

# **AAA Workshop on Grant Writing**

Jeffrey C. Johnson  
Institute for Coastal and Marine  
Resources

Department of Sociology  
Department of Anthropology  
Department of Biostatistics

# Getting Your First proposal Funded is Like Getting Your First Large Loan

Its hard to get credit without  
having a history of having  
credit!

Its hard to get funding  
without having a track  
record of funding!

Somehow we all manage  
to get credit!

Somehow you'll  
manage to get  
funded!!!

# So How Do You Do It

- Find a funding agency that is appropriate
- Initially you may need a cosigner, team up with a senior researcher
- There is no substitute for a good idea
- You need to know what the funding agency wants--You need to do an ethnography of the agency
- Get examples of good proposals funded by the agency of interest
- You need to write a good proposal
- If you don't succeed at first, try again!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

# So Why Seek Funding?

## Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivations

- Extrinsic rewards include, for example, money, prestige, awards, recognition, perks
- Intrinsic rewards include, for example, individual satisfaction, self-confidence, pride, freedom

# Positive Aspects

- Freedom to carry out research with adequate resources
- Excitement of discovery
- In a team setting, excitement of exchanging ideas and perspectives
- Increase available departmental resources(administrators like this!)
- Greater visibility for researcher and department

## Positive Aspects (cont.)

- Student support and opportunities for student involvement
- Increase chances for attracting better graduate students
- More resources available for attending conferences and meetings to present study results
- Chances for more publications
- Better opportunities for communication, release time, and equipment

# Possible Negatives

- Finding time to do the research
- Putting in the effort of writing a proposal and getting turned down
- Further demands on time due to grant management
- Possible problems with recruitment and retention of research assistants

# The Relationship Between Ideas and Sources of Funding

- Should the idea drive where to seek funding or should the agency determine what it is you study?
- Or, which comes first, the idea or the sponsor?

# When Sources Drive the Ideas

- Many federal, state and private funding sources seek investigators to put together proposals that address issues viewed as important to them
- You can seek such sources of funding by reviewing various RFP's (Request For Proposals), RFA's (Request for Applications), or Program Announcements

# Where to Find Such Sources

- These days there are all kinds of tools available to find funding sources
- Most major sponsors are on the web
- Your university office of sponsored programs (OSP) should have access to whole range of traditional (Federal Register) as well as electronic databases (SPIN, IRIS, The Foundation Center, FEDIX, etc.)



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# If You Choose to Have the Agency Drive the Idea

- Pick a topic in which you have expertise
- If you lack the expertise, team up with those that do
- Pursue funding under such circumstances only if you have a true interest in the potential topic of study
- Be aware of restrictions and reporting requirements of the agency

# Grants versus Contracts

- Contracts generally involve specific reporting requirements and deliverables
- Grants generally involve fewer specifics, but expect the project to produce various academic and applied products (this is the place where ideas generally determine the funding source)

# When the Idea Drives the Source

- Idea may be better--based on your experience, expertise, and interests
- May involve a higher level of sustained motivation
- Better fit
- May provide more flexibility in carrying out the project
- Higher likelihood of project success

# Either Approach is Legitimate

However, my preference is  
having the idea first,  
although I have been  
influenced by interesting  
program announcements to  
find an idea that fits.

# There are Multiple Stages to Any Good Idea

- The original idea
- Discussions of the idea with close colleagues and/or mentors--the idea should now have some form and substance
- Is the idea novel?
- Is it grounded in the literature?
- Is it doable--logistically and financially?
- Will it lead to significant accomplishments?
- Will it solve a problem or contribute to some body of knowledge?
- Are there any ethical concerns?

# Further, Depending on the Source of Funding

- Can you generalize from the expected findings?
- Is it doable--from a methodological standpoint?
- Do you have contingency planning--there will be some results even if the original idea is risky?(some agencies have programs for potentially risky research efforts)

Now That You Have A  
Well Thought Out Idea

# Do An Ethnography of Any Potential Funding Agency

- Check out the agency's web site
- Read the pages carefully
- Look for special programs that might give you an edge in competition (e.g, programs for women and minorities, first-timers, faculty from smaller universities)
- Read the agency's guidelines
- Read the guidelines again!
- Seek guidance or advice from others who have been successfully funded by the agency of interest

Given you have a good idea you  
can discuss and have an  
understanding of the agency of  
interest

- Contact the  
appropriate  
program  
manager  
/officer!

