

Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences

Student Proposal Cover Page

Applicant Information

Applicant Name: Yu-Ju Chien Date: 2/18/2008
Project Title: The Role of Intergovernmental Organizations in the Production of Scientific Knowledge on Avian Influenza
Department: Sociology College: College of Liberal Arts
Home address: 2055 Knapp Avenue E4 City & State: Saint Paul, MN Zip: 55108
Faculty advisor name: Joachim Savelsberg Email: savelsbg@atlas.socsci.umn.edu Not applicable
Dept. Head's name: Christopher Uggen Dept. Head's email: uggen@atlas.socsci.umn.edu
Dean's name: James A. Parente, Jr (Interim Dean) Dean's email: paren001@umn.edu

How did you hear about this funding opportunity? Via the OIP Website.

Funding

Amount of funding requested: \$6,653

Funding justification: [a clear statement of what you will use the funds for without going into budget details]

For the proposed fieldwork, I am seeking funding for my travel to Europe for 6 weeks during the summer of 2008. I will collect first-hand data at the headquarters of OIE, WHO and FAO in Paris, Geneva, and Rome. I intend to use the funds for salary, transportation and living costs. My fieldwork in Europe includes collecting archival data on avian flu reports in the organizations' libraries, interviewing key officials and scientists, and collecting information on additional informants.

Approvals

Check all appropriate approvals required for your proposal. Approvals must be obtained prior to receipt of funding. If you have applied for approval but have not yet received it, indicate that below.

IRB Date submitted: 02/16/2007 Number: 0702E02561
 IACUC Date submitted: _____ Number: _____
 Other Explain: _____

For Use by the Consortium Office

- The proposal is 1000 words or less excluding budget, biographies, references and citations.
 The proposal includes a work plan with a specific timeline using months or quarters to identify work to be done and completion dates.
- The proposal includes a 1-2 paragraph biography of the applicant and all co-investigators.
 The budget form is complete including the funds sought for this project, other pending applications for this project, and the amount/source of matching or other funds.
- The applicant's faculty advisor is copied on the application email. Professional students w/o advisors check NA.
- All necessary approvals are pending or received.

Project Title: The Role of Intergovernmental Organizations in the Production of Scientific Knowledge on Avian Influenza

The outbreak of avian influenza since 1997 has become a severe threat to human health, agricultural sustainability and food supplies. To prevent a global pandemic, UN affiliated organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) have actively coordinated scientific research endeavors and proposed global preparedness and response plans. As the most authoritative sources of information on avian flu, they provide knowledge and recommend policies to the global society.

However, our understanding of avian flu is limited today. The FAO acknowledges in its technical report that some knowledge gaps still need to be bridged, such as risk factors, transmission factors and the relative contribution of trade versus wild birds¹. Some official recommendations were criticized for failing to consider how commercial farms contribute to the spread of the virus². Due to the novelty and mutation capacity of avian flu viruses, these UN-affiliated agencies have to provide immediate response to control a possible global epidemic, even before scientists and technical experts fully understand its transmission mechanisms.

My research questions are: Through what processes do intergovernmental organizations filter various perspectives and achieve policy recommendations? Why do these organizations prioritize certain pieces of information while paying less attention to others? What environmental and intra-organizational conditions influence the knowledge production process? By exploring these questions, I attempt to understand the mechanisms through which organizations not only process, but also create, the understanding of an emerging disease that is endangering global public health.

