

PROPOSAL NO.: 0314395

PANEL SUMMARY:

Intellectual merit:

Three members of a nine-member panel of cultural anthropologists reviewed this proposal. The average rating was 4.3 on a scale where 5=Excellent, 4=Very Good, 3=Good, 2=Fair, and 1=Poor. The rating placed it in the group of 31 proposals to be discussed at the panel meeting. However the panel ranked it 'A' with no discussion in view of the high reviews.

Broader Impacts: This proposal's contribution to the training of a young social scientist would give it significant broader impacts. The new knowledge created about conflicts over scarce resources in a developing country will be of great interest to development planners.

REVIEW #1

PROPOSAL NO.: 0314395

INSTITUTION: University of Florida

NSF PROGRAM: CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Bernard, H. Russell

TITLE: Dissertation Research: The Effects of Water Scarcity on Reciprocity and Sociability in Bolivia

RATING: Multiple Rating: (Excellent/Very Good)

REVIEW:

What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?

What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?

Summary Statement

The proposed project is an interesting and clearly formulated inquiry into the effects of water shortage in a periurban barrio of Cochabamba, Bolivia. The researcher proposes to measure whether cooperation among neighbors, especially certain forms of reciprocity, are altered by water scarcity. This researcher will test this problem through a series of hypotheses. The research objectives are clearly outlined and include documenting water scarcity in the community, determining the effects of water scarcity on reciprocal exchanges and social relations between households, and ascertaining whether a community norm exists for determining how people withdraw from reciprocal relations, and whether people follow these norms in practice. (Also, it might be important to

determine whether the community follows any kind of water distribution system. Is it a kind of economic free-for-all or are ideas of turn taking employed at times?)

The project will be the first study to examine in what ways urban mutual support networks are affected by a scarce water supply. The topic is timely and important. The theoretical perspective for the research comes from economic/ecological anthropology. It is inspired by studies of reciprocity and conflict theory. Note, however, that there is a wide literature on Andean reciprocity that is only touched upon in the proposal—much of it, though based in rural 'traditional' communities might nonetheless be of use for understanding reciprocity among migrants to the city. The researcher has chosen five 'major kinds of ties' that are involved in mutual support networks, and these may in fact be borne out. But I hope the researcher will use participant observation to first test this. These five do not take into account other possible reciprocal ties that migrants might use. For instance, the category of 'neighbors,' especially in the absence of ayllu membership, may be important in this barrio, and would be worth examining. Also, classic Andean forms of reciprocity such as ayni (performed variously from place to place) may also be active in some guise in Cochabamba's barrios. Also forms of 'ayuda' bind people together, or is it certain social units that provide ayuda? The project proposed here would offer a wonderful perspective by additionally taking into consideration some of the rural forms of reciprocity, asking informants to list them and comment on them, and thus providing a comparative angle. The obvious counterpart in the countryside is water distribution for irrigation and there are numerous studies here (e.g., Gelles, Gose, Guillet, Isbell, Sherbondy, Sikkink) that discuss the conflict and cooperation involved in this event, and would serve as a counterpoint to the study proposed here. Also I hope the researcher will work towards a broader bibliography of studies from Bolivia and specifically Cochabamba (such as Albro, Dandler, Larson, Paulson) in which to contextualize the results of the study. (Obviously from my ratings I think this is a strong proposal; it's also a topic of interest to me which is why I offer the suggestions I do.)

The researcher has an excellent background and the necessary skills for undertaking this project. Her anthropological training is exemplary. She has not only been trained in anthropological methodology but has managed data collection and analysis for several projects. The analysis section of the current proposal evidences this. The researcher has also undertaken independent research projects in Mexico and Bolivia, and therefore has the fieldwork and language skills required for the project.