# Things to know about Program Managers /Officers

- They are in the business of seeking good ideas
- If you have a good idea they are there to help you
- They know and understand agency mission and priorities and will help determine how well your idea fits
- They have all the most recent information (special programs, changes in submission dates, etc.)
- They can give advice that may make your proposal more competitive

# Ask For

- Examples of funded proposals-  
-if it is a federal agency  
examples should be readily  
available
- Any letters produced by panels  
or other review  
committees(these may also be  
available on the agency web  
site)
- Guidelines sent to reviewers

# If At All Possible Establish Face-To-Face Contact With Program Managers/Officers!

This can be done by scheduling meetings at the agency, discovering when they may be at universities in your area, or contacting them at conferences.

**Side Note: Familiarity with  
program officers may get your  
name on a list of potential  
reviewers**

The more proposals you  
review the more you will  
get a feel for how the  
review process works and  
just what constitutes a good  
proposal!

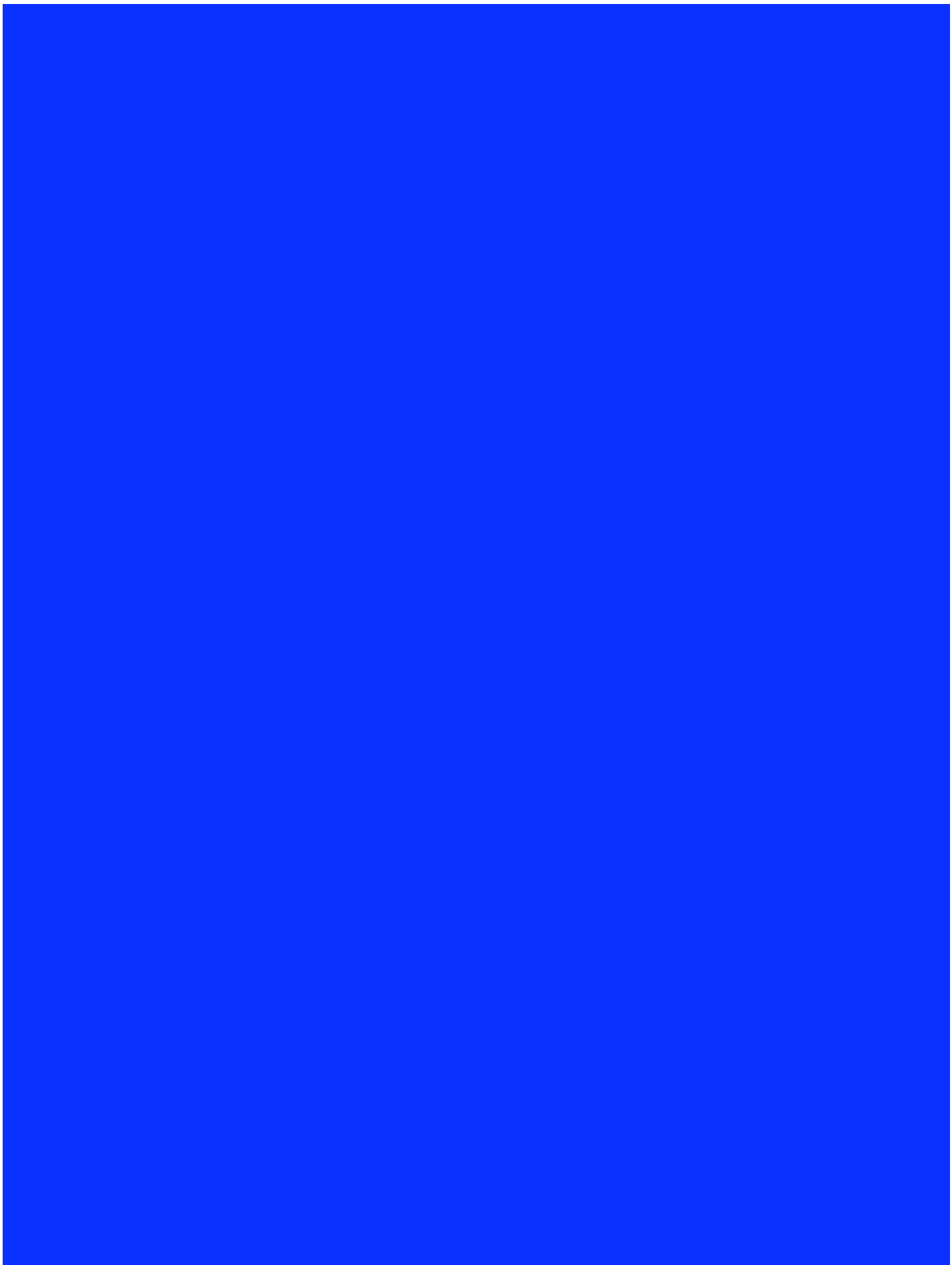
Now you are ready to  
write!

