

FEDERATION OF BEHAVIORAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND COGNITIVE SCIENCES

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Historical Foundations and the Emergence of a Unified Voice

The **Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences** was established in 1980 as a direct response to a burgeoning need for collective representation within the scientific community. During this era, individual scientific societies often operated in silos, possessing limited influence over the complex mechanisms of federal policy and budgetary allocations. The founders recognized that the diverse fields of **psychology**, **behavioral science**, and **cognitive research** required a centralized body to articulate their shared interests to policymakers in Washington, D.C. By forming a coalition, these disparate groups sought to ensure that the human element of scientific inquiry received the same level of attention and funding as the physical and biological sciences.

In its early years, the Federation focused on building a robust infrastructure that could support a wide array of member organizations. The primary objective was to foster a sense of unity among scientists who, while specialized in different sub-disciplines, shared a common commitment to the **scientific method** and the improvement of human welfare through empirical research. This collaborative spirit allowed the Federation to represent a broad spectrum of expertise, ranging from **developmental psychology** and **social behavior** to **sensory processes** and **artificial intelligence**. The organization quickly became a vital intermediary, translating complex scientific findings into actionable insights for legislators and federal agency officials.

The evolution of the Federation was also driven by the shifting landscape of federal research priorities in the late 20th century. As the **National Science Foundation (NSF)** and the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)** began to expand their portfolios, the Federation played a crucial role in advocating for the inclusion of behavioral and cognitive components in large-scale research initiatives. By highlighting the relevance of human behavior to national challenges--such as public health, education, and national security--the Federation secured a permanent seat at the table for behavioral scientists. This period of foundational growth set the stage for decades of advocacy that would fundamentally shape the trajectory of psychological science in the United States.

Organizational Structure and Governance Mechanisms

The operational success of the **Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences** is rooted in its sophisticated governance structure, designed to balance the interests of its diverse member societies. At the core of its leadership is a **Council of Representatives**, which consists of delegates from each member association. This democratic framework ensures that even smaller specialized societies have a voice in the Federation's strategic direction. The Council is responsible for electing the **Executive Committee** and the President, who provide the day-to-day leadership and maintain the organization's focus on its long-term advocacy goals.

Beyond the primary leadership, the Federation utilizes various standing committees to address specific areas of concern, such as **science policy**, ethics, and education. These committees are composed of experts who volunteer their time to analyze legislative proposals, draft white papers, and develop educational materials. The **Science Policy Committee**, in particular, serves as the organization's "eyes and ears" on Capitol Hill, monitoring the activities of congressional committees that oversee research funding. This structured approach allows the Federation to respond rapidly to political developments while maintaining a high standard of scientific integrity and professional consensus.

Membership in the Federation is not limited to professional societies; it also includes a significant number of **affiliate members**, such as university departments and research institutes. This dual-membership model creates a powerful network that bridges the gap between individual researchers and the broader scientific community. By providing resources to department chairs and graduate directors, the Federation helps to cultivate a new generation of scientists who are well-versed in the importance of **science advocacy**. This comprehensive organizational model ensures that the Federation remains a stable and influential presence in the scientific landscape, capable of weathering changes in the political and economic climate.

Advocacy Strategies and Legislative Influence

The primary mission of the **Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences** is to serve as a persistent advocate for the behavioral and cognitive sciences in the halls of government. This advocacy takes many forms, ranging from direct lobbying of members of Congress to the submission of formal testimony regarding **federal appropriations**. The Federation's staff and leadership work tirelessly to educate policymakers about the practical applications of behavioral research, demonstrating how **psychological principles** can be used to solve real-world problems. By framing scientific research in the context of national priorities, the Federation makes a compelling case for sustained and increased federal investment.

One of the Federation's most effective advocacy tools is the **Congressional Briefing** series. These events bring leading scientists to Capitol Hill to present their research directly to congressional staffers and legislators. These briefings are carefully curated to address topics of immediate relevance to current legislative debates, such as **human-computer interaction**, the impact of stress on health, or the cognitive factors involved in decision-making. By providing high-quality, non-partisan information, the Federation establishes itself as a trusted resource for the legislative branch, often influencing the language of bills and the allocation of research budgets.

