Investigating the Relationship between Housing Characteristics and Sexual Violence  
Christopher Allen, Psychology

**Project Description:** Recently, the White House reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating sexual violence from college campuses and called for expanded efforts in assessing the scope of the problem on college campuses. During 2015-2016, I conducted a research study entitled, “Examining Sexual Violence at UML.” Preliminary analyses suggest that the vast majority of sexual violence is perpetrated in UML-owned housing (i.e. - dorms, apartments). During 2016-2017, I plan to extend this line of inquiry by assessing and identifying characteristics of UML-owned housing that are related to experiences of sexual violence. This study will use quantitative analysis to test for relations between students’ experiences of sexual violence, living arrangements (e.g. – type of room, # of roommates), and building characteristics (e.g. – total # of rooms, # of common spaces). Currently, the development of effective campus-specific strategies is severely hindered by the lack of research identifying where to target intervention efforts. This research will contribute to extant literature and prevention efforts at UML by determining if specific qualities of where students are associated with experiences of sexual assault and suggesting potential avenues for prevention and intervention.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications:** Possible tasks for student involvement during this project include: assisting with IRB proposals/submissions, online survey programming, survey pilot testing, conducting participant interviews, observational coding, data cleaning, assisting with preliminary data analysis for faculty manuscripts/presentations, data analysis for the student’s own manuscripts/presentations, submission of conference proposals, assisting with literature searches and summaries. Ideally, students interested in this project would have some experience with online survey software/programming and basic familiarity with SPSS.

Adoption and Foster Care: Experiences and Attitudes  
Doreen Arcus, Psychology

**Project Description:** The aim of this project is to examine societal attitudes towards adoption and foster care using multiple methods of investigation. This two-part project will use (a) children’s drawings in an experimental examination of implicit bias in the evaluation of self-representations of children in traditional families and in foster care, and (b) survey methodology to gather quantitative and qualitative data from young adults about their lived experiences in adoptive families.
**Student Tasks/Qualifications:** The student will gain experience reviewing and summarizing relevant literature, preparing materials for ethical review by the UMass Lowell IRB, developing test stimuli, ensuring the validity of measures, preparing survey material for Qualtrics, disseminating material in online environments, working with and analyzing data, and presenting results clearly and professionally at the student research symposium, in a co-presented talk in the Psychology Colloquium Series, and a co-authored poster at, for example, the annual conference of the Association for Psychological Science. Students with interests in developmental psychology and a desire to attend graduate school in psychology or social work are especially well suited for this project. Although additional support will be available, the student should have experience with MS Excel and SPSS.

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**The Realities of LGBT Asylum: From Institutional Approaches to Individual Experiences**
Cheryl Llewelyn, Sociology

**Project Description:** In the past three decades, a growing number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals have left their countries of origin in order to escape persecutory conditions and have sought protection in other nations using the process of asylum. This increase in sexual orientation based asylum claims has forced international organizations and national immigration systems to reconsider the utility of existing asylum frameworks for LGBT individuals and other groups not specifically referenced in asylum and refugee treaties. In my previous work, I identified barriers for LGBT access to the U.S. asylum system, including antiquated and stereotypical ideas about sexual identity, stringent requirements for proving persecution, and skepticism about the relevance of sexual orientation based claims. For this project, I will shift my focus from institutional responses to the actual experiences of LGBT asylum seekers in the United States. The goal is to develop a project that reflects the lived reality and the voices of those seeking sexual orientation based asylum in the U.S.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications:** The student will be involved in reading to understand the topic, a literature review, the development of a research proposal and interview schedule, the Institutional Review Board process, and the implementation and analysis of the interviews (possibly but not certainly including conducting interviews). It would be useful if the scholar had some training or course work in research methods (social science methods would be ideal, but humanities skills are likely transferable).

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**Examining the Nature of Learning Difficulties in Children through Eye-Tracking Technology**
Richard Serna, Psychology

