INTRODUCTION TO PROBLEM:

The Taíno were the first group of people influenced by Christopher Columbus when he sailed across the ocean in 1492. The Taíno people were the first group contacted by the Spanish conquistadors. They traded with the Spanish at first, but then were later forced into slavery. The seafaring Taíno culture was focused mostly in the Caribbean and their population may have contained as many as 100,000 to 1,000,000 people or more at the time of their encounter with the Spanish explorers (Rouse 1992:7). There were five Taíno chiefdoms on Hispaniola, where modern day Dominican Republic is located, during the 15th Century. But most of the Taíno culture had been destroyed by diseases that were brought over by the Spanish conquistadors. Since most of the Taíno are now gone, the only way to learn about them is to find artifacts that will give us clues as to how they lived.

GOAL:

The purpose of my research is to determine how the Taíno people made and used tools that were made of shell. By finding artifacts and recording the data found, I should be able to learn more about the practices of the Taíno people. Since the Taíno lived by the ocean, shells were an abundant source of material for them (O'Day 2002). Shells could have been used for many different purposes from decoration to food production. Eyles states that “while other archaeological data have been studied, ranging from potsherds to fish vertebrae, the hundreds of pieces of shell have received very little attention” (2004: 1). I intend to investigate the types of species of marine shellfish species recovered during archaeological investigations. I will identify those tools with evidence of expedient - or single instance - use (using O’Day and Keegan 2001) as well as those exhibiting elaborate modification, and explore any relationship between species and tool function. An example would be if a group shell artifacts are all found in a modified state, and only as a certain type of tool, such as a cutting edge tool or a pick, then I can assume that they were used for the express purpose of a tool. On the other hand, if the shells are found as tools, but they are not modified, then a different decision process was being used for those shells. With this information, I should be able to gain more knowledge about the everyday life of the Taíno people and learn more about the interaction between the Taíno and the Spanish conquistadors. I hope to learn whether the Taíno used shell for certain tools as opposed to using a different type of
abundant material such as stone or bone. I also expect to learn if the Taíno selected certain species of shells for specific tool purpose or if they were not particular of which species they used.

PROPOSED RESEARCH:

I plan on spending the first two weeks of the summer on doing more research about the Taíno people and their culture. Most of the time will be spent reading about shell tools. I plan on using a recent research thesis, *Prehistoric Shell Artifacts from the Apalachicola River Valley Area, Northwest Florida* (Eyles 2004), as my main resource. More reading will be conducted on the history of the Dominican Republic and the current culture. I will also be doing some reading on the Spanish conquistadors to get an idea of what the Taíno people experienced when the Spanish landed on their island. Another portion of the first two weeks will be spent with Dr. VanderVeen discussing the readings and the plan of research.

In order to find shell artifacts I will be flying down to Dominic Republic, where I will be working on the Bahía Isabel Archaelogical Project (BIAP) with Dr. VanderVeen and colleagues. The BIAP will conduct archaeological excavations of indigenous village sites. The main site I will be working at is El Tamarindo in the northwest part of the Dominican Republic. This is a Taíno site near La Isabel, which was the first European town in the New World. Portions of the site have been excavated by BIAP in previous years and a variety of shell tools were recovered.

I will be spending approximately 6 weeks in the Dominican Republic for the excavations at site of El Tamarindo as well as some other indigenous sites. Most of the mornings will be spent digging for artifacts, and the afternoons will be spent cleaning the artifacts and recording information about any artifacts found.

The shell artifacts that are recovered will be photographed and carefully documented. Each artifact will be mapped where it was found. I will then examine the artifact for any evidence of human alteration. Shells had many different uses to ancient cultures. They have been used as hammers, cutting tools, and grinders just to name a few. I will then classify any shell that has been altered by humans and compare my findings with some of the artifacts that were classified by Eyles, Keegan, and others. There may be a chance that the Taíno used a different method in creating shell tools and that information could be used to expand the classification system. Older data systems could be revised and the data found in the Dominican will help to expand the geographical region of that data.

