Clint P, research statement prepared for Liberal Arts position  
Applied Economist (PhD, with Public Policy MA and Industrial Engineering BS)

Introduction

I am an applied economist with interests ranging from development, environmental to health economics. Generally speaking, I prefer to use experimental frameworks and apply insights from behavioral economics to these policy issues. I first explain my recent dissertation research followed by my future research plans and a brief description of my research philosophy.

Current Research

Livestock theft is a serious problem in sub-Saharan Africa with annual losses of US $50 million. Standard economic crime models assume that potential thieves weigh the benefits and risks of crime. In these standard models higher penalties or probabilities of being caught mitigate crime. In South Africa, however, the probability of being detected committing livestock theft is very low and attempts to deter theft are expensive. Thus, the standard mitigation strategies of high penalties and high detection probabilities are not realistic solutions. In response to this challenge, my dissertation uses experimental methods to evaluate factors that exacerbate livestock theft and strategies to mitigate this problem in South Africa. Specifically, I analyze the importance of heterogeneity in race and wealth as aggravating factors as well as gift-giving and efficiency information as mitigation strategies.

The first aspect of this project is the development of a more applicable model. This model diverges from the standard approach by eliminating the threat of detection or punishment and incorporating aspects of reciprocity theory. In this model, a potential thief’s payoff is determined not only by his consumption, but also impacted by inequality aversion, fairness and economic efficiency considerations. Given South Africa’s apartheid experience, social distance (race and wealth) also impacts an agent’s theft decision. Later, this model is adapted to show how gifts from a rancher to a potential thief might be used as mitigate theft and lead to higher societal welfare.

The second aspect of my dissertation uses South African prisoners as subjects in economic games where players are given the opportunity to “steal” from one another. The results of this experiment validates the importance of the factors mentioned above in the decision making process. Further experimental results show that a gift relationship can reduce theft leading to higher welfare for both parties.

The third aspect of the project also uses this experiment to compare gifts to payments as methods to mitigate theft. Under different conditions both gifts and payments are effective. However, an agent’s behavioral response to the treatment determines a treatment’s usefulness.

I am pleased that this work has shown the potential to impact policy and may lead to a pilot project to test the effectiveness of gift-giving to mitigate livestock theft. Although the generation of knowledge is exciting for its own sake, seeing my work impact policy is an important motivator.

New Directions

In the future, I intend to continue to incorporate behavioral insights into standard models and apply the results to policy. Several projects are of particular interest. I intend to:
-examine the impact of subsidies and rewards for healthy behaviors. Many insurers or development programs use incentives to motivate behavior but little rigorous research has been done to determine how to design such a program for maximum effectiveness. More importantly, little is known about the long-term impacts of such programs and how they might impact future motivation and thus health outcomes.

-analyze why people contribute to public goods and how insights from behavioral economics might be used to influence a more efficient provision of such goods. The most salient application for this work is how people make consumption decisions regarding goods which generate externalities. (e.g. drive an SUV or bike to work?)

-develop a methodology to generate experimental data using the online role playing video games. Typically, economic experiments are done in a laboratory or the field and can be logistically difficult and expensive. Many online video games are set in complex social situations which mimic real life. Decisions made in these environments can generate inexpensive data and be a valuable tool to understand behaviors such as cooperation, kindness and reciprocity.

Research Philosophy

Each of these projects applies economics to relevant policy issues and contributes to our understanding of human decision making. In order to accomplish these projects I will coordinate with other economists and well as academics from other disciplines. It is my firm belief that research questions are best confronted in an interdisciplinary environment and my work reflects this. In addition, some of my work requires collaboration with researchers abroad who might better understand social settings and provide additional opportunities for joint work. Likewise, I work to establish working relationships with the private and public sectors to answer questions of mutual interest. Not only does this assure policy relevance of my work, it also provides and unique opportunity to mitigate the logistical and funding difficulties of experimental economics.

Although research is an important part of my career, it does not stand alone. My research and teaching objectives are symbiotic. My experimental work gives students an entertaining and memorable platform to learn economics in the classroom by incorporating experiments into lectures. In addition, involving more advanced students in research is feasible as these students can easily recognize policy issues and contribute through literature reviews, experimental design and basic data analysis. My strong interest in applied research makes my work more accessible to those without graduate economics training.

