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The Use of SSI Among Appalachian Residents

Ashley Wellman

Faculty Mentor: Joanna M. Badagliacco, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

This study by Dr. Badagliacco examines the use of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) among people who reside in Appalachian Kentucky. SSI is a program for people who are poor and are aged 65 or older, blind, or disabled. Children as well as adults may be eligible for SSI.

In order to receive SSI, people must meet many qualifications. SSI is based upon how much income and resources are within a household, such as wages and the amount of money in a bank account. However, some income and resources are not counted toward SSI eligibility, such as food stamps and the house that a person lives in. The maximum amount that a person can have in income and resources is $2000 per month. A couple can have no more than $3000 per month in income and resources to be eligible to receive SSI. While on SSI, a person may also receive Medicaid or food stamps, depending on the state in which he or she resides.

SSI is prevalent throughout the country. When the welfare program was reformed in 1996, many people were no longer eligible to receive welfare. When this happened, people had to find another way to survive. SSI is one of the ways that people in Appalachian Kentucky and other regions of the country found to replace welfare.

The number of people who receive SSI throughout the country has steadily increased since the 1970s. In 1974, there were 70,900 children who received SSI. In 1974, children made up 1.8% of all people who received SSI. This is markedly different from today’s statistics. In June 2003, 6,877,549 children under age 18 received SSI, which is 13.7% of all people receiving SSI. Children need to depend on SSI more than they did 30 years ago.

Through secondary data analysis, such as looking at census data and social science databases, I helped Dr. Badagliacco find more information on SSI. In her research, data is examined on a county level to see how prevalent the use of SSI is among people who are below the poverty line. The percentage of households receiving SSI ranges from 11% in some counties to 27% in more impoverished counties in Kentucky.

One conclusion of this study is that the use of SSI appears to become a safety net for those who are not able to take care of themselves. Children help their families to survive by receiving SSI. In some families, children receive SSI because of a learning disability (often termed a “mental disability”). It is difficult to know if they are actually learning disabled or if the family has had to resort to using SSI for survival.

People who are on SSI and other welfare programs need some help in order to survive. Many families are forced to use their children. Dr. Badagliacco is studying all of this information to shed light on how widespread the use of SSI among children is. She wants to help children and their families make ends meet without forcing children to be labeled as having a “mental disability” if they do not. There are many problems with the SSI program, but this program is helping people.

Throughout the course of this year, I have learned how difficult research can be. I did not know what SSI was at the beginning of the year, nor did I know how widespread it is. I learned that the government or the people need to do something to help those people who are not able to help themselves. The secondary data analysis was difficult to do. There were many SSI articles that I found that had nothing to do with Dr. Badagliacco’s research. I had to learn to look at an abstract of an article and know whether or not it pertained to her study. I learned many other things from Dr. Badagliacco that I will be sure to carry with me throughout the rest of my career. This summer, I will be accompanying her to the National Meeting of the American Sociology Association in Philadelphia to present our results.

The Use of Mooi-Jai (Bond Maids) in Early 20th Century Chinese Society

Joseph Van Horn

Faculty Mentor: Kristin E. Stapleton, Associate Professor, Department of History

Radical changes occurred in Chinese society between the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of Mao’s People’s Republic of China. There has not been an in-depth study of how and why these changes occurred. This is where Dr. Kristen Stapleton’s book will fit in. Her book will examine the changes in Chinese society during the early 20th
Century. She will illustrate how society changed using characters from Pa Chin's novel *Family*.

My research with Dr. Stapleton involved studying the use of mooi-jai, or bond-maids. Ming-Feng, a character in *Family*, is the example used for this class of indentured servants. My research included compiling background information about bond-maids, and noting areas where further research is needed. My work included what mooi-jai are, how Chinese culture perpetuated this practice, and what happened to the girls after they were sold as mooi-jai.

The purpose of my assistance to Dr. Stapleton was to compile what information was available on mooi-jai from English language sources; and to find out what areas of the transitional period were underrepresented in current research. I was to give a brief overview of the work done, as well as point out what areas needed research done. This effort was to enable her to have information to build on, as well as knowing what research needed to be done. My viewpoint was also helpful, because the book is aimed at undergraduate college students. This viewpoint allowed Dr. Stapleton to see how to best present the material in a format that would be received well by her target audience.

This experience had an eye-opening effect. I was able to see firsthand the type of work that goes into writing a book about History. Writing a book is something that I will probably do in my future career, and it was interesting to finally be exposed to the processes involved in publishing a book.

One of my best sources was Maria Jaschok’s book *Concubines and Bondservants*. Her book examined the abolition of the practice of employing mooi-jai in Hong Kong, and gave a useful background regarding the traffic in mooi-jai that I was able to use in my research. Another extremely helpful source was Marinus Meijer’s article “Slavery at the End of the Chinese Dynasty.” His article explained the legal reform movement in Qing China. Although these reforms never had the lasting effect they were intended to have, they illustrate the fact that reformist elements did exist in the Qing government.

Dr. Stapleton’s book will have to fill in the gaps of what happened at the local level throughout China that finally resulted in the abolishment of the trade in mooi-jai. Although it was outlawed in 1910, this trade still existed until 1949. Her goal will be to demonstrate what factors within Chinese society led finally to the abolition of this practice.


**Face Recognition by Infants**

**Alisa Oerther**

**Faculty Mentor: Ramesh Bhatt, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology**

Over the past 30 years, much research has been conducted having to do with recognition of different faces by infants. I worked with Dr. Ramesh Bhatt and his graduate students, Andrea W. Reed and Angela Hayden, in the University of Kentucky’s Infant Memory and Development Lab. We worked on many studies with infants three to seven months old. I helped with recruiting these infants for our studies.

This spring in the lab, we have been doing a study of first-order and second-order face processing. First-order face processing means relations among features, such as your nose is above your mouth. Second-order face processing means the space between things, such as the space between your eyes.

Twenty-five infants approximately five months old were used for this study. The infants sat on their mother’s lap with no distractions. On a computer screen, the infants looked at three different sets of pictures in random order.

The stimulus was a set of two faces shown together. For example, a normal male face was paired with one of the following male faces: first order up-right (figure 1), second order up-right (figure 2), and second order inverted (figure 3). The infant’s reaction was recorded on a DVD. Later, we coded the looking times of each trial to find the preference of the infants. I entered some of the infant’s results in the lab’s computer to find the results of all the differences together. The infants showed preference for the second order processing in the up-right position. Inversion affected both kinds of relational processing with the infants.

![Figure 1](image1)

**First Order Normal Second Order Normal**

![Figure 2](image2)

**Figure 3**

![Second Order Normal](image3)

I not only learned about psychological research, but also people skills, and real job situations. I feel very fortunate that I was able to participate in research during my freshman year. This is also a great opportunity for undergraduate students to explore whether their major is really right for them. I really enjoyed working in the lab. This working, hands-on experience gave me a much stronger understanding of research.