Previous organization studies demonstrate that organizational judgments are always made with imperfect knowledge, and an organization's perspective may be influenced by its environment, internal characteristics and routines (Eden, 2004; Vaughn, 1996)³. The fact that avian influenza knowledge and policies are made in a global society makes the organizational mechanisms more complicated. First, these UN agencies are embedded in a larger environment where other actors seek to influence the knowledge of avian flu, including

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Organization for Animal Health, and World Health Organization. 2007. "Technical Workshop on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and Human H5N1 Infection. Final Report 2 August 2007." Retrieved December 15, 2007 (<http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/232786/ah671e.pdf>)

² Davis, Mike. 2005. *The Monster at Our Door: The Global Threat of Avian Flu*. New York: The New Press. Greger, Michael. 2006. *Bird Flu: A Virus of Our Own Hatching*. New York: Lantern Books. Mercola, Joseph. 2006. *The Great Bird Flu Hoax: The Truth They Don't Want You to Know About the Next Big Pandemic*. Thomas Nelson. Tenpenny, Sherri J. 2006. *Fowl! Bird Flu: It's Not What You Think*. Yreka: Insight Publishing.

³ Eden, Lynn. 2004. *Whole World on Fire: Organization, Knowledge, and Nuclear Weapons Devastation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Vaughn, Diane. 1996. *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risk Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NACA*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

external scientific communities, governments, private pharmaceutical companies, and pro-animal rights and sustainable agriculture NGOs. Second, because the virus infects both humans and animals, scientists from various disciplines, such as virologists, microbiologists, epidemiologists, veterinarians, public health experts and economists, all take part in the knowledge production process. Each discipline has its own focus and perspective. Therefore, the processes through which scientific knowledge is filtered and policies are made become more complicated.

By using in-depth interviews and archival analysis, I will investigate three questions. First, what external and internal factors influence knowledge production within these organizations? Second, how are organizations shaping the content and hierarchy of knowledge on avian influenza? Third, what is the relationship between knowledge and policies? This research will contribute to our understanding about how organizations construct knowledge and perceptions, when dealing with an emerging disease.

Innovative Contributions

My research will provide innovative contributions to interdisciplinary research on public health, environment and life science. It invokes sociological, historical, legal, organizational studies and public policy questions. As an infectious disease that contaminates both humans and animals, avian influenza has not only cost hundreds of human lives, but the lives of billions of poultry. Policies on avian flu, too, affect not only public health but also animal welfare and farming practices. The knowledge and policies provided by intergovernmental organizations influence countries, communities and citizens around the world in different ways, whether rich or poor. Controversies over sharing of virus strains and the role of commercial farms intensify the tension between the Global North and South. By studying the global policies regarding avian influenza, my research will illuminate the relationship between scientific knowledge and existing social order. In addition, it will clarify how science and technology carry different consequences across sectors and cultures.

In addition, my research contributes to a new and exciting research field of organizational knowledge and science and technology studies. Studies by Eden, Vaughan and other sociologists of organizations have demonstrated how formal organizations, such as the U.S Air Force and NASA, shape their own ways of knowing and sometimes create dangerous decision outcomes. In line with such pathbreaking work, my project draws research attention to the organization as a mediating link between macro-level structure and micro-level interaction. It will clarify how intergovernmental organizations serve as causal mechanisms that underpin the co-production of knowledge and public policy. Practically, my research may help policy makers to incorporate ecological soundness and animal welfare concerns, developing more comprehensive policies on disease control in the future.

Research Timeline

So far, I have established the theoretical frame, and collected official documents, lists of organizations' activities and scientific reports on avian flu. I have also established first contacts with key actors. For the proposed preliminary fieldwork, I aim to collect first-hand data at the headquarters of OIE, WHO and FAO in Paris, Geneva, and Rome. My timeline for the research is as follows:

Now through late May: networking and developing an interview guide

I have contacted several key officials of the WHO, FAO and OIE. As of now Margarita Riela, the Assistant to the World Fund Coordinator of the OIE, has agreed to provide me assistance to arrange interviews with key informants in advance. Keiji Fukuda, WHO's Global Influenza Programme coordinator, agreed to be interviewed and to introduce me to relevant experts in his organization. Before traveling to Europe, I will keep networking with organizational administrators to arrange more interview opportunities. Furthermore, I will develop my interview guide to ascertain issues and questions to be addressed in my interviews.

