Jonathan Page, assistant professor of psychology (pictured in the backseat), works with the London Metropolitan Police Driving Academy studying brain processing during high-speed pursuits. He is just one of many psychology faculty members and students delivering dramatic results in real-life settings.

Photo courtesy of the London Metropolitan Police Federation. Photographer: Tom Parkes
Alpha and beta command response, high-speed pursuits, child pornography computer crimes—these sound like subplots for a primetime television drama. Instead, they are topics of research studies led by the Psychology Department at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

As part of his Teaching Scholar Fellowship, associate professor of speech communication David Engen chronicled daily life in four of Greater Mankato’s “third places.” A term coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, “third places” are gathering places between home and work where people congregate, share conversation, and build community. Dan’s Barbershop in Mankato’s Belle Mar Mall is one such place. Says Engen: “Drop by Dan’s and you’ll find a whole lot of humor, kindness, and community—and for fourteen bucks you can get a pretty darn good haircut, too.” Through audio and photos (such as this photograph of Dan Quaderer, owner-operator of Dan’s Barbershop), Engen captures part of what makes these places so special and so important to our community. His project can be viewed at http://www.mnsu.edu/voices/thirdplaceproject.html.
Alpha and beta command response, high-speed pursuits, child pornography computer crimes—these sound like subplots for a primetime television drama. Instead, they are topics of research studies led by the Psychology Department at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

There is no doubt about it: Military and police organizations are tough. They emphasize uniformity, chain of command, life-threatening assignments, and a culture that discourages complaining. It is therefore perhaps surprising that senior leaders of military and police organizations voice concern about the psychological health of their members.

In response to those concerns, military and police organizations sponsor extensive research programs on management, leadership, work-life balance, and training. This puts two of the seemingly most unyielding institutions in the U.S. on the cutting edge of management innovation. And research provided by Minnesota State Mankato’s Psychology Department has been an integral part of that management innovation.

**Command Compliance**

Professors Dan Houlihan and Jeff Buchanan studied the ways police officers communicate with suspects during arrests. Specifically, they examined the effectiveness of two types of commands: alpha commands, which are clear and specific (Get out of the car!), and beta commands, which are vague and indirect (Cooperate with me!). Alpha commands proved to be most effective. However, the professors’ research found officers defaulted to beta commands during violent encounters, making their communication least effective when it was most important.
Jonathan Page, assistant professor, has worked with the London Metropolitan Police Driving Academy for three years, studying driver reactions during high-speed pursuits. Last year his research team, including associate professor Lisa Perez, graduate student Ashley Stanoch, and researcher Kasee Page, measured stress, driving performance, and brain activity of police officers engaged in training exercises—some of which took place at 130 miles per hour on London city streets and highways. Their findings have been used to modify training and policies in the UK and have been included as evidentiary information in legal proceedings.

Some might think the Psychology Department has been lucky to land these exciting research projects. However, luck is created when preparation meets opportunity and the Department has been preparing for years. Specifically, the Department acknowledges the early military research of retired professor Wayne Harris; financial support and connections of Minnesota State graduate U.S. Air Force Major David Englert; and connections and support of David Enforcement professor and Director of the Force Science Research Center, Bill Lewinski.

The people in charge of mapping out a city’s population growth and determining what available land can and cannot be used don’t usually go about things Fei Yuan’s way. But that could well change, as the associate professor of geography at Minnesota State Mankato is about to have work published showing the benefits of merging two technological tools in the interests of better managing population growth and its environmental impact.

It’s a case of significantly high tech ingredients adding up to a fairly straightforward premise: “It allows you to see what has happened in the past and also predict the future,” Yuan says.

The recipient of a 2008 Summer Research Grant from Minnesota State Mankato, Yuan will have her studies published in the academic journal Remote Sensing and Urban Planning. The upshot of it all is to show how the use of both remote sensing technology and geographic information systems (GIS) can help city planners more accurately predict the best route to growth and sustainability in areas where population is on the rise.

After receiving her bachelor’s degree in geography at East China Normal School University in Shanghai, Yuan received a master’s degree in GIS at the University of Minnesota, followed by a doctorate in remote sensing, also received at the U of M.

Remote sensing is the process by which information about the earth’s surface is gathered electromagnetically by satellite or aircraft sensors. Geographic information systems, or GIS, allows for computer-based analysis of a particular area and for the manipulation of data to enable planners to predict where people and land use are headed.

“Using multi-temporal remote sensing data obtained by the airborne or satellite-based sensor, I can do the image process and analysis, and can map the urban growth dynamically,” Yuan says. “It’s an unusual step—at least now—to use both remote sensing and geographic information systems together for urban planning. Yuan says. But her research makes a case for it.

