

**Institute for the Social Sciences
2013 Fellows' Program
Research Highlights
May 2013**



Dan Benjamin (Economics) and co-authors (Ori Heffetz, Miles Kimball, Alex Rees-Jones, and Nichole Szembrot) found people's choices deviate systematically from what would maximize their self-reported happiness and life satisfaction. The researchers identified other factors -- including family happiness, health, security, values, and freedoms -- that people are willing to trade off against their own happiness. They proposed a methodology to create a "well-being index" of responses to a variety of subjective well-being survey questions governments could track.



Antonio Bento (Dyson/AEM) developed a model to evaluate the efficiency and distributional impacts of clean energy standards and renewable technologies. His work shows that by taxing dirty inputs and subsidizing cleaner inputs in the production of electricity, clean energy standards can increase overall electricity consumption and may or may not reduce overall emissions. Bento discussed his research at a 2013 Congressional staff briefing in DC, and presented preliminary findings at the National Center for Environmental Economics of the US Environmental Protection Agency.



Benjamin Cornwell (Sociology) completed three studies of how people's social networks change in later life. These studies analyze a new, nationally representative data set funded by the National Institutes of Health. Cornwell finds, contrary to popular belief, that most older adults expand their networks in later life. The addition of new network members is associated with significant improvements in older adults' functioning and overall health, reflecting the increased access to social resources, boosts in self-esteem, and increased physical activity that new social relationships entail.



Dan Cosley (Information Science) produced two experiments and a revision of a major grant proposal in his Fellowship semester. The first experiment looks at how people at risk for mental illness change their disclosure behavior. The second, which will launch in summer of 2013, examines how people respond to disclosure from friends in social media. He spent much of the Fellowship semester developing the software to collect Facebook behavioral data and survey participants about their goals and decisions around self-disclosure. His team is resubmitting a \$1.2 million grant proposal in 2013 with revisions encouraged by the prospective grantor.



Raymond Craib (History) made significant progress on his book manuscript, *The Cry of the Renegade: Poetry, Politics and Anarchism in Chile, 1920*. In the fall 2012, he completed one chapter, made significant headway on another, and created a series of maps that will illustrate his arguments. He also gave talks at the New School and the University of California at Davis.



Saida Hodžić (Anthropology) revised her book manuscript, *Of Rebels, Spirits, and Social Engineers: The Awkward Endings of Female Genital Cutting*, and journal articles. Her book examines the logics and effects of surprisingly successful Ghanaian non-governmental organizations' interventions against FGC. Her article, [Ascertaining Deadly Harms: Aesthetics and Politics of Global Evidence](#), published in *Cultural Anthropology*, examines WHO research on the obstetric consequences of FGC as a case study of the politics of knowledge in global governance. She also presented her work at domestic and international conferences, gave invited lectures, conducted research in Bosnia, and founded two research groups.



Lee Humphrey (Communication) published two articles, one in the inaugural issue of *Mobile Media & Communication* and one in *Information, Communication, & Society*. In her Fellowship semester, Humphreys presented three different research papers, two of which were coauthored with students, at three conferences in the US and Europe. After taking the ISS-sponsored media training for Faculty Fellows, she participated as a panelist on Huffington Post Live. She also co-edited the Association of Internet Researchers' annual journal issue of *Information, Communication, & Society*.



Tamar Kushnir (Human Development) spent her ISS semester examining children's developing conceptions of choice. She found that preschoolers reason about their own and others' choices in sophisticated ways, and children weigh their personal desires against moral and social obligations. Results of new experiments begun during the ISS fellowship year show the role social and personal experiences play in children's developing beliefs about choice. Kushnir and her students published several papers and presented them at international conferences.



Karel Mertens (Economics) studied the effects of tax reforms on economic activity and fiscal policy in a liquidity trap. One paper off this work, with Morten Rayn, will be published in the *American Economic Review* and has been highlighted in the [Washington Times](#). Another forthcoming paper in the *Journal of Monetary Economics* explains why recent estimates of tax multipliers are much larger than estimates shown for prior periods. Additional papers analyze the effects of fiscal interventions in liquidity traps caused by low consumer confidence and the impact of marginal tax rate changes on income distribution.



Tom Pepinsky (Government) produced three working papers in the Fall of 2012, all on the political economy of Southeast Asia. The first is a comparative study of the politics of trade in US colonial history, comparing sugar industries in the Philippines with those in Hawaii and Puerto Rico. The second addresses the long-term consequences of Chinese and Arab migration to Java under Dutch colonial rule. The third, which is part of a major collaborative project with scholars from around the world, is a thematic overview of pluralist approaches to material inequality and political power in democratic Indonesia. He presented these papers at seminars and workshops at ANU, Binghamton, University of Sydney, UCSD, UVA, Wisconsin, and Yale.



Brian Rubineau (ILR/Organizational Behavior) advanced four distinct field research projects, many in collaboration with a variety of institutional research partners. He prepared three new research manuscripts, all of which were accepted for presentation at scholarly conferences. He completed several other working papers and submitted them for review, resulting in one acceptance ("Missing Links: Referrer Behavior and Job Segregation," *Management Science*), one requested revision, and three awaiting decisions. Rubineau also presented his research at seven invited talks, workshops and conferences during the 2012-2013 academic year.



Kim Weeden (Sociology) worked on three disparate, inequality-related questions: 1) How do students' occupational plans affect their educational decisions? 2) Why has income inequality increased in advanced industrialized nations? 3) How do changing patterns of work hours affect the gender pay gap? Papers that were completed during her fellowship semester have been accepted for publication in the *American Sociological Review*, *Social Science Research*, *American Behavioral Scientist*; one other paper is under review. Some of this work was featured in the Cornell Chronicle and the Harvard Business School's online magazine.