The O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University Bloomington presents

Spring 2021 Honors Thesis Symposium

Friday, April 16th

8:45 a.m. – Welcome Remarks
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. – Session 1
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – Session 2
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. – Session 3
12:30 p.m. – Closing Remarks
All presentations will be held virtually

Welcome Remarks
Dean Siân Mooney

Session 1 9:00-10:00 a.m.

Panel 1: Media & Public Affairs
Panel Chair: Michelle Lee

Casey Fizer
*Rural Republicans: The Influence of Moral Ideals on Political Opinions*
Faculty advisor: Allison Schnable

CJ Louive
*Comparative Analysis of Media Censorship and Terrorism in the U.S. and Australia*
Faculty advisor: David Henry

Connor Meyer
*Broadcasting Hate: Alt-Right Media Trends and Extremist Behavior in the U.S., 2011-2019*
Faculty advisor: Jennifer Silva

Panel 2: Health & the Community
Panel Chair: Ashley Bradford

Sydnie Hill
*Medicare’s Hospital Readmission Reduction Program and the Unintended Impact on Racial Disparities in Readmission Rates*
Faculty advisor: Kosali Simon

Sarah Nance
*Socioeconomic Vulnerability, COVID-19, and the Opioid Epidemic*
Faculty advisor: Kosali Simon
Gary Thompson  
*How Food Insecurity Impacts Food Access in U.S. Counties*  
Faculty advisor: Shellye Suttles

**Panel 3: Environmental Policy & Management**  
Panel Chair: Laura Helmke-Long

Sydney Granlund  
*Climate Action Plans: Symbolic Gestures or Action-Inspiring? Understanding Accountability Measures Utilized by Leading Indiana Cities*  
Faculty advisor: Aaron Deslatte

Annie King  
*Policy Process of Invasive Species Laws in Indiana*  
Faculty advisor: Jon Eldon

Emma Schuster  
*A Complete Tree Inventory and Management Plan for Indiana University’s Dunn’s Woods*  
Faculty advisor: Jon Eldon

**Session 2 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

**Panel 4: Subnational Conflict & Crime**  
Panel Chair: Shannon Conley

Jonathan Ralstin  
*Does Expanding Access to SNAP Reduce Crime? Evidence from ABAWD Waivers*  
Faculty advisor: Coady Wing

Emily Dartt  
*Purpose Over Punishment: How the Expansion of Correctional Education Programs in the State of Indiana Can Reduce Recidivism*  
Faculty advisor: John R. Gregg

Avery VanMiddlesworth  
*Resolving the Troubles: Theories on the Peace Process in Northern Ireland*  
Faculty advisor: Susan Siena
Panel 5: Nonprofit & Arts Management
Panel Chair: Megan Darnley

Wayne Hasting
*Examination of Museums as Historic Sites*
Faculty advisor: Frank Lewis

Kayla Leversen
*Fundraising in a Time of Unrest: How Bloomington, Indiana Nonprofits and their Development Plans have been Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic*
Faculty advisor: Kirsten Grønbjerg

Emily Buuck
*Indiana Rural Community Foundations and Their Responses to COVID-19*
Faculty advisor: Laurie Paarlberg

Panel 6: Public Policy
Panel Chair: John Stavick

Kulsoom Tapal
*Examining Islamophobia in Congress*
Faculty advisor: Beth Cate

Benjamin Bledsoe
*The Demographics of Distrust: How Perceptions of American Political Candidates Accused of Misconduct are Influenced by a Voter’s Demographic Identity*
Faculty advisor: Jill Nicholson-Crotty

Nicole Lewis
*Abortion TRAP Laws: Effects on Accessibility*
Faculty advisor: Jill Nicholson-Crotty

Session 3 11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

Panel 7: State & Local Policy
Panel Chair: Ruth Winecoff
Ethan Dillman
*State Spending: How a Shift in Funding Allocations can Change the Number and Type of Credentials Distributed by Higher Education Institutions*
Faculty advisor: Ashlyn Nelson

Kylie Clouse
*The State of Community Energy: How Legislative Design Impacts the Success of Community Choice Adoption*
Faculty advisor: Sanya Carley

Elijah Kray-Mawhorr
*Reducing Zonings Impact on Educational Disparities*
Faculty advisor: Tom Rabovsky

**Panel 8: Policy & Management**
Panel Chair: Breck Wightman

Christina Sanchez
*The Effect of Workplace Meetings on Job Satisfaction and Employee Productivity*
Faculty advisor: Dan Grundmann

Sakshi Anil Dewani
*The Impact of COVID-19 on Human Resources Departments in Healthcare Facilities*
Faculty advisor: David Archer

Jacob Cribbs
*Canary in the Coal Mine: Ban the Box Legislation and its Effect on White-Black Employment Deficit*
Faculty advisor: Denvil Duncan

Reid Shanks
*Equitable Sharing to State and Local Law Enforcement: Is it Worth It?*
Faculty advisor: Tom Stucky

**Panel 9: Environmental Science**
Panel Chair: Wesley Zebrowski
Ellen Bergan
*The Conservational Significance of Tsuga canadensis as a Climate Relict within Indiana*
Faculty advisor: Avram Primack

