

**2015 Summer Research Program in  
Social Sciences  
At Wellesley College**

**Faculty Projects**

**Department of Economics**

**Pinar Keskin, Department of Economics**

I am an applied micro-economist focusing on public policy issues, with a particular emphasis on issues of gender, ethnicity and resource access in developing countries. This summer I, along with my coauthor, plan on analyzing recently acquired datasets to investigate the impacts of education on people's attitudes towards violence and the prevalence of domestic violence.

The existing literature documents a strong negative correlation between schooling and domestic violence. While this strong association holds even after controlling for individual background characteristics and community level variables, these estimates are likely to suffer from omitted-variable bias, since unobservables such as ability, socioeconomic status, or upbringing might affect both education and people's attitudes towards violence. Because an unobservable variable may underlie the education-violence relationship, one cannot answer the important policy question of whether there is a causal relationship between these two variables using standard methods. In our study, we will take advantage of an extension of compulsory schooling in Turkey in 1990s to estimate the causal effect of schooling on domestic violence, with a focus on violence against women and children.

This project is entirely data-driven, and it will increase students' ability to conduct empirical work. The bulk of the summer work will involve work with Excel and STATA, with some limited library/internet research. Students with a background in economics or computer programming, regardless of major, are encouraged to apply. However, a student with some familiarity with Stata (taught in Econ 203) would be an ideal match for the project.

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.

## **David L. Lindauer, Department of Economics**

*Economics of Development* (Norton) is a widely used textbook in development economics. I became a co-author for the 6<sup>th</sup> edition (2006) and served as lead author for the 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2013). I will begin work on revisions for the next edition during the coming summer. Development economics is a subject that never stands still. The world is constantly changing and a textbook tries its best to keep up. My project for the summer involves updating and revising chapters on poverty and inequality, population, education, and trade and development.

I would like to work with a student who has completed both principles courses in economics and has some background in statistics, preferably having completed Econ 103 and 203. You should also be interested in development economics. You should enjoy working with data and have facility using Excel and a familiarity with Stata. Your time will be devoted to generating the charts and tables on development outcomes that appear throughout the textbook, using data sets available from the World Bank and other agencies. You might also undertake literature reviews and will have the opportunity to pursue specific topics that engage you. In previous summers, Wellesley students have supported the research that helped to produce the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> editions. They all found the experience worthwhile and I hope your experience will be similar.

## **Julie Matthaei, Department of Economics**

This summer, I will be completing the first draft of a book project entitled, *From Inequality to Solidarity: Putting Heart Back into Economics*. The book analyzes the present economic historical conjuncture as a condition of potential paradigm shift from the inequality paradigm to the solidarity paradigm. The first part of the book focuses on the socio-historical construction of gender, race, class, and man/nature inequality, and on the solidarity processes which have been transforming and transcending them. The second part of the book critically examines the ways in which consumption, work, production, and investment are constructed in the inequality paradigm, and looks at the ways in which emergent solidarity economy practices and institutions are improving and evolving them. While the book is centered in economics, it is interdisciplinary and historical.

I am looking for a student research assistant to help me with various aspects of my research, such as creating diagrams to represent the conceptual framework of the book; creating timelines to illustrate key historical events and achievements of pro-equality movements; calculating summary historical statistics and creating graphs and tables on the level of race, gender, class, man/nature inequality; and locating, documenting and evaluating the prevalence of solidarity economy practices and institutions. Preference will be given to students who will have completed my Econ 243 class, "The Political Economy of Gender, Race, and Class," and who have also studied race, class, and gender in other social science and history classes.

**Seth Neumuller, Department of Economics**

I am a macroeconomist with research interests in consumer finance. I am currently exploring the ways in which aggregate macroeconomic shocks affect the ability of lenders to accurately forecast the credit risk of potential borrowers. This strand of my research agenda is motivated by the aftermath of the recent financial crisis during which time credit markets contracted sharply leaving many consumers with few options for smoothing their consumption in response to a job loss or wage cut.

