

This assessment of my research record does not account for the quantity, quality, originality, significance, and recentness of my work (A Closer Look, p. 20) as these can be gauged from the information that I provided. To summarize, during the period of 1995-2001, I had 7 books, 19 chapters, 20 proceeding articles, 123 refereed and 5 non-refereed articles, and 198 papers and invited lectures. I had 7 Best Paper/Article awards from international organizations, 2 career awards, and held 4 international research fellowships. My work is published in the most highly cited journals (according to SSCI impact ratings) in several disciplines, including the Review of Educational Research (#1 in education: 2 since 1995), Social Studies of Science and Public Understanding of Science (#1 and #2 in SSCI impact rating in history and philosophy of science: 4 articles since 1995), and Science Education and Journal of Research in Science Teaching (#1 and #2 in science education, 20 articles since 1995). I have provided citation statistics and

impact ratings for my "five most important publications." I know from active participation in adjudication processes at SSHRC (Committee 12), FCAR (Quebec), NSF (USA), and ARC (Australia) that this record is considerably above the norm in any of the fields in which I participate. (I have evaluated proposals in science and mathematics education, artificial intelligence, anthropology, and science studies.)

It appears that the committee based its decision on the opinion of one assessor, who construes my record in a way that is inconsistent with the facts without presenting evidence to support his/her case.

With respect to my record, Assessor 8 wrote, "Many of his papers are repetitive, and he borrows extensively from others' more original contributions . . ." The assessor did not provide evidence to support this statement. There is no evidence in my submission that would support such an assessment. If this was the case, I would not have been able to publish in the top journals of several disciplines to the extent that I have done and documented in my application.

Assessor 8 also wrote that I became assistant professor in 1988 and that my research generated few research practitioners. There are several errors of fact. First, I was a high school teacher from 1989-92. I started my research career and my tenure clock in Canada only in 1992. I indicated that I lost one doctoral and four masters students when I moved to the University of Victoria in January 1997. At my current university, there is no formal Ph.D. program in my area, requiring me to recruit students after I secured funding. ("The committee must make allowances for applicants who have not supervised graduate students simply because their university does not offer graduate programs" [A Closer Look, p. 20].) I did state that I involved graduate students doing their degrees with other professors and involve them in publications. The fact is that students working with me have coauthored 72 articles in the period 1995-2001, and therefore I have contributed tremendously to the support of future scholars, even if they do their degrees with other professors (see my application).

The Assessor 8 states that my contributions to science education are "good." There are two problems with this statement. First, my contributions to science education are not just good as the following facts indicate. In the course of my career I received four times the "Best Paper Award" from the largest international organization of science educators (NARST), received its Early Career Award, and was recently nominated as the outstanding science educator of the year (AETS). These are more awards in the recent history of the field of science education than any other science educator has received. Second, the assessor focuses on science education when in fact only three of the publications listed in my application pertain to this area; there is not a single repetition in these publications as one each focuses on gestures, technological design, and graphing. There were more articles listed in each of three other disciplines, applied cognitive science & educational psychology, applied linguistics, and sociology, history, and philosophy of science. There are vast differences between the four disciplines as well as the topics addressed so that claims of repetitive

publications are completely unfounded. (The topics include [see two-page list of publications]: teacher knowledge; teacher training and learning to teach; graphing skills of scientists, university students, and middle school students; gesture studies; enculturation of scientists; learning technological design; situated cognition; phenomenology of science and mathematics; learning in knowledge-based communities; and epistemology & cybernetics.)

Appendix D: Response to Appeal

Dear Dr. Roth:

I am responding to your letter of May 14, 2002, to [director of research grants], in which you ask that we re-evaluate your research grant application, "Navigating knowledge boundaries between formal education and workplace." As you are appealing the Council's decision not to award you a grant, it is our policy that I reply for the council.

Your letter asks that Council reconsider its decision on grounds of factual error and possibly also procedural error. You argue that one of the external assessors (no. 8) made several errors of fact that may have been based on prejudice.

First, I do not see a procedural error. Some of your comments about assessor 8 suggest that there may be a conflict of interest in play, but I have not been able to find any evidence of this.

Our appeals policy defines factual error to exist where there is compelling evidence that the committee based its decision not to recommend an award on a conclusion which is contrary to information clearly stated in the application.

I have taken into consideration the arguments you advance in support of your belief that the committee based its recommendation on factual errors in the report of assessor 8. However, I was unable to find evidence of factual error according to the Council's admittedly stringent, definition. My understanding is that the committee engaged in a very thorough discussion of your application, taking into account the views of both assessor 5 and assessor 8. I did not find an over-reliance on one assessor over the other, nor any lack of careful consideration by the committee.

The committee was particularly careful in relation to the score assigned for record of research achievement, having been advised that your scores for record before previous adjudication committees had been significantly higher. As you know, committees are not bound by the decisions of earlier committees, but Council staff do ask committees to take account of significant discrepancies. Having looked at your application twice, the committee decided on a score of 7.45 in the context of other scholars submitting to the committee and in light of your previous scores. Having examined the process, I have come to the conclusion that the committee was scrupulous in considering all factors before assigning the score for record.

Similarly, the committee assigned a very creditable score of 7.0 for your program of research, indicating a meritorious research program with some reservations that nevertheless did not detract from the committee's essential judgment that the probability of significant research advances was very good. I appreciate that you disagree with the opinions of the committee and of one of the external assessors regarding your proposal. It is not my place, however, to express an opinion on the scientific merit of the specific reservations of the committee. I consider these to be questions on which competent scholars can legitimately disagree and therefore beyond the scope of the appeals policy.

I regret that I cannot therefore allow your appeal, but wish you every success with your research.

Sincerely,
[president]

Appendix E: Adjudication Letter 2003 Selection Committee [Education I]

The committee congratulates Dr. Roth on placing first in this year's Committee [X] INE competition.

It recommended funding this excellent proposal, but with a reduced three-year budget of \$ [amount]. It judged that savings could be made in the proposed expenditures for travel and professional/technical services.

Scores:

Record of achievement: 9.5/10

Program of research: 8/10

Weighted Score: 89.00%

This proposal was ranked 1th of 11 INE applications reviewed by the committee.

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