Mallory Babcock
*Analyzing the Relationship between Geographic Location and Green Behavior*
Faculty advisor: Landon Yoder

Emma Hand
*Effects of Nitrogen Deposition and Mycorrhizal Type on Carbon and Nutrient Cycling in Temperate Hardwood Forests*
Faculty advisors: Richard Phillips and Kimberly Novick

Liam Bules
*Deicers, Moderating Ions, and the Dynamics of Acute and Chronic Chloride Standards in a Small Urban Stream*
Faculty advisor: Todd Royer

**Closing Remarks**
Amanda Rutherford, Director of Undergraduate Honors Program and Associate Professor
Analyzing the Relationship Between Geographic Location and Green Behavior

This paper examines the disproportionate distribution of climate change effects across the U.S. and how vulnerability differences might indicate a person’s green behavior. Climate scientists are searching for ways to lessen these effects, and recent studies cite green behavior as a solution and policy tool. Current green behavior research focuses on what factors shape a person’s willingness to engage, including income, values, norms, demographics, exposure to media, and spatial dimensions. However, it fails to explore a relationship between an individual’s green behavior and exposure to climate extremes due to their location. Communities within the U.S. are becoming more vulnerable to the effects, with some being more at risk than others; California faces extreme forest fires and Florida coasts experience flooding due to sea level rise. In this study, college students from four universities around the U.S. with differing levels of vulnerability were given a survey to report their environmental attitudes, behavior, and risk perceptions. Preliminary findings suggest that certain green behaviors are higher in more vulnerable areas. If green behavior can act as a tool to fight the climate crisis and increasing risks, it is crucial to understand how vulnerability may impact behavior.
The Conservational Significance of *Tsuga canadensis* as a Climate Relict within Indiana

Indiana has undergone dramatic climatic changes over the past million years, each change leaving behind geographically isolated populations of species. Climate relicts are the remnants of much wider past distributions, persisting through changing environmental conditions and now mostly occurring in small, isolated habitats. Indiana contains numerous climate relict species that reflect its past climates and ecosystems. Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) covered most of Indiana after the Wisconsin glacial retreat. It is now limited to several small populations within isolated habitats that are disjunct from the main population that lies further to the north and east. Phylogeographic analyses show that Indiana’s disjunct populations have less genetic variation but are genetically distinct from main-range populations. Comparative analysis of habitats in the main range and disjunct populations shows that disjunct populations occupy a narrower range of habitat conditions. Relict populations in Indiana are limited to steep slopes, low flooding frequencies, and fewer soil parent material types. Main-range populations are able to occupy flatter terrain, higher flooding frequencies, and wider varieties of soil parent material types. As eastern hemlocks face changing climate and land use conditions, the relict status of Indiana’s hemlock populations underscores its ecological importance and the need for monitoring and protection.
The Demographics of Distrust: How Perceptions of American Political Candidates Accused of Misconduct are Influenced by a Voter’s Demographic Identity

Since the mid-twentieth century, several research efforts have explored how people respond to allegations of misconduct towards candidates during a campaign and election process. The findings of these studies provide opportunities for new research to address unanswered questions on this topic. For instance, past work has generally only considered one homogenous group of people and their responses to misconduct allegations. In contrast, the goal of this thesis is to explore how various demographic groups in America respond to allegations of sexual and financial misconduct toward electoral candidates. Capturing a range of demographic groups’ responses to misconduct allegations was achieved by using two versions of a survey experiment tool with randomly assigned groups, where one group was introduced to a sexual misconduct allegation and the other was given a financial misconduct allegation. The collected data were analyzed to provide information about whether certain demographic groups are particularly vulnerable to their voting behavior being influenced by allegations of misconduct toward candidates. This information has implications for the formulation and implementation of anti-defamation and election policies.
The purpose of this research was to explore the dynamics of chloride pollution from deicers in the context of US Environmental Protection Agency guidelines and the State of Indiana acute and chronic chloride water quality standards. US EPA guidelines are fixed values whereas the Indiana chloride standards are a function of total hardness and sulfate concentration. The study stream is Campus River, a small stream that drains the Indiana University campus. More than 35% of the watershed is impervious surface and numerous storm drains discharge to the stream. We used high-frequency sampling of specific conductivity and discrete sampling of chloride, total hardness, and sulfate to determine exceedances of acute and chronic standards from 2018 to 2021. During winter storms, the Indiana acute chloride standard ranged from 620-717 mg/L due to variation in hardness and sulfate; the chronic standard ranged from 383-444 mg/L. Between October 2019 and February 2021 there were 18 exceedances of the Indiana acute standard and 9 of the Indiana chronic standard, and a peak chloride concentration of 5,817 mg/L at the furthest downstream site. The heavy use of deicers on campus results in chloride concentrations that are harmful to aquatic life.
Indiana Rural Community Foundations and Their Responses to COVID-19

