May 2010

**POPCENTER NEWSLETTER**

**Berkeley Population Center**

www.popcenter.berkeley.edu
Popcenter@demog.berkeley.edu
Director: Michael Hout
Associate Director: Will Dow
Executive Director: Leora Lawton

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Resubmitting an NIH Grant Application
An Introduction to NSF Grants
Study Review Groups at NIH
Resources on the Popcenter Website
Formal Demographic Methods Mini-Conference
Survey and Public Opinion Research Mini-Conference
Spring 2010 Pilot Grant Awardees
Fall 2010 Pilot Grant Call

**Photo Credits**
The photo strip above is the result of winning Photo Contest submissions by (right to left) Liz Ozselcuk, Savet Hong and Jill Luoto, with the historical photograph from The Bancroft Library.

**Note from the Executive Director**
The Berkeley Population Center has been gaining traction and momentum toward securing external funding for its faculty affiliates. Ted Miguel was successful in his NIH R03 application last summer, to study “The Impact of Vocational Education on Incomes, Health and Wellbeing in Kenya”. We expect to usher in another 3-4 NIH applications this Spring, and then an equal number in the Fall. And as you can see within this newsletter, the Popcenter’s own ARRA ‘stimulus’ application was partially funded, enabling us to support even more Pilot Grants. Indeed: we funded 15 pilot grants in the 2009-2010 academic year, up from 7 in 2007-2008.

In addition, the capabilities of the Popcenter to support researchers have increased. I know I have a much better understanding of the entire NIH and related research processes. To further disseminate this understanding, I have added many downloadable guides to the Popcenter website on the Grants section. These documents cover the NIH application, human subjects, how to approach revisions, and much, much more. In the face of the decreased emphasis campus-wide on ORUs (Organized Research Units) and increased emphasis on decentralization, the importance of the role played by the Popcenter in providing personal assistance has grown.

In this second newsletter, I touch on the above developments and more. I am always interested in suggestions for topics to cover or other ways to be more supportive. In the meantime, take a look inside to see what’s new.

-LL
UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Mini-Conference on Formal Demographic Methods

Monday, June 7, 2010, 9 AM to 4 PM
To be held at the Brower Center in downtown Berkeley | adjacent to campus
2150 Allston Way, Berkeley, CA 94704
www.browercenter.org
Luncheon and refreshments provided

Speakers

- Kenneth Wachter, Departments of Demography and Statistics, UC Berkeley
  Topic: Mathematical models using evolutionary theory to account for patterns seen in common across species in rates of mortality as functions of age.

- Shripad Tuljapurkar, Department of Biology, Stanford University
  Topic: Vive la difference: Variation in lifespan, reproductive success, and fitness. Why, how much, and do they matter?

- Samuel Clark, Department of Sociology, University of Washington
  Topic: Mortality modeling and model life tables using data from the INDEPTH Network of demographic surveillance system sites in Africa and Asia and the human mortality database.

RSVP for the conference by June 1, 2010 to Leora Lawton, popcenter@demog.berkeley.edu. There is no cost to participants but they must register in advance to assist with planning.

Survey and Public Opinion Research Mini-Conference

And while we’re talking mini-conferences, the Berkeley Population Center will once again co-sponsor a mini-conference with the Pacific Association of Public Opinion Research (PAPOR). This conference features panelists who attended the national AAPOR conference (this year in Chicago May 14-18), who then summarize presentations around central themes, for example, web survey design issues, and the use of incentives. The conference will take place on campus, June 21 (Monday) from 9 AM to 3 PM. (Note changed date.)

Population Association of American Annual Meeting

The next annual meeting of the PAA will be held in Washington DC, always a fun destination, and likely to feature a good deal of NIH and other agency activity. Submission date will be in mid-September.

Marriott Wardman Park
(next to the Zoo)
Grants and Research Administration News

Berkeley Population Center Receives Stimulus (ARRA) Funding!

The Berkeley Population Center was eligible to apply for stimulus funding, so last summer we sent in an application, requesting a modest amount of money for two years. At first, we were told that it was not going to be funded and then one day we received email, “Would we accept one year of funding if offered?” YES!! So we have been awarded a total of $52,615 (direct + indirect funds).