**Project Description:** Whether a young child is typically developing or is diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disorder such as autism, teaching approaches based on the science of Applied Behavior Analysis have been very effective. A key aspect of such teaching involves discrimination learning. For example, the ability to distinguish objects, numbers, letters, spoken words and other symbols from one another is critical to subsequent success in pre-academic- and communication-relevant learning. However, discrimination-learning success is not universal; a significant number of children do not acquire discrimination skills at one level or another. My longstanding research interest lies in determining the factors that lead to discrimination-learning difficulties and, based on these findings, implementing appropriate remedies. One such factor involves a propensity of some children to “over-focus” on irrelevant features of task materials, rather than on all aspects of a stimulus. This
phenomenon is known as overselectivity or selective attention. My project will focus on overselectivity that occurs when an individual observes stimuli that are very similar to one another, such as the letters “M” and “N,” which have many features in common. To aid in this effort, I will utilize eye-tracking technology, which allows the researcher to obtain a video record of the precise point of gaze of the participant’s pupil during learning tasks. Once the observing patterns of task materials is known, remediation procedures specific to those patterns can then be developed.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications:** In addition to the benefit of learning the specifics of research methodology and conduct, the successful undergraduate applicant will be participating in a project that has implications for strengthening our university mission of interfacing with the local community, as some of the research will take place in local Head Start programs. The student will assume an applied, supervised partnership in my research project where s/he will provide a meaningful, year-long contribution to the study. The student will meet regularly with me to discuss the rationale of study and participate directly in relevant components of the research process, including, but not limited to, IRB approval, literature review, research design, research protocol, data collection, entry, and analysis and dissemination of findings through presentations and manuscript submission. It would be ideal if the student partner has taken or is concurrently taking Learning and Behavior (47.312). A student who has taken my Clinical Seminar in Autism (47.475) would also be in a good position for this project. These courses provide a basic understanding of both behavior analysis and its methodology.

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**The Contradictions of Place: Lowell, Massachusetts as Consumer of Slave-produced Cotton and as a Leading City in the Struggle to End Slavery**

Robert Forrant, History

**Project Description:** Lowell was a contradictory political place in the decades before the Civil War. In 1835, mill owners purchased 34,000 bales of slave-produced cotton and by 1842 were purchasing nearly 60,000 bales of cotton to keep the city’s mills running. In 1859, on the eve of the Civil War, 95,000 bales of cotton arrive in the city, some 405 tons of the fiber a week. Lowell’s wealth derived almost exclusively from slave-produced cotton. Yet over the same time period fugitive slaves openly ran several businesses in the city’s two main business districts along Dutton and Central Streets. Women mill workers organized one of the largest female anti-slavery societies in New England and even some mill overseers permitted workers to circulate petitions against the slave trade while at work. One such petition circulated by female mill workers demanding the abolition of slavery in Washington, D.C., contained 1,634 names and measured 27 feet in length. Many ministers in the city were outspoken critics of slavery and preached against the institution regularly. St. Anne’s Episcopal Church was a well-known stop on the underground Railroad and St. Paul’s Methodist Church hosted a gathering of nearly 1,500 people in November of 1841 to greet the former slaves of the ship *Amistad*, set free earlier that year by the U.S. Supreme Court after a lengthy set of legal proceedings for their roles in an 1837 ship-board rebellion to gain their freedom. The selected Emerging Scholar will play an integral role in learning much more about the history of abolitionism in Massachusetts in general and Lowell in particular.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications:** The first semester will be spent tracking down primary source materials on abolitionism in Lowell, including reading issues of such newspapers as *The Liberator* and the *Middlesex Standard* for articles about anti-slavery society meetings and events in Lowell. *The Liberator* was edited by Newburyport-born William Lloyd Garrison while the *Middlesex Standard*...
was headquartered for a time in an office on Central Street in Lowell and edited by John Greenleaf
Whittier. The Emerging Scholar would also read portions of the diaries of St. Anne’s Reverend
Theodore Edson, who discussed anti-slavery activities in the city and who harbored an Underground
Railroad stop in the basement of the Merrimack Street church. In addition, the Emerging Scholar
would be asked to learn more about the free African American and fugitive slave owned businesses in
the city. Some preliminary research has already been done on this topic. The second semester would
be spent gathering as much biographical information as possible on several of Lowell’s leading
abolitionist figures. A list of names will be developed from the newspaper articles being read on anti-
slavery efforts in the city. The ultimate goal of the year-long project is to present university and city
leaders and the Lowell National Historical Park with information about the vibrant anti-slavery
movement that existed in the city in hopes that they will use the information to make this important
story a much more central part of the history visitors take away from their time in Lowell. A love of
history, attention to detail, and research and writing skills are essential.

