PANEL SUMMARY:
The Cultural Anthropology Senior Advisory Panel met on April 14 & 15, 2011, in Room 970, Stafford I, at the National Science Foundation. The panel reviewed 73 of the 74 Senior proposals being considered by the Cultural Anthropology Program this cycle. Per Program policy, the 74th proposal is being reviewed by external review only because the PI is a member of the panel. Proposals included: 10 collaborative proposals (5 projects), 9 workshop and training proposals, and 54 regular senior proposals.

Proposals received at least 3 reviews. Reviewers were instructed to use NSF’s merit criteria regarding both intellectual merit and broader impacts, as articulated in the Grant Proposal Guide (NSF 11-01). Written reviews were made available to panelists prior to the panel meeting. On the basis of written reviews and the discussion of the proposals that transpired during the panel meeting, the Cultural Anthropology Senior Advisory Panel made the following recommendations regarding program support for each proposal. (Please note that the panel only makes recommendations, not final funding decisions.)

- Group 1, Competitive high: 7 proposals (6 projects)
- Group 2, Competitive medium: 12 proposals (11 projects)
- Group 3, Competitive low: 8 proposals
- Group 4, Decline, revise and resubmit: 17 proposals (15 projects)
- Group 5, Decline, needs significant work: 29 proposals (28 projects)

Depending on budgetary constraints and the willingness and ability of other programs to participate in joint funding of meritorious proposals, the Cultural Anthropology Program anticipates recommending funding for approximately 10-15 per cent of the Cultural Anthropology Senior Grant proposals during the Spring review cycle.

Panel Summary

CRITERION: INTELLECTUAL MERIT
The project seeks to test a series of hypotheses generated from agent based models about culture change and culture contact, specifically whether norms and ethnic markers change when low-status indigenous Machiguenga come into contact with high status Mestizo.

How is the research significant?

The research operationalizes and tests theory from cultural evolution and interethnic interactions, theory that has received inadequate previous empirical attention.

Are there particular strengths or weaknesses?
The panel recognized a significant strength of this proposal: the hypotheses are well developed, with clear links to theory. Testing these hypotheses is likely to generate interesting knowledge.

The fundamental weakness of this proposal is methodological. The PI does not seem to have much previous ethnographic research experience. It is unclear whether and how the norms and markers will be experienced and recorded. For example, the PI says that he will learn norms as he is rewarded and sanctioned as a junior member of the society. To an experienced ethnographers this sounds a bit naive, for as an outsider the PI will not be held to the same cultural standards as an insider; indeed, the PI may interact much as Mestizo do. Learning Machiguenga language is not easy, and there is no discussion for how the language will be learned; learning from ethnographic experience is also challenging. There is no discussion of whether the PI has been in touch with the Machiguenga Indigenous Federation or how this federation will be included in the proposal.

It is unclear what the role of the "advisory committee" is on this project; how would they compensate for shortcomings in the PI's expertise/training?

Is research potentially transformative?
This project could produce some interesting findings, but perhaps not transformative.

CRITERION: BROADER IMPACTS

What Are the Broader Impacts of the Proposed Research?
The hope is that research of this sort could help us to understand how to mediate cultural encounters and inter-ethnic conflict. A grad student would be trained. The PI would teach English to Machiguenga.

How Can the Broader Impacts Be Improved?

DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN:
The data management plan is appropriate to the research.

SYNTHESIS OF PANEL COMMENTS
The panel encourages a resubmission. In the resubmission the PI should either discuss explicitly the role of the Advisory committee to compensate for shortcomings in the PI's experience and training. Or better yet, we recommend that the PI consider adding a cultural anthropologist to the project.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION (Check one)

The panel recommendation is:
___Highly Competitive
___Competitive, Medium
___Competitive, Low
_X_Not Competitive: Decline: Encourage revision & resubmission
Not Competitive: Decline: Considerable work needed

The summary was read by/to the panel and the panel concurred that the summary accurately reflects the panel discussion.

PO Note: The proposal received two E ratings by reviewers who emphasized the formal construction and significance of the hypotheses and their formal testing and did not note the problems with conceptual content, problematic fieldwork skills and experience, limited language capacity and insufficient demonstration of statistical skills. During the panel discussion, these issues were discussed and the panelists all agreed to the proposal placement and recommendation for revision and resubmission.

Panel Recommendation: Not Competitive: Revise/Resubmit

Panel Recommendation Key:
Now Comp D: Not Competitive: Extensive Work Needed, Not Comp R: Not Competitive: Revise/Resubmit,
Low: Competitive: Low Priority, Mid: Competitive: Mid Priority, High: Competitive: High Priority
Proposal ID: 1123469  
Principal Investigator(s): Bunce, John

Summary of project:

The general objective of this 25-month study is to address the question: How do patterns of interaction among people of different ethnicities relate to the actual and perceived distributions of ethnic-typical norms of behavior and symbolic markers across an ethnic boundary? The study population consists of the Mestizo and minority indigenous Matsigenka ethnic groups in lowland forests along the Manu River in southeastern Peru.

Below is a summary of the panel's discussion.

Intellectual Merit:

Strengths: This is a fascinating proposal and a great opportunity to gather unique data regarding cultural contact between an indigenous tribe and a more dominant cultural group. It mixes social psychological theory regarding norm transmission with the methods of cultural anthropology. The question is timely and important.

Weaknesses: The PI does not seem well-suited to conduct this research, given his training. He does not appear to be trained in the methods of cultural anthropology or social psychology, nor in the statistical skills to conduct the planned analyses. If he could demonstrate that he had developed the necessary skills, the proposal would be stronger.

Broader Impacts:

Strengths: The work could provide interesting data regarding social psychological theory in a unique setting. The PI's plan to teach English in the community was also noteworthy. The training of a graduate student was also mentioned.
Weaknesses: None were noted.

Data Management Plan: A data-management plan was provided.

Panel’s Conclusion and Ranking:

Based on insufficient evidence that the PI has the necessary skills (both methodological and statistical) to conduct this project, the panel judged the proposal to be not competitive.

Please indicate the panel’s final rating of this proposal:

___ A (highly competitive)
___ B (competitive)
___ C (not competitive ? revision encouraged)
X___ D (not competitive)

Note: The summary was read by/to the panel and the panel concurred that the summary accurately reflects the panel discussion.

PANEL RECOMMENDATION: Not Competitive
PANEL RECOMMENDATION KEY:
; D: Not Competitive, C: Not Competitive - revision encouraged, B: Competitive, A: Highly competitive