When I return from the Dominican Republic I plan on spending the next two weeks taking all the pictures, records and any important information and compiling them into a record for further research. From all of this information I will be able to determine the use of the shell artifacts by the Taíno.

BENEFITS FROM RESEARCH:

There will be many benefits that I will receive from this summer research project. The main thing I will be learning is more about archaeology field work. I will be learning how to properly excavate a site, record all the data, and preserve artifacts. I am considering going to grad school for anthropology and this research project will help me in determining whether or not I will continue on after IUSB. These skills will also help me in my everyday life because of the attention to detail that needs to be spend while doing an archaeological excavation. My knowledge of the Taíno culture will be increased through this research as well as my understanding of shell tools. This research project will also be a good way for me to collaborate and network with other student and faculty members at other campuses. Networking with other colleagues is good for both IUSB and for me personally. All of these skills are important skills that I will be able to utilize not only in the field of anthropology, but also in my everyday life.
Upon my return I intend to give a presentation of my findings to the IU Undergraduate Research Conference. I also want to give a presentation to my colleagues in the IU South Bend Anthropology Club. I hope that my research will be of interest to other students and will spark their interest in the field of Anthropology. I also plan on writing a research paper for possible publication about my findings and experiences while doing research on the Taíno people in the Dominican Republic.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

AMOUNT OF SUPPORT REQUESTED - $3400 - 10 WEEKS (400 HOURS)

FINANCIAL BUDGET
I am planning on going to the Dominican Republic to work with BIAP this summer even if I do not receive any outside support.

TRAVEL EXPENSES
FLIGHT TO DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - $400
GROUND TRANSPORTATION - $80
HOTEL ACCOMODATIONS - $470
ADDITIONAL MEALS - $50

EQUIPMENT EXPENSES
DIGITAL CAMERA - $150
HANDELD GPS - $100
MEASURING TAPE - $8
TROWEL - $12
LINES AND LINE LEVELS - $10
BRUSHES - $20
TOTAL - $300

AFTER COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT, I WILL BE DONATING THE EQUIPMENT TO THE BAHIA ISABELA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT FOR THE USE OF IUSB STUDENTS.
TIME BUDGET

APRIL 30 - MAY 6
10 HOURS
-READING HISTORY OF THE DOMINICAN CULTURE
-LEARNING ABOUT THE TAÍNO CULTURE
-DISCUSSION OF THE TOPIC WITH DR. VANDERVEEN

MAY 7 - MAY 13
10 HOURS
-READING ABOUT THE SPANISH’S INTERACTION WITH THE TAÍNO PEOPLE
-READING UP ON SPANISH LANGUAGE
-READING ABOUT SHELL TOOL MAKING
-DISCUSSION OF THE TOPIC WITH DR. VANDERVEEN

MAY 14 - MAY 20
60 HOURS
-TRAVEL TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
-FIELD RESEARCH AT THE SITE (MAPPING, EXCAVATING, CLEANING, INVENTORY)

MAY 21 - MAY 27
60 HOURS
-FIELD RESEARCH AT THE SITE (MAPPING, EXCAVATING, CLEANING, INVENTORY)

MAY 28 - JUNE 3
60 HOURS
-FIELD RESEARCH AT THE SITE (MAPPING, EXCAVATING, CLEANING, INVENTORY)

JUNE 4 - JUNE 10
60 HOURS
-FIELD RESEARCH AT THE SITE (MAPPING, EXCAVATING, CLEANING, INVENTORY)

JUNE 11 - JUNE 17
60 HOURS
-FIELD RESEARCH AT THE SITE (MAPPING, EXCAVATING, CLEANING, INVENTORY)

JUNE 18 - JUNE 24
60 HOURS
-FIELD RESEARCH AT THE SITE (MAPPING, EXCAVATING, CLEANING, INVENTORY)
-RETURN FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

JUNE 25 - JULY 1
10 HOURS
-COMPILATION AND REVIEW OF RESEARCH DATA

JULY 2 - JULY 8
10 HOURS
-COMPILATION AND REVIEW OF RESEARCH DATA