# Two Basic Parts of A good Proposal

- Translating your ideas into an understandable, well integrated, theoretically and technically competent, and highly readable proposal
- Crossing the t's and dotting the i's (fonts, page requirements, CV's, etc.)

Who to send a proposal  
to in anthropology is  
particularly challenging!

One's epistemological  
stance will largely  
determine sources of  
funding and just what  
constitutes a good proposal



Most funding  
opportunities are in the  
systematic or applied  
side

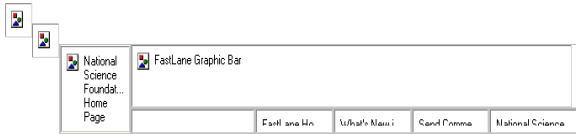
We will concentrate our  
efforts in this realm

Any proposal will  
eventually go through a  
peer review process of  
some type

You should be aware of  
what that process entails!

Although the agency  
makes the final decision,  
you must satisfy reviewers!

So what do reviewers  
look for?



## Proposal Review

National Science Foundation (NSF) seeks to support the most meritorious research whether basic or applied, to meet its statutory responsibilities. Reviews play a key role in the NSF's evaluation of research proposals. Please provide **both** written comments as well as summary rating on this Proposal, using the [Proposal Evaluation Criteria](#). Please also see [Conflicts of Interest](#), [Confidentiality of Proposals and Peer Reviews](#), and [Privacy Act and Public Burden Statements](#).

Information on Proposal Number: 0327311

Principal Investigator's Name:	Getta Leif
Institution:	Whatsamatta U.
Title:	Dissertation Research: Markov Chain Models of De-Naturalized Hegemonic "Objective" Critiques

Please provide your e-mail address so the cognizant NSF Program Officer can contact you regarding any questions he/she might have about your review.

Please check this box if you want to receive an e-mail copy of your review.

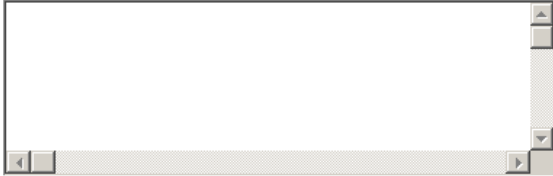
**Note:** As with any form of electronic communication, NSF cannot guarantee privacy of the e-mail message during its transmission.

<b>Rating Section</b> <input type="radio"/> I am declining to review this proposal. <input type="radio"/> I am giving this proposal no rating. <input checked="" type="radio"/> I am rating this proposal (Please check rating below).
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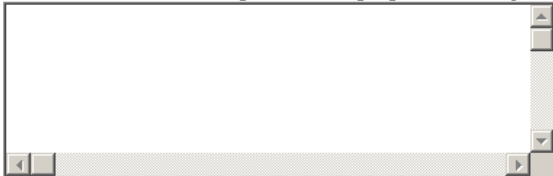
### Overall Rating

- Excellent** Outstanding proposal in all respects; deserves highest priority for support.
- Very Good** High quality proposal in nearly all respects; should be supported if at all possible.
- Good** A quality proposal, worthy of support.
- Fair** Proposal lacking in one or more critical aspects; key issues need to be addressed.
- Poor** Proposal has serious deficiencies.

