BEGINNING EXPLORATIONS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE (BESS)
PHASE I

This Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Phase I project developed a design and prototypes for an innovative CD-ROM educational product entitled Beginning Explorations in Social Science (BESS) aimed at introducing social science contributions, elementary statistics, and data analysis to novices as young as high school juniors. At the end of the Phase II period of performance, BESS was to contain: (1) a research encyclopedia on two topics of interest to adolescents — adolescent sexuality and health; and the American family; (2) data and documentation from four exemplary national studies in these topical areas; and (3) an interactive statistics textbook that would use the included data and documentation to teach elementary statistics and data analysis. The Phase I investigation produced Tables of Contents, capabilities specifications, user interface designs, and illustrative chapter-modules for each of these three parts of the BESS CD-ROM.

Social science data sets had grown exponentially in size, number, and quality over the prior ten years. However, easy access to these data sets by social scientists, policy makers, and other potential users had lagged considerably, so that much of the data's potential for informing science, policy, and practice had not been met. Sociometrics Corporation had pioneered in making this wealth of data resources readily available, easy to use, and widely disseminated through the establishment of indexed data archives in a number of important health and social science areas. This project complemented these past and ongoing corporate efforts with new work in the science education area focused on enlarging and training the potential user base for such data by using multimedia computer technology, interactive learning techniques, and state-of-the-art data in the Sociometrics data archives to: (1) communicate important research findings in the family and adolescent health research areas, (2) teach elementary statistical analysis and interpretation, and (3) show how the application of statistical analysis methods leads to important findings from social science data sets.

This Phase I project received a supplement (see Project No. 56).

Sponsor:	National Science Foundation 4201 Wilson Boulevard Arlington, VA 22230 (703) 306-1391	
Grant No:	DMI-9460152	Program Official: Sara B. Nerlove
Duration:	01/01/95—06/30/95	Budget: $64,348
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