Radiality: A Polynesian Foundational Cultural Model

Giovanni Bennardo, Anthropology

In the last three years, supported by a NSF Grant #BCS 0349011, I investigated the Tongan (Polynesian) conceptions of social relationships by collecting and analyzing linguistic and social networks data. The individuals interviewed were mostly commoners and a cultural model was obtained. This summer (July-August), supported by a new NSF Grant #BCS 0650458 I will collect new data by means of interviews with members of the top echelon of Tongan society like nobles, chiefs and public officials. Like the previous data, these new linguistic data will be analyzed to recover the potential cultural model held regarding social relationships. A final comparison between the two models obtained will conclude the research project.

During fall 2007 and spring 2008, I plan to conduct the following activities (among others): 1) analyze the interview by conducting frequency counts of key words related to the foundational cultural model; 2) conduct a metaphor analysis of the interviews; 3) conduct a quantitative analysis of the kinship data collected; 4) update the Digitized Tongan database (a GIS project) with the results of the new analyses; 5) write up the results of the analyses for presentation at a conference; 6) include the results in a manuscript I am writing and already under contract for publication with Cambridge University Press.

The undergraduate student selected will be responsible for transferring videotaped interviews to DVDs, conduct quantitative analyses on the linguistic data and the kinship data. S/he is expected to work between 8 and 10 hours per week. S/he will actively participate in the discussion about the relevance and potential of these data within the overall research. Besides expanding his/her familiarity and expertise with computer applications such as Excel, iMovieHD, and iDVD, the student will experience and contribute personally to the conceptualization and implementation of this particular phase of the research project. Both aspects of this experience increase the potential of the student as a future scholar and/or professional. Previous experience in handling and processing numeric data statistically and video data digitally by using applications on a PC/Macintosh would be a great advantage in the selection process.

Expenses for CDs, DVDs, hard drive storage, photocopies, and printing need to be covered under grant funds.
Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program, March 27, 2008

Radiality: A Polynesian Foundational Cultural Model II

Giovanni Bennardo, Anthropology

In the last three years, supported by two NSF Grants (#BCS 0349011 and #BCS 0650458), I investigated the Tongan (Polynesian) conceptions of social relationships by collecting and analyzing linguistic and social networks data. The individuals interviewed were commoners and members of the top echelon of Tongan society like nobles, chiefs and public officials. The analyses of the data revealed the presence of a Tongan foundational cultural model I named ‘radiality.’

While most of the data collected has already been analyzed, some data still needs to be explored. These linguistic data (interviews) and cognitive data (tasks) will be analyzed in a similar fashion to those already examined to possibly recover again, thus further supporting the previous findings, the potential foundational cultural model held regarding social relationships.

During fall 2008 and spring 2009, I plan to conduct the following activities (among others): 1) analyze interviews by conducting frequency counts of key words related to the foundational cultural model; 2) conduct a metaphor analysis of the interviews; 3) conduct a quantitative analysis of the cognitive data collected; 4) update the Digitized Tongan database (a GIS project) with the results of the new analyses; 5) write up the results of the analyses for presentation at a conference; 6) include the results in a manuscript I am writing and already under contract for publication with Cambridge University Press.

The undergraduate student selected will be responsible for transferring videotaped interviews to DVDs, conduct quantitative analyses on the linguistic data and the cognitive data, help with various aspects of the manuscript preparation. S/he is expected to work between 8 and 10 hours per week. S/he will actively participate in the discussion about the relevance and potential of these data within the overall research. Besides expanding his/her familiarity and expertise with computer applications such as Excel, EndNote, iMovieHD, and iDVD, the student will experience and contribute personally to the conceptualization and implementation of this particular phase of the research project. Both aspects of this experience increase the potential of the student as a future scholar and/or professional. Previous experience in handling and processing numeric data statistically and video data digitally by using applications on a PC/Macintosh would be a great advantage in the selection process.

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Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program, February 12, 2009

Is Tongan a SVO or VSO language? A Quantitative Analysis.

Giovanni Bennardo, Anthropology

The Tongan language (Western Polynesian, Tongic) is typically classified as a VSO, that is a language in which the Verb precedes the Subject and the Subject precedes the Object of the sentence. However, both in oral and written texts, Tongans use a variety of sentence structures including VSO and others.

