



School of Social Sciences
Summer Scholarship Research Program 2021
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Project 111: Ramadan: Devotion, Compassion, and Purification

Supervisor(s): Adam Possamai - A.Possamai@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Pedram Khosronejad - P.khosronejad@westernsydney.edu.au
Second Supervisor

Kathleen Openshaw - K.Openshaw@westernsydney.edu.au
Third Supervisor

This project is in partnership with the **Powerhouse Museum**

Project Description

According to the 2016 census, Muslims make up more than 2.6 % of the Australian population, an increase of over 15% of its previous population share of 2.2% reported in the previous census 5 years earlier. However, the annual observance of Ramadan shared by the Australian Muslim communities is poorly represented in scholarship.

Ramadan which is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar is one of the five pillars of Islam and seen as an obligation upon all Muslims who are in good health. Considered as the holiest month of the year, during which time many Muslims across the world fast from sunrise to sunset – no food or drink for the whole day- Ramadan should be considered as a time for self-examination, increased religious devotion and a chance to broaden one’s compassion for the less fortunate. Through this temporary deprivation, Muslims renew their awareness of and gratitude for everything God has provided in their lives.

This project will be a multisensory and reciprocal project with the aim of community engagement and public education. Researchers and the public will be the active parts of this research project together during which they work side by side.

The results of this project will be used in a greater joint project between Western Sydney University and Parramatta Powerhouse Museum for curating an exhibition at Parramatta, which will include a submission for an ARC Linkage grant.

Project Aims

- To better understand the Interplay between the faith (Islam / Ramadan) and visual and material culture
- To understand the role of Islam / Ramadan in the creation of visual and material culture
- The importance of Immigrant family stories about Ramadan (oral history & Ramadan in Diaspora) and the creation of visual memory
- To determine the role that digital devices and related apps play in the production and archiving Ramadans’ memory (smartphones & Ramadan)

Project Methods

In this research project we are using a multidisciplinary research method which comprises multi-sited ethnography, reciprocal ethnography, material culture studies, and heritage and memory studies.

We will train a student and prepare them to collect and analyse data in Liverpool, Parramatta, and Auburn. This will include:

- Collecting sensory and visual materials produced by Muslim communities after the Ramadan ceremonies during previous years: sound, photographs and film footages. This will be done by contacting Muslim communities and associations and ask them if they have kept some archive of the festival of Ramadan they have run over the years, and collecting digital pictures available to the public (e.g. #RamadanSydney on Instagram and Facebook).
- Writing ethnographical notes on material culture. The analysis will focus on exploring the experiences of immigrant Muslims' fasting practices, the importance of the production of sensory and visual materials relating to the Ramadan ceremony while they are in Australia, the role of immigrant sensory, visual and material culture in performing Ramadan in Diaspora, and the changings in social, cultural and religious elements of Ramadan in Diaspora.
- In the process of training, the student will work with the three CIs in writing a journal articles. This article will be part for the building of a rack record towards applying for a ARC Linkage grant and contributing towards a research to plan an exhibition at Power House Museum in the near future.

Opportunity for Skill Development

The student will benefit in taking part in the beginning of a long research project that will culminate in the submission of an ARC linkage grant and an exhibition at the Power House Museum. He or she will learn to work as part of a research team, collect and analyse data, and be involved in the writing of results. He or she will also learn the process of writing and submitting an academic paper. It is unlikely that the article will be completed during the summer scholarship but the CIs will remain connected with the student afterwards and while no further input from the student will be requested, he or she will be kept involved in the submission process for educative purpose. The CIs would welcome this student to continue working on this project afterwards as part of a thesis for a Master of Research.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

The ideal student would be enrolled in a Bachelor of Social Sciences or a Bachelor of Anthropology and have completed at least on research method unit in social sciences and 80 credit points. Students from other degrees who have completed a unit in social science methods and 80 credit points will also be considered.

Project 112: Tourism Futures in Western Sydney

Supervisor(s): Garth Lean - g.lean@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Project Description

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact of Australia's tourism industry. Despite the setbacks, tourism is still seen as a key industry for Australia's economic future. The development of a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek has been identified as an important opportunity to foster tourism development in Western Sydney. However, some have argued that the benefit for Western Sydney tourism may be limited with domestic and international travellers transiting directly from the airport to other destinations closer to the Sydney CBD, or in other parts of New South Wales and Australia. It is important that opportunities to benefit from such a significant infrastructure development are realised.

The summer research student will work with the project supervisor and tourism stakeholders in Western Sydney to investigate how the Western Sydney tourism sector can take advantage of the tourism development opportunities that the new airport offers. This will include reviewing relevant strategies and policies across local government areas in Western Sydney.

Project Aims

1. To identify and review tourism strategies in place across local governments in Western Sydney.
2. To identify the ways in which local governments in Western Sydney are preparing to take advantage of the development of Western Sydney airport.

Project Methods

1. Search for publicly available reports, media, journal articles and other sources that detail the tourism strategies of Western Sydney local governments.
2. Collate sources and information in an Excel Spreadsheet.
3. Conduct a basic thematic analysis.

