The Lewis N. Cotlow Field Research Fund is a GW Anthropology Department fund, established in 1990 as a bequest by the explorer Lewis N. Cotlow to further field work and exploration. All undergraduate or graduate students at The George Washington University are eligible to apply, but preference is given to those in anthropology programs. Funds are to be used for travel, research assistance, and other expenses related to field research.

The deadline for application is 5 p.m. on the first Friday in March of the year for which support is requested. Applications must be submitted in hard copy; no electronic submissions will be accepted.
I. Personal Information

Name: Claire F. Selsky

Permanent Address:

Current Address:

Home Phone:

E-mail:

Degree Sought: M.A.

Field of Study: Latin American Studies, Concentration in International Public Health and Development

Expected Date of Graduation: Spring 2008

Faculty Advisor(s) for This Project: Barbara Miller, Mark Edberg

Does your proposed project involve the use of a "field language"?

Yes

If so, state what it is, and note your degree of fluency in speaking or writing.

Spanish; fluent in speaking and writing

II. Brief Abstract of the Project

Title of Project:


Amount Requested: $1200.00

In 100 words or less, clearly state the goals of the proposed research.

The proposal research project is focused on the health care experiences of Latin American immigrants in Washington D.C. In an effort to understand how Latino individuals maneuver through the U.S. health care system, I will interview male and female adult Latinos in Mount Pleasant. I will also interview health care providers who work in Mount Pleasant. In order to provide a context for the interview data, I will conduct participant observation in the area. My research will provide descriptive and narrative information on the Washington, D.C. health care system as experienced by an important and understudied minority group.
III. Significance of the Project to Anthropology. *What is the relationship of the proposed research to other anthropological research in this field and region? (250-500 word maximum)*

This project will contribute to several areas of cultural anthropology, including medical anthropology and the anthropology of urban minorities in the United States. As described below, it will add to medical anthropology studies of Latino health in the United States and will add substantially to the ethnography of minorities in the Washington, D.C. area.

*The Anthropology of Latinos and Health in the United States*

There is a growing body of anthropological work on how the poor and uninsured experience the U.S. health care system (A. and S. Greer 1983, Singer and Clair 2003, Singer 2004, Becker 2004, Sered and Fernandopulle 2005). Urban sociologists A. and S. Greer document that race and income levels are strongly correlated with health status and the utilization of and access to services in their edited volume. Singer (2004) and Singer and Clair (2003) discuss the correlation between socioeconomic class and health/health care access. Becker finds that African Americans and Latinos without health insurance delay seeking care because of cost, do without medications, have negative views of safety net health care, and experience discrimination. Sered and Fernandopulle show how, and how often, people “fall through the cracks” of the U.S. health care system.

*The Anthropology of Latinos and Health in Washington, D.C.*

In an early study, Cohen (1979) addressed health issues among Latino immigrants in Washington, D.C., suggesting that poverty-related stress among her participants was minimized by strong cultural mechanisms of emotional and behavioral control.

Williams has conducted more recent anthropological fieldwork and archival research in Washington, D.C. (1988). Williams published an ethnographic study of gentrification of the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood in the 1970s and 1980s, in which she explored relationships between class, culture, gender, and ethnicity.

Social psychologists Murguia and Zea, with clinical psychologist Peterson, have studied ethnomedical health care approaches among Central American immigrants living in Washington, D.C. (2003). They discuss how the spiritual and religious beliefs of members of the Central American immigrant population affect their views of health and health care. They focus on “Latino culture-bound syndromes” such as “the evil eye” and hexes.

Using an approach that combines linguistic anthropology, cultural geography and urban anthropology, Modan (2006) discusses how members of the multi-ethnic Mount Pleasant community use language to legitimate themselves as community members and to discredit others. This study is the only ethnographic research that I know of, on Mount Pleasant, since Williams’s 1988 publication.

In sum, there is a need for more research on Latinos in Washington, D.C., in general, and also for research on the Mount Pleasant community. My research on the health care experiences of the Mount Pleasant Latino community will build upon past anthropological works on the poor and uninsured, in urban studies and in Latino studies, by addressing the local community of Mount Pleasant from a medical anthropological perspective. My research project will explore a key theoretical issue in medical anthropology, namely, the role of poverty and ethnicity in health care access (Farmer 2003, Singer and Clair 2003, Singer 2004). In terms of methods, it follows the lead of Becker in gathering narratives of experiences of care in order to gain an understanding of subjectivities (2004).
IV. Methodology. *What are the specific research questions you plan to ask? What data will you collect and how? How will you collect the data? How will you analyze the data? How do you plan to use these data to address and resolve your research questions? Be specific. (250-500 words maximum)*

The Context of Mt. Pleasant

The Mount Pleasant neighborhood is located between 16th Street and Rock Creek Park, north of Adams Morgan. Mount Pleasant has the highest proportion of immigrants in the Washington D.C. area. Its residents come from more than 120 countries, and they have ties to most of the major social groups in those countries (All-ways.org). Immigrants from El Salvador and Vietnam account for half of the new immigrants to the Mount Pleasant/Adams Morgan zip code (Singer et al. 2001).

