

**2012 Summer Research Program in
Social Sciences
At Wellesley College

Faculty Projects**

Anthropology Department

Anastasia Karakasidou, Department of Anthropology

Medical anthropologists have long been fascinated with the doctor-patient encounter in medical clinical practice. When it comes to cancer, this dual relationship takes new dimensions. Cancer is considered to be 'an enemy within' that needs to be fought, transforming the human body into a battleground. The 'war' against cancer was declared by President Nixon, but each individual patient fights his/her own battle in the cancer clinic. This project is anthropological/ethnographic in its methodology and will require research to be conducted in an oncology clinic in the Boston area. The student will observe the doctor-patient encounters as they negotiate the individual 'war' against the disease. The student will also participate in the cancer 'ward' and volunteer services to patients undergoing treatment. Developing an intimate rapport with those afflicted by the 'dread' disease will be crucial to the project. Only through personal intimate relations would the student be able to bring the voices of the sufferers to the frontier of medical anthropology and the genre of illness narratives

Deborah Matzner, Department of Anthropology

This summer, I will be conducting research investigating the role that the relationship between domestic servants ("maids") and their employers plays in upper class discourse in India today. Since globalization and liberalization have increased the gap between the "servant class" and the "employer class" in India, while reducing the social safety net for the former, and since domestic workers' unions have sprung up around the country, the institution of domestic servitude has become a key topic of anxiety and self-reflection for members of the intellectual middle and upper classes. This discursive production, I hypothesize, involves ongoing ambivalences upper classes feel with the eclipsing of ideologies of national development for consumerist ones that attend globalization, and point to the fact that this eclipsing is not nearly as complete as many take it to be. My summer researcher will conduct work vital to my ongoing ethnographic and analytical project, collecting scholarly work on the maid/employer relationship across cultural contexts, as well as clippings from Indian popular newspapers, magazines, films and editorials on the topic. (Knowledge of Indian languages is not a necessity, as I anticipate focusing primarily on the English-language press and other sources available in English editions). After collecting, charting and analyzing this discourse, she will then assist me in putting it into conversation with my ethnographic observations from ongoing fieldwork I have conducted and continue to conduct in Mumbai, India. This research experience will introduce the student to research methods in the social sciences, as well as a fascinating realm of public debate that illuminates class relations and anxieties in contemporary India.

Economics Department

Pinar Keskin, Department of Economics

My research primarily focuses on the determinants, consequences, and economic responses to

groundwater scarcity. This summer I plan on analyzing recently acquired datasets to investigate the following policy-relevant questions: (1) what is the value of groundwater access in agricultural production, and how does this differ under different climate scenarios? How quickly, and by how much, does the agricultural sector adjust to changes in water availability? (2) How do the linkages between industry and agriculture manifest in the presence of increased industrial activity? (3) What role do demographics and socioeconomic status (including ethnic identity) play in determining access to water resources? Can well-designed policy interventions, such as gender or caste quotas, facilitate disadvantaged groups' access to public water resources?

Therefore, I am willing to supervise students interested in studying the causes and consequences of differential water access in a variety of geographical and historical settings, ranging from early twentieth century United States to contemporary India. My research is entirely data-driven, and all these projects will increase students' ability to conduct empirical work. In addition, these projects will involve the use of software such as ArcGis, Excel and Stata. Students with some familiarity with Stata (taught in Econ 203) would be a good match for these projects.

Finally, there is some potential for continuing work during the academic year depending on skills, interest, and availability. To be considered, please email me a brief statement of interest and qualifications (500 words max) and an unofficial transcript.

Gauri Kartini Shastry, Department of Economics

My research is in development economics, with a focus on savings, health and education. One of my primary research interests relates to how people make financial decisions. I am working on two projects looking at financial decision-making in the US and two field projects on the savings behavior of migrants in developing countries. For example, I am studying the impact of financial training workshops on the financial decisions of migrant mineworkers in South Africa and the impact of similar workshops on the financial decisions of female migrant workers in Singapore.

This summer, I am interesting in supervising a research project on financial literacy. While there is a well-documented correlation between financial literacy and good financial outcomes, there is little evidence that this relationship is causal. There are several projects I am interested in supervising. For example, one study found suggestive evidence that financial literacy courses taught in high school improved savings behavior but only for students whose parents were not 'financially savvy.' We can test this hypothesis more fully using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Summer tasks would involve preparing the data, doing preliminary analysis and drafting a report summarizing the findings. Students who are familiar with Stata (taught in Economics 203), willing to learn more Stata, and have good communication skills are encouraged to apply. To be considered, please email me a brief statement of interest and qualifications (300 words max) and an unofficial transcript.