I am looking for a student to work with me this summer as I analyze a new dataset that contains information pertaining to loan losses and interest rates on consumer debt at U.S. commercial banks. This project is data-driven, and therefore will allow the student to develop their ability to perform policy-relevant empirical analysis. The majority of the work will involve data manipulation and analysis in Microsoft Excel and STATA. Interested students with a background in economics, mathematics, or computer science, regardless of declared major, and familiarity with STATA (taught in Econ 203) are strongly encouraged to apply. Depending on the outcome of the analysis completed by the student this summer, there is the potential for continuing work on this project during the following academic year.

To apply, please e-mail me ([seth.neumuller@wellesley.edu](mailto:seth.neumuller@wellesley.edu)) a brief statement describing your interest in this project and relevant qualifications.

**Kyung Park, Department of Economics**

The project examines the effects of candidate race on voting behavior in political elections. Existing literature focuses largely on high-information elections (i.e. presidential, congressional, gubernatorial, or senatorial contests). This project will focus more on the role of racial heuristics in low-information elections (i.e. elections for railroad commissioners, district-level judges, school board commissioners, and etc.) The appeal of studying these types of elections is that voters typically have far less information on incumbent performance or ideology. In these elections, heuristics such as the candidate's party affiliation, gender, or race may play a heightened role in voting decisions. Candidate race is observed, albeit imperfectly, since the candidate's name appears on voting ballots, and names may provide a signal of racial or ethnic identity (Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004)). We will use data from historical elections from the state of Texas to explore the role of candidate race. The data includes county-level election results from every election from 1992 onward. The student will clean the data and then conduct empirical analysis. The researcher will use many of the econometric tools that she learned in Econ 203. The student will potentially have the opportunity to continue working on this project during the following school year.

**Gauri Shastry, Department of Economics**

My research is in development economics, with a focus on savings, health and education. One of my research interests relates to how people make financial decisions, both in the US and 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.

A second research interest relates to how people make decisions concerning their children's health and education. In one project, Prof. Keskin and I are studying the decision to breastfeed in Bangladesh and how it responded to a national information campaign regarding arsenic contamination in the drinking water. In another research project, I am evaluating a few school nutrition interventions in Orissa, India, that try to combat anemia; in one of them, the government distributed iron supplements to children through the school infrastructure and in the second, school meals are fortified with micronutrients that improve the absorption of iron.

Students working with me will either assist on one of the projects described above or a similar project. I am looking for a student who is familiar with Stata (taught in Economics 203), is willing to learn more Stata, and has good communication skills. 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**

I am working to complete a draft of a book project with the working title *Why Good People Do Bad Environmental Things*. The two chapters that remain incomplete are the one on values and social norms and the one on habit and standard operating procedures. Much of the book argues that incentives are key determinants of behavior or tools for changing behavior. But both social norms and habits have recently come to be seen as powerful determinants of action, and it is important to understand the conditions under which they contribute to problematic environmental behavior, or can be used as tools to create desired behavior. The student who works with me will work to find and evaluate literature pertaining to these topics, and also on broader commenting on and assistance in revising the entire book manuscript. Students with backgrounds across the social sciences and environmental studies will be qualified to work on this project.

## **Political Science Department**

### **Stacie Goddard, Department of Political Science**

My current research examines rising powers in international politics. At present I am completing a book manuscript on how great powers respond to rising powers in international politics. I am also working on an additional project that analyzes whether rising powers seek to integrate into existing international institutions, or whether they attempt to reform, transform, or even overthrow existing institutions in the international system.

Over the summer, I seek a student interested in working with me on either of these two projects. For example, one possible research project would be to examine how China justified its claims to contested islands, for example? How did it justify expanding its recent claims to air space, or other (possible) expansions of its sovereignty? In this case, a student should have the ability to conduct independent research on Chinese foreign policy, including a strong background in

international relations (POL3 221 is required; advanced IR courses are suggested), Chinese foreign policy, and ideally, fluency in Mandarin. A willingness to learn techniques of content analysis is a plus.

For the second project, I would be looking for a student able to compile and perhaps analyze a database on states' institutional position in world politics. This would involve entering and analyzing data involving diplomatic exchanges, treaties, and alliances, for example. Here a background in international relations (see above) as well as quantitative data analysis would be useful.

