

Baafra Abeberese, Economics

My research area is industrial development - empirical analyses of the behavior of firms in developing economies. My research focus is on analyzing the constraints faced by these firms. This summer, I plan to work on two projects. The first is related to infrastructure constraints. Despite the pervasiveness of power outages in developing countries, their impact on firms is a relatively understudied topic. This project will involve analyzing survey data we recently collected from Ghanaian firms to determine the magnitude and sources of firm productivity losses resulting from power outages.

The second project is related to credit constraints and will involve using Indonesian firm-level data to analyze the impact of collateral registries on credit access.

The ideal student should have an interest in development economics, be able to use Stata for tasks such as cleaning data and running simple regressions, and should have an interest in becoming more proficient in using Stata.

My research focus this summer will be a study of dialect change in the phonology of Jamaican Creole speakers in the United States. Jamaican Creole, as a dialect of English, bears many similarities to Standard American English, but with distinct phonetic and phonological differences that combine to make up the Jamaican accent. Many Jamaicans who have immigrated to the United States, over time, have been observed to have a change in accent, with a shift towards Standard American English. What is interesting though is to see which parts of the phonology change and which do not. Previous work in this area looking at the change in the accent of Jamaicans living in London has provided some insight into what elements tend to change (Wells 1973). However, preliminary pilot work on Jamaicans in the Boston area shows accentual differences that are not explained solely by the differences between the American accent and the British accent. The work this summer will include researching the current literature on dialect change in general, gathering speech samples, coding the samples and conducting some phonetic analyses of both Jamaican and American speech.

This study is situated within the larger area of linguistic dialect change. This is a field of linguistics that combines phonetics, phonology and sociolinguistics. As such, the summer project requires someone who has taken some linguistics. Specific training in the use of phonetic software will be provided, but basic linguistic knowledge is expected.

Linda Charmaraman, PhD, Wellesley Centers for Women

I am currently working on a few research projects at the analysis and dissemination stages, focusing on media, identity, and civic engagement. I hope to incorporate my intern's research interests and goals in crafting a productive summer immersion into mixed-methods and interdisciplinary (education, human development, psychology, sociology) research. In order to gain a full appreciation of the life of a researcher, I will invite the intern to become involved in one or two of my projects, including (a) media and civic engagement, particularly regarding presidential elections, (b) the role of social media in resiliency and risk (e.g., substance use, sexual health, LGBTQ health), (c) the sense of community or alienation derived from mass media messages. My hope is that I can mentor someone who is interested in a future career in either research or nonprofit work. I look forward to meeting you!

Intern's Responsibilities:

- Library work involving Xeroxing chapters from books, downloading journal article pdfs
- Assist with data entry and writing literature reviews
- Assist with writing blogs, fact sheets, and policy briefs about research projects
- Potential opportunity to co-publish findings, if interested and motivated

Skills Required:

- Some coursework in at least one of the following fields is required: psychology, education, sociology, ethnic studies, women's studies, communications, social science methods (quantitative or qualitative). Desire to attend graduate school a plus
- Ability to work independently, reliably, and cooperatively as part of a research team
- Ability to meet on a regular basis at Cheever House and arrange schedule to meet intern-related deadlines

Faculty: Stephen Chen, Psychology

Research Statement

The Chen Lab examines how cultural and family processes influence development and mental health across the lifespan. One of our current investigations is the Family Development Project, a longitudinal study of stress and well-being in Chinese American immigrant families. Specifically, the project examines how stressors related to immigration and acculturation impact the well-being of two samples of Chinese American immigrant families: 1) families from Boston Chinatown and surrounding urban areas, and 2) families from suburbs of Greater Boston/Metrowest Boston. One of the key aims of the project is to identify how socioeconomic disparities between these two groups may be associated with disparities in family functioning and well-being.

The assessment protocol uses multiple methods (e.g., survey, computerized tasks, behavioral observation, semi-structured interviews) to assess various domains of parent and child well-being, including mental health, family relationships, and self-regulation. Social science research students have the opportunity to be involved in multiple aspects of the project, including administration of family assessments, data entry, coding and transcription of multilingual family interviews, and analysis of health-related data (BMI, physiological indicators of stress). Specific projects will be assigned based on students' previous experience and language proficiency.

As most assessments are conducted in Chinese, literacy and fluency in Mandarin and/or Cantonese are strongly preferred. Previous experience working with children is also preferred.

Social Science Summer Research Program 2017
Beth DeSombre, Environmental Studies

This summer I will begin a new book project, on Post-Policy System Evolution in environmental policy. It starts from the premise that any sort of policy action is simply a starting point. Once a policy has been adopted, many things – some of which are predictable – change. A regulatory change will likely trigger innovation or technology forcing, drawing those who can profit by developing a cheaper or easier way to meet the new regulation to invent substitutes or new technology to meet the obligations. Previously existing substitutes or technology may become cheaper from the economies of scale that come as production is ramped up to take account of all the new demand. Disruption of standard operating procedures may lead to new ways to meet regulatory requirements that are at least less costly than simply adding in the cost of the new regulation, and, perhaps even more efficient than the pre-regulation approach. And pressure for other changes to make implementing the new rules easier is likely as well.