In 1980, Latinos made up 13 percent of the population (Low and Gillette 1988). Today, about 35 percent of the residents of Mount Pleasant are Latino (All-way.org). Mount Pleasant Latino residents demonstrate a sense of pride and community by participating in the city's annual Latino Festival (Cadaval 1998). The Latino-serving organizations of Neighbors Consejo, La Clinica del Pueblo (The People's Clinic), The Latino Community Heritage Center, and the Latin American Youth Center, are located in Mount Pleasant.

Having grown up in and around Washington D.C., and having lived and worked in the Mount Pleasant area for nearly a year, I am familiar with the Mount Pleasant immigrant population. Throughout the summer, I will be conducting informal participant observation through my role as an adult English teacher.

Interviews with Latino Residents of Mount Pleasant

I am currently working at Neighbors' Consejo as an adult English teacher. There, I have come into contact with many members of the Mount Pleasant Latino community, male and female, with a wide range of ages. When the term finishes at the end of March, I will be able to ask my adult students to participate in my research project. Through my students, I will be able to reach out to other Latino members of the community, thereby increasing my participant pool. Thus, the research population will be a non-random snowballing sample (Bernard 1994:97). I hope to interview 30 community members.

I will offer to meet the participants in Mount Pleasant at a public location, such as a local coffee shop or park. I expect each interview to take approximately one hour. I hope, with permission, to make audio recordings of my discussions with participants. If a participant is uncomfortable with this method, I will ask him to speak slowly so that I can type, or write, his comments accurately. I will transcribe recorded interviews in the language of the participant. I will give each interviewee a small gift. For example, I may treat participants to coffee or tea, or give them a small gift upon the conclusion of our meetings to say “thank you.”

I will ask community participants questions as listed below, though other questions may be added based upon the flow of conversation.

1) Where were you born?
2) When did you come to the United States?
3) How did you come to the United States?
4) With whom did you come to the United States?
5) What is your age?
6) Are you married or do you live with a partner?
7) Do you have children? If so, how many? How old are they?
8) How many people live in your household? (How many adults? Children?)
9) How many people in your household work?
10) How would you describe your economic situation in general terms?
11) Does anyone in your household speak English? Another language other than Spanish?
12) How long have you lived in the Mount Pleasant area?
13) Where do you live in Mount Pleasant?
14) Do you work? If so, what do you do?
15) Have you ever needed to go to a doctor in the United States but not done so? Or delayed?
16) Have you ever needed to go to a hospital in the United States but not done so? Or delayed?
17) Have you found it difficult to communicate with doctors in the United States because of a language barrier? If so, please share your story.
18) Do you have health insurance? If so, have you found care to meet your expectations? If not, has this fact limited health care options for you? Please explain.
19) Are you a United States resident or citizen? If so, do you participate in U.S. health care funding programs, such as Medicare or Medicaid? Please discuss your experience with such programs. If not, has this affected the choices you make in seeking health care or choosing not to seek health care?
20) Do you care for your health in any ways besides doctor/hospital visits, such as using herbs or traditional medicines from your country? If so, please describe.
21) Have you experienced any illnesses in the last year? If so, what was (were) the illness(es) and how did you deal with it (them)?
22) Has a member of your family experienced any illness(es) in the last year? If so, what was/were the illness(es) and how did he/she deal with the illness(es)?
23) Overall, do you feel you are in good health? If not, what do you believe could be done by you, or with the help of others, to improve your health?
24) Do you feel safe in the Mount Pleasant area? Please describe your feelings.
25) Do you plan to stay in the Mount Pleasant area for the next several years? If so, why? If not, why would you move, and where?
26) Do you have any other comments about your health situation that you would like to share with me?

Interviews with Health Care Providers

I plan to conduct interviews with 6 health workers in Mount Pleasant. I expect these interviews to last approximately one hour. I will approach La Clinica del Pueblo (a hospital/clinic), Neighbors’ Consejo (a clinic for Latino homeless and substance abusers), and Columbia Road Health Services (a community health center serving the low-income and uninsured) as well as other Latino-serving organizations like La Casa (a homeless shelter for Hispanic men). Professor Mark Edberg has offered to assist me in contacting Latino-serving organizations in the area so that I may gain the perspective of health workers. I will ask health workers a series of questions based upon their individual positions. I will discuss individual-specific question sets with Professors Miller and Edberg as opportunities arise to meet with health professionals. My basic guiding questions will include the following:
1) How long have you worked at X institution?
2) What services do you provide to members of the Mount Pleasant community?
3) What are their major health care needs?
4) What problems, if any, do you see in terms of providing them health care?
[Other questions, as relevant, to particular professionals.]
V. Ethics. Describe (in 150-200 words) how you will ensure that your research project is conducted with attention to the ethical guidelines of the discipline of anthropology (and your project’s particular field within the discipline) and the guidelines of GW’s Institutional Review Board (if your project involves living human beings). For the former, consult the Web site of the American Anthropological Association and its section on research ethics (http://www.aaanet.org). For the latter, review GW’s IRB guidelines (http://www.gwu.edu/research/human.htm).