Environmental Studies Program

Beth DeSombre, Environmental Studies Program

Why Good People Do Environmentally-Bad Things

I am beginning a new project that aggregates and evaluates the social science data for why people act the way they do in ways that have environmentally problematic consequences. We will look at such things as the role of externalities, issue structure, uncertainty and risk, prospect theory, discount rates, and collective action problems, to ascertain the role they play in people's environmentally-related behavior. This project is premised on the notion that there are good

reasons behind behavior people exhibit that has negative environmental implications and that the key to figuring out how to change this behavior is to understand the structural and conceptual factors that lead people to behave as they do. We will also begin to look at the solutions that are suggested by these causes. Because this is the very beginning of a book project, the student will do a lot of gathering, reading, and aggregating the literature from a wide variety of social science disciplines (political science, economics, psychology, sociology) that speaks to these questions. The most appropriate student for this project will have taken ES/POL2-214 (or possibly Econ 228).

Jay Turner, Environmental Studies Program

From the Chevy Volt to the iPhone: Batteries, Technology, and Environmental Sustainability

The new Chevrolet Volt, your cell phone, and some solar and wind farms all share one thing in common: they rely on lithium-ion batteries. As environmentalists, engineers, and politicians work to promote a more sustainable future that is less carbon-intensive, many of the key technologies they tout are highly dependent on batteries. Yet little attention has been given to the environmental and social consequences of the battery industry. This summer, the focus of my research will be on the structure of the lithium-ion battery industry: how is it organized, which natural resources it draws on, how has it been affected by recent energy and economic policies (the Obama administration has made expanding production of such batteries a centerpiece of its domestic energy agenda), and the industrial ecology of batteries (from manufacture to disposal). Completing this project will involve research into the structure of the industry (using trade journals and government data), historical research on origins and implementation of relevant policies, and quantitative analysis of material flows and international trade data. (Note, no knowledge of electrochemistry is required, though you'll learn some along the way!)

Political Science Department

Hahrie Han, Department of Political Science

Nets and Engines of Activism: The Role of Civic Organizations in Mobilizing Political Activism

This project examines the role that membership-based civic organizations (organizations like the Sierra Club, the NRA, AARP, and the Christian Coalition) play in motivating people to higher levels of political activism. How do these organizations transform new members into committed activists? Millions of Americans join these kinds of organizations each year. Sometimes, they do nothing but join. Other times, they take one or two actions and then stop. Then, there are still others who go on to become committed activists, constantly engaging in activism on behalf of the organization. What explains these differences? Specifically, what organizational factors are most important in determining who is likely to become a committed activist and who is not? The project focuses particularly on organizations working in environmental and health politics.

Students working with me will primarily work on coding field notes about different organizations and conducting and transcribing interviews with activists. I'd be especially interested in working with students may want to use some of the data we gather for their own independent research projects. Experience with interviewing, transcribing and quantitative data is a plus, as is an interest in environmental and health politics. Students must be thorough, meticulous, and attentive to deadlines. In addition, students should be able and willing to work independently.

Department of Psychology

Angela Bahns, Department of Psychology

My research focuses on the justification of prejudice and discrimination. Using experimental methods, my research tests the hypothesis that negative affect drives the cognitive and behavioral components of prejudice, including perception of threat, stereotypes, and behavioral responses. The goal of this research is to better understand how and when cognitive and behavioral components of prejudice develop—information that is critical to reducing prejudice and improving intergroup relations. This summer I will be working on extending this research to focus on how specific emotions involved in prejudice are related to specific kinds of threat perception. In particular, my goal is to develop methods of eliciting specific emotions in the lab, such as using film clips to evoke feelings of disgust or fear.

My second line of research focuses on how social ecological factors like population size and diversity and cultural beliefs about relationships constrain who people become friends with. My past work has shown that larger and more diverse settings create more opportunity to form relationships with people who are very much like us, but smaller and less diverse settings offer less opportunity to find similar friends. This summer I hope to continue this research with similar field studies at Wellesley College and in Boston. The method involves approaching pairs of people interacting in public spaces and asking them to complete a short questionnaire. We measure pair similarity across a variety of attitudes and behaviors, to get a picture of the overall similarity of relationship pairs.

Julie K. Norem, Department of Psychology

The Impostor Phenomenon

This summer project will involve helping to coordinate data analysis and literature searches to support publication of several studies on the impostor phenomenon. The impostor phenomenon refers to a constellation of beliefs: individuals who feel that their achievements are due to luck or error, that other people see them as more competent than they are, and that they are at perpetual risk of being “discovered” as fakes are considered impostors. We will be analyzing eight studies worth of data on this phenomenon, and compiling a bibliography of related research, as part of planning and writing research articles on this topic. Data include surveys, experiments, and qualitative analyses. Prior experience with SPSS is highly desirable, but no specific statistical knowledge or experience is necessary.

Students working on the project will first read background literature to acquaint themselves with work on this phenomenon. Then, we will go through each of the studies that my lab has conducted thus far, to review completed analyses and plan what remains to be done. We have four experiments on self-recognition, and four field studies of students at various colleges, all of which include impostor data. After completing analysis of each study, we will organize the results for publication, and update our review of the literature. In addition to learning about the impostor phenomenon itself, students will gain data analysis and literature search experience, as well as learning about the process by which empirical data is collected and submitted for publication in psychology.