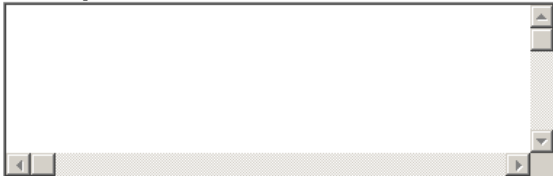
**What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?**

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**What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?**

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**Summary Statement**

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**Other Suggested Reviewers (Optional, Max. Characters: 480):**

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**Conflicts of Interest**

If you have an affiliation or financial connection with the institution or the person submitting this proposal that might be construed as creating conflicts of interest, please describe those affiliations or interests in the box below. Regardless of any such affiliations or interests, we would like to have your review unless you believe you cannot be objective. If you do not describe conflicts of interest in the box below we shall assume that you have no conflicting affiliations or interests.

**Conflicts of Interest Text (Optional)**

[Go to Overall Rating](#)

<input type="button" value="Submit Review"/>	<input type="button" value="Go Back"/>
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		<b>National Science Foundation</b> 4201 Wilson Boulevard Arlington, Virginia 22230, USA Tel: 703-292-5111 FIRS: 800-877-8339 TDD: 703-292-5090		Last Modified: Jan 10 2003 (DS)	



# NSF Criterion

- **What is the intellectual merit of the activity?**
- How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields?
- How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project?
- To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative and original concepts?
- How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity?
- Is there sufficient access to the necessary resources?

## NSF Criterion (cont.)

- **What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?**
- How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning?
- How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups?
- To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks, and partnerships?
- Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding?
- What may the benefits of the proposed activity to society?

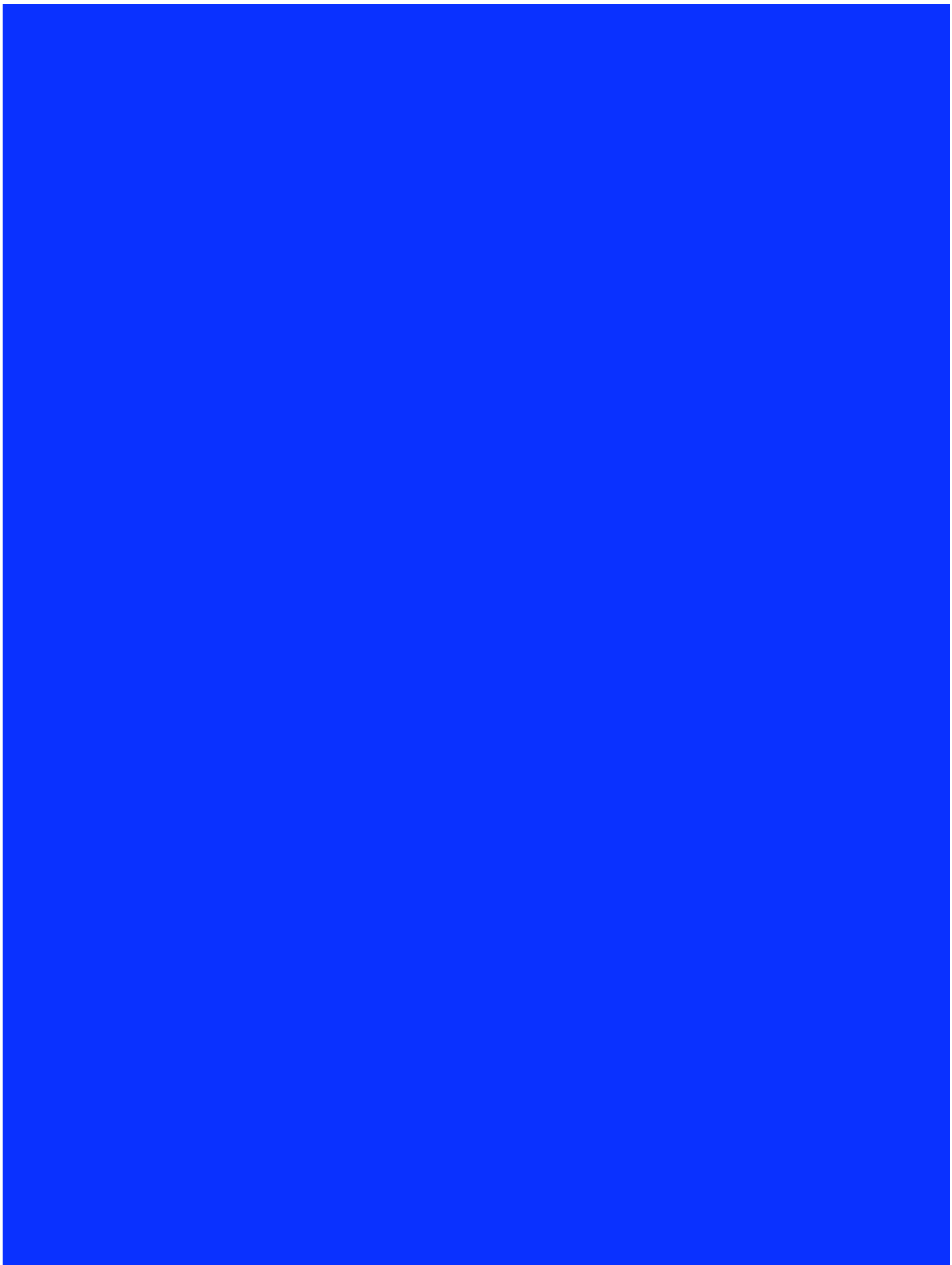
# NIH's eight basic questions reviewers ask