Conclusion

As I have mentioned, I pursue research to generate knowledge for its own sake but just as importantly to apply findings to policy. Using experimental methods to apply behavioral insights to development, health and environmental questions allows me to collaborate within and across disciplines as well as both the public and private sector. I am also able to use my research to enhance my teaching and incorporate students in my investigative work. I look forward to continuing on this path.
Winny S, Research Statement prepared for R1 position ((one more draft to go)
PhD Psychology combining industrial and organizational, with BA combining
psychology and management

As a scholar, I see my role in the scientific process to be multi-faceted. While many
scientists focus on either producing or applying research, I believe that it is valuable to
generate, synthesize, and apply new scientific knowledge to answer research questions
and that these different types of inquiries often reinforce each other and provide
different insights. Thus, I carefully examine the fit between the research question and
the research design and methodology of each of my projects. I have utilized a variety of
methods and research designs in my previous studies including survey methodology,
lab experiments, field experiments, momentary experience sampling, physiological
measures, and meta-analytic synthesis.

I believe that my role as a researcher involves both training undergraduate and
graduate students to understand research design and methodology and also
encouraging their interest in conducting original research. To fulfill this role, I will
encourage research collaboration with students with a steady progression in
responsibility. Students will work on projects led by myself as their introduction to
research to be exposed to all aspects of the research process, but will subsequently be
encouraged to develop their own research ideas and interests, carry out these projects
with my support, and submit manuscripts for publication. My goal is to train researchers
to have the necessary research tools at their disposal to carry out high-quality,
innovative research studies, regardless of the research content.

As an industrial/organizational psychologist, I am somewhat unusual in that my
research interests span both the industrial and organizational sides of the science. My
research interests currently center around three themes. First, I am interested in issues
of fairness, bias, and diversity in organizational and educational setting. To this end, I
have studied subgroup differences in selection tools and methods to increase minority
representation in work and school settings. Secondly, I am interested in the
measurement and prediction of academic and job performance. In this domain, I have
examined individual differences related to performance, reliability issues in job
performance ratings, and methodological issues. Third, I am interested in worker health
and well-being. In this arena, I am particularly interested in the role of work events and
the supervisor in the physical and mental health of employees.

My first research stream involves issues of fairness, bias, and diversity in organizational
and educational settings. Within this domain, I have examined subgroup (e.g., race and
gender) differences on selection tools used for selecting workers and students. One
project has examined the Black-White and Hispanic-White gap on tests of cognitive
abilities to understand if the magnitude of these differences increases or decreases over
the lifespan (Sackett & Shen, 2009). Another series of projects examines gender
differences in personality traits (Duehr, Foldes, Shen, & Ones, in preparation; Shen,
Ones, Duehr, & Foldes, 2010a). These projects seek to understand both mean and
variability differences in personality traits between men and women as these differences
may have implications for the gender composition of jobs when employers rely on
personality assessments to hire workers. My research in subgroup differences also
takes on a cross-cultural perspective. A current research project examines whether there are systematic differences in the magnitude of gender differences in personality traits across cultures (Duehr, Shen, Foldes, & Ones, 2010b). A previous project examined similarities and differences across countries on legal protections for diversity and sanctions against discrimination (Myors, Lievens, Schollart, Van Hoye, Cronshaw, & Mlandinic, et al., 2009a, 2009b). In addition to examining subgroup differences in selection tools, I am also interested in the tradeoff between predictive validity and adverse impact. A current project examines whether using specific abilities tests matched to job content, rather than general cognitive ability tests, may help to increase minority representation at minimal loss of predictive validity (Waters, Sackett, & Shen, in preparation).

Industrial/organizational psychologists are at the forefront of utilizing scientific methods to address diversity issues in work and school organizations. I believe that this research is both timely and necessary to help organizations balance their dual goals of maximizing diversity and job performance. My future research in this area will expand on current conceptualizations of gender differences in personality by examining gender differences in the heritability of personality traits and differential prediction by gender of job performance outcomes using personality traits. Additionally, I am interested in expanding my research to examine perceptions of diversity and the diversity climates of universities and organizations to determine if these perceptions, in addition to physical numbers, are related to increased positive outcomes for both minority and majority individuals.

My second research stream has focused on the measurement and prediction of academic and job performance. A study in this area focused on understanding feedback-seeking behaviors as a potential individual difference variable that could explain differences in job performance (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2010). Another study focused on the interrater reliability of job performance ratings (Shen, Beatty, & Sackett, 2009). By understanding under what circumstances performance can be more accurately assessed by supervisors, we're hoping that organizations can increase these situations so that relationships between job performance and other variables can be more reliably estimated. Additionally, these reliability estimates can be used in meta-analytic studies to better understand construct level relationship between job performance and other organizational constructs.