The methodology section is particularly strong. The proposal is based on a clear and reasonable research plan. The research will test a number of hypotheses using interviews of key informants, measurement of water availability, household interviews and observation, an experimental game, and participant observation. Throughout the process the researcher will build on current available data and work with NGOs active in this area. Data analysis will include constructing an ordinal measurement of water use, and analyzing interactions among households, as well as the results of the game. Quantitative data will be analyzed using inferential statistics: t-tests and ANOVA will facilitate this. The researcher addresses the issue of the project's social salience in a clear manner. The researcher plans to hire and train a Bolivian student in the methodology of the project and disseminate the results of the study to three local NGOs. These efforts are aimed at both contributing to the success of future water delivery projects, and to indicating 'possible avenues for conflict prevention in marginal urban communities.'

REVIEW #2

PROPOSAL NO.: 0314395

INSTITUTION: University of Florida

NSF PROGRAM: CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Bernard, H. Russell

TITLE: Dissertation Research: The Effects of Water Scarcity on Reciprocity and Sociability in Bolivia

RATING: Multiple Rating: (Excellent/Very Good)

REVIEW:

What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?

What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?

Summary Statement

This proposal deals with conflicts over water shortages in Bolivia. The purpose of the research is to better understand how conflicts develop in water-scarce regions, and to outline the social and economic factors that mediate cooperation and conflict. The research will be conducted in Villa Israel, near Cochabamba, Bolivia. The objectives of the research are to document the incidence of water scarcity, to determine how water scarcity affects the frequency and quality of reciprocal exchanges between households, to determine how water scarcity affects social interactions between households, and to evaluate community norms for engaging in or withdrawing from reciprocal exchange relationships.

A number of hypotheses are outlined, perhaps too many to be accomplished in the scope of the research agenda. For example hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 4 are simply flip sides of the same coin. Moreover hypotheses 5 and 6 are reciprocal suppositions.

Nevertheless, the research plan is clearly outlined, including the sampling frame and the methodology by which data will be collected. A major strength of the proposal is the clarity of the sampling pattern for in-depth interviews. The proposal also calls for use of an experimental game to study economic behaviors, analogous to research that has been conducted in fifteen small-scale societies. This game will test trust and reciprocity among participants. The intellectual merit and broader impacts of the research are clearly spelled out. The only other criticism would be a general failure of the investigators to situate the research questions within a larger political economic context. For example why are there water shortages to begin with? What is the role of the state in determining the availability of water? These and other macro-level questions may be of interest as the research is undertaken.

REVIEW #3

PROPOSAL NO.: 0314395

INSTITUTION: University of Florida

NSF PROGRAM: CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Bernard, H. Russell

TITLE: Dissertation Research: The Effects of Water Scarcity on Reciprocity and Sociability in Bolivia

RATING: Very Good

REVIEW:

What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?

What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?

Summary Statement

Working within the theoretical perspective that increase in scarcity of resources reduces cooperative ties within communities, the proposal aims to test the proposition that in Villa Isreal, a barrio of Cochabamba, Bolivia, severe water shortages erode reciprocal exchange and social relationships.

This is a very strong and well organized proposal. The Co-PI lists five clear research objectives that delineate aspects of the scarcity-erosion proposal, and in addition, 10 specific hypotheses are proposed, each stated clearly in regard to operationalization and measurement of variables. In order to generate data to test the hypotheses, a two-stage research plan is proposed. A purposive sample of 60 households will be chosen, primarily for development of test protocols, mainly for the creation of a water scale. The measure will be designed as a Guttman scale. During phase two, in-depth interviews will be conducted with key informants, and four interviews will be conducted at each household.

Data analysis will consist of coding the interviews and using inferential statistics to measure the relationships among social variables and water scarcity. ANOVA and repeated applications of ANOVA will be used for analysis of the data.

The only weakness of any consequence in the proposal is that virtually no attention is given as to how the coding will proceed. What does the Co-PI anticipate that the codes will be, i.e., what will be coded for? How will the codes relate to the methods? To the theoretical perspectives? If that had been clearer, the recommendation would be for a '5', but as it is, the recommendation is a '4', Very Good.