DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE

ENDOWED FELLOWS GRANT COMPETITION
General Information:

NAME: Rachel Willis

CAMPUS ADDRESS:

HOME ADDRESS:

PHONE NUMBER:
EMAIL ADDRESS:
YEAR OF GRADUATION: 2018

SCHOOL AND MAJOR:
McAnulty College of Liberal Arts:
Public Relations & International Relations with a concentration in Latin American Studies
Minor in Women’s and Gender Studies (not yet reflected on official transcript)

THIS IS AN APPLICATION FOR ENDOWED FELLOWSHIP IN (CHECK PRIMARY AREA):
___ AFRICAN STUDIES
___ CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION
___ COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING
___ CREATIVE ARTS
___ LIBERAL ARTS
___ PHENOMENOLOGY
X WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES
The Effect of Role Models on Girls’ Empowerment Within Chile

Introduction: Purpose, Outline & Background

In my proposed research I will address the use of female role models as an effective tool for empowerment of young girls between the ages of eight and thirteen years old in contemporary Chilean society. I intend to conduct this research while studying abroad in fall 2016 in Valparaiso, Chile, in a program focused on the cultural identity, social justice, and community development of Chile offered by the School for International Training (SIT).

The role of women in society has evolved throughout Chilean history including before, during, and after Augusto Pinochet’s regime. Today in Chile, women are beginning to take a more prominent role in society, especially politics. On January 14, 2015, the Chilean Senate passed sweeping electoral reforms with the intent to improve democracy and make candidates and elected officials more representative of the population. Included in these reforms were temporary gender quotas that will be in place from 2017 to 2029, requiring no single gender to hold more than 60 percent in the parties’ final slates of candidates for congress. In practice, this means, women are required to hold at least 40 percent of the candidate positions. Presently, women only hold 15.7 percent of seats in both chambers of Congress, which is below the regional average of 27 percent for the Americas and global average of 22 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015). However in 2015, two prominent women, Michelle Bachelet and Isabel Allende, held two of the most powerful seats in Chilean politics as the president of Chile and the president of the Chilean Senate, respectively.

Research: Questions, Objectives & Methodology

With more opportunities emerging for women in politics, the question arises as to how the next generation of women will be empowered to participate. One strategy is through role models, individuals who serve as behavioral models, representations of the possible, and/or
inspirations for others also called role aspirants (Morgenroth, Ryan & Peters, 2015). The “role model effect” works by placing women in positions with higher visibility to the media and society, including young girls, which then encourages girls, who have seen these women succeed in positions of power, to aspire to do the same (Childs, 2004). I want to discover who are considered to be influential female role models in Chilean politics, how they are represented by media and society, and how the role model effect can be used for girls’ empowerment in Chile’s more collective society and, if so, to examine its limitations due to differences in socio-economic backgrounds and cultures.

This study will require a working definition of role model that can be understood cross-culturally, a set of criteria for determining who the female role models are and list of potential candidates, analysis through a case study of how the media have represented female politicians in the news, and a survey designed to gauge the perceptions of girls ages eight to thirteen years old regarding role models. SIT offers a course in Research Methods & Ethics designed to prepare students for planning and executing their independent studies during the last four weeks of the program. For my project, I must submit a Review of Research with Human Subjects application, which then will need approval from the SIT Institutional Review Board and the Local Review Board in Valparaiso. On Appendix B of this application, I have attached a full copy of this review procedure taken from the SIT Student Handbook.

Relationship to Academic Discipline:

Women’s political participation is critical to research in international relations. As of August 2015, women only comprised 22 percent of all national parliaments in the world (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015). Additionally, only 11 women served as Head of State and 10 served as Head of Government. (UN Women, 2016) As stated by the 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women’s political participation, “Women in every part of the world continue to be
largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women.” Nevertheless, women will not participate in politics if they do not receive encouragement from role models as young girls. Therefore, girls’ empowerment is equally important to the study of International Relations.