In addition to direct legislative engagement, the Federation coordinates **grassroots advocacy** efforts among its member societies. This involves mobilizing individual scientists to contact their representatives, participate in "Hill Days," and write op-eds in local newspapers. The Federation

provides the necessary training and materials to ensure that these communications are professional, persuasive, and aligned with the broader goals of the scientific community. This multi-tiered strategy--combining professional lobbying with broad-based constituent engagement--has proven highly effective in protecting the **peer-review process** and ensuring the continued viability of behavioral science funding across various federal agencies.

Collaboration with Federal Agencies and Research Funding

A significant portion of the Federation's work involves maintaining close relationships with the leadership of major federal funding agencies. The **National Science Foundation (NSF)**, the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, and the **Department of Defense (DoD)** are among the primary targets of the Federation's collaborative efforts. By engaging with agency directors and program managers, the Federation helps to identify emerging areas of research and ensures that behavioral and cognitive sciences are integrated into cross-disciplinary funding opportunities. This proactive engagement is essential for maintaining the **Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE)** directorate at the NSF and the various behavioral research branches within the NIH.

The Federation also plays a critical role in the **budgetary process**, specifically during the development of agency "justifications" for Congress. By providing data and success stories, the Federation helps agencies articulate the value of their behavioral science portfolios. This support is particularly important during periods of fiscal austerity, when social and behavioral sciences are often unfairly targeted for budget cuts. The Federation's ability to demonstrate the **return on investment** for behavioral research--such as improvements in public health outcomes or more effective military training programs--is a key factor in securing continued federal support.

Furthermore, the Federation monitors the **grant-making processes** of these agencies to ensure fairness and transparency. They advocate for the use of rigorous **peer-review** standards and oppose political interference in the selection of individual research projects. When specific grants are publicly criticized by politicians for being "wasteful," the Federation provides the necessary context and scientific justification to defend the research. This role as a protector of the scientific process ensures that funding decisions remain in the hands of experts rather than being subject to the whims of political cycles, thereby preserving the integrity of the **scientific enterprise**.

Educational Initiatives and Public Outreach

Beyond its advocacy and policy work, the **Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences** is deeply committed to public education and the dissemination of scientific knowledge. The organization recognizes that long-term support for science depends on a public that understands and values the contributions of **behavioral and cognitive research**. To this end,

the Federation produces a variety of publications, including newsletters, policy updates, and "science briefs" that summarize complex research findings for a general audience. These materials are designed to be accessible while maintaining the highest levels of scientific accuracy, helping to bridge the gap between the laboratory and the living room.

The Federation also sponsors various awards and recognition programs to honor outstanding contributions to the field. These accolades serve a dual purpose: they celebrate individual excellence and they bring public attention to the importance of the work being done in the **psychological sciences**. For instance, awards for **early career scientists** help to foster talent and encourage young researchers to remain in academia, while lifetime achievement awards highlight the cumulative impact of a career dedicated to understanding the human mind. By publicizing these honors, the Federation raises the profile of the behavioral sciences within the broader scientific community and the general public.

Another key component of the Federation's educational mission is its work with **science communication** training. The organization provides workshops and resources to help scientists effectively communicate their work to non-experts, including journalists, policymakers, and the public. In an era of misinformation, the ability of scientists to clearly and persuasively explain their findings is more important than ever. The Federation's emphasis on **public engagement** ensures that the insights gained from behavioral and cognitive research are not confined to academic journals but are used to inform public discourse and personal decision-making, ultimately contributing to a more scientifically literate society.

Transition to FABBS and the Inclusion of Brain Sciences

In 2010, the organization underwent a significant transformation, rebranding itself as the **Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences (FABBS)**. This name change was more than just a cosmetic update; it reflected a strategic shift to include the rapidly expanding field of **neuroscience** and the "brain sciences" more broadly. The leadership recognized that the boundaries between psychology, cognitive science, and neuroscience were becoming increasingly blurred as researchers sought to understand the biological underpinnings of behavior. By incorporating **brain sciences** into its name and mission, the Federation ensured that it remained relevant in the 21st-century scientific landscape.