I am also interested in methodological research that can explain inconsistent findings in the performance literature. As part of a project funded by the College Board, my colleagues and I have explored whether there are situational moderators that influence the relationship between a cognitive ability test (e.g., SAT) and freshmen grade-point-average (FGPA). What we found is that though the SAT is a valid predictor of FGPA across schools, it tends to predict better in more selective and costly institutions that place a higher emphasis on traditional selection tools of standardized testing and school records and it tends to be less predictive in schools with higher percentages of minority students or rely on alternative selection tools for selection (Shen, Sackett, Kuncel, Beatty, Rigdon, & Kiger, 2010).

My third research stream has emphasized worker health and well-being. Within this
area, a substantial amount of my research interest involves the role of the supervisor in promoting employee health and happiness. My first year project was the creation of a taxonomy and inventory of ineffective leadership behaviors (Shen, Rasch, Davies, & Bono, 2008). My colleagues and I believe that ineffective leadership is not simply the absence of effective leadership behaviors and that these leadership behaviors have substantial relations with employees working experiences and desire to leave a position. Ultimately, our goal would be to create a training program that teaches leaders to change their ineffective behaviors and evaluate if this program has a beneficial outcomes for employees and the leaders themselves.

Similarly, I have also studied emotional intelligence as another construct that would potentially allow employees to regulate their own emotional experiences at work and another why in which leaders could influence their followers. (Groves, McEnrue, & Shen, 2008; McEnrue, Groves, & Shen, 2009; McEnrue, Groves, & Shen, in press). In addition to examining the role of the leader in employee health and well-being, my colleagues and I have also examined if events at work are related to employee's physiological and psychological health both at work and at home (Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, & Koch, in preparation). We also examined whether an intervention telling individuals to focus on positive life events, lessened the impact of negative work events on employees' health.

Overall, while my research interests are diverse, they center around three major themes: diversity, performance, and health and well-being. My ultimate goal is to produce research that will provide insight into the creation of diverse, equitable, productive, and healthy workplaces. To that end, I take a broad view of research valuing both basic and applied work and the appropriate usage of a variety of methodologies and statistical techniques to address these pressing questions.
Alain-Philippe, French (position and training)
Research Statement prepared for R1 position

Although I received my training and specialize in contemporary French literature, my research has always been guided by an interdisciplinary method. In addition to literary and cultural theories, anthropologic, sociological, and philosophical approaches feed my own analysis of literature and culture. The core that influences all my scholarly projects consists of a fascination for spaces and places; intertextuality; semiotics; modern technological devices and electronics; and the kind of popular culture that characterizes the extreme contemporary.

My main area of interest concerns the novel. While I published articles on Honoré de Balzac and Machado de Assis, I have focused more recently on contemporary novelists. My book, Un Monde Techno. Nouveaux espaces électroniques dans le roman des années 1980 et 1990 [A Techno World. New Electronic Spaces in the Novel of the 1980s and 1990s], examines the invasion of contemporary society by technology, the mass media, and popular culture. In France, this phenomenon is reflected in the novels of a new generation of writers published in the last 20 years. I am concentrating in particular on the nature of these new spaces as it is clear that the invasion of technology in the contemporary society has created a new environment that French anthropologist Marc Augé calls “nonplaces” in his book NonPlaces. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity (Verso, 1995): “installations used for the accelerated circulation of people and goods (urban expressways, interchanges, airports) as well as the means of transporting themselves or the big malls and commercial centers, or even the transitory camps where are parked the refugees around the world” (48). Prefaced by Augé himself, Un Monde Techno defines the nonplaces as they appear in French contemporary prose. My analysis shows that nonplaces share three characteristics. First, they are always the center of extreme, overamplified, deafening noises. Secondly, in the nonplaces, the traditional means of expressions have disappeared and have been replaced by commercial slogans and billboards, sound jingles, and other electronic devices. Finally, nonplaces are characterized by the reduction of space. A great number of contemporary French novels take place in a global village, an environment where big megalopolis such as Paris, London, and New York all look alike.

My research for Un Monde Techno coupled with my work at Duke with Fredric Jameson, and the reading of more postmodern theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, Pascal Bruckner, Umberto Eco, Alain Finkielkraut, Donna Haraway, Jean-François Lyotard, and Paul Virilio, resulted in several other publications and projects. For instance, I applied the nonplace theory to the ambivalent space of immigration in an article dealing with Cameroonian author Calixthe Beyala’s novel Le Petit Prince de Belleville [The Little Prince of Belleville]. Furthermore, in response to the URI Multicultural Center’s invitation to give a presentation on rap music in France, I was intrigued by how the appropriation of both spaces and modern technologies is central to the entire hip-hop culture. After realizing that France is the second largest market for rap music in the world (behind the United States) and that no book entirely devoted to francophone hip-hop culture existed, I decided to edit a volume on the topic. I was honored and pleased to obtain interdisciplinary chapters (and a foreword) by the leading scholars in the field from both sides of the Atlantic. The book has been a resounding success, the result of which is
that I have received much interest from several publishers and invitations to make formal presentations at university campuses and at conventions (Denver, Euromed Marseille, CCRI, U of Wisconsin Madison, Villanova . . .).