This book project will derive a set of predictions about the types of post-policy system evolution that will come about, with some initial hypotheses about the types of regulatory approaches (or environmental issues) that will most effectively trigger these types of systemic evolutions that render environmental policy easier and cheaper to implement than initial predictions suggest, and then pick a set of empirical cases to use to examine what happens as policies are implemented. The summer research student will help with examining the literature and also identifying and researching possible empirical cases.

Students should have some background in social scientific analysis (especially in political science or economics) and some background in environmental issues. A student who has taken ES/POL2-214, ECON 228, ES104 or related courses (any cross-listed ES/POL course would suffice) will have especially useful preparation.

Stacie Goddard, Political Science

Project Description:

The construction of “precision”

I am looking for a student researcher to gather data on precision weaponry. Proponents argue precision targeting has not only made war more effective; it has made it far more humane as well. A norm has developed, both among the military and civilians, that equates precision targeting with just conduct in war: to use force precisely is to use it legitimately. This project has three aims. First, to raise the question of how it is weapons come to be defined as “precise”. Second, and relatedly, the project will ask *why* it is some technology is constructed as “precision” technology. Here, the project adopts an original analysis of interservice rivalry and norm development, with a particular focus on competition between the different services of the US military, and how each has sought to claim it is capable of deploying precision technology in times of war. Finally, this project explores how it is precise warfare has become equated with legitimate warfare.

2017 Summer Research Program in Social Sciences
Faculty name: Igor Logvinenko (Political Science)

Statement about current research

I am working on a book-length study that explores the compatibility of open markets and authoritarian rule, specifically in post-communist autocracies. There are two major parts to the study: one is a study of financial openness in Russia since the fall of Communism. The other is a comparison between the Russian and Chinese approaches to the regulation of cross-border flows. The book analyzes how financial openness affect the politics of control over assets, and various ways through which autocratic regimes mitigate their exposure to the volatile global financial markets. One of the findings emerging from this research suggests that autocrats are becoming increasingly interested in developing non-repressive means of maintaining social order through improvements in the redistributive capacity of the welfare state.

I would be especially interested in working with a student with Russian and/or Chinese language skills, although it is certainly not a requirement. Some background in social science research, political science and economics would be a big plus. I am also happy to give a few brief tutorials to get the student up to speed.

Igor Logvinenko
Assistant Professor of Political Science
Wellesley College
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From Inequality to Solidarity

Proposal for 2017 Summer Research Program in Social Sciences at Wellesley College

Julie Matthaei, Economics Department

This summer, I will be working on a book project entitled, *From Inequality to Solidarity: Co-Creating a New Economics for the 21st Century*. The book's thesis is that, Donald Trump's election notwithstanding, the U.S. and the globe are in a process of paradigm shift from inequality to solidarity. The first part of the book presents an historical framework for understanding this process of paradigm shift, from an economy centered on narrow materialistic competitive self-interest and the profit motive, towards one centered in socially responsible, cooperative forms of economic agency and economic human rights. The second focuses on the socio-historical construction of gender, race, class, and man/nature inequality, and the four great movements against inequality which have been transforming them: worker, anti-racist, feminist, and ecology movements. The third 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 achievements of pro-equality movements; calculating summary historical statistics on inequality and creating graphs and tables representing them; literature searches of relevant secondary research; and documenting 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;" who have studied race, class, and gender in other social science and history classes; and who have studied U.S. social and economic history.

Summer Research into Anthropology and Art in the context of The Kochi-Muziris Biennale

Deborah Matzner

In recent decades, the contemporary art market has become increasingly organized around a network of international fairs and exhibition sites, including the growing biennale circuit, which has spread from Venice to include fairs across the non-West. While some have argued that this proliferation offers novel opportunities for artists outside the West to gain visibility, others caution that it forces such artists to subject themselves to neocolonial framings of non-Western art. Certainly it offers organizers opportunities to capitalize on the cachet of international biennale culture in an attempt to produce the value of local art within the international market and of the biennale setting as a cosmopolitan locale and touristic destination.

As an anthropologist, I am interested in art fairs nodes within art worlds, which I understand as fields of production shaped by complex and contested regimes of value (Appadurai 1986). A relatively new art fair, the Kochi-Muziris Biennale launched in 2012 in Kerala, South India, offers an ideal context in which to address these questions. Moreover, it's a particularly interesting context for the anthropologist. Organizers are attempting to define the cosmopolitan-yet-local value of this biennale by drawing connections between contemporary Kochi and historical Muziris, a nearby urban site that functioned as a key node in a cosmopolitan third century B.C. trade route. At the same time, they find the biennale mired in controversies involving the lack of exhibition facilities of international standard, questionable uses of local government funds, connections to international funding, and local audience reactions ranging from bemusement to protest.

My summer research assistant will help me to locate and analyze curatorial and artists statements, reviews, and other art writing about the biennale. The student will also conduct and transcribe interviews. This case should be of particular interest to those intrigued by contemporary art, archaeology and/or India.