The transition to **FABBS** allowed the organization to broaden its membership base and forge new alliances with societies focused on **neuroimaging**, **molecular biology**, and **computational neuroscience**. This expanded scope strengthened the Federation's advocacy position, as the "brain sciences" often enjoy high levels of public and political support. By linking behavioral research with the study of the physical brain, the Federation was able to make an even more compelling case for the necessity of holistic research that addresses both the "hardware" of the

brain and the "software" of the mind and behavior.

Despite the change in name, the core mission of the organization remained steadfast. FABBS continues to perform the same essential functions as its predecessor, but with a more comprehensive reach. The **rebranding** also coincided with an increase in digital outreach and the modernization of its communication platforms. Today, FABBS serves as a contemporary, multi-disciplinary powerhouse that represents the interests of thousands of scientists across dozens of professional societies, ensuring that the **behavioral, psychological, cognitive, and brain sciences** remain at the forefront of the national research agenda.

Impact on the Scientific Community and Future Directions

The impact of the **Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences** (and its successor, FABBS) on the scientific community cannot be overstated. Over the course of several decades, the Federation has been instrumental in securing billions of dollars in **research funding** that might otherwise have been diverted to other fields. By providing a unified voice, the organization has prevented the marginalization of the social and behavioral sciences, ensuring that they are viewed as "hard" sciences capable of producing rigorous, reproducible, and impactful results. This has led to advancements in everything from **early childhood education** to the treatment of **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**.

Looking toward the future, the Federation is poised to address new challenges arising from the integration of **big data, machine learning, and genetics** into behavioral research. As the methodology of science evolves, so too must the advocacy strategies used to support it. The Federation is currently working to ensure that ethical considerations regarding data privacy and algorithmic bias are integrated into federal research guidelines. Furthermore, the organization is placing an increasing emphasis on **diversity, equity, and inclusion** within the scientific workforce, recognizing that a diverse community of researchers is essential for producing science that is relevant to all members of society.

The ongoing mission of the Federation remains rooted in the belief that understanding **human behavior** is the key to solving the most pressing problems of the modern world. Whether addressing the challenges of climate change, the complexities of global health crises, or the nuances of social cohesion, the insights provided by the **behavioral, psychological, and cognitive sciences** are indispensable. Through its continued advocacy, education, and collaboration, the Federation ensures that the voices of these scientists are heard, their work is funded, and their contributions are recognized as vital to the progress of humanity. The legacy of the Federation is one of resilience, unity, and an unwavering commitment to the **advancement of science** for the public good.

Summary of Key Contributions and Membership Benefits

Unified Advocacy: Providing a single, powerful voice for dozens of scientific societies to influence federal policy and research appropriations.

Agency Liaison: Maintaining critical relationships with leadership at the **NSF**, **NIH**, and other federal entities to protect behavioral science budgets.

Professional Development: Offering training in **science communication** and policy advocacy for researchers at all career stages.

Legislative Education: Hosting **Congressional Briefings** that translate complex cognitive and behavioral research into actionable policy insights.

Public Awareness: Disseminating scientific findings through accessible publications and media outreach to improve **scientific literacy**.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Facilitating networking and partnership across the fields of **psychology**, **neuroscience**, and **cognitive science**.

Ethical Leadership: Advocating for the **peer-review process** and the protection of scientific integrity against political interference.

Core Disciplines Represented within the Federation

Cognitive Psychology: The study of mental processes such as attention, memory, perception, and problem-solving.

Developmental Science: Research into the psychological and biological changes that occur throughout the human lifespan.

Social and Personality Psychology: The investigation of how individuals think about, influence, and relate to one another.

Neuroscience and Biopsychology: The exploration of the relationship between the **nervous system** and behavior.

Experimental and Comparative Psychology: The use of controlled laboratory experiments to study behavior in humans and non-human animals.

Educational Psychology: The application of psychological principles to the processes of teaching and learning.

Industrial-Organizational Psychology: The study of human behavior in the workplace and its impact on organizational productivity and health.