

## *Hey Jane!*

### **Becoming internationally engaged**

Welcome to Column 41 of Hey Jane! This is a project of the SWS Career Development Committee. Questions are generated by the committee and SWS members.

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#### ***I am interested in becoming internationally engaged professionally. What practical suggestions do you have for moving forward?***

This is an important question to ask – with a push to closing borders for academics worldwide, as feminist activist scholars we should find ways to develop or maintain our international engagement. Here are some general suggestions for becoming active beyond the borders of your country. They should be useful no matter what region or country you intend to learn more about. And though some of the resources mentioned are particular to United States-based sociologists, many apply more globally.

Remember that these suggestions are a beginning. Look for opportunities to learn more at conferences (for example, 2017 ASA meetings will feature a workshop lead by myself on strategies for engaging in international research). And you will want to collect more suggestions from others who work in your particular area of interest. You might think of your professional development as an ethnographic project. As such, you will appreciate that, in order to create networks and to build trust with individual collaborators, personal (face-to-face) contacts matter a lot.

1. **Explore funding from your own organization:** Your department, dean, provost may have funds set aside for international partnerships, such as attending international conferences, visiting research institutes, or inviting collaboration partners to visit from abroad.
2. **Identify external funding sources** for international research, collaboration, or teaching stays. These may be governmental or NGO sources. Check, for example, the Fulbright Commission and contact their office staff. There are also many bi-lateral funding sources, such as the German Academic Exchange Program (DAAD). Also, identify sources that do not receive many applications from social scientists, like the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.
3. Use **teaching opportunities** abroad to cover your own travel costs, and figure out ways to combine teaching and research, and to build local connections. For

- example, invite local guest speakers to the course you teach abroad, and include visits to organizations that will simultaneously build your research networks
4. **Learn about rewards at home:** Recognize that your institution might or might not value your global engagement, and check how merit/promotion guidelines recognize such efforts.
  5. **Do your “homework”:** Read up on the country you are planning to visit, getting as much information as possible. Contact visitors from that country who you may be able to meet with near your home base, or at a conference you are attending. Talk to U.S. colleagues who you know have collaborators abroad. Contact possible local faculty, graduate students, postdocs, researchers, libraries, archives before you travel for your project. Make use of phones and videoconferencing when available.
  6. Find (academic) collaborators and/or local organizations abroad who share your interests and **seek to build mutually helpful partnerships**. Go out of your way to learn how to read the literature of academics from the region/country. Find the academic literature as well as governmental or organizational reports to identify activists and experts.
  7. **Identify international researchers through journals and professional associations.** Check the (international) editorial boards of your favorite journals. Check the SWS and ASA programs and other conferences you attend for colleagues from abroad. ASA has had, for example, a reception for international scholars. Attend their talks and/or invite them as (potential) research partners to the social events you attend during the meetings.
  8. **Seek out international visiting postdocs, scholars, and professors who are in the United States.** Find out who the international visitors to your campus or nearby campuses from the country (region) you are interested in. Current Fulbright fellows in the United States, for example, can be invited to campus. Talk to them about conducting research in the countries they are familiar with.
  9. **Create a two-way street:** Include colleagues from abroad in your own academic world. Build and maintain collegial relations by sharing calls for papers and conferences, inviting international colleagues to panels you organize, and so on. Consider sharing your expertise on how to publish in US journals by working with colleagues on their publications for submission to U.S. journals, volunteer to comment, read, and edit drafts, and/or collaborate on pieces. When you get an invitation (such as, to participate in a conference or contribute to a publication), ask the organizers who from outside the United States is part of it. Maintain a list of international colleagues and provide names from it when asking event or publication organizers to invite experts in your field, especially when these events look exclusively U.S.-focused.
  10. Just as you would do when at home, when you are abroad you should consider what the community you work with needs or wants. **Offer your skills and your labor**, for activities such as grant writing or copy editing.
  11. Also, consider how you can **create or adapt organizational practices and policies** to be more inclusive to scholars and scholarship from outside the United

States. For example, as editor of *Gender & Society* Joya Misra instituted the requirement that at least one reviewer was from outside the manuscript author's country.

12. **Getting future generations of scholars involved in international networks** is crucial, too. Thus, consider finding funding to invite, hire and/or train graduate students and postdocs of your international collaborators and, in return, consider taking a group of your undergraduate, graduate students or postdoctoral fellows abroad. Faculty who are themselves less mobile can benefit from exchanging members of their teams.
13. **Don't assume that everyone is a native speaker of English.** In talks, panels, and discussions that you organize and attend give explicit room to (for example directly ask) non-English speakers to contribute. Even proficient English speakers may take longer to insert themselves in a discussion if English is not their first language. If native English speakers have told you that you speak very quickly, those who speak English as a second (third, or fourth) language probably would appreciate your working to slow down your delivery.
14. Consider how to combine **your own personal and family commitments** with international collaboration. If you are not currently mobile yourself, invite your colleague(s) from abroad, their students or postdocs. Families are not always impediments to travel abroad, but may actually be an important support to you in your international endeavors. Read about creative ways of how to handle family responsibilities when research takes one abroad. And talk to others who manage family responsibilities in these situations.

## **Selected Literature on Gender, Field work, and Families Abroad**

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