HEY JANE!

Welcome to Column 25 of Hey Jane! Named in honor of Jane Addams, this is a project of the SWS Career Development Committee. Questions and answers are generated by the committee and SWS members. Answers are compiled from several anonymous sources. All columns are archived on our committee's page on the SWS website: http://www.socwomen.org/page.php?ss=26. If you have a question for Hey Jane, please send it to susan.hinze@case.edu.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO FIND OUT ABOUT AVAILABLE GRANTS?

There is no one way, but many. If you are a grad student, make sure you talk with your mentors (plural!) about funding sources in your areas of interest. Distinguish between fellowships and grants, as the former are usually for you alone whereas the latter often require a faculty PI to sign off on your behalf. Also, don't forget to check both private (foundations etc.) and public (government) sources of funding. If you are an international student, you will not be eligible for fellowships/grants from government sources unless you are a permanent resident; private organizations make up their own eligibility rules. Exception to the exception: international students can compete for grant/fellowship competitions internally held at your institution. But in general, for non-nationals, private foundations become an important lifeline.

Apart from your mentors, check with your graduate school – they often have a website devoted to upcoming competitions, both internal and external. If your grad school doesn't, check the grad school websites of top-10 schools around the country. Remember that they often post deadlines way too late for you to tailor your project, get it through the required official channels – including signatures from financial officers (whatever your school calls its "Office of Sponsored Programs" or "Grants Management") and Human Subjects Approval (sometimes needed at time of application, other times needed at time funding is scheduled to start). So think about funding sources one year before you actually need to apply. Most of these deadlines are recurrent, on an annual basis.

Also, read the acknowledgements often printed on the bottom of the first page of articles, and at the start of books. It tells you who has supported that research – and thus can give you ideas for who might support yours. And talk to older graduate students, both in your department and outside. Don't cast yourself too narrowly. Maybe your approach to research makes you eligible for humanities or hard-science based funding opportunities?

If you are already post-dissertation stage, which grants and fellowships you can apply for depends on whether you are in academia, or whether you are working e.g., for a non-profit or research facility. If you are an academic, the same rules apply. Key is now to make sure you are applying for grants aimed at your target group (e.g., junior profs, or post-docs).

Finally, keep in mind the NIH for health-related (broadly conceived) work, and the NSF for sociology more generally. NSF funds quantitative, qualitative, and comparative-historical research, and is particularly interested in funding data collection (rather than simply funding data analysis of existing data). Many foundations support sociological research, including SSRC, Russell Sage, Spencer, Sloan, Guggenheim, William T. Grant, and many others. It is worth meeting with the grants/foundations relations people at your university to see if they have ideas about where to look. Seed grant money can also come from the ASA Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline.

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS TO A GRANT PROPOSAL? WHERE CAN I GET SAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATIONS?

A successful grant proposal should show that it (a) is about an important topic, one with real relevance to the world outside of sociology (even when it is basic research), (b) is being carried out by someone who knows the relevant literature and is likely to produce the research (funding a proposal is taking a gamble; the review panel will try to increase their odds), and (c) has a strong research design, one that is likely to yield useful and important insights.

There are lots of guides available online, and the following essay contains great information: http://fellowships.ssrc.org/art_of_writing_proposals/.

In addition to following general rules about how to organize a grant proposal, *make sure you read, and follow, the funding agency's actual grant guidelines*. For instance, if they request information about the broader impact your research will have or how it relates to the funding agency's mission, make sure you address this head on. How to get examples? If you know someone who got a grant/fellowship from an agency where you want to apply (say, NSF, or Ford Foundation), ask them. Many funding agencies will list their most recent grant recipients online. Even if the proposals are not posted, contact the recipients and ask them to share their recipe for success (or even the grant proposal). They are your peers – probably just a year or two ahead of you in grad school/tenure track – and you will likely continue to run into each other at conferences down the road.

WHAT ARE SOME ISSUES TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN APPLYING FOR FUNDING FOR A QUANTITATIVE PROJECT? FOR A QUALITATIVE PROJECT?

Regardless of your methodology, your proposal needs to demonstrate the elusive theory-method-data link. Make sure you understand this part: Most proposals get rejected because that link is broken. For example, if you propose to study how gender identity shapes people's conflict resolution strategies, doing interviews may not produce the most accurate picture. Perhaps an experimental design, or a survey would be better. If you want to examine how different policy

contexts affect educational outcomes, you need to be clear about whether your theory is better designed to explain cross-sectional or longitudinal policy-outcome trends, and use the appropriate data.