Jennie Pyers, Department of Psychology

This summer we will work on one of two different projects on language development depending on the research student's interests and skills. The first project examines typically hearing

children's ability to learn ASL signs for different verbs. Some signs depict how a human handles an object; for example, the sign for HAMMER shows how you hold and move the hammer, while other signs have a more arbitrary relationship to their referent. We will investigate whether children learn one type of sign more easily than the other. *Because this project involves work with children, experience with children is necessary.*

A second project in which a student can become involved investigates the well-documented issue that bilinguals have in remembering words: Bilinguals have many more "tip-of-the-tongue" experiences than monolinguals. We will explore whether age of exposure to a second language affects word retrieval. That is are bilinguals who are exposed to their languages before the age of five better able to retrieve words than bilinguals who are exposed to their languages between age five and eight. *Because this project involves work with bilinguals, experience as a fluent bilingual is necessary. Spanish-English bilinguals are especially welcome to apply.*

The student will learn to administer, videotape, and code language comprehension tasks, as well as conduct basic statistical analyses. She will also help find reference material relevant to the design and write up of this study. The ideal student should be willing to learn new computer (Mac) and video skills.

Paul Wink, Department of Psychology

Religion, spirituality, and social attitudes and everyday functioning among college students

In the past few decades, the American religious landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation. Whereas prior to the 1960s most Americans identified with a traditional religious denomination, current survey data show a sharp increase in individuals who describe themselves as spiritual but not religious, or who report being agnostic. Nonetheless, significant numbers of Americans continue to believe in God and in other tenets of traditional Christianity even if they do not go to church, and many others mix belief in an impersonal God or in the cosmic force of nature with participation in traditional church rituals. In short, as several recent surveys demonstrate, contemporary American religion is highly diverse and fluid. During the summer of 2012, I intend to compare the patterns of religion and spirituality and their implications for social attitudes and everyday life using self-report questionnaires administered to a college population. In doing so, I hope to enhance the understanding of how varied religious beliefs and practices shape the lives of the millennial generation, the generation that is at the forefront of contemporary social and cultural change. The study will place a special emphasis on the relationship between religion, spirituality and wisdom. The data for this project have been collected at the University of New Hampshire and at St. Paul University in Ottawa.

Department of Sociology

Thomas Cushman, Sociology

Anti-Capitalist Thought

I am doing extensive research on the history and sociology of anti-capitalism. The aim of the research is to understand hostility toward capitalism and market systems. The research will examine writings from the 19th and 20th century, with specific focus on the US, as well as interview data from those who are active in anti-capitalist social movements, such as Occupy Wall Street. Students will spend the summer collecting and coding data from written sources, internet sites, and interviews. The student will learn how to form research questions based on

theoretical concepts from cognitive sociology and sociological theory more generally. The student will learn how to engage in what sociologists refer to as “the long interview”, with respondents in social movements. This is not an ideological project; it is a social science research project which aims to understand the cultural and emotional sources of hostility toward capitalism and free markets. As such, the ideal student for this research is someone who is critical, in true sociological fashion, of received conventional wisdoms about the market. The ideal student will have taken SOC 302, “Research Methods in the Social Sciences,” but this is not an absolute prerequisite.

Markella Rutherford, Sociology

Emotional Capital and Upward Mobility

Recent sociological research has highlighted the importance of cultural capital as a theoretical explanation for class reproduction. However, most of these studies have focused on extracurricular activities and educational attainment as operational measures of cultural capital. The role of emotions has remained a relatively undocumented feature of class cultures, and the relevance of emotions for understanding cultural capital have been little explored. Because the requirement of emotional competence has increasingly become a feature of professional and managerial occupations, sociologists need greater understanding of the role that emotional socialization in childhood plays in either discouraging or facilitating upward social mobility. My current research investigates the role of both cultural and emotional capital in upward mobility, paying careful attention to both parenting styles and social/emotional school curricula. My focus for this summer is on the ways that working-class and immigrant parents weigh childrearing choices as a means of fostering upward mobility for their children. Students may undertake summer projects involving either analysis of observational field notes or interviews with parents and teachers.

Wellesley Centers for Women

Wendy Wagner Robeson, Ed.D. Senior Research Scientist, Wellesley Centers for Women Work, Families and Children

Currently several research projects are being conducted under the umbrella of Work, Families and Children at the Wellesley Centers for Women. My focus is in child development (birth to age 8) and early education and care. One project is supporting low-income pre-kindergarten children’s literacy and school readiness skills through the implementation of a literacy curriculum combined with on-going professional development for their child care teachers. Another project is assessing the quality found in kindergarten through third grade classrooms in a large urban school district. In addition, I am working on a grant about child care subsidy use by low income families as well how families without subsidies handle their work and child care needs. Another project is focused on fathers’ increased participation in child rearing and involvement in their children’s lives. More research projects may begin if given funding. I am willing to supervise any research project a student wishes to complete involving any of the projects listed as well as on any topic in child development or early education and care. There are many data sets that can be explored and used in answering questions a student may have about all facets of child development, school readiness, quality of child care, family functioning, combining work and family and/or early education and care in general.