Through Their Eyes: Understanding the Transition to College
Judith Davidson, Graduate School of Education

**Project Description:** This project was initiated due to a concern with student retention issues at the
undergraduate level, which evolved into a paired class venture between a doctoral qualitative research
class and a first year writing class. The two classes are meeting four times over the semester with the
doctoral students gathering different kinds of qualitative research data about what it is like to make
the transition to becoming a college student; and the first year writing students are reading, writing,
and thinking across the semester about what it is like to make the transition to becoming a college
student. By the end of Spring Semester 2016, there will exist interview, survey, visual, artefactual,
and observational data from the 19 undergraduates on the topic of making the transition to
college. From the 16 graduate students there will exist surveys, e-mail interviews, and assignments
related to making the transition to college AND (the secondary study) paired classes. During the
2016-2017 academic year, I plan to organize and analyze this cache of data and conduct a literature
review into key topics related to the themes emerging from the data. I also plan to replicate the paired
class experience again in my Spring 2017 Qualitative Research course, which will require another
IRB submission in Fall 2016 and data collection activities with the doctoral class. During the
upcoming year I will also be reaching out to faculty and staff on our campus to share my results and
begin conversations about the role paired classes could play in making higher education more lively
and educative.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications:** The Emerging Scholar will assist in the organization and analysis of
data collected during Spring 2016 for the “Through Their Eyes” project, learn NVivo software and
principles of good e-project organization, assist in the development of a robust literature database
using Endnote software, participate in Spring 2017 replication, including submission of Institutional
Review Board application, conduct hands-on research during the Spring 2017 replication and assist
with organization of incoming data from that experience, attend doctoral qualitative research class as
a participant-observer, and participate in the development of on and/or off-campus presentations on
the results of the study. The student will demonstrate: excitement and curiosity in learning about
learning and educational culture; ability to learn new kinds of complex digital tools (NVivo and
Endnote); interest in qualitative research methods; capacity to set up a regular, weekly schedule
(working in my office or the GSE computer lab for 9 hours per week); interest in finding new
information on the Internet about diverse topics; capacity to ask questions when confused; interest in writing—this kind of research requires a lot of reading AND writing (fieldnotes, memos, annotations, parts of papers); ability to keep logs, schedules, records and to complete work in a timely manner; have a good sense of humor and a caring personality.

Women Playwrights in Latin America
Maria Matz, World Languages and Cultures

Project Description: The project I will be working on in the 2016-2017 academic year is based on the work of Latin American female play writers. While a feminine perspective has become more common on Latin American stages since the late 1960s, few of the women dramatists who have contributed to this new viewpoint have received scholarly attention. A study of plays written by specific Latin American playwrights is long overdue. This manuscript will be part of a much needed type of scholarly work, with introductory and background material about the author, as well as a brief summary of the situation of women play writers in each specific country. It will examine the message of the individual plays and their ties to life and society outside the play. It will be a useful source book for anyone interested in theatre by women of the Americas.

Student Tasks/Qualifications: The ideal student for this project should have some training in research methods. It would be necessary that s/he is proficient in Spanish and is a good writer. The student will be involved in finding appropriate sources, putting together a review of relevant literature, creating a list of female play writers by countries and helping to identify the key plays within their dramatic work. Depending on the work done by the student, a 15-20-page paper (summarizing the work) will be co-authored with the student and submitted to a journal to be considered for publication. Finally, besides presenting at the Undergraduate Research Symposium, I would like to have the student submitting an abstract to a national conference and, if accepted, the student will present his/her research work in it.

Reading Victorian Women’s Poetry: The Claims of Close and Distant Reading
Natalie Houston, English

Project Description: During 2016-17, I will be conducting research for a 6500-word chapter I’m writing for the forthcoming Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women’s Poetry. During the nineteenth century, hundreds of women poets published a vast quantity of poetry in books, periodicals, and newspapers. However, many of these poets are today almost unknown, as literary scholars tend to focus on a small number of canonical figures. This chapter will respond to current debates in literary studies about the value of close interpretive reading versus “distance reading,” which uses the big data now available to us through digital archives to analyze literature at a much larger scale.

Student Tasks/Qualifications: The Emerging Scholar will be conducting research in nineteenth-century periodicals in both print and digital formats; collecting, cleaning, and analyzing data about women poets and their works; and creating annotated bibliographies of primary and secondary materials. Because this project involves both traditional literary analysis and newer methods from the digital humanities, students with either previous experience or an interest in learning skills in
historical and literary research, data visualization, or statistical analysis are welcome. This project includes interpretive close reading work, historical research in print culture, and large-scale data analysis. Depending on the student partner’s interests, background, and skills, some of the tasks might involve: learning to use print reference sources and research databases to look up information about poets and their works; using literary and historical databases to compile a bibliography of relevant secondary sources; discovering and indexing poems published in Victorian periodicals; conducting authorship attribution research; reading poems and annotating them by theme and form; preparing a plain text corpus of poems by Victorian women poets, based on public domain digital texts; learning to run topic modeling analysis to algorithmically “read” large datasets of poems; learning to use OpenRefine to clean messy data sets extracted from OCLC records; learning to use Gephi to explore datasets with network analysis; and/or learning to use R for statistical analysis of digitized texts.