Kyung Park, Economics

The research proposal is to study the evolution of attitudes towards Muslims in response to 9/11 and other terror attacks in recent years by studying willingness to pay for housing in close proximity to mosques. In theory, terror attacks may lower home values close to mosques after large-scale terror attacks if prospective buyers perceive homes that are closer to mosques as less safe than those that are further away. Interestingly, the data shows that hate crimes have increased substantially towards Muslims rather than the other way around. It may be that 9/11 and other international terror events are not strong predictors of local terror risk for residences near mosques. In this case, prospective buyers may erroneously perceive salient events to be stronger predictors of local attacks than they actually are.

I am expecting to receive an unusually rich dataset that includes the universe of home transactions from 1996 to 2016 within a 2 mile radius of all mosques in the New England area before the end of the semester. Because this data set includes the names of all home buyers and names signal racial/ethnic identity, we may be able to observe changes in neighborhood racial composition as well. The research assistant will be asked to clean and analyze the data, find external data, read and summarize existing literature, and so on. Strong proficiency of Stata is required.

2017 Summer Research Program in Social Sciences

Project: Work, Families and Children

Supervisor: Wendy Wagner Robeson, Ed.D., Senior Research Scientist

Department: Wellesley Centers for Women

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. Our team is involved in many projects that focus on child care, the early grades, families' engagement with their children's schools, the workforce and more. 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 that focuses on education, early childhood care and education, families, paid and unpaid work, or children and adolescents. 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. However, a student may also generate a new topic, complete a review of the literature, create hypotheses and collect new data that will be analyzed over the summer.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROJECT

Nancy Scherer, Political Science

I study courts, law and politics; this research project is entitled “Presidents’ Strategic Use of Diversity Appointments on the Bench”: Pleasing the Elite or Pleasing the Masses?” My research project address a topic never addressed before in the field of American Politics. My co-author and I are planning on presenting a paper using the data we collect over the summer at the annual American Political Science Conference. My student researcher will work with Stata, and will learn to code to create a sizable data base. I will also teach the student how to run a regression model in Stata.

There are three presidents who made diversity the cornerstone of their judicial appointment strategies, Carter, Clinton and Obama. The research and paper will try to determine whether these presidents placed the diversity judges only in districts with large populations of blacks, or dispersed them and was more invested in obtaining high numbers of diversity candidates in the aggregate (169 black judges in total for Carter, Clinton and Obama; 75 Hispanic judges in total for the three presidents). For example, where were the 37 blacks appointed by Carter placed on the bench or where were Clinton’s 61 African American were assigned? Or where are the 61 judges Obama appointed.

And, it tells us whether the president favored the elites by focusing on the aggregate numbers or the masses which likely prefers the diversity judges be allocated to high crime, poor and unemployed districts with large minority populations. Having written a book on president’s use of diversity judges to please the masses, I test the hypothesis: Democratic Presidents appoint blacks to the bench in order to please the elites affiliated with the Party.

Kartini Shastry, Economics

Project description:

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. 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.

I am also working on a project with Professor Shurchkov on gender differences in financial-decision making. The literature on gender differences in similar decisions finds that women exhibit lower levels of financial literacy, greater levels of risk-aversion and respond differently to feedback. Outside the realm of financial decisions, recent studies suggest that women are more likely than men to attribute negative feedback to their own ability. For example, at co-ed institutions of higher education, women are more likely to change their major after failing a course than to take it again. We seek to examine whether a tendency to over-attribute negative feedback to own ability affects how women make financial decisions when facing uncertainty.

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 and organization skills. To be considered, please email me a brief statement of interest and qualifications (300 words max) and an unofficial transcript.

Gender Bias in Manager Evaluations

Olga Shurchkov (with Katherine B. Coffman and Alexandra van Geen)

Social Science Summer Research Program Proposal

This study conducts a controlled laboratory experiment aimed at understanding how individuals evaluate leaders and managers. Our primary question is whether male and female managers are evaluated differently. We use a simulated manager-worker environment in the laboratory to explore this question. Managers have the opportunity to assign incentives to motivate their workers on a real effort task. Workers then evaluate the choices and competency of the manager. We ask whether, conditional on the choices they make, male and female managers receive similar ratings. We ask whether the gender bias in evaluations is a function of the gender-type of the task (math or verbal) and whether the manager position was earned through performance.

This work builds on a related study by Shurchkov and van Geen (2016), who explored the incentive choices of managers in a similar laboratory experiment. Our hypotheses are shaped by the findings on warmth-competency tradeoff documented in the psychology literature (for instance, Fiske et al 2002). The goal of this study is to not only contribute to ongoing research on gender gaps in the labor market context, but also to generate additional interest in related questions, and in gender and economics more broadly.

This project presents a unique opportunity for a student interested in behavioral and experimental economics, as well as in gender studies. A qualified candidate for the position will possess strong quantitative and writing skills. Working knowledge of statistics (Econ 103 or equivalent, proficiency in Excel) and econometrics (Econ 203 or equivalent, proficiency in Stata) are required for the analysis of the experimental data, which will constitute a large portion of the work. Attention to detail and strong editing skills are also essential for success in this position.