### **Marion Just, Department of Political Science**

#### *Research on Social Media*

I will have a busy research summer and would enjoy working with a student on my projects. The major commitment will be to complete coding of social media messages in the 2014 male/female Senate campaigns. We have already collected the Twitter, YouTube videos and Facebook posts for 20 campaigns. The coding will begin this spring and I anticipate that the analysis of the Twitter data will begin in by June. In addition, I would like to work with a student to contact and interview the – mostly young – people in charge of Twitter and Facebook at these Senate campaigns to better understand the process of producing campaign Tweets and posts. I plan to present a paper about the social media campaigns at the next American Political Science Association meetings.

In addition, two co-editors and I have received a contract with for a book about the use of Twitter in campaigns. The book has a very tight timeline since social media are a fast moving target. This volume will be the first to compare use of Twitter in elections around the world. We are expecting the chapters to be completed by June and I will need help both in preparing my own chapter on Twitter in the 2012 and the 2014 Senate campaigns and in researching and editing the other chapters for which I will be responsible.

I am happy to help a student assistant learn to code media messages, analyze data using SPSS, interview campaign staff, and edit manuscripts. All of these skills are transferable to the world beyond academe.

### **Psychology Department**

#### **Jonathan Cheek, Department of Psychology**

##### *Convergent and Discriminant Validity of Introversion scales*

I have been working on and off on my program of research about the many meanings of "introversion" since 1979. This work involves the psychometric analysis and conceptual probing of personality questionnaire items that have been included in scales purporting to assess aspects of introversion and related psychological constructs. During the 2015 Summer Research Program I will have a research student assist with extending the 2010-2014 survey research described in the poster abstract below by administering the measures of introversion to a new online sample

that will also include measures of happiness, subjective well-being, sexual adjustment, and enjoyment of various kinds of vocational and recreational activities:

Guilford demonstrated in the 1930s that the various attempts at transforming conceptualizations of Introversion-Extroversion by Jung and others into personality questionnaires were resulting in ambiguous multiple-factor scales. Proposed measurement models subdividing introversion into components resulted in heated but inconclusive debate, as exemplified by the exchange between Eysenck and Guilford in 1977. Carrigan (1960) argued that introversion was not effectively captured as a unitary construct, and pressure to clearly define introversion with a comprehensive conceptual and operational model continues (e.g., Block, 1995; 2010). The many meanings of introversion leave contemporary researchers with an unresolved dilemma: despite the persistent conceptual ambiguity and lack of a universally accepted measurement model, interest in the topic and demand for measures seems to be increasing (e.g., Laney, 2007). The purpose of the present research was to return to recommendations made by previous generations of psychologists such as Guilford and Carrigan; we identified contemporary personality measures that can be usefully organized into measurement domains that reflect coherent meanings of “introversion.” Nineteen scales administered to 225 Wellesley students were grouped by examination of intercorrelations and factor loadings into four domains of introversion: social (4 scales), thinking (5 scales), anxious (6 scales), and inhibited/restrained (4 scales). Correlations among factor scores representing these domains indicated moderate convergence among social, anxious, and inhibited/restrained introversion ( $r$ s averaging .50). Thinking introversion, however, did not correlate significantly with the other domains.

### **Julie Norem, Department of Psychology**

#### *Personality and Negative Affect Effects on Performance*

There is a growing body of research that explores how negative affect influences different kinds of social cognition and performance. In general, mild negative affect tends to lead to more detail-oriented cognitive processing. This kind of thinking can be advantageous in some contexts, and problematic in others. More specifically, there is research that suggests that negative affect can decrease stereotyping, increase memory accuracy, and decrease gullibility. I have spent years studying people who use a strategy called defensive pessimism, and have shown that it helps people manage their anxiety, and works by promoting concrete mental simulations that are similar to the descriptions of the detail-oriented thinking promoted by negative affect. Given those similarities, and given the typical defensive pessimist’s extensive experience with managing negative affect effectively, I want to explore whether defensive pessimism leads to the same cognitive and performance advantages that negative affect does.

Students working with me this summer will review the relevant literature on affect and defensive pessimism, and help in designing a series of studies to explore these relationships. We will run the studies using Mechanical Turk, which is a crowdsourcing research site, set up by Amazon. We will then focus on data analysis and writing up our results for publication.

