

# Patil: Q-and-A with statistics Ph.D. candidate Wendy Chan

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Chetan Patil, Columnist

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Wendy Chan [has been](#) a Ph.D. student in statistics since 2011. Her hometown is Ozone Park, N.Y.



## What is statistics?

Statistics is a field that analyzes the collection, organization and interpretation of data. Research in statistics spans a wide variety of topics ranging from statistical computing to meta-analysis to survey sampling.

## Was there any specific reason you wanted to pursue a Ph.D. in statistics?

NU's department of statistics has some of the most renowned names in the research community. I think that pursuing a degree in statistics is very versatile as I get opportunities to work on interdisciplinary research with social scientists as well as members of the same field. I think that statistics will play a large role in different industries as the demand for quantitative specialists increases.

## Why did you opt for NU?

I chose NU because some of the faculty members have done incredible work in their research. I am particularly interested in educational research and the use of statistics in this area. My interests align with a couple of the professors at NU and because of this, I decided to study at this university.

## Tell us about your research at NU.

I am currently working on a project related to generalizability from social experiments. I am working on validating a method that uses a model to predict selection into experiments. The experiment itself involves non-probability sampling and the goal is to generalize from this sample to the population.

## What is the most exciting phase of this research?

I think that working with real data and finding some new questions along the way is pretty interesting. I get a lot of flexibility in terms of thinking of the next steps and direction to take the project. I think that the exploratory phase where I get to try out different things is exciting.

## Does prior research experience help before pursuing a Ph.D.?

I did not have much prior research experience, but I think it would be helpful before pursuing a Ph.D. I don't think it is necessary to have that kind of experience because you develop it along the way. I do think that is important to like doing research and be creative about the way we think of things.

## What's next?

I am thinking of being a professor after my degree. I would like to work in a research university, probably in a school of education, so that I can continue collaborating on research in the social sciences.

## **Do you have advice for those looking to pursue a Ph.D.?**

It is a challenging experience, regardless of the field you decide. I think it is important to know what your interested in and look for people who share those same interests. You learn a lot about working together and working independently in graduate school, which I think will come in handy when you are pursuing your respective careers. I think that if anyone is serious about pursuing a Ph.D., then be prepared to make mistakes and keep working around them.

## **What is the best way for students to contact you?**

[LinkedIn](#)

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