Opportunity for Skill Development

The student will have the opportunity to join the TinDA (Travel in the Digital Age) and SoTech (Social Technologies) research teams, a group of 20+ academics, research students and research associates investigating the intersections of mobile lives, people, travel and technology. We conduct innovative projects in collaboration with government, commercial and not-for-profit partners. This collaborative environment will enable the student to fast-track their development as a researcher, and lead to future research opportunities. In addition, the student will develop the following research skills:

- Learn how to conduct and organise a review of reports, journal articles and media commentary using Excel.
- Gain skills in content / thematic analysis.
- Gain knowledge of the ethical and legal complexities of conducting social research.
- Have opportunities to network with Western Sydney tourism stakeholders.
- Have the opportunity to co-write publications that draw on the research they complete.
- Join a wider interdisciplinary team of staff and students and be included in the project's digital presence, in turn, building their own professional web presence.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

While all students are welcome to apply, this project would be most suited to a final year undergraduate student who has been completing a degree in the School of Social Sciences or School of Humanities and Communications. We welcome applications from students who are looking to continue into higher research degree programs, and to have an ongoing connection with the Travel in the Digital Age and Social Technologies research teams.

Project 113: The Role of Events in Western Sydney's Visitor Economy

Supervisor(s): Garth Lean - g.lean@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Project Description

Governments across the world are increasingly looking to events to stimulate visitor economies, foster community well-being and to preserve cultural heritage. This is no exception in Western Sydney where events are also contributing toward strategies to address negative perceptions of places across the region. This landscape has become increasingly more complex during the COVID-19 Global Health Pandemic.

The successful summer research student will work with lead researcher and key stakeholders to complete a review of events strategies across local governments in Western Sydney. This work will be used in curriculum development, and to help identify partners for teaching and research.

Project Aims

1. To identify and review event strategies in place across local governments in Western Sydney.
2. To identify key events contacts across Western Sydney to develop partnerships and curriculum.

Project Methods

1. Search for publicly available reports, media, journal articles and other sources that detail the tourism strategies of Western Sydney local governments.
2. Collate sources and information in an Excel Spreadsheet.
3. Conduct a basic thematic analysis.

Opportunity for Skill Development

The student will have the opportunity to join the TinDA (Travel in the Digital Age) and SoTech (Social Technologies) research teams, a group of 20+ academics, research students and research associates investigating the intersections of mobile lives, people, travel and technology. We conduct innovative projects in collaboration with government, commercial and not-for-profit partners. This collaborative environment will enable the student to fast-track their development as a researcher, and lead to future research opportunities. In addition, the student will develop the following research skills:

- Learn how to conduct and organise a review of reports, journal articles and media commentary using Excel.
- Gain skills in content / thematic analysis.
- Gain knowledge of the ethical and legal complexities of conducting social research.
- Have opportunities to network with Western Sydney event stakeholders.
- Have the opportunity to co-write publications that draw on the research they complete.
- Join a wider interdisciplinary team of staff and students and be included in the project's digital presence, in turn, building their own professional web presence.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

While all students are welcome to apply, this project would be most suited to a final year undergraduate student who has been completing a degree in the School of Social Sciences or School of Humanities and Communications. We welcome applications from students who are looking to continue into higher research degree programs, and to have an ongoing connection with the Travel in the Digital Age and Social Technologies research teams.

Project 114: Social Media and Cloth Nappy Communities

Supervisor(s): Jenna Condie - j.condie@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Bhavya Chitranshi - B.Chitranshi@westernsydney.edu.au
Second Supervisor

Project Description

Single use non-biodegradable disposable nappies are a serious environmental problem. Almost 700 kilotons of raw materials are used annually to manufacture disposable nappies, which equates to 2.7 metric tons of greenhouse gases per year. In Australia, an estimated 3.75 million disposable nappies are used every day. As it takes anywhere between 150-500 years for them to decompose, billions of nappies still exist in our waste systems. Plastic pollution is detrimental to the health of our planet and rectifying the damage caused by single use disposable nappies should be an urgent priority.

A growing number of people, mainly women, are looking to the reusable cloth nappy as a more sustainable solution to our wasteful nappy problem. Prior to the rise of disposable nappies in Western countries, babies often wore cloth nappies. The (re)turn to cloth nappies is tied up with technological innovation, improvements to sanitation infrastructures, and rising consumer demand for reusable absorbent hygiene products. Today's cloth nappies are known as 'Modern Cloth Nappies' (MCNs). To differentiate them from past iterations of cloth nappies that were bulky, visually unappealing, and laborious to wash, MCNs are now fitted, elasticated, waterproof, machine washable, resizable, come with adjustable snaps or Velcro, and in a range of highly visual prints with matching accessories such as change mats and wet bags. MCNs offer the same usability and comfort benefits of disposable nappies, while reducing waste.