June to July: Six-week travel to Europe (France, Switzerland, and Italy)

I plan to visit Europe to conduct in-depth interviews with researchers and key professionals identified in the previous phase. I will also collect archival data on avian flu studies, relevant policies and internal data in the WHO, OIE and FAO libraries.

August to October: Analysis and Wrap-up

Upon returning to Minnesota, I will transcribe interviews and analyze the data. In addition, I aim to begin preparing a paper for publication, which would further provide the basis for my dissertation.

Budget proposal:

Project Title: The Role of Intergovernmental Organizations in the Production of Scientific Knowledge on Avian Influenza

Instructions: add rows for multiple personnel.		Requested funding	Matching/other funding	
		Amount	Amount	Source
Category	Description & justification			
Personnel <i>Explain what hourly wage & fringe are based on - departmental, community or other rate?</i>	Salary = 30 hrs x 15 hrly wage x 10 weeks	4,500		
	Fringe rate			
	What work will this person do? I will collect archival data and conduct interviews at headquarters of the WHO, OIE and FAO			
	Subtotal	4,500		
Supplies & Services	Research-related reimbursable expenses: copying costs, telephone cards, internet access...etc.	300		
Travel <i>Travel costs must include a description of the purpose of the travel, start and stop dates of travel, transportation costs, housing costs, and allowable per diem (use University rates found at http://travel/umn.edu).</i>	1. Transportation: \$1,853 - Roundtrip flight from MSP to Paris: \$1,379 (Expedia.com) - 3 country rail pass: \$474 (Railpass.com) 2. allowance per diem \$100/day *42 =\$4,200 3. Schengen Visa application fee: \$88	1,853	4,288	The Graduate School at UMN/ or the Social Science Research Council.
	Subtotal research supplies, equipment, travel, other	2,153		
TOTAL BUDGET		6,653	4,288	

I am also seeking funding for this project from the following sources (both applications are pending):

1. Thesis Research Grant from the Graduate School at the University of Minnesota.
2. Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship (DPDF) from the Social Science Research Council.

If one of these funds is awarded, it will provide additional money to cover the amount of matching funds.

Biography of the applicant (Yu-Ju Chien)

My dedication to the value of nature and social justice drives me to my current research interests in sociology. My pre-doctorial education was completed in Taiwan. I double majored in psychology and sociology as an undergraduate, and accomplished my master's degree in sociology at the National Taiwan University (NTU) in Taiwan. Training in both human and natural science prepares me to think in interdisciplinary perspectives. My experience in public services and volunteering also fostered my commitment for social and environmental justice. Since my undergraduate years, I have actively volunteered for various NGOs and projects, such as joining the Labor-Affairs-Research Club, organizing summer camps and offering academic tutoring for aboriginal children, becoming a member of a NGO striving for women's rights, editing a women's e-newsletter, and organizing "Buy Nothing Day" activities in Taiwan. Corresponding with my volunteering experience, I was attracted to Gender Studies, Economic Sociology, Globalization Studies and Organization Studies in my undergraduate years.

Being aware of how human activities profoundly influence our external environment and other creatures, my interests are turning toward issues of health policy, science and technology studies, and animal rights. My Master's thesis "The Commodification of Pets" was a historical analysis of the development of dog markets in Taiwan since the 1950s. It demonstrates how a new market was created through cultural transformations, social interactions and the production of new knowledge and value systems. The thesis contributes not only to sociological insights, but also to social and ethical consideration regarding the pet industry. After earning my M.A. in 2002, I worked as a journalist for a famous magazine "Living Psychology" in Taipei. The magazine aims at helping people lead meaningful, energetic and balanced lives. This experience enhanced my sensibility and broadened my perspectives in analyzing social issues. Driven by my passion to academic studies, I have been pursuing my Ph.D. degree in Sociology at the University of Minnesota since the year 2005. I am committed to develop excellent sociological research that incorporates interdisciplinary perspectives. By studying the production of knowledge and policies on avian flu in my dissertation research, I hope my work will contribute to the development of more comprehensive policies that advance not only human health but also animal rights and eco-friendly farming practices.