Apart from that, good proposals, regardless of methodology, demonstrate that the PI has (or will acquire) the skills to complete this project in the intended timeframe, that the data can actually yield answers to the questions asked, and that the concepts being invoked can be gauged reasonably well with the data available. Providing the funding agency with a table of what your data sources are, what variables you will use to gauge which concepts (if quantitative) or what your coding scheme is likely to look like if collecting your own qualitative data can go a long way to getting approved.

Beware of falling into the trap of thinking that quantitative proposals have a better chance of getting funded. **It's the theory-method-data link that remains key**. Unfortunately, in my own experience as a reviewer, some proposals simply fail because they come across as what we call "trust me" proposals – in other words, the reviewers get the impression that the PI is on a fishing expedition but fails to verbalize a clear research question, or expectations grounded in one or several (competing or complementary) theories, or seems to engage in haphazard data collection/analysis.

All that said, there are some things to keep in mind that are specific to quantitative work. You may be more likely to receive funding if you are collecting data rather than analyzing existing data. If you aim to collect data, it is important to show that you have really done your homework, and you need to know exactly how you will collect the data---right down to the interview schedule for surveys, the operationalization of measures and sources for quantitative historical data. If you are analyzing existing data, explain in detail why you need the funding, what it is about the data that requires a great deal of time and effort. You should demonstrate considerable knowledge about the data set in question, the available variables, and how they will allow you to answer your research question.

With a qualitative project, be clear about how you will collect the data in ways that maximize your contribution to the existing scholarship. If it's historical work, specify the archives or other sources you will use and how you selected your cases; if it is interview or field research, specify how you will choose your cases, and give as much detail as possible about setting up the study to allow you to address your research questions.

I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT BUDGETS. WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

You need to know where to find a good grants manager! There are people within your organization whose job it is to help you plan the budget. Use them.

Be aware that there is a huge distinction between fellowships and grants. This affects how your funding is routed (and when you get paid), whether taxes are withheld or you need to squirrel some away yourself. Depending on the size of the grant (not usually an issue for grad students), it also affects whether your institution gets to charge "*indirect cost*" (often used to maintain labs, equipment, etc.). For regular grants, you will need to include not only your salary but also *fringe benefits* – your institutional financial officer knows what that means. Each institution sets its own fringe and indirect cost calculation, and each funding agency can also impose limits on what they do and don't pay. Alas, this means that what you need to know to write up one budget justification may not be the same as what you need to put into the proposal when sent to another funding entity. For example, one university takes 54 cents per every $1.00 the researcher receives for a federal grant, but only about 20 cents if it is a foundation. If you allocate funding for travel or equipment, make sure you give reasonable estimates. For travel etc., use federal guidelines (online, e.g. at www.gsa.gov). For equipment, talk to your institution's IT people. Unless you are a total techie yourself, buy it through them, so that you don't have to worry about maintenance etc.

DO I HAVE TO GET IRB APPROVAL BEFORE I APPLY?
That depends on the funding entity to which you are applying. Most definitely, you will need it by the time the funding starts – or they can suspend your award. Remember that going through IRB can take months (unless you are exempt from review, which is NOT for you to determine), and that many IRB committees, especially at smaller institutions, do not meet during the summer months.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE REVIEW PROCESS? WHO REVIEWS THEM? HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

That also depends on the funding source. Federal government agencies (NIH/NIMH, NSF, NIJ and the like) usually have a panel of experts which meets regularly, in synch with the application deadlines. Many private foundations follow similar norms. The panel members rotate, of course, so it's not as clubby or secretive as you might fear in your more paranoid moments (and we all have those...). Sometimes, the panelists don't know who sent the proposal (making the review double blind, just like article reviews), sometimes they know it's you. But usually you will not know who reviewed you (a blind review in one direction). Sometimes, the expert panel reviews are supplemented by other, "external" reviews from specialists (or generalists) in your field. Most of the time, funding entities try to get multiple reviews, upward of three per proposal.

How long it takes also depends on the funding source. Some funders want a letter of intent as a first step; this prevents you from wasting time if your proposal is not what the foundation has in mind. Most proposals will go through a several month long review process. You can contact the program officer for information.

IF I DON'T GET FUNDED, SHOULD I REAPPLY? IF I'M ASKED TO REVISE, DO I HAVE TO MAKE EVERY CHANGE THE REVIEWERS SUGGEST?