Cloth nappy communities are coming together on social media platforms to provide support for MCN use, encourage reusability, build community, and provide education. Organised and populated primarily by mothers, there are numerous MCN Facebook Groups that are creating active and necessary spaces for dialogue, participation, real time advice, and action. Some of the MCN Facebook Groups are well established and well moderated with high levels of engagement and large numbers of members, such as Clean Cloth Nappies (75,100), Cloth Nappy Reviews and Support (26,500), and MCN Tips and Tricks (17,600). MCN brands have large numbers of followers on their Facebook Pages too, like Designer Bums (35,971), Bare and Boho (16,150), and Econaps (13,316). There is also a prominent 'Buy Swap Sell' culture for MCNs within Facebook Groups and the platform's Marketplace function.

Parents will stop using disposable nappies as environmental and socio-economic policies and practices come into play to shift social practices towards reuse. MCN communities have an important role to play in the transition towards sustainable nappy practices and within social support for parents in their pro-environmental care work. This research project aims to understand how MCN social media-based communities are instigating change and supporting more sustainable nappy practices.

Project Aims

This research project aims to understand how MCN social media-based communities are instigating change and supporting more sustainable nappy practices.

The summer scholarship project will:

- Produce a literature review of peer-reviewed journal articles and other relevant publications (e.g. reports, policy documents) on social media communities, parenting practices and pro-environmental social action.
- Co-analyse qualitative data from focus groups with key stakeholders within Australian MCN social media communities.

Project Methods

- A number of established search techniques will be used to conduct the literature review. All sources will be compiled into an Excel sheet for thematic analysis.
- Qualitative data from focus groups will be co-analysed with the supervision team using thematic and discursive analytical techniques.

Opportunity for Skill Development

You will learn how to carry out a rigorous literature review using a range of search techniques across different databases (e.g. Scopus, Google Scholar). You will acquire skills in developing a set of keywords that return relevant information. You will also learn how a theoretical framework shapes the ways in which you can read the literature.

You will also co-analyse qualitative data from focus groups, which creates an opportunity to learn qualitative data analysis techniques in practice with experienced researchers.

The literature review and data analysis will be published in a journal article. You will have the opportunity to be a co-author on this publication.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

All students with an interest in this project are welcome to apply. The project would suit a final year undergraduate student who might like to continue on into postgraduate study researching the role of social media communities for social and environmental issues.

Project 115: Social Media Use in the Social Housing Sector

Supervisor(s): Jenna Condie - j.condie@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Project Description

More and more people are facing housing stress in Australia. The Covid-19 pandemic has amplified the need for secure and affordable housing. For cities to be liveable, safe, and just, social housing is more necessary than ever. However, social housing is effectively being designed out of inner-city areas through government-led public housing redevelopment. Low-income communities are being pushed to the margins of cities into concentrated pockets of deprivation and in turn, they face socio-spatial inequalities due to geographical location and inequitable mobilities due to inadequate transport infrastructure.

Delivering social housing in the contexts of housing inequity and welfare reform is fraught with challenges. Social media makes new challenges for non-profit community housing providers as they traverse the complex space between the state and the market. Given the ‘context collapse’ of social media where multiple audiences and communities are compressed into the same digital spaces, how social housing organisations take up social media reveals who and what matters within the social housing sector and more broadly, within society.

This project utilises, updates, and enhances existing datasets from the ‘Social Media for Social Housing: Tenant Participation in the Digital Age’ project (2015-16). The project examined the use of social media for tenant participation by public and community housing providers in New South Wales (NSW). The existing datasets on social media use by the social housing sector in NSW are 1) an audit of the digital footprints of community and public housing providers, 2) interviews with housing stakeholders, and 3) social media content analyses of community and public housing provider Facebook and Twitter accounts. The summer scholarship will contribute to updating the 2015-2016 datasets, which will also be reanalysed in light of new literature on social media as well as recent developments within the social housing sector.

Project Aims

This research project examines how social media is used by social housing organisations for the purposes of tenant participation, social entrepreneurship, and housing advocacy.

Depending on the student’s disciplinary background and skill set, the summer scholarship student will either:

1. Complete and update a ‘digital footprint’ audit of community housing providers in New South Wales;
2. Generate data visualisations of social media data from social housing organisations; or
3. Co-analyse qualitative data from focus groups with key stakeholders from the social housing sector.

Project Methods

- A number of established search techniques will be used to carry out the digital footprint audit. All data will be compiled into an Excel sheet for quantitative analysis.
- Open source data visualisation tools will be used to explain complex social media data in clear and effective ways.
- Qualitative data from focus groups will be co-analysed with the lead supervisor using thematic and discursive analytical techniques.

Opportunity for Skill Development

Depending on your disciplinary background and skillset, you will have the option of which data analysis tasks you want to work on.

1. You will learn how to carry out a rigorous audit using a range of search techniques. You will input that data and derive quantitative research findings about the digital footprints of community housing providers in NSW.
2. You will learn how to generate data visualisations using a range of open source tools. You will integrate those visualisations into the written analysis.
3. You will also co-analyse qualitative data from focus groups, which creates an opportunity to learn qualitative data analysis techniques in practice with an experienced researcher.

The data analysis will be published in a journal article. You will have the opportunity to be a co-author on this publication.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

All students with an interest in this project are welcome to apply. The project would suit a final year undergraduate student from any degree where data analysis skills are developed. Ideally, a student who might like to continue on with postgraduate study researching social media and/or social housing will apply.