- How high are the intellectual quality and merit of the study?
- What is the potential impact?
- How novel is the proposal?(Is the research likely to produce new data and concepts or confirm existing hypotheses?)
- Is the hypothesis valid and have presented evidence supporting it?
- Are the aims logical?

# Eight questions continued

- Are the procedures appropriate, adequate, and feasible for the research?
- Are the investigators qualified?
- Are the facilities adequate and the environment conducive to the research?

This is the formal stuff,  
but what do reviewers  
really think and say?



## Selected problems and concerns often cited by NIH reviewers

- Lack of significance to the scientific issue being addressed.
- Lack of original or new ideas
- Proposal of an unrealistically large amount of work.
- Scientific rationale not valid.
- Project too diffuse or superficial or lacks focus.
- Proposed project is a fishing expedition lacking solid scientific basis.
- Alternative hypotheses not considered.
- Proposed experiments simply descriptive and do not test a specific hypothesis.
- The proposal is technology driven rather than hypothesis driven (I.e., method in search of a problem).
- Rationale not provided

## Reviewer concerns (cont.)

- Direction or sense of priority not clearly defined (lack a clear starting or finishing point).
- Insufficient methodological detail to convince reviewers the investigator knows what he or she is doing (no recognition of potential problems and pitfalls).
- Proposed model not appropriate for proposed question.
- Investigator does not have experience with the proposed techniques.
- The proposal lacks critical literature references causing reviewers to think the applicant either does not know the literature or has purposely neglected critical published material.

# Wenner-Gren Foundation

“Only 15-20 percent of  
Individual Research  
Grant applications are  
successful.”

So they recommend...

Given this degree of competition, the foundation advises applicants to follow closely all the procedures for completing the application. For example, the research question or objective should be clearly and succinctly stated on the first page in no more than one sentence. A short sentence usually communicates better than a long one. Applicants should also follow the directions about font size (it must be 11 point or larger). The foundation reserves the right to return applications using smaller font sizes unread.

In evaluating applications, the foundation pays very close attention to the answers to the five Project Description Questions and to the bibliography that accompanies these answers. The five questions, given here in their simplest form, are:

What is your research question or objective?

How does your research question relate to the work of other anthropologists?

What evidence will you need to collect to answer your research question?

How have you prepared to do this research?

What contribution will your project make to basic research in anthropology?

Through these five questions, the foundation evaluates the quality of the proposed research. In making this evaluation, the foundation looks for four essential characteristics in the proposal: the formulation of a research question, an appreciation for appropriate evidence, a feasible plan for gathering evidence, and a concern for the contribution of the research.