Postmodern theorists have also had an impact on my interest in French cinema. Many of the themes that interest me in the French novel of the last 20 years are found in contemporary French cinema, particularly in the Cinéma du look period of the 1980s. This is why I pay close attention to films by directors such as Luc Besson and Jean-Jacques Beineix, and why my long-term projects include writing an article on Besson’s Subway and comparing Jean Renoir’s French Cancan (1955) with Baz Luhrmann’s Moulin Rouge (2001). My first years at URI have only increased my inclination toward comparative literature. I published an article showing the influence of Frenchman Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s Paul et Virginie on Brazilian Machado de Assis’ Helena. But it is my encounters and collaboration (in designing Honors comparative literature courses or directing/participating on thesis/dissertation committees) with the following colleagues that are shaping my future scholarly projects: Robert Manteiga and Clement White in my department; Galen Johnson at the Honors Program; and Naomi Mandel, Jean Walton, Stephen Barber, John Leo, and Valerie Karno in the English department.

Since my arrival at URI, I have become ever more interested in a group of novelists who are attracting much attention, success, and often controversy, all around the world. They include: Frédéric Beigbeder, Marie Darrieussecq, Virginie Despentes, Michel Houellebecq, and Catherine Millet in France; Don DeLillo, Bret Easton Ellis, and Chuck Palahniuk in the United States; Douglas Coupland in Canada; Mian Mian and Weihui in China; Eimi Yamada in Japan; Lucía Etxebarria in Spain; Viktor Pelevine in Russia; or Jacinto Lucas Pires in Portugal. Consequently, I am currently thinking, in collaboration with Naomi Mandel, about a book project dealing with contemporary novels that have been the center of public scandal upon their publication and have become international best sellers. The objective is to decipher the universality of these novels’ style and themes, the reasons behind their success, and the fierce debates they provoked. One of the reasons for the international recognition of these works is the fact that all their authors are often classified as writers of “hip literature,” that is, a literature connected to the contemporary extreme. These novelists depict a hyper real, often apocalyptic, world progressively invaded by popular culture and dominated by electronic devices. The novels’ main characters are irremediably attracted to an increasingly impersonal environment. These characters become cyborgs, creatures in-between (hyper) reality and fiction, and asexual bodies that depend on machines, drugs, and pills for their survival, when they do survive. Because these novelists do not avoid any taboo, their literature redefines the concept of ethics, in particular, in its relation to violence.

I will participate, in the spring of 2004, in a panel organized by Naomi Mandel on “Violence and Ethics” at the annual meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) at the University of Michigan. I will present a paper on an article in progress dedicated to a comparison of Beigbeder’s latest novel, Windows on the World, in which he imagines what happened in the restaurant located on the one hundred and seventh floor of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and Who Killed Daniel Pearl?—French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy’s detailed account of American journalist Daniel Pearl’s kidnapping and execution in Pakistan in January 2002.
My overall research goal is to serve as a connection between the natural and social sciences that inform environmental policy. Policy is informed by an array of social sources—science, culture, the economy, values, power, to name a few. I approach policy as a web of causality by focusing on a topic and moving outward into associated fields. This research approach necessarily requires collaboration and cooperation; one cannot become an expert in all associated fields, nor should one try. But one should be knowledgeable enough to know who to ask and where to find out information in the multiple disciplines.

I hope to continue research through such a web of interdisciplinary research, to build teams of students, academics, and professional in government or NGOs in addressing environmental problems. Of particular interest of mine is to continue research on climate change through collaborative partnerships with people involved with the United Nations Conference on Climate Change. An area of special interest to me and related to my research on climate change is research on the important connections between the UNFCCC and the Biodiversity Convention, both agreed upon at the Earth Summit in 1992. I hope to develop a research agenda that infuses biodiversity criteria with the climate change policy mechanisms.

I also anticipate working to construct local- and state-level environmental policies and initiatives that run parallel to global environmental policy frameworks. Such work has already been pursued in Minnesota where I am working with Department of Natural Resource managers who are interested in developing climate change policy that parallels and prepares the state for a national climate change policy framework that can be aligned with the Kyoto Protocol.