In accordance with the American Anthropological Association ethical guidelines, I will communicate the aims of my investigation to my participants clearly and in detail (“Principles of Professional Responsibility,” AAA, 1.b.), and I will interview people only with their informed verbal consent. Additionally, informants will be given the right to remain anonymous, and will have this right explained to them before interviewing commences. This research project will cause no risk for the participants. When referring to participants in my writing, I will use pseudonyms. I will transcribe all interviews, whether in Spanish or English. I will keep tapes, notes, and transcribed conversations, in a locked drawer in my home.

In accordance with guidelines of GW’s Institutional Review Board, this research project fits in the “excluded research” category. It is not “a systematic investigation designed to develop generalizable knowledge,” but rather a localized case study. Furthermore, it involves no harm to the participants.

VI. Product.
What kinds of results do you expect to come from the proposed research? (E.g., publishable article, presentation at a professional meeting, film, museum exhibit, etc.).

I will use the results of the research in writing my Master's Thesis (to be completed by May 2008). In addition, I will present my findings at the 2008 Anthropology Student Research Conference at GW. During the spring semester of 2008, I would like to use my research in writing a publishable anthropology article. I plan to share my findings with the health institutions that participate in the project.
VII. Schedule. State clearly your timetable of specific research activities.

Research Period: 18 weeks between April 15, 2007 and August 31, 2007

Interview Data:
- 18 weeks
- Two interviews per week of one-two hours each
- Total of 36 interviews (30 community participants; 6 health professionals)
- Weekly transcription of the interviews: 10-12 hours per week

Participant Observation:
Throughout the research period, as a resident of Mount Pleasant, I will be able to provide contextualized data on the neighborhood, including a sense of people’s daily activities, access to services including health, and social involvement such as the church. Through participant observation, I will gain an understanding of major stressors and common difficulties for members of the community.
VIII. Budget. Provide a detailed budget for the proposed activities. Among the expenses you may need to include are transportation, room and board, and research supplies. The Cottlow Fund cannot be used to pay tuition or academic fees or to purchase equipment such as cameras or laptops. Awards range from a few hundred dollars to around $1500.

$300.00  Informal Gifts  (approximately $8.00 per person; 36 participants)

$800.00  Room and Board  (approximately 15% of rent/food costs for an 18-week period)

$100.00  Transportation  (approximately 20 round-trip bus fares; some locations may be within walking distance)

Total requested: $1200.00

IX. Staff. If others are to participate in the project as investigators or assistants, please give their names and qualifications.

Not applicable

X. Outside Support. List any other sources of funding for the project, with amounts and restrictions (if any).

Not applicable
XI. References cited and select bibliography (one page maximum).

All-Ways Mount Pleasant.

Becker, Gay

Bernard, H. Russell

Cadaval, Olivia

Cohen, Lucy
1979 Culture, Disease and Stress Among Latino Immigrants. Research Institute on Immigration and Ethnic Studies, Smithsonian Institute.

Farmer, Paul

Greer, Ann L. and Scott Greer

Low, Linda and Howard Gillette, Jr.

Modan, Gabriella Gahlia

Murguia, Alejandro, with Rolf. A Peterson and Maria Cecilia Zea

Sered, Susan Starr and Rushika Fernandopulle

Singer, Audrey, with Samantha Friedman, Ian Cheung and Marie Price

Singer, Merrill

Singer, Merrill and S. Clair

Williams, Brett
XII. Transcript. A copy of your academic transcript (official or unofficial) must be submitted with this form.

- Transcripts attached

XIII. Permits. Various permits may be necessary to conduct the proposed research (e.g., research visas, research permits, antiquities permits, Historical Preservation Committee approvals, health forms, research on human subjects forms). Anyone planning to conduct research with humans -- even if through an impersonal survey form or using data about humans collected by someone else -- must fill out and submit a set of forms about the "protection of human subjects" before undertaking the research. In most cases, if you have been thoughtful about ethical aspects of your research, and you convey this clearly on the forms, the Committee will speedily approve your project.

The forms are available on the Web: http://www.gwuhec.edu/research/human/htm. Unless you are doing biomedical research, you should use the forms labeled "non-medical." If you have questions, there is a phone number on the Web to call, but please do so only after carefully reading the instructions, trying your best to proceed according to the guidelines, and seeking advice from anthropology professors.

If you have the requisite paperwork, attach copies to this application; if you do not yet have it, summarize the steps you have taken to obtain it. If no permits or committee approvals are necessary, state that below.

Not applicable; see Section V.

XIV. Legal Conditions. All award recipients must provide a complete financial accounting within three months of the termination of research, and must submit a written report on the research within one year of its termination. This report may be a thesis or honors paper. These documents should be submitted to the department's Cotlow administrator or chairperson. Recipients are required to make a presentation at the annual Cotlow Student Research Conference. Failure to meet these conditions may obligate the recipient to repay the award.

By signing below, I declare that the information given on this form is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and that I have read and understood the Legal Conditions section above.

Signature: [Signature]

Date: March 8, 2007

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