The formulation of a developed research question is the single most important characteristic of a successful proposal. A research question should ask "why," "how," or "what" questions about a phenomenon of significance to anthropology. Applications are denied funding when they present a vast research topic as the object of investigation instead of a research question developed from that topic. The proposed research should not be presented as if applicants know in advance exactly what they will find. Such applications do not allow for "falsification," and there is a risk that the research problem will not really be investigated. Applications also fail when they assert that the research will answer such a wide variety of questions that the investigation may not answer any single one fully and carefully.

A well-developed research question also means that applicants should state how the research fits into and elaborates on existing knowledge in anthropology. In what way is this research original? How will it add substantially to knowledge on this problem?

Appropriate evidence refers to the evidence needed to answer the research question or problem. The foundation welcomes all the methods of collecting evidence commonly used in anthropology: from quantitative to qualitative, from laboratory analysis to fieldwork, from survey to study site. Whatever the methods used, they should be appropriate for answering the research question. The application therefore should communicate a close fit between the evidence to be collected and the research question. Too often in applications, it is unclear why or how the particular evidence to be collected will answer the research objective. The result is a gap between the research goals expressed and the actual investigation to be undertaken. Applicants should make very clear what evidence they will collect and how it serves to investigate or to "measure" fundamental aspects of the research question.

A feasible plan of research means that the research can be accomplished. One measure of an application's feasibility is the preparation made by the researcher. Has the required language skill been acquired? Have official permits and research visas been obtained? Have local contacts or academic affiliations been made?

Feasibility also means that the plan for conducting the research can be managed in the allotted time. It requires that the field or laboratory site chosen for the research be suitable for the time and funds available. Too often, applicants promise to amass so much evidence or to generate evidence in such a short period that they seem highly unlikely to fulfill their promises. A feasible research plan with clearly defined procedures is much better than one so encompassing that it seems impossible to accomplish within the limits of the time and funding available.

Contribution of the research has to do with the mission of the foundation and how closely the research fulfills that mission. The commitment of the Wenner-Gren Foundation is to support basic research in anthropology, and all applications therefore should indicate their significance for that mission. It is not enough for the research to "fill in" knowledge about a culture, a site, or a primate species. Applicants should show how their research addresses important theoretical and methodological issues or debates in anthropology. They need to suggest how their research findings might clarify or even help resolve such issues. Often, however, applicants claim significance for their research in terms of applied goals, such as helping to solve ecological problems or to alleviate social conflicts. Although worthy in most cases, these applied goals are outside the foundation's priorities in funding. Similarly outside the foundation's scope are applications whose research questions are not directly relevant to anthropological theory and methods. Applicants should not assume the foundation can intuit the contribution of their research to anthropology; they should make that significance explicit.

The bibliography should list sources that are directly relevant to the research and, in so far as possible, these sources should be utilized in the body of the application. An enormous list of sources not directly pertinent to the research and not used in the application serves no purpose.

One of your major goals  
in writing a good  
proposal is to not anger  
reviewers!

So from a practical  
standpoint what does it  
all mean?

Devices and suggestions for  
writing a good proposal

Depending on the agency and focus,  
often times reviewers may not be  
familiar with your area (or possibly  
your discipline)

Solution: Write clearly and keep  
away from jargon. If you must  
use a technical term define it  
well or use adequate  
references.

**KNOW YOUR INTENDED  
AUDIENCE!**

Every section of the  
proposal should be  
connected and  
integrated!

If you mention  
something earlier in the  
proposal it should be  
supported, reiterated, or  
linked in subsequent  
sections!

