ANTHROPOLOGY, ACTUALLY – SARAH STANSFIELD AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE CLASS TOWARDS PUBLISHING YOUR FIRST ARTICLE [1]

Submitted by Catherine M. Zeigler on October 2, 2018 - 1:31pm

Sarah Stansfield's first peer reviewed article, "Sexual role and HIV-1 set point viral load among men who have sex with men" was recently published in Epidemics [3]. Sarah is a 5th year graduate student in the biological anthropology PhD program, and is also completing an MPH in epidemiology. She researches the continued evolution of HIV-1 in men who have sex with men.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO ANTHROPOLOGY?

As an undergrad, I started as a chemistry major, but took one archaeology class since I had always liked books about archaeological sites and the cultures there. That class was enough to make me switch majors! After I went to field school I realized archaeology wasn't quite for me, so I moved to bioarchaeology and finally bioanthropology because I became interested in disease evolution. I'm happy that anthropology is so broad!

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR FIELD OF STUDY/RESEARCH TO A FRIEND WHO IS NOT IN YOUR GRADUATE PROGRAM?

I look at how HIV virulence evolves within networks of people. Modeling how it evolves differently when I change people's relationship patterns or add higher proportions of treatment or prevention drugs can give us insights about how HIV could be evolving in the real world.

WHAT DREW YOU TO YOUR TOPIC?

I knew I was interested in modeling disease spread from a class I took as an undergrad with Lisa Sattenspiel. She had finished her lecture early one day and decided to show us what research she was working on. The topic came back to me later when I was deciding what kind of PhD program I wanted to apply for. She actually recommended I apply to work with my current advisor, Steve Goodreau.

WHAT’S BEEN THE BEST EXPERIENCE, SO FAR?

I think it was presenting at a really small conference this spring. The conference had about a hundred people at a conference center in Leavenworth. It was really rewarding, since it was a great opportunity to have really in depth conversations with a lot of people in my field and start collaborations.

WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY ABOUT SEATTLE?

Hiking and bakeries – especially Sea Wolf Bakers! I took a sourdough class there and now I make sourdough a lot.

WHAT’S NEXT?

I'm working on my next dissertation chapter, which looks at how HIV virulence may evolve with increasing levels of treatment.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR PAST SELF ABOUT GRADUATE SCHOOL?
Reflect on whether you're enjoying the topic your working on and don't be afraid to change topics — take advantage of how broad anthropology is!

People Involved: Sarah Stansfield

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