Spring 2010 Pilot Grant Awardees

We are pleased to announce the Berkeley Population Center Spring 2010 Pilot Grant Awardees. We received many quality proposals and were pleased to accommodate as many as possible within our budgetary constraints and goals for long-term planning. Those constraints were alleviated by the ARRA award the Popcenter received. Please join us in congratulating these recipients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investigators</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agarwal, Sabrina;</td>
<td>Maternal and infant health of the Aeta of Luzon, Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milligan, Lauren</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dow, Will; White,</td>
<td>Using Group Commitment To Promote Smoking Cessation in Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuru-Jeter, Amani</td>
<td>Premature physiological aging among African-American women: a study on race and racism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next round of Pilot Grant applications is due November 15, but we accept them anytime. Please visit the website for the updated Call for Proposals and Guidelines for proposal submission. Call for Pilots:  http://www.popcenter.berkeley.edu/Call_for_Pilots_Spring_2010.pdf Proposal Guidelines:  http://www.popcenter.berkeley.edu/Pilot_Guidelines.doc

About NSF Grants

The Popcenter is funded by NICHD so we do tend to emphasize that particular source of external funding. That said, another viable source for social scientists is the National Science Foundation. There are two relevant divisions in NSF under the Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences for social science research: Social & Economic Sciences (SES) and Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences (BCS). The SES division has several subgroups: Decision, Risk & Management Science*; Economics; Innovation & Organizational Sciences*; Law & Social Sciences*; Methodology, Measurement & Statistics*; Political Science; Science Technology, & Society*; and Sociology. The asterisks denote interdisciplinary programs.

Dr. Jan Stets of NSF (jstets@nsf.gov) recently presented an introduction to NSF funding; this article condenses that talk. Her talk emphasized sociology but the lessons are applicable to other social sciences in SES as well. NSF supports theoretically-grounded research on systematic patterns of social relationships on the causes & consequences of human behavior, social structure, & social change. Studies range from micro to macro levels of interaction. Topics include: Stratification, labor markets, social change, organizations, networks, crime, race/ethnicity, social psychology, culture, education, family, gender, population, immigration, social movements, political processes, & globalization. In
addition, this program also supports research using a range of social science methodologies: quantitative & qualitative including survey, experimental, & ethnography, and a combination of multiple methods for original data collection & secondary data analysis.

Proposals by full-time faculty are due by August 15 and January 15, and typically cover 2 years of support for data collection & analysis, survey costs, participant fees, graduate & undergrad assistants, summer salary, and travel for data collection.

In addition to dissertation fellowships (not covered here) two other programs worth mentioning are:

1. CAREER Award: Supports the effective integration of research & education: Eligibility: PhD; untenured, Assistant Professor in a tenure-track position; can compete in 3 competitions. Budget and Duration: $400,000 over 5 years. Deadline: July 23
2. Minority Postdoctoral Research Fellowship: Supports efforts to increase the diversity of researchers in the social sciences. Budget & Duration: $60,000 per year for 2 years; annual stipend of $45,000; research allowance of $10,000; institutional allowance of $5,000 for fringe benefits. Deadline: Third Monday in October.

Applying for NSF grants has some details that distinguish it from other grant applications but basically, they want to see a quality proposal. The process is straightforward.

1. Determine possible funding sources from Program Areas.
2. Read the Grant Proposal Guide carefully:
3. Determine whether your project fits program scope
4. Look over prior award abstracts (link at the bottom of the Program Areas)
5. Ascertain evaluation procedures and criteria
6. Talk with NSF Program Officer
7. Work with your institution (me!) & sponsored research office
8. Ask PIs for copies of proposals
9. Determine budget: faculty & student salaries, data collection, equipment, travel for research, equipment, subawards and indirect costs.
10. Get IRB approval early
11. Provide suggested reviewers.