Her testing ground was nothing less than the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, which includes the seven counties surrounding Minneapolis and St. Paul, some areas of which—Woodbury, for instance—are seeing a large population growth. By addressing the question of how planning for the future urban growth of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area should proceed, her study presents an example of using spatial technologies to estimate impacts of urban land plans and policies on future urban development.

Over the past two decades, urban-use land in the area increased from 24 percent in 1986 to nearly 33 percent in 2002. Agricultural land and forestry diminished by nearly 9 percent. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Council, the regional planning agency for the Twin Cities area, has forecasted a population increase of 500,000 by 2020. Obviously, if sustainability is a concern, it’s time to proceed cautiously. Enter the high-tech.

Yuan began this project in 2007 by collecting the remote sensing imagery of the Twin Cities metropolitan area obtained between 1973 and 2006 by the University of Minnesota and made available through

MAPPING OUT A FUTURE

By Joe Tougas

An expert in both GIS and remote sensing, Minnesota State Mankato’s associate professor of geography Fei Yuan explores the combination of the two technologies in guiding urban planning.
Lori Lahlum spent the summer of 2008 in a Norwegian state of mind.

Using time bought with a 2008 Summer Research Grant from Minnesota State Mankato, the assistant professor of history has been polishing several chapters of a book examining the experiences of Norwegian immigrant women who were part of transforming the northern states from prairie to farmland.

The migration of Norwegians to the Northern Plains between the Civil War and World War I was a time of great agricultural significance and one well-chronicled by scholars—save for an examination of what the Norwegian immigrant women were experiencing.

These years saw the transformation of rough prairie into new farmland, a time when "from the ground up" was not just a figure of speech. It was a transformation that allowed no time for rigid adherence to conceptions of "men's work" and "women's work." Roles on the farm became less gender-oriented, and the changes were sudden, urgent, and necessary. As a result, many of the Norwegian families who made the journey here for a new life found their own family dynamics changing as well. For some these changes were the source of some unease, for others a welcome change.

Lahlum chronicles these changes in her book manuscript, tentatively titled Norwegian Women, Landscape and Agriculture on the Northern Prairies and Plains 1850-1920. Her research relies on years of poring over letters, diaries, and other materials in Norwegian archives and in books published by local historical societies. She also found a great number of letters at the Norwegian American Historical Association at St. Olaf College in Northfield.

Milking duties in particular get a lot of examination in Lahlum's manuscript, simply because men milking cows represents a clear break with tradition. On Norwegian farms, gender roles were rigid, milking cows was women's work. "In Norway, women in many places were the primary agriculturalists," Lahlum said. "And it's because the economy's really a dairy economy. And women had responsibilities for the barns, and they milked the cows. So then, in America, that changes...and you have these men who are essentially doing women's work."

"There was something that was drastic. Some men absolutely refused to milk cows, and in some ways the differences in the U.S. could be quite liberating for Norwegian immigrant women. It was used as a means of encouraging immigration by telling these young women, you don't have to wear the big wooden shoes, there's a lot less work because you don't have to do all of the barn work."

Old letters obtained during her research provided a wealth of insight on how the women made these transitions and their state of mind. In many cases, their perception toward America's farmland and the new way of life was enthusiastic. The book reflects the interaction these women had with the landscape itself, as well as the farming duties that lay ahead. They saw these crops and fields as representing new economic hope as well as a source of pride and satisfaction. As Lahlum states it, rich fields of crops were the ideal both economically and aesthetically.

Lahlum sees the book as filling a void in what's been available on Norwegian American history. Most scholars who have published works on the Norwegian immigrants have not addressed gender or used gender as a category of analysis. That could well be the result of relying too much on what the Norwegian men wrote when they composed letters to their home country.

Lahlum found an interesting distinction between husbands and wives in the letters they wrote home, particularly about who was doing what work. "If you use these sources largely generated by men," she said, "you come up with a very different interpretation of what's going on in these communities."
Assistant professor of sociology Emily Boyd examines how “Extreme Makeover” treats femininity and masculinity. And it’s not pretty.

Emily Boyd’s most recent research was the rare type that had to pause every now and then for pimple cream commercials.

Of all the places to mine new insights on femininity and masculinity, the Minnesota State Mankato assistant professor in sociology and corrections found her Ground Zero in primetime reality television.

In 2004 and 2005, Boyd spent more time than most would care to admit watching the ABC reality show “Extreme Makeover.” The premise of the show is to find people who consider themselves ugly ducklings and are hoping to change their appearance. In the world in which the only obstacles to good self-esteem are a nose job, neck lift, lower and upper eye lift, breast implants, teeth whitening, facelift, fat injection to the cheeks, or some combination of any and all. For starters.

If chosen by the producers, the guests undergo a round (or two or three) of surgical nip and tuck, a makeover, a fashion education, some dos and don’ts about carrying themselves—essentially a re-tooling of their physical presence. “The end of each show is a ‘Voilà!’ unveiling the new woman or man. Tears of joy are shed, confidence is gained, and all is well.