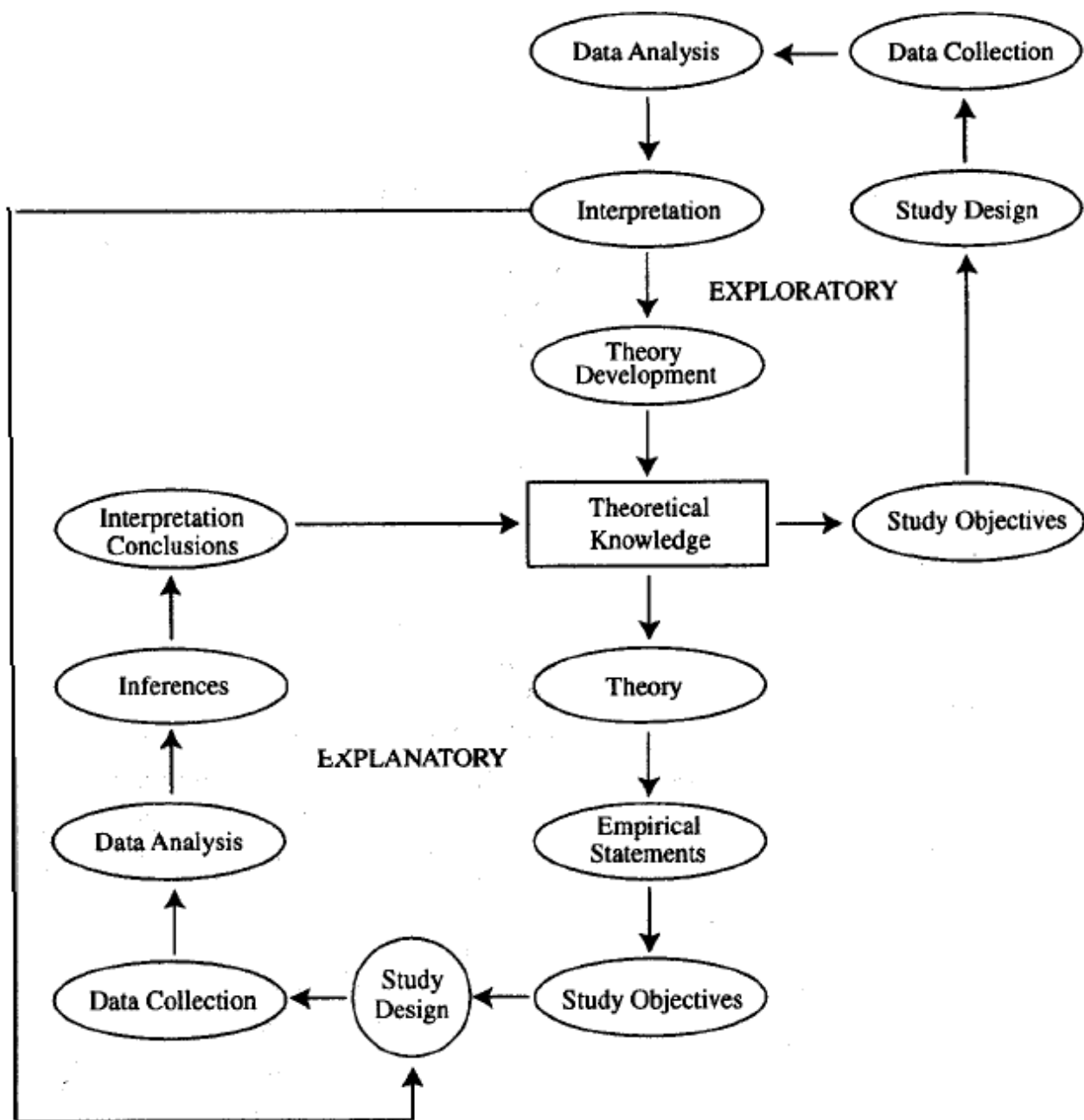


Figure 2. Relationship between exploratory and explanatory approaches within the overall ethnographic research process.

# Borrowing from the NSF project description

- Statement of the research problem, specific aims, expectations, propositions or hypotheses (could include research questions)
- Review of literature and significance
- Preliminary studies, if any
- Research Plan
- Research schedule (work plan)

# Research Plan

- Research Design
- Research Site or Source of Data
- Data Analysis Plans
- NOTE: References and citations are as important in your methods as in your theory section

## Research Problem, Objectives or Aims, and Propositions, Expectations, Research Questions, or Hypotheses Should be Tightly

### Linked

- Project objectives or aims should be driven by the research questions or hypotheses and should be tightly focused.
- You should begin with an overall objective (related to the research problem) followed by a series of more specific objectives
- All objectives should relate directly to the research questions you are setting out to answer or the hypotheses you intend to test
- Remember that your research design methods will relate directly to your aims or objectives

# An Example

The ninth specific objective is to determine the role of an individual's knowledge of group structure on his/her ability to "fit" in or function in the social environment. Some have suggested that an individual's knowledge of group structure is adaptive in that it allows an individual to reduce social uncertainty (Freeman et al., 1989) and negative affect (Palinkas 1992a). We expect:

