



**Patience Kapfer**  
Politics and History  
Graduated May 2013

**What are you currently doing?**

At SUNY Binghamton I am in the Masters program for Political Science.

**How did doing research prepare you for this program?**

Doing undergraduate research definitely better prepared me for this program because it reaffirmed my desire to do research and my love for developing a research question and answering that question. Simply participating in undergraduate courses does not quite prepare students for the intensity of graduate school and I think having the opportunity to do undergraduate research is a great way to get more experience. Not only that, but working on my own research project allowed me to solidify my true interests and work on something I greatly enjoyed.

**What did you gain from doing this research?**

This project was a great way to gain more research experience as well as examine an area that has not been excessively studied yet. I was able to incorporate one of my favorite areas of study. This project improved my research and statistical skills and gave me a great opportunity to pursue my own interests. I was also able to work on a paper and poster and then had the opportunity to present the poster at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference. This

was an excellent experience that really helped to reinforce my love for studying political science and desire to continue studying it after Potsdam.

### **What are some qualities needed of a student researcher?**

A student researcher needs to be dedicated and seriously interested in the topic they wish to study while also not so invested in the outcome of their research that they risk biasing the results. It is important to be highly motivated and have a strong desire to learn as well as being self-disciplined.

### **Who was your mentor for your project and what was their role of the process?**

Dr. Hinckley and I would usually meet weekly to discuss how the project was progressing and what the next step should be. Sometimes our meetings would be more or less frequent depending on what stage of the project we were in. We would consider various ideas and Dr. Hinckley would make valuable suggestions concerning how to tackle different stages of the project.

It was great to work with Dr. Hinckley and learn from him. It was excellent to be able to work with someone with so much knowledge in the field and be able to learn from him. Dr. Hinckley allowed me to take on a significant amount of responsibility throughout the entire project, while also still always being there for help. Having a great faculty mentor for support and assistance made my first real research project a genuinely fun experience.

### **What was your project?**

*Dissolving Village Governments in New York: Assessing the Effects of Social Capital and Performance*

This project was designed with the intention of answering the question: Why have some villages in New York State formally considered dissolving their local government while others have not? In this project we sought to explain the possible factors to which would influence a village to consider dissolution. These factors include level of social capital- the features of social organizations such as networks, norms, and trust that help to facilitate cooperation and increase civic engagement; government performance; and institutional structure, or level of reform of the village government.

Since 2007 only 18 of the 552 villages in New York have formally considered dissolution, despite the notion that dissolution will create greater efficiency and reduce property taxes. I was intrigued to understand what could possibly cause so few villages in New York to consider dissolution when it seems so beneficial. Also after completing a project in the spring of 2012 about the Potsdam dissolution referendum, I was curious to explore dissolution further. I've also been interested in exploring social capital further for a while and this project gave me the perfect chance to do that.