Unless, of course, you’re doing academic research on what this show says about femininity and masculinity. And Boyd is doing just that, using her 2008 Summer Research Grant from Minnesota State Mankato to prepare an article titled “Transforming Masculinity and Femininity on ‘Extreme Makeover’” for a sociology journal.

As the title suggests, her focus is not so much the emotional effects of the transformation (which was covered in her dissertation preceding this project), but on how this show defines masculinity and femininity, along with an examination of what traits were seen as deficient and problematic.

Sociologists like to talk about the distinctions between individuals and institutions. To that end, watching how a popular television show presents shame, loneliness, and despair as curable through physical change is great fodder for discussion, Boyd says. Instead of viewing the beauty industry as an institution that could use an overhaul, she adds, the show puts the burden on the individual.

“Most intriguing is how women in the show are in need of femininity, how it needs to be whipped up for them via the surgical procedures, makeovers, and training (as in how to walk in high heels). Men, on the other hand, are never portrayed as needing masculinity, Boyd says. At the most, men might be able to enhance their masculinity, but they’re never portrayed as needing to create it from scratch.

“There’s no discussion of men lacking masculinity, whereas women lacking femininity is a huge threat,” Boyd says. “So it’s interesting to me that it’s acceptable to talk about women’s bodies in this way, but not men.”

Ultimately, it’s a question of how femininity is seen as something that’s created instead of something innate and biological, Boyd says. “I suggest we’re not seeing multiple definitions of what a woman is, but a preferred standard.”

There are also some aspects to the show that reinforce the women’s need to be deferential—for her own good. Any fuss raised by a female makeover candidate, who for instance would rather not have her long hair cut, is overruled by the stylist. Not so with men. If a guy is advised to give up his cowboy boots but doesn’t want to, the producers find a way to work around it, Boyd says.

It’s interesting to note that “Extreme Makeover” isn’t the only such show in which physical transformation leads to happiness. Shows such as “Dr. 90210” or “The Swan” do essentially the same thing.

In general, she says, the shows encourage mass consumption of goods and services for problems that can’t be solved by consumption of goods and services.

“It essentially says ‘if you have a problem, there are ways you can take your money and solve that problem by buying surgery or buying these other items that will make you a better you.’ People are not encouraged to introspective or work on their sense of self, but to get out their wallets and take care of things that way.”

Boyd says she’s interested in continuing research based on the show, ideally holding focus groups with viewers.

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Initially drawn to the McNair Program by the prospect of scholarships, Amina Salim and Awale Awale soon realized the benefits of the program extend far beyond money. Amina Salim and Awale Awale emigrated from Somalia to the United States at different times and took different paths to Minnesota State University, Mankato. Neither spoke English when they arrived and both had already achieved success personally and academically. "When you speak with them, it is obvious they are determined to achieve a great deal more," said Salim. "My mother was my inspiration. During the war in Somalia, she saw many people die when they didn’t receive medical treatment. She encouraged me to study medicine." Awale began the McNair Program as a pharmacy major—the business of his family in Somalia. However, after working a few years in pharmacies, Awale realized that was not where his heart lay. His true passion was construction. "As a teenager, I bought tools with my extra money. I’ve always liked to build stuff, time goes by so quickly when I’m involved in building something," he said.

At the annual Undergraduate Research Conference (URC) scheduled for April 27th and 28th, students will present their research through poster sessions, oral presentations, exhibits, and other forums. After the conference the projects will be published in the 2009 Journal of Undergraduate Research.

Sixteen Minnesota State Mankato students may also present their research at the national’s top undergraduate research conference. The students were selected by the URC Steering Committee to submit proposals to the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), which will be held April 16-18, 2009 at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The students, their projects, and their faculty mentors are listed at left.

By Carol Jones

For more information about the McNair Achievement Program at Minnesota State Mankato, contact program director, Laura Bartolo at laura.bartolo@mnsu.edu or 507-389-1188.

"We are a family and our decisions about where to go to graduate school have to work for all three of us," says Awale. "Amina, pictured here with his wife, Amina Salim, and daughter, Lela.

Somali immigrants and praised her mentor, professor of nursing Norma Krumwede. "I learned so much from her," Salim said. "I could never have done it without her help. And we both learned a lot about the way native Somalis approach healthcare in Minnesota." This year, Awale is conducting research on sustainable construction methods. He and his mentor, assistant professor of construction management Scott Fee, are surveying thousands of general contractors across the country to determine their understanding and level of participation in reducing construction waste. Awale is passionate about his research. "Everyone understands the importance of building green buildings," he said. "But being green is just as important in the construction process. Therefore, I want to help find a workable solution for contractors to reduce waste and energy consumption during construction."