## **Jennie Pyers, Department of Psychology**

The acquisition of language is a human universal; even under the most difficult environments children acquire communication systems. The current research in my lab examines the degree to which human language acquisition is shaped by human cognition. Are there some cognitive abilities that must be in place to learn a language? Do the cognitive abilities that shape language acquisition differ based on whether the language is spoken or signed? How do cognitive abilities affect the emergence of a new sign language? We have several possible projects to undertake this summer to address some of these questions. (1) We are examining how the lexicon of Nicaraguan Sign Language (NSL), an emerging sign language, has changed since its inception more than 30 years ago. (2) We are investigating the emergence of spatial prepositions such as *in*, *on*, and *under* in NSL and how the emergence of this vocabulary relates to spatial cognitive abilities of the NSL signers. (3) We are isolating which cognitive abilities support the learning and use of a sign language. (4) We are evaluating whether there are some types of signs/gestures that are more easily learned by children than other types of signs/gestures. The choice of project will be based on the interests and skills of the applicant. The ideal applicant will have some knowledge of Spanish (vocabulary) and/or American Sign Language, and will feel comfortable using a Mac and shooting and editing video. Some experience with computer programming is a plus.

## **Wellesley Centers for Women**

### **Erika Kates, Ph.D., Senior Research Scientist, Wellesley Centers for Women**

Many women's organizations support women's causes e.g., reproductive rights, combating violence against women, but few tackle the endemic neglect of women caught up in the criminal justice system. The proposed project is intended to fill in gap in our knowledge of the role women's organizations play in addressing the widespread neglect and over-incarceration of women – especially women of color – in the US. This is an opportunity for a student to explore and document the roles of US women's organization in advocating for justice-involved women and girls.

#### **Research tasks:**

1. Identifying 10-15 national, state and local women's organizations that have displayed an active interest in women and girls caught up in criminal justice agencies
2. Defining the political and educational, and personal activities that count as 'advocacy', e.g. organizing conferences, letter-writing campaigns, raising funds, and supporting legislation.
3. Creating a questionnaire that can be used to collect information through personal interviews and online surveys
4. Disseminating the surveys and conducting telephone and personal interviews
5. Summarizing the results

This work will supplement a study by a Wellesley College student in summer 2014, consisting of an analysis of task forces and commissions working on women's concerns in 20 states, as well as

an ongoing study of organizations working for social change, created and administered by (formerly) justice-involved women

The project supervisor is Erika Kates, Ph.D., senior researcher, the Wellesley Centers for Women, and founder of the Massachusetts Women's Justice Network.

**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 on child development (birth to age 8) and early education and care. One project is supporting quality improvement in child care centers serving children from low-income families through on-going professional development for their child care teachers. Another project involves families enrolling their children in kindergarten and increased family engagement through the Mind in the Making model. A third project is focused on children's language and literacy development. There are other on-going projects as well. 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.

**Rosanna Hertz, Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies**

*Unconventional Families: Donors, Donor sibling Networks and their Meaning.*

I am researching unconventional families, which have emerged as an outgrowth of advances in new reproductive technologies coupled with the purchasing of gametes and embryos. Today, because of the Internet, families who share the same donor can register online and find one another. These families are forming outside of mainstream social norms and often with no legal standing. This research explores what has happened as a result of these social and technological developments including what kinds of relationship are developing and how parents and children make sense of them.

The data includes indepth interviews with two-parent, one-parent (heterosexual & lesbian) and their children. There are also separate surveys on parents, offspring and donors that will provide background information.

Summer 2015: I am working with the transcriptions of approximately 90 families. We will be coding the data using hyperresearch. Goal is to draft analytical memos and one of the following chapters: (1) Chapter 1 is on the use of social media among donor sibling networks (how they use it, how it created connectedness and intimacy and how it might create a sense of belonging). (2) Chapter 2 is on how parents and children make sense of nature versus nurture. No one is really clear on what comes from whom (parents or donors). However, families often have crafted narratives about the traits and characteristics that come from an unknown donor versus each parent. How the donor's initial profile shapes this narrative is what we will also be examining.