Weak proposals to NSF suffer from the kind of problems one sees elsewhere. They are worth while recalling as you review your own grant proposal efforts:

- Merit criteria are not met
- Not theoretically grounded or methodologically sound
- Not making a contribution (it’s already been done) or the contribution is incremental with no evidence of a breakthrough
- Disconnected – proposed research does not follow from the original idea
- ‘Trust me’ – lacks sufficient detail about proposed approach (particularly a problem from senior investigators).
- Unstated assumptions – proposed research presupposes the answer
- Unreasonable budget – budget items don’t follow from the research plan.

The NSF is a highly respected grant, so when considering a funding source, consider NSF.
HOW TO REVISE AN NIH APPLICATION*

It pays to revise your NIH grant application. Right now about 80% of all funded projects are resubmissions. So don’t get discouraged; see revising as part of the process. The reviewers don’t say “revise and resubmit” but if your score was reasonably good, or if the comments are reasonably supportive even if unscored, then be persistent.

At the PAA, Rebecca Clark, our program official at NICHD, gathered together a panel of grant awardees, reviewers and program officers to speak about the “Five Things People Should Know About Resubmissions”.

Pam Smock (many kinds of revisions)
1. Get into the reviewers’ head – what is it that made them not see the wonderfulness of your research? Common flaw: lack of clarity and coherent. A form of etiquette, really.
2. Take each reviewer comment seriously. But don’t give up your internal integrity and commitment to your research. It’s your creativity and unique contribution.
3. View a revision as an opportunity, not a rejection. It’s guidance for the researcher, not a contract for ending it.
4. Call the program officer to get a sense if you should revise (more on this below).
5. No typos or excess ‘white space’ on the paper (show that you need to use all the space available because your work is that deep). But be concise and don’t include fluffy filler.

Jason Boardman (revised R03)
1. Collaborators are great, but they aren’t co-authors. Drop them if they think it’s not worth while to revise.
2. Write your grant as one singular voice, not a hodgepodge of different researchers’ language and approach. Even if different people write different sections, go back and rewrite it in your own prose, so that it flows from section to section.
3. Get experience reviewing. Ask a faculty mentor to let you read over a proposal**.
4. Bug the program officials to get more insight. They can tell you the tone and tenor of the discussion, whether it was enthusiastic, matter of fact, or dismissive.
5. Don’t write your revision for the reviewers, because there may be different reviewers. The revision should stand on its own. The reason for your revision isn’t “because the reviewer said so” but because “it’s solid scientific logic or method.”

Feinian Chen (revised a K grant)
1. Get in touch with the Program Official to get his/her advice. Their job is to get successful applications through the process.
2. The program official can help you select the advisory committee and reviewers.
3. Look at other successful applications – particularly the parts that your reviewers discussed.
4. Make a spreadsheet of ‘things to do/address’ and go through the list.
5. Set up a target resubmission date to help you deal with the insecurities and the “my research is crap” feeling.

Michael Rendall (many grants)
1. Don’t tell the reviewers they were wrong.
2. Write all sections in one style. Rewrite in your own language if necessary.
3. Consider the mechanism. Resubmit to another program, e.g., R03 to a R21, etc.
4. Believe in your idea. Show the summary statement to others: things may be addressable.
5. Revise but do it afresh. It has to stand on its own.

Valerie Durrant (review committee)
1. Your audience is the study group, not the PA or RFA.
2. Review panels are interdisciplinary. Don’t turn off someone outside your discipline, for example with jargon.
3. Know the literature outside your field, at least a bit.
4. What’s the impact of your research? Don’t let the reviewers come to the conclusion that ‘nothing is new here.’
5. Don’t do too much too different. “Trying to do too much” and “not enough focus” are common reviewer criticisms.

Carla Walls (scientific review)
1. The page limits – especially the new ones – mean you have to be clean and concise.
2. Don’t get discouraged when not funded initially.
3. NIH wants you to do well. So call your program official for insights and advice.

Rebecca Clark (program official)
1. Don’t yell at your program official. [LL says: If you’re that angry or upset, it’s too early to call.]
2. Be respectful to reviewers.
3. Your proposal’s title and abstract may confuse or obfuscate your content and thus get your application assigned to the wrong study group.
4. Stay away from controversial titles and phrases like ‘gay marriage’ and ‘abortion rights’. Congressfolk notice these and the topics wave red flags. Sometimes NICHD changes titles for this reason.
5. Ask specific questions when contacting the program official for follow-up. Not “why didn’t I get funded” but more like “what did the reviewers mean when they said xxx.”