H5: *In each cultural setting, the greater an individual's knowledge of the group structure (as determined by the cultural consensus model), the less likely he or she will be engaged in social conflict and the greater his or her psychological well-being.*

# Objectives or Aims should begin with to

- to determine
- to model
- to test
- to document
- to advance
- to apply

# Background and Significance

- Relate literature review to your objectives and research questions and hypotheses
- Keep the statement of significance relatively brief (state how your project is innovative, looks at an issue or topic in a new way, advances understanding/knowledge or improves methodology)
- Justify your proposed research by relating it to relevant research
- The literature section shows your grasp of the field (extremely important to reviewers)
- Be sure to identify gaps or discrepancies in the field
- Recognize where you or someone else might go from here

# Preliminary Studies

- If you have done preliminary research (or know of others who have done preliminary research) on the topic it will help build reviewer's confidence that you will have a higher probability of successfully completing the proposed project
- Use preliminary studies to show how the proposed research is valid and how it will expand earlier efforts
- Be critical--that includes being aware of alternative interpretations or explanations, even of your own work
- Incorporate your own publications or unpublished data on the topic where relevant (you want the reviewers to know your expertise in the area--but don't include such materials unless they are relevant to the topic)

# Research Plan

- The research design should be related to your aims and hypotheses/research questions (i.e., the design should relate to the theory)
- Theory, design, data collection methods, and data analysis methods should be tightly linked
- You must provide a detailed explanation and rationale for design and methods chosen (it doesn't make any difference if they are qualitative or quantitative)
- If you introduced theoretical concepts in earlier sections you must clearly operationalize them here
- Provide adequate references for your methods--(or did you invent them?)
- Be aware of sampling issues!!!!
- Cite original methodological sources where possible (you want to give credit where credit is due)

# Research Plan (cont.)

- Be specific about how you will answer your research questions or test your hypotheses
- Avoid mere lists and references to statistical or text analysis software packages--be specific about how each applies
- Link the research site to the aims of the research--site chosen should be justified
- “It should be possible for a reviewer to look back to your specific aims and understand why each kind of data is being collected , and why a particular analytic technique is being employed.”(from NSF Dissertation Panel advice to students)

# Research Plan Example

- Operationalize concepts

Psychological Well-being: The Profile of Mood State (POMS) is a self report mood questionnaire that obtains data on six factors: Tension-Anxiety, Depression-Dejection, Anger-Hostility, Vigor-Activity, Fatigue-Inertia, and Confusion-Bewilderment (McNair, Lorr, and Droppleman 1992). The questionnaire consists of 65 adjectives, each of which is rated on a 5-point scale. The POMS has been widely used in a number of different cultural settings and appears to demonstrate broad cross-cultural validity. Nevertheless, confirmatory factor analyses will be conducted to determine whether the instrument displays similar factor structure and reliability among all four cultures.

# Research Plan Example (cont.)

To evaluate hypotheses 4 and 5, the morale scale will be analyzed to produce a measure of each individual's level of harmony with the social group. Next, the social harmony index and POMS subscale will be compared with the results of the analysis of the social evaluation data. It is expected that high social and low conflict with others will be associated with high consensus of the individual's status and role (hypothesis 4) and with high competence (agreement with others) on the social evaluation instruments (hypothesis 5)

# Work Plan

- Follow proposal guidelines
- Again, relate each of the data collection and analysis tasks to the aims of the proposal
- Give reasonable time for the completion of tasks
- Be sure to identify the person or persons responsible for the tasks

# Some insights on dotting the i's and crossing the t's

- Follow the agency guidelines carefully!!!
- Be kind to reviewers, make the proposal readable! Use a readable font and make sure tables and figures are understandable
- If you are going to include appendices, make sure they are allowed and don't depend on them to get your point across (reviewers may not even look at them)
- Make sure to include any supporting letters from relevant organizations (tribal associations) or institutions

**Finally!!!!!!!**

**Be PERSISTANT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

If you get turned down the first time around swallow your pride, take constructive criticism to heart, and revise and resubmit your proposal.

If in fact you have a good idea, your chances in a second round are generally better.