Undergraduate Research Faculty Mini-Grants (2014-15)

Proposed Faculty Mentor: Professor Elisa (EJ) Sobo, Anthropology (esobo@mail.sdsu.edu)

Proposed Protégé: Autumn Sannwald, Anthropology Undergraduate

Project Title: Vaccination Information Study: Analysis and Dissemination

General Overview: The case for vaccination seems self-evident. In the U.S. alone, “among children born during 1994–2013, vaccination will prevent an estimated 322 million illnesses, 21 million hospitalizations, and 732,000 deaths... at a net savings of $295 billion in direct costs and $1.38 trillion in total societal costs” (Whitney, et. al. 2011:352). However, a look at vaccination rates upon school entry—the standard measure of uptake—indicates that not everyone agrees: pediatric vaccination uptake is falling in the USA. The Vaccination Information Study is an IRB-approved study that seeks to help answer why vaccine rates are falling as well as to generate recommendations for health workers intent on stemming the tide of refusal and delay.

My prior work with a vaccine-cautious community here in San Diego suggested that vaccine refusers are overconfident in their ability to parse the scientific literature, the Vaccination Information Study entails measuring global confidence, information literacy, and scientific numeracy levels among both vaccine refusers and acceptors. It also entails the collection of qualitative (narrative) data regarding vaccine decision-making. With the quantitative data, we can test whether refusers are, as a group, more confident and have higher information literacy and scientific numeracy scores than vaccine acceptors. The qualitative data can illuminate the situation by helping us to understand the “hows and whys” underlying vaccine caution.

Data collection began in Spring 2014 via Anthropology 508 (Medical Anthropology). It was woven into 508’s coursework so that I might provide more SDSU undergraduates with hands-on experience doing ‘real’ research. In addition, MA student Lori Thurman and Lecturer Arianna Huhn signed on to help. We recruited participants (N=54) from SDSU’s Children’s Center and via various community sites known to be popular among vaccine-hesitant populations.

Data analysis began in late summer. Descriptive statistics were calculated and an anthropologically-informed thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews was initiated. We anticipate completing the analytic work and beginning our ‘write up’ phase by mid-November. The dissemination plan includes both publications and presentations.

I include as many students as I can in real research as a way to add value to their educational experience. They can both contribute to the larger projects that I have organized and select aspects to develop by themselves. An Undergraduate Research Award would bolster my efforts at enrichment by enabling a protégé to present findings at a professional academic conference—underwriting, for the student, a truly transformative educational experience.

Recruitment Plan: A number of the undergraduates involved in the project last spring truly excelled. A number also requested continued involvement. I therefore seek to recruit a protégé from the 508 cohort to assist us in these efforts. I have targeted Autumn Sannwald as my first
choice. Ms. Sannwald was an exemplary role model for her 508 peers. Her contribution to the project continued into the summer. This fall, due to Ms. Sannwald’s demonstrated intelligence, eagerness to learn, and laudable work ethic, I invited her to become a full-fledged member of the research team, tasking her to assist in data analysis, write-up, and dissemination. She is therefore the ideal candidate for the position.

**Training Plan:** Our training plan is as follows.

1. **Data Analysis Training:** The protégé will receive training in various data analysis techniques, including theme identification and category formation, relational coding, descriptive figure generation, and case study write-up. Some of the texts used for didactic lessons on these techniques are Borgatti (2006), Ryan and Bernard (2003), Quinn (2005), and Sobo (2009). Hands-on training in the application of data analyses techniques occurs via Friday Lab Meetings, and through between-meeting tasks.

2. **Writing Training:** After the analysis has progressed, I will train the protégé in how to write up findings for publication. The protégé will be assigned to write certain sections of a paper to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. Initially the protégé will be shown how to prepare case study material and category and item tables. Other section writing will be in accord with her particular interests. In addition, the protégé learn how to follow a journal’s style and format specifications and how to write a proper abstract as well as an effective cover letter.

3. **Presentation Training:** I will teach the protégé how to prepare a presentation proposal and how to give a successful presentation.
   a. I have secured a registration waiver for the protégé for the American Academy of Pediatrics meeting, to be held in San Diego Oct. 11-14. Attending will enhance the protégé’s subject area knowledge and, in acquainting the protégé with conference-related norms, help to insure that his or her future conference participation is successful and productive.
   b. The protégé will submit a proposal to present our work at the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) conference. Last year’s SfAA program chair already has contacted me regarding reporting the vaccination work for this conference, and so chances for acceptance are high. The protégé will select an aspect of the work that particularly interests her and she will develop it (as first author) for the presentation. **The funds requested will pay for the protégé’s conference travel.**
   c. The protégé will submit a proposal to SDSU’s Student Research Symposium.

4. **Prior Training:** It is worth noting here that, prior to this semester, the preferred protégé (Ms. Sannwald) received lessons from me in human subjects protection and informed consent procedures, research design, instrument development, survey administration, open-ended interviewing, audio file transcription, quantitative data entry, and data quality assurance procedures.
Budget

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References:


http://www.analytictech.com/mb870/introtogt.htm


Submitted by:

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Submitted to:

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