

## **Gender Equity Project Colloquia and Workshops**

### **Capitalizing Gains and Maximizing Progress During the Summer**

#### **Topic Discussion and Activities**

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Research is one of the most exciting and satisfying components of an academic career. The opportunity to develop one's understanding of a problem, while simultaneously contributing to a field of knowledge, is what attracts many people to academia. The pleasure of discovery, the pleasure of creating a new method, the pleasure of insight, the pleasure of reconciling two apparently contradictory phenomena, the pleasure of synthesizing a large body of material, the pleasure of abstract thinking – those are among the joys of intellectual work. Why, then, aren't those joys enough to keep everyone productive in research and writing? Some of the reasons are external – e.g., teaching and committee responsibilities. Some are internal - e.g., fears about how one's work will be received.

The summer offers a special opportunity for making progress on one's research – both in writing up material for publication and in moving one's research forward. In the summer there are fewer external impediments to productivity: one is not teaching or attending committee meetings (unless planning has gone grievously awry). The summer thus allows maximum time for research and writing and maximum time for pleasure. The summer also offers some dangers. Exactly because so much time is available, it can seem as if planning is unnecessary. But planning is always necessary. The internal blocks to writing remain. They may even loom larger, because the distractions of external problems are gone. Summer also offers other activities – such as vacations, visits from or to friends or relatives, a different set of household responsibilities – that compete with and can usurp research and writing time.

The summer, then, requires careful and realistic planning in order to maximize productivity and pleasure. A realistic schedule is a key component: it obviates the need to think, each day, when one will work. The summer requires both time management and, for lack of a better term, psyche management. Three activities are listed below; they are intended to help with both kinds of management.

For time management, you will need to a) think constructively and realistically about the time available and the tasks you wish to accomplish and b) plan a schedule to achieve those tasks in the time available. For psyche management, you need to a) think about where the likely threats to your research will come from and b) develop relationships and mechanisms to neutralize those threats. An ally is especially helpful during the summer.

We recommend that you complete each activity with at least one partner. The immediate goal of each activity is to develop ideas and suggestions for how to design a summer that will work best for you. Some people may provide you with suggestions to adopt; others may provide you with suggestions to avoid. You will not be getting prescriptions from people, but descriptions of what they do or would like to do.

We also recommend having a circle of advisors. With one person, you may arrange for weekly discussions about your schedules and progress; in that way, you will hold each other accountable for a certain amount of progress; you will also be able to help each other analyze what is going right and what is going wrong. With another person, you may arrange for a regular discussion about the content of your work. With someone else, you might plan a discussion about long-range goals. The aim is to think about what you need in order to design a productive summer.

## Activity 1 (complete before the workshop)

**Part A.** Talk with at least one person whose work habits and productivity you admire about how they structure their summer. Your goal here is not necessarily to find someone to emulate. It is to learn what strategies people use for a happy and productive summer so that you can devise your own strategies. Keep the following questions in mind.

- How do they structure their day?
  - Some people write in the morning and leave afternoons and evenings free for other activities.
  - Some people devote certain days or weeks to work and leave others for free time.
- Where do they work?
  - Some people work at home, finding some things challenging and other things helpful about it.
  - Some people work at Hunter.
  - Some people work at a summer place.
- Do they take work with them when they travel or are on vacation?
  - If so, they must schedule time for work and leisure activities.
- How do they balance work with their other activities and responsibilities (e.g., visiting relatives)?
- With whom do they talk about their work during the summer?
  - Some people talk primarily to research assistants and students.
  - Some people talk with colleagues at their home institution or another institution.
- What have they learned about the conditions under which they work best?

**Part B.** "Interview" yourself. Think about a period when you were more productive than usual.

- What contributed to your productivity?
  - Would you like to duplicate those conditions? Perhaps not; perhaps you were working to a deadline and never want to relive that situation.
- If you imagine the ideal summer, how do you balance work and pleasure?

Gather a short list of useful ideas from your conversations with others or from your "interviews" with yourself. E-mail them to the GEP ([gender.equity@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:gender.equity@hunter.cuny.edu) OR [gep2003\\_04@hotmail.com](mailto:gep2003_04@hotmail.com)). Come prepared to discuss them at the workshop.

## Activity 2

The summer is an ideal time to write and to perform research. Imagine that your goal is to submit 2 papers a year for publication. That figure is an approximation. In some fields, writing one paper a year would be considered productive. In others, writing two papers a year would be considered below-par performance. In other fields, or at some points in one's career, writing a book might substitute for writing papers. With 2 papers a year as the desired end result, consider how to arrange your summer to maximize the likelihood of meeting that goal.

In preparation for a productive summer, a) identify the major projects (no more than 4) you want to accomplish by the end of the summer (e.g., complete data analysis, finish a book chapter); b) identify the preparatory work that you need to complete in what remains of the spring semester so that you can hit the ground running. For each project, consider a set of questions.

- What roadblocks to completing the projects might you face?

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- Internal roadblocks could be anything from feeling stale on the project to thinking that the project is too difficult. Think back to previous summers to see what roadblocks you might be omitting.
- External roadblocks could be anything from household responsibilities to lack of resources. Think back to previous summers to see what you might be omitting.
- What solutions to the roadblocks can you come up with?
  - For internal roadblocks, consider how an ally might help or whether it would be useful to have email correspondence with someone working on a similar topic.
  - For external roadblocks, consider reducing them by, for example, spending less time on a trip or visiting with relatives.
- Will it help to have interns?
  - Think about what jobs an intern could perform.
  - Let the GEP help you in sending out notices of internships.

### Activity 3

The more detail you can provide about your projects, the more likely it is that you will complete them. This activity is designed to help you think in depth about what time and resources your projects require; that will help you design your summer schedule. Identify one major project from your list of summer projects.

- Divide the project into 4 to 5 smaller subtasks. Use the subtasks as a guide to determine the time and resources you need to complete the entire project.
  - What resources will each subtask require?
    - Consider the possibility that there are resources, facilities, or people that are only available in a specific place or at a specific time.
    - Consider what subtasks you can work on while you travel. For example, while it may be feasible to take a large chunk of reading with you on a visit to relatives, it may not be practical to complete a complex data analysis since you may not have the necessary computer program.
  - How much time will each subtask require?
    - Anticipate here what could go wrong and thus require more time than you initially anticipated.
  - What subtasks can you complete or set up during the semester?