How Can Cognitive Psychologists Use Scientific Outreach to Help Teachers and Students?
Yana Weinstein, Psychology

**Project Description:** In January 2016, I founded a community called the “Learning Scientists” with my colleague Megan Smith at Rhode Island College. Our goal is to communicate with teachers and students about evidence-based teaching and learning strategies. We do this mainly via our blog (www.learningscientists.org), and on our Twitter page (@AceThatTest). Through these avenues, we discuss research and how best to implement evidence-based practices in and out of the classroom. Teachers have to come to us with questions ranging from how to write good multiple-choice questions to how to give useful feedback. We have also advised students on how to study. As of right now – one month into the endeavor – we have published 12 blog posts and 3,300 tweets; we have almost 1,000 Twitter followers and almost 70 blog subscribers. However, aside from these somewhat context-less numbers, we do not have a sense of what impact (if any) our project is having on teachers and students. In this project, I am seeking to measure the impact of our outreach efforts. Engaging in and measuring scientific outreach are both new domains for me, so I anticipate working closely with a resourceful student and discovering together what methods we might be able to use to track our impact. Example sub-projects we may develop include analyzing: social media references to a topic before and after we post a blog on it, the impact (if any) that our various attempts at busting common “brain myths” are having on our Twitter followers, or teachers’ and students’ opinions and usage of evidence-based strategies. The methods used will be a combination of surveys/opinion polls conducted online, semantic analyses of social media content, and quasi-experiments.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications:** The Emerging Scholar will be involved in reading and synthesizing the literature on measuring the impact of science communication; designing, carrying out and analyzing a survey on student and teacher views of evidence-based practice; and designing, carrying out and analyzing a survey of teachers’ consumption of scientific literature. Specific tasks may include: finding and summarizing relevant research papers on science communication, learning (with me!) how to design a valid survey instrument, programming a survey in Qualtrics, analyzing results of the survey, visualizing the results of the survey in an eye-catching format, creating a poster to present the results of the survey at a conference, and writing up results of published research in blog format for wider readership. Skills desired include: willingness to learn collaboratively (i.e., I will also be learning at the same time as them); an interest/active participation in social media, especially Twitter; excellent writing skills; an interest in cognitive psychology and education; and an interest in scientific outreach.
The Musical Playground
Elissa Johnson-Green, Music

**Project description:** The Musical Playground project seeks to provide public schools, community centers, and parks with specially designed and built outdoor musical instruments made from repurposed materials. Alongside the Sustainability Program at University of Massachusetts Lowell, we have identified technological waste as a major component of the university's overall recycling burden. We plan to use this waste to create high quality, safe musical play structures. The instruments will be designed and built by an interdisciplinary team of faculty, staff, and students across music, engineering, art and design. They will be made simple, portable, and modular to fit different sizes and types of spaces at schools and community centers. The Musical Playground long-term projected research goals include: 1.) Examine how open access to musical instruments may impact diverse social/educational spheres; 2.) Examine playgroups as units of study when comparing creative processes; 3.) Examine how playgroups use the instruments in social/cognitive play. 4.) Examine how children may be involved with the instrument assembling and playground design process, which may have implications for supporting Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) education. I plan to perform extensive qualitative research during this initial phase, which will form the basis for continuing studies on The Musical Playground. Data collection will include observations, interviews, surveys, video and audio recordings of instrument play, and demographic information about participants. It is projected that this phase of research will generate extensive data, with intensive time and effort into analysis and writing. I will be examining several aspects of musical play with college and young student musicians, comparing how these groups use the instruments and for what purpose. Further, this project will grant opportunity for research into musical creativity, social connection, learning processes, and music composition as design process.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications:** An Emerging Scholar will participate in the following ways: training in and performing various aspects of qualitative research; IRB training and application writing; training in data analysis including video and audio coding, synthesis, thematic classification, and patterning; contributing to literature review, adding to an ongoing annotated bibliography; contributing to articles that will be submitted to peer-reviewed journals; aiding in writing and submitting grant applications; contributing to research conference submissions with possibility for co-presenting; contributing to social media to get the word out about this project. I am looking for a student with strong writing skills (vital), an open-minded approach to learning, a tendency toward divergent thinking, consistency and reliability in work habits, and good listening skills.

