



Personal reflections and Scholarship Impact report/ Questionnaire

Section One: To be completed by the scholar:

Name:	Hannah Huysmans
School:	Durham University
Programme of study:	Anthropology Ba
Email address:	hannah.huysmans@durham.ac.uk
Title of Scholarship Project:	How does contact affect breastfeeding within the first 24 hours after birth?

Please answer the following questions in no more than 400 words per question.

1. What have been the highlights of the project work you have done?

Being able to take part in the Laidlaw scholarship has been both a challenging and worthwhile experience. Highlights of the project include being able to undertake research in an area of my interest and realise a final product from my work. Working alongside professor Helen Ball and Alice Keegan on the anthropology of infant and maternal sleep and health allowed me to expand my knowledge through carrying out research in the Durham Infancy and Sleep Center. Furthermore it was incredibly rewarding to write up my findings and produce a research report at the end of my 6 week project. It was also incredibly satisfying to be given independence to carry out research in my own time, and to be trusted in doing so whilst still being supported by my supervisor. Another highlight of the project was being able to see the impact anthropological research has on communities. In this case the research done at the sleep lab is used to improve maternal and infant health through educating parents and providing new research that health practitioners can use to adjust policies and guidance when informing parents on care for their infants. Overall the project

was incredibly interesting and I thoroughly enjoyed it from start to finish, from coding the data collected by Alice, to formulating a literature review, to writing up my final report.

2. *How would you summarise the future impact of your research?*

The research I conducted at the sleep lab has many possible future impacts. The communities reached by the research that is undertaken at the Durham Infancy and Sleep Centre include parents, infants, health practitioners, policy makers etc. My research involved looking at how an intervention in a hospital (an in-bed bassinet) could increase rates of successful initiation of breastfeeding. With further research, and Alice exploring the topic more in depth in her PhD, the research should, if the outcomes support this, impact hospital policy, causing an increase in successful breastfeeding initiation in hospitals that adopt the intervention. Breastfeeding is incredibly important for maternal and infant health. The WHO (2009, p. 3) states that optimal breastfeeding within the critical window of the first two years of life, could prevent 13% of deaths occurring in children under the age of five globally. Despite its importance, breastfeeding rates in the global north remain low; with the UNICEF's 2018 report showing that Ireland had the lowest number of babies that had never breastfed with 55% and France following suite with 63% (Howard, 2018). Research into increasing breastfeeding rates is important as it impacts maternal and infant health, and hopefully the research written up by myself can help contribute to this topic.

references

World Health Organization. (2009). Infant and Young Child Feeding: Model Chapter for Textbooks for Medical Students and Allied Health Professionals. Geneva
https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/44117/9789241597494_eng.pdf;jsessionid=54C15EC3A99AF499B7328F233B986681?sequence=1

Howard, J. (2018, May). The countries where 1 in 5 children are never breastfed.
<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/09/health/breastfeeding-unicef-study-parenting-without-borders-intl/index.html> [accessed: 29/09/2020]

3. *How has this scholarship enhanced your knowledge and research skills?*

The scholarship has enhanced my knowledge and research skills through allowing me to undertake an independent research project of my interest. I increased my knowledge on the topic of evolutionary medicine and the importance of breastfeeding and skin to skin contact, as well as the biology behind this through conducting a literature review on my topic of choice. Furthermore, through the research project I have been able to gain a variety of skills. I have improved my coding skills by learning how to use Observer XT in order to code observational data, as well as expanded my coding skills in R-studio through learning how to code various new statistical tests. I was also able to improve my time management skills through having to balance multiple tasks at once, as well as being entrusted to manage my own time on this project. Prior to the Laidlaw scholarship I had carried out some research, such as during my A-level geography course where I was required to carry out fieldwork

independently. However, this research project was far more expansive and I was able to gain a valuable insight into carrying out research, as well as improve my own research skills such as; my writing skills, presentation skills, time management, coding ability, communication skills as I had to communicate back to my supervisor, meeting deadlines, and presenting data.

4. *What have been the highlights of your Leadership in Action experience?*

My leadership in action project involved having an active leadership role within the Durham Infancy and Sleep centre. I was able to lead recruitment for a new study the lab was carrying out, I also carried out some independent research on the topic in order to procure the materials needed to formulate a literature review. Being able to work with the Sleep Centre for another summer was a highlight for me as I got to further explore an area I am particularly interested in. One of the highlights of the experience however was being entrusted to take on a leadership role through teaching and overseeing the research assistants in their coding of the data collected. I did not expect to be given that level of responsibility and it was incredibly rewarding to see how the time spent talking through the coding scheme with them allowed them to independently code the data for themselves. I also learnt I enjoyed the responsibility of overseeing this teaching.

5. *How would you summarise the future impact of your Leadership in Action experience?*

The future impacts of the project itself are centered around maternal and infant health. I cannot disclose too much information as the project is confidential, however the main aim of the research and data collected is to improve infant sleep and safety around infant sleep products.

6. *How has this scholarship enhanced your leadership skills?*

Through my Leadership in Action experience, I was able to gain many valuable skills which I think impacted me personally. I was also able to learn about various leadership styles, what kind of leader I currently am and how to become a better leader, and how to be an ethical leader through the various workshops, training day and seminars put on by the Laidlaw foundation. The Leadership in Action summer itself gave me newfound confidence in my leadership skills, and I think the programme helped me to become a better leader overall through gaining a variety of skills in leadership, time management, ethical leadership etc. I gained these skills through various talks, giving presentations, communicating with members of a team, overseeing a team of research assistants, and writing up research.

7. *How has this scholarship contributed to your employability skills and career plans?*

I think the scholarship overall has contributed to my employability as I have learnt a variety of new skills and improved my existing ones. Furthermore, I will take away everything I have learnt from the programme and implement it into my future endeavours, whether as a PhD student if I continue to carry out research or in my future workplace. Due to the interest, I discovered in research and particularly evolutionary medicine, I have decided to apply for the medical anthropology masters at Durham University. The programme has given me newfound confidence I can take away and use when applying for future programmes. The networking opportunities I received from the scholarship will also contribute to my employability, and I am keen to take part in similar programmes in future having seen how enjoyable and worthwhile this one was

Section Two: To be completed by the supervisor:

Please answer the following question (500 word maximum)

'As supervisor, what do you feel has been the impact of the Laidlaw Research and Leadership project?'

Consideration of the scholar's knowledge and research skills, leadership skills and employability skills as well as research impact can be highlighted.

The Laidlaw Research and Leadership project we have been involved in over the past 2 years has clearly been of benefit to Hannah our Laidlaw Scholar, and to the Durham Infancy & Sleep Centre. In her first summer Hannah was an engaged and effective researcher, learning how to analyse video data and conduct analyses to answer research questions. In her second summer she had sufficient skills and confidence to be able to take the lead on recruiting and liaising with volunteers on a subsequent project, and to train new research assistants in how to code videos using the skills she had learned the previous summer. Hannah's contributions helped us to quickly progress projects during the brief periods between lockdowns when we were able to work onsite, and especially during the 2nd summer when we were able to conduct on-site lab studies with volunteer families. Overall, this was a mutually beneficial project that we are pleased to have been involved with.