**Relationship to Academic and Personal Interests:**

My study of female role models and their empowerment of young girls in Chile are relevant and important to my academic, professional, and personal development. Foremost, as a double major in Public Relations and International Relations with a concentration in Latin-American Studies and, hopefully, a minor in Women’s and Gender Studies, this project grants me the opportunity to explore an intersection of these three disciplines within the context of Latin America. With all courses taught in Spanish as well as the Independent Study Project, I will be able to improve my fluency in Spanish. The project would also provide a significant foundation for further research in graduate school in which I want to earn a Master’s in Public Administration with the goal of becoming a CEO of a non-profit or non-governmental organization devoted to women’s issues and empowerment. Furthermore, as an undergraduate mentor for Strong Women, Strong Girls (SWSG), I have seen firsthand the positive impact role models can have on young girls. SWSG is a mentoring organization dedicated to building communities where young, at-risk girls in Pittsburgh develop leadership skills, learn about strong female leaders, and explore potential college and career opportunities. Through this project, I can better understand how role models serve to empower young girls both in Pittsburgh and Chile. Overall, I would benefit greatly from an endowed fellowship grant.
**Relationship to Duquesne Mission:**

The Duquesne University Endowed Fellowship Grant in Women’s and Gender Studies is an ideal setting to conduct my research, especially with support from the Honors College and my faculty mentor, Dr. Boncho Dragiyski. My research provides an opportunity for more university research into the Latin-American society, culture, and politics, all of which have been influenced heavily by Catholicism. This research provides Duquesne and the Honors College with a new topic of research in a region of the world underemphasized at the university, the effectiveness of role models in girls’ empowerment in Chile, and further expansion of study within the Women’s and Gender Studies discipline.
Letter of Endorsement:

NAME OF FACULTY MENTOR: Dr. Boncho Dragiyski
DEPARTMENT AND SCHOOL: Modern Languages & Literatures Dept. / McAnulty College of Liberal Arts

CAMPUS ADDRESS:

PHONE NUMBER:
EMAIL ADDRESS:

Dr. Dragiyski has sent his letter of endorsement directly to the Honors College’s email address. I waive my right to see his letter of endorsement. Thank you.
Appendix A:

Works Cited:


Appendix B:

SIT policy on Independent Study Projects and Human Subjects Review. This was taken from the SIT Student Handbook which can be found online at https://studyabroad.sit.edu/documents/studyabroad/Student-Handbook.pdf.

INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECTS & HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW POLICY

All final Independent Study Project proposals must reflect a thoughtful and culturally appropriate consideration of the effects of the inquiry on the participants. To that end, students will be required to submit a Review of Research with Human Subjects application form that includes questions about any potential harm that might occur as a result of the study; appendices to the form should include interview and survey protocols. If the academic director believes that the concerns of this policy have not been sufficiently addressed, they may require a revision of the proposal. Standards for this Human Subjects Review policy are developed in-country and reflect local academic practice. Completion of the Review of Research with Human Subjects application occurs during the SIT Study Abroad program and is a standard part of ISP preparation. All ISP proposals are submitted to Local Review Board for approval. The Local Review Board may expedite the review, suggest minor changes or recommend full review by SIT Institutional Review Board. However, if the Local Review Board deems a research proposal unfeasible in-country because of local laws, value systems or other safety concerns, the student will be asked to change or amend the nature of the research proposal to meet the recommendations of the Local Review Board.

In the event that a student’s research has been funded by a US government agency or if a student plans to take research back to their home school or community for further dissemination, more stringent standards must be followed, i.e., not only those of the host community, but also those of the Office for Human Resource Protections, with which SIT Study Abroad is registered. Any questions or concerns will be forwarded to SIT’s Institutional Review Board for consideration. A student’s home school may have its own procedure to follow regarding Human Subjects Review, and SIT Study Abroad recommends that students check in with their home study abroad office and academic advisor prior to the start of the program.