Sentiment Analysis, Party Politics, and Presidential Primaries
John Cluverius, Political Science

**Project Description:** Think about this project as an opportunity to build skills that employers look for and a chance to read truly mean tweets about candidates for President of the United States. One of the things that troubles people who study social media is that when we measure people's opinions on social media, they don't line up with data from polls, surveys, or other consumer behavior. Twitter gives us an idea of what some people are thinking in the moment, but it's unclear what that means for the world at large. However, the 2016 Presidential Primaries give us a real chance to measure whether what people say on social media drives the public's voting in party primaries, or whether voting and other measures of public opinion drive how people tweet about candidates. This is because a lot of so-
called political elites (high profile politicians and members of the media) use Twitter a lot, and there's a debate as to whether primary voters take their cues from these elites or vice versa. I'm combining some of the work I've done analyzing social media with polling data from the UML Center for Public Opinion and other sources.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications**: A student working on this project needs only a dedicated work ethic and an interest in politics. If you have experience in statistical programming, content analysis, or are good at finding sources online, that's a plus, but if you don't, I will train you. You might identify and collect twitter accounts for groups of state-level elites. You might gather and organize polling data, or look at snapshots of particular days or weeks of data. You might use Stata, R, or Python (all useful in the job market) to do some high level text analysis. You might also just look at tweets about a particular candidate and rate them as positive or negative. Students who make great contributions will be listed on publications and/or conference papers, with conference travel an absolute possibility.

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**Building the Leviathan – Voluntary Concession of Authority to the State**

David Kingsley, Economics

**Project Description**: The project will explore individual behavior in a public good experiment. Such experiments create a conflict between what is in the individual’s self-interest (not contributing) and what is in the group’s collective-interest (contributing). A central authority can alter individual incentives so that it is in their interest to contribute by monitoring behavior and punishing those who deviate from the established rules. For example, consider how local governments regulate individual driver incentives to speed. Importantly, this monitoring of individual behavior comes at a cost regardless of driver behavior (even in the absence of speeding the police and judicial system is costly). The question posed in this experiment is whether, and under what circumstances, groups will voluntarily impose such a central authority upon themselves. The hypothesis tested is that heterogeneous groups (with rich and poor subjects rather than those with equal resources) will be more likely to self-impose central authority institutions.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications**: The scholar will have two primary tasks. The first is to understand the public good experimental literature and how it relates to the hypothesis being tested. The second involves analyzing the data collected. Ideally the scholar will have had some courses in statistics and research methods / Econometrics. The scholar will learn how to use STATA to analyze the data to create reports and present the data in a meaningful way.

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**Shooting for Inclusion: Photovoice Project**

Jana Sladkova, Psychology

**Project Description**: Students of color, especially Black students, in higher education have started to openly express their concerns and issues related to their experiences of racial prejudice on campuses (e.g., U of Missouri, Yale) and how these experiences impact their educational attainment as well as physical and psychological wellbeing. The goal of this project is to understand what it is like to be a student of color at UMass Lowell. This is important as UMass Lowell continues to grow the diversity of its student body and builds inclusive campuses. Research participants, namely African American/Black and Latino/Hispanic students will take part in this photovoice participatory action research. The students will express/capture their racialized experiences and visions for improvement
through the medium of photography. They will learn photography skills from Dr. Kamal, and internationally renowned photographer, to be able to express themselves effectively through the medium of photography. They will put together an exhibit of their work, and UML’s Chancellor, Provost, Deans, faculty and students will be invited to the opening. Students will explain their work to their audience and the hope is that these “data” will be used to increase UML’s inclusivity. The students will also design a platform (possibly digital) where other students will be able to report incidents of discrimination or more systemic oppression.

**Student Tasks/Qualifications:** The Emerging Scholar will work on participant recruitment, will help facilitate and schedule meetings/workshops with participants. The Emerging Scholar will search for grant opportunities to advance the research and will co-write grant proposals and manuscripts. S/he will assist in exhibit planning and organization and will likely facilitate focus groups and possibly transcribe some data. Ideally, the Emerging Scholar will have an interest or passion for social justice. S/he should be empathetic and open to various points of view. S/he should have good organizational skills and be able to work with a number of people (students and faculty). Flexibility and good writing are a big plus.