Yes. And yes, within reason. Remember that people want to help you and are usually donating their time to giving you advice, so take it seriously. Sometimes, reviewers give you advice that would take your project in opposite directions (e.g., one might suggest adding a longitudinal component whereas another wants to see an expanded cross-sectional analysis, or they disagree on how you should frame your study theoretically). Figure out which suggestion will strengthen your proposal. Find a good reason (and explain) why you have chosen not to follow a particular piece of advice given to you. Run the reviews you get, and your ideas for revisions, past your mentors (again: plural!). If the funding agency does not provide written feedback automatically, contact the program officer and ask whether it might be possible to obtain them anyway, or get a digest of comments from the program officer.

ARE THERE BEST PRACTICES YOU COULD SUGGEST TO A NOVICE GRANT WRITER?

If at first you don't succeed, try try again. This goes for new and experienced grant writers. And if you are going to put a lot of time into writing a proposal, maximize the output. Find 3 (or more?) potential funding sources and send it off to all three. You will increase the odds that at least one of them will come through. They may not all fund the same thing. For instance, an NSF dissertation grant or Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Grant might help pay for your training (methods, language) or travel or equipment expenses, whereas a fellowship from *** will fund your living expenses for the year. Just make sure you do invest the additional time to tailor your grant to the appropriate funding source. It turns reviewers off when they get proposals that were clearly written for some other agency and some other purpose/mission.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A GRADUATE STUDENT SEEKING FUNDING FOR A DISSERTATION?

Apply! And apply! And apply! There are many opportunities out there, and since you've already had to write a dissertation proposal for your department, it makes sense to try. While it is disappointing not to get funding, it is better to have tried than to have not. It also will teach you something about the process. Start looking early. Start looking the year before you first plan to apply (just so you get a sense of who's out there, and when the deadlines are).

In general, as you build your academic career, expect rejections and learn not to internalize them. Start small. Get internal grants first, for instance from your department or academic division, for an early part of your (M.A. or diss.) research project. This can include a travel grant to present your work at a conference, training courses at ICPSR, equipment so you can do interviews, or getting onto a faculty member's grant as R.A., etc. By building a record over time, you increase

your chances that other funding entities will want to support your work as well. It's all about external validation.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SEEKING GRANTS FROM A PRIVATE FOUNDATION?

Private sources of funding often have more leeway in what they can let you use funding for: living expenses, project-related expenses; if you are a faculty member: what you pay your RA or a consultant, whether you can use the funds to buy a course off.... Also, because many private foundations don't allow institutions to charge the full amount of indirect cost (either limiting or eliminating it), it often means more bang for your buck, from your point of view. Of course, for your institution, the picture looks different. While they love the prestige that comes with external funding, especially from foundations, they'd prefer to benefit from both the prestige and a share of the funds from federal grants. Think about what you need. For example, NSF Sociology doesn't support course releases but private foundations often do. If TIME is what you need, funding from a private foundation might be better.

ARE THERE ANY APPROACHES FEMINIST RESEARCHERS CAN TAKE TO ENSURE THAT THEIR GRANTS ARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY REVIEWERS?

If you are able to suggest reviewers, list at least five people that you know are conversant with feminist work, and who would provide useful reviews. Don't try to mask the explicitly feminist nature of your work, but also emphasize that your project contributes to knowledge beyond feminist audiences. It is endlessly surprising to me how few feminists serve on grant panels, but I also rarely run across reviewers or panelists who are explicitly hostile; it's more likely that I run across people who have no way to assess feminist work, or are vaguely uncomfortable with the "political" nature of feminist work. Also, if you are a feminist researcher, be willing to serve as a reviewer on grant proposals, and serve on review panels!

Regardless of whether you are a feminist, make sure you actually pose a research question that (1) has not been answered yet, (2) is answerable (with the methods and data you propose), and (3) of interest to a broad audience. This means stay away from proposing a study to which you presume to already know the answer. Put differently: If you already know what you are going to find, why on earth should I fund your research? Make sure you differentiate being a scientist (which means you use theory and want to produce new knowledge) from being a pundit (which means you use ideology to confirm what you've known all along). If you are not designing a project that could produce new knowledge, and thus unanticipated findings, you have no reason to request research funding. Bad example: "My study will illustrate how rampant and pervasive heterosexism affects the way juries arrive at verdicts in domestic violence cases." Better example: "My study examines whether, and if so, how the way juries arrive at verdicts in domestic violence cases is shaped by prevailing gender norms."