Salim and Awale were inspired and motivated to achieve after hearing the story of Ronald E. McNair—the program’s namesake. McNair grew up in a segregated town in South Carolina and became a mission specialist astronaut for NASA. "Learning about where he started and what he achieved encouraged me to further my education," said Salim.

"I’ve always thought an undergraduate degree was a big enough accomplishment," said Awale. "Now that I’m in the McNair Achievement Program, I believe that I can achieve more than that."
HAVING A HAND IN HISTORY

By Carol Jones

People can’t always imagine how their experiences will shape their futures. Tomasz Inglot certainly had no idea how raising his hand at a student strike meeting in Poland would affect his life. In fact, he forgot the details of that day until reminded by a friend years later. In retrospect, he says it marked the starting point for years of research and a comparative study of welfare states (social policies) in the former communist region of East Central Europe.

Those years of research resulted in the recent publication of his book entitled Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919-2004. It was fall 1981, during the Solidarity-led revolution, when Inglot attended a meeting of the Independent Student Association at the University of Wroclaw—“the only officially registered, openly anticommunist civil society organization in the Soviet bloc before 1989,” according to Inglot. He knew something historic was happening and he was eager to become a part of it. But he volunteered to take care of the everyday needs of the striking students, he had no idea of the challenges before him. He was forced to use all of his resources and ingenuity to feed hundreds of people for three weeks during a time when the only items stocked at grocery stores were salt and vinegar.

The student strike successfully garnered promises of comprehensive educational reform. However, the immediate result was less positive for Inglot. Weeks after the strike, martial law was declared and he was imprisoned several months for conducting independent socioeconomic activities. Two years later, in 1983, he arrived in the United States as a political exile.

Inglot’s book will not likely be found on coffee tables; however, since its release in May 2008, it has made Tomasz Inglot an international expert on welfare states in East Central Europe. As a reference book on the topic of welfare states, it is the first of its kind in both the U.S. and Europe.

Inglot earned his undergraduate degree at Stony Brook University in New York, his master’s at Loyola University Chicago, and another master’s and his doctorate at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Each level of education encouraged him to explore his interests further. He received an earlier offer to publish his dissertation on social policies in Poland, but experts in the field encouraged him to explore the topic more deeply—to complete a comparative study.

Although the strike marked the beginning, Inglot’s life is full of experiences that led him to complete his first book: Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919-2004 is an interdisciplinary study and comparative analysis of the evolution of socioeconomic policies in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic and Slovakia since 1993). The reforms of the social security programs in these countries in the 1990s and even during communist rule are remarkably diverse. And he said the aim of the book is to reveal major reasons behind the divergence.

Inglot’s work is not possible to persuade others—family, government officials, or university deans—to support your work if you are not excited about the project. “Passion makes all the difference,” said Inglot.

He realized he was in a unique position that had prepared him to do just that. Inglot credits his mother who motivated him “to be proactive politically and socially and to explore different possibilities.” Perhaps because of her, he had been encouraged to pursue new frontiers of research, focusing on socioeconomic reforms. His paternal grandfather inspired him to pursue academics, which prepared him for a decade of scholarly pursuits. He dedicates the book to them, noting “Their integrity, dedication, and love of knowledge will always remain the greatest inspiration for me and my work.”

Another critical factor in his success became apparent as he described his years of research. Taking trips abroad, working with officials in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland to uncover documents, and writing and revising his book required passion. It is not possible to persuade others—family, government officials, or university deans—to support your work if you are not excited about the project. “Passion makes all the difference,” said Inglot.

Given his passion for his research, it is not surprising that Inglot already has another project in the works: a collaborative study on family policy, specifically policies affecting working mothers and childcare in Romania and Hungary. No doubt his second book will cement his status as an international expert—and extend the impact of his own portentous history.


Left: A group of pensioners from the Solidarity trade union protest against the Polish government’s decision to cancel the regular annual increases of retirement benefits. Warsaw, February 14, 2007. Middle: The main events hall at the University of Wroclaw (Poland), where the series of events that led to Inglot’s book began. Right: A series of events that began in 1981 led professor of political science Tomasz Inglot to complete his first book, (inset) Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919-2004, an interdisciplinary study and comparative analysis of the evolution of socioeconomic policies in Poland, Hungary, and the former Czechoslovakia.
A Thousand Words

Every weekday morning at Mankato’s Wagon Wheel Cafe, a group of men tuck themselves into the back corner for coffee and conversation. They are retired teachers and band leaders and generals and mechanics and shop owners; they call themselves “The Bullshippers.” Drop by and they may even let you play the morning numbers game because, as 92-year-old founding member Royal Lee says, “We’re not very selective.” (See related photo and read about David Engen’s research on the inside front cover.)