Other thoughts from several other panelists ...
- Be persistent. Don’t give up. Remember: 80% of funded grants are resubmissions. The payline is also 3-4 times higher for resubmissions than for first-time submissions.
- Be sure you clarified the importance of your research, to science, and to society’s well-being and the NIH mission.
- Address reviewers’ comments, don’t ignore them.
- Clarify the Significance to people outside your field.
- Know when to fold. Sometimes it’s just not worth it to NIH.
- As of 2010 only one resubmission is allowed. They are checking to make sure that people aren’t trying to circumvent this rule by renaming it and submitting it as if it were a brand new proposal. If found, it will get returned without any review.

*This document is also available for download on the Popcenter website, [www.popcenter.berkeley.edu](http://www.popcenter.berkeley.edu).

*Note from LL: *Journal of Marriage and Family* has a reviewer internship program for new PhDs and advanced graduate students. Many, many of the problems in proposals are shared in peer-reviewed articles. You will learn a lot. Visit [http://www.ncfr.org/journals/marriage_family/review/become.asp](http://www.ncfr.org/journals/marriage_family/review/become.asp) for more information.
DEMYSTIFYING NIH STUDY REVIEW GROUPS*

In submitting a grant proposal to NIH, you may have been advised to select or recommend peer-review study groups – the panel of similar researchers – to review your proposal. Obviously it makes sense to ensure that the reviewers are people who understand and are familiar with your area of work and your methodologies. But how does that happen? When does that happen? How do you know who is on the review panel? This note sets out to demystify that process.

In order to understand your role in selecting a review panel, it’s important to understand what happens after your proposal is received. After submission, your proposal is reviewed by the Division of Receipt and Referral (DRR) for NIH compliance (e.g., it must be complete). Then DRR assigns your proposal to a Scientific Review Officer (SRO, also known as SRA). Since competing applications may be funded through more than one institute or center (ICs), DRR decides which IC is most appropriate for your research. The SRO then assigns your proposal to a CSR Study Section (or to an IC Review Committee) by looking at the title, overview and PI profile. It is a human process: a real person is looking at your application. The full detail of this process is available here: http://cms.csr.nih.gov/ResourcesforApplicants/Submission+And+Assignment+Process.htm.

The researcher can help by letting the SRO know what might be a good choice. The place to provide this guidance is in the optional cover letter, which is one component of the application SF424(R&R) package. First specify which program official(s) you’ve been speaking with about your proposal, which IC you think is most appropriate and any secondary possibilities, and which research program it fits into (more is not bad: it shows that multiple ICs might be interested in funding your work). The Study Group is also the kind of thing you should discuss with your program official before you submit the application. They are aware of nuances of reviewer strengths and focus.

Second, you suggest possible review groups. Some ICs have CSR do all the review, in other cases the IC will handle some of the reviews. For example, NICHD reviews its own R03’s but NIA sends them to CSR. There are regular standing groups, and there are special emphasis panels for unusual expertise or conflicts of interest. Different groups review R01s, R03s & R21s, K’s and F’s. Yet even if you suggest a group for your R03 that only reviews R01’s, you’ve still provided valuable insight.

To find your group, you can start here: http://cms.csr.nih.gov/. For example, type in ‘migration’ into the search menu. You’ll see two options for social sciences research, one for R01s (SSPS) and one for R03s (ZRG1 PSE C 90). Click on the link for a description of the kind of research this group reviews. Click on the roster: do the names seem appropriate? Another way to find study groups is: http://www.csr.nih.gov/Roster_proto/section1.asp or http://era.nih.gov/roster/index.cfm.

Rosters are released 30 days prior to the actual meeting. Even though you should suggest which study group makes sense in your optional cover letter, if you see it’s now not appropriate (e.g., now there’s several medical doctors and you want social scientists), then it’s time to write to your SRO and let her/him know. DON’T MENTION REVIEWERS BY NAME. Instead, mention expertise that you want.