For this research project I intend to investigate this phenomenon and try to identify specific language production context within which the switch between the two forms takes place. For this reason a number of written Tongan texts will be scanned and digitized to prepare them for analysis. Similarly, a number of oral texts (collected in the field over a number of years) will also be readied for analysis.

During fall 2009 and spring 2010, I plan to conduct a number of analyses in two stages: first, all the sentences in the texts will be assigned a sentence structure (either SVO or VSO, or else); second, a frequency count will be conducted with particular attention devoted to the type of texts within which those frequencies are realized.

The undergraduate student selected will be responsible for scanning and digitizing written texts, help in the sentence structure assignments, and finally create frequency analyses in graph forms. S/he is expected to work between 8 and 10 hours per week. S/he will actively participate in the discussion about the relevance and potential of the data within the research. Besides expanding his/her familiarity and expertise with computer applications such as ReadIris and Excel, the student will experience and contribute personally to the conceptualization and implementation of this particular phase of the research project. Both aspects of this experience increase the potential of the student as a future scholar and/or professional. Previous experience in handling and processing numeric data statistically by using applications on a PC/Macintosh would be a great advantage in the selection process.

Expenses for CDs, DVDs, hard drive storage, photocopies, and printing need to be covered under grant funds.
Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program, February 10, 2010

Conceptualizations of Nature and the Environment Across Cultures

Giovanni Bennardo
Department of Anthropology
and Cognitive Science Initiative
Northern Illinois University

In the next three years, I will conduct a research about the conceptualization of nature and the environment in many cultures. A beta model of the methodology to be employed will be used on a sample of the American local population.

The general goal is to discover cultural model of nature and the environment. These out-of-awareness mental structures are used to make deduction about the world, to explain relationships in a causal fashion, and to construct and interpret representations. Importantly, they can also motivate behavior. In other words, we use cultural models to make sense of the world around us while at the same time they provide the basis out of which we plan our behavior.

The specific goal is to try out a methodology that will be eventually used in other cultures across the world. During fall 2010 and spring 2011, I plan to conduct research in three stages: first, I will conduct some interviews; second, the interviews will be transcribed; third, a number of linguistic analyses will be conducted on the obtained texts.

The undergraduate student selected will be responsible for helping with selecting the content of the interviews (topic, questions), transcribing the interviews texts, and helping during the analyses. S/he is expected to work between 8 and 10 hours per week. S/he will actively participate in the discussion about the relevance and potential of the data within the research. Besides expanding his/her familiarity and expertise with computer applications such as Word and Excel, the student will experience and contribute personally to the conceptualization and implementation of this particular phase of the research project. Both aspects of this experience increase the potential of the student as a future scholar and/or professional. Previous experience in handling and processing numeric data statistically by using applications on a PC/Macintosh would be a great advantage in the selection process.

Expenses for CDs, DVDs, hard drive storage, photocopies, and printing need to be covered under grant funds.
Conceptualizations of Nature and the Environment Across Cultures II

Giovanni Bennardo
Department of Anthropology
and Cognitive Science Initiative
Northern Illinois University

I am currently conducting a research about the conceptualization of nature and the environment in many cultures. A beta model of the methodology to be employed was used on a sample of the American local population during academic year 2010-11.

The general goal was to discover cultural model of nature and the environment. These out-of-awareness mental structures are used to make deduction about the world, to explain relationships in a causal fashion, and to construct and interpret representations. Importantly, they can also motivate behavior. In other words, we use cultural models to make sense of the world around us while at the same time they provide the basis out of which we plan our behavior.

The specific goal was to try out a methodology to be used in other cultures across the world. During fall 2010 and spring 2011 I conducted some interviews and transcribed them (both with the help of URAP students). During fall 2011 and spring 2012, I plan to conduct a number of linguistic analyses (key words analysis, metaphor analysis, gist analysis) on the obtained texts.

The undergraduate student selected will be responsible for helping during the analyses. She is expected to work between 8 and 10 hours per week. She will actively participate in the discussion about the relevance and potential of the data within the research. Besides expanding his/her familiarity and expertise with computer applications such as Word and Excel, the student will experience and contribute personally to the conceptualization and implementation of this particular phase of the research project. Both aspects of this experience increase the potential of the student as a future scholar and/or professional. Previous experience in handling and processing numeric data statistically by using applications on a PC/Macintosh would be a great advantage in the selection process.

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