Conflicts of interest between the researcher and review panel members are taken very seriously, and should be discussed prior to making formal requests in writing. An example of a serious conflict of interest issue to be discussed is previous experience of ethics violations between yourself and the reviewer. Another is, suppose your research sets out to show how Professor John Doe’s theory is inadequate and you see that Prof. Doe is on your panel. It should be mentioned as an issue for the SRO to consider. They NEVER share this kind of information with the reviewers.

To sum up, the optional cover letter can be an essential part of your application.  
*This document is available for download on the Popcenter website.
**DID YOU KNOW? – THE GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY HAS PANEL AND INTERNATIONAL DATA**

Jon Stiles of the UC Data Center (http://ucdata.berkeley.edu) presents periodic overviews of important data sets that social scientists and health researchers might be interested in exploring, either for personal research or for instruction. One of the most widely used in the United States (second to the Census PUMS data) is the General Social Survey (GSS). In this talk I learned three things: there is now panel data for longitudinal analyses, there are international data sets, allowing for cross-national comparisons, and researchers can apply to submit their own questions in subsequent waves without having to necessarily secure external funding.

**Panel Data:** In 2006, GSS switched to a mix of fixed and panel respondents, so that 2008 has a panel, and so will 2010, including the second reinterview of the 2006 and first of the 2008 panel respondents. A panel data set for the reinterviewed 2006 panel, containing core questions asked in both 2006 and 2008, can be downloaded at: http://www.norc.org/GSS+Website/Download/STATA+v8.0+Format/ .

**International Data:** The GSS is US data but there is also an agreement with other countries to field the same series of questions on selected repeating topics in 45 other countries, with about 39 countries participating each year. These are primarily in Europe, but have recently expanded to other regions. These data allow for cross-time and cross-national explorations. For more information, visit www.gesis.org/en/services/data/survey-data/issp .

**New Questions:** In addition, it is possible to apply to have a module of questions added to the next interview round (conducted every 2 years). Formerly, PIs had to bring their own funding to pay for the additional questions, but NSF added funding. The call for proposals to add questions to the 2012 GSS can be found at: http://sda.berkeley.edu/GSS2012.pdf . In 2008, 10 of 38 PIs who submitted questions were approved. GSS data is easily searchable and downloadable (with optional SAS, SPSS or STATA set-up) from Berkeley’s award winning website, http://sda.berkeley.edu.

Are there any datasets you would like Jon to cover? Contact him at jons@berkeley.edu.

**RESOURCES ON THE POPCENTER WEBSITE**

Over the last year I have written a number of helpful guides to the research process. I announce them as I post them to the Popcenter Website, but I want to re-publicize a selection of them so that you will think of the Popcenter website when you need to know something in straightforward language.

1. **BPC’s Guidebook to the NIH SF424(R&R) Application:** A step-by-step guidebook for putting together an NIH SF424(R&R) application, used for the R01, R03 and R21 programs. http://www.popcenter.berkeley.edu/grants/Popcenter_Instructions_SF424_attached_documents.pdf


3. **BPC’s Guide to NICHD’s Demographic and Behavioral Studies Branch (DBSB):** This document summarizes research areas supported by NICHD, so you can better identify which Program Official you need to contact to begin your NIH grant process. http://www.popcenter.berkeley.edu/grants/nichd_grants.html

4. **Guidelines for PowerPoint Presentations and Poster Sessions:** By popular request, you can now download templates for PowerPoint presentations and for those large posters. http://www.popcenter.berkeley.edu/resources/postersessions.html. See the next page, too.
Award-Winning Posters at PAA

Two Demography graduate students, Alma Vega and Nobuko Mizoguchi, won prizes for their poster sessions, and they used the templates now available on the website. Alma presented her research in a Demography Brownbag prior to the PAA, and we spent a bit of time on giving feedback on the design. Those suggestions are incorporated into the online templates and guidelines.

http://www.popcenter.berkeley.edu/resources/postersessions.html

Below is Alma’s Poster (okay, so you can’t read it but you can see how cool it is!)