This research evaluates the various ways rural Indiana community foundations responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by answering the following question: how have rural Indiana community foundations leveraged their roles as funding intermediaries and community leaders to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? This is accomplished through two-part in-depth interviews with the executive directors of the Warren and Scott County Community Foundations during January and February of 2021. The purpose is to determine how rural foundations in different Indiana communities sought to alleviate the burdens brought on by the pandemic both for individual citizens and local nonprofits. Analysis of these interviews shows that rural foundations within the state have responded very differently to the pandemic. The Scott County Community Foundation utilized a disaster relief fund and formed strategic partnerships with local businesses and nonprofits while the Warren County Community Foundation chose not to establish any form of relief fund and instead relied on the traditional foundation grant cycle and behind-the-scenes work to support their community. These foundations have shown that disaster response has been localized to best meet the needs of the rural areas in which they operate.
The State of Community Energy: How Legislative Design Impacts the Success of Community Choice Adoption

Community energy models give local governments the opportunity to break away from the status quo set by utility companies in the United States and choose their own energy portfolios for consumers. Although only legal in a limited number of states, municipal governments are taking on community choice aggregation models at an increasing rate—despite the extra responsibilities that go along with such a policy adoption. Although there is substantial research in the field about the potential effect that community choice aggregation models have on the energy market and the municipalities that employ them, there is very little information about how the state legislation that legalized such models affects the adoption of CCA on a community level. This paper addresses the legislative traits that may help or hinder municipalities’ abilities to adopt CCA so that other state authorities that legalize such a model do so in a way that maximizes community energy benefits.
Canary in the Coal Mine: Ban the Box Legislation and its Effect on White-Black Employment Deficit

Beginning in the 1990’s, Ban the Box Legislation has attempted to improve Ex-Offender employment rates by removing the identification of a criminal background to a later step in the hiring process. Many studies have suggested a negative racial component within these policies, yet none have used a long-term time series analysis to determine how minority Ex-Offenders are impacted by Ban the Box. This study aims to do this by analyzing White-Black employment deficits in two sets of cities with similar labor markets. The results show a significant negative effect between Ban the Box legislation and White-Black employment gaps in the large metro set and an inconclusive positive effect for the small metro set. From a legislative perspective, this study emphasizes the need to take into account how minority Ex-Offenders will be adversely affected by Ban the Box legislation as well as the questionable long-term effectiveness of the policy in increasing Ex-Offender employment.
Purpose Over Punishment: How the Expansion of Correctional Education Programs in the State of Indiana Can Reduce Recidivism

One of the main goals of incarceration is deterrence, and many believe punitive action is the best way to discourage previous and potential offenders from committing crimes. High incarceration rates plague the United States, where a large proportion of the incarcerated population is made up of previously released offenders. Recidivism is a relapse into criminal behavior, and incarceration alone may not be the solution as many former inmates find themselves back in the prison system. It is important to reassess punitive approaches to incarceration considering the difficulties inmates face to assimilate back into society. What is the best deterrent if not punishment? The solution may be one that is already in existence but has not reached its fullest potential, particularly in the state of Indiana. Expanding and improving current correctional education programs in all Indiana state prisons can result in reduced recidivism rates, maintained order in prisons, savings to taxpayers, and increased public safety. This paper will demonstrate the need for Indiana policymakers to put purpose over punishment by exploring the history behind incarceration spikes, recidivism rates and data, the benefits of establishing effective and comprehensive correctional education programs for inmates rejoining society, and the ways in which current programs can be greatly improved.
The Impact of COVID-19 on Human Resources Departments in Healthcare Facilities

The Coronavirus pandemic has led to deaths of over 530,000 American citizens and caused an economic downfall of 9.1% (8.8 trillion dollars) in the United States. The healthcare sector in the United States is usually considered a recession-proof sector, but it was impacted drastically by the pandemic. The role of Human Resources (HR) departments in healthcare organizations is to ensure that employees are adequately managed, appropriately compensated, and effectively trained. One of the most important roles of HR departments is employee recruitment which is usually done through communicating job announcements to potential job seekers. This research aims to study the impact of COVID-19 on Human Resources departments within healthcare facilities in Indiana. In order to study this, I use job announcements that were posted on Indeed (www.indeed.com) in January 2021. I employ the inductive reasoning method to understand the COVID-19 policies that each organization adopted. I then observe trends and patterns to categorize policies. Resulting categorizes display the wide range of policies that were adopted by organizations to limit the impact of pandemic and make employees and patients feel safe in their facility. Most organizations implemented mandatory mask and PPE policies for employees in the facility, required COVID-19 vaccine administration, and underwent a special infection control and prevention training to stop the spread of the virus.
State Spending: How a Shift in Funding Allocations can Change the Number and Type of Credentials Distributed by Higher Education Institutions

The past decade saw a shift in higher education funding that favored two-year institutions over four-year institutions. In addition, there is an increasing gap in labor supply and talent demand in Indiana, as the state’s higher education institutions continue to struggle to keep pace with its economic talent demand. Analyzing credential data beginning in 2004, the goal of this research is to determine whether the shift in higher education funding for state institutions had any impact on the number and type of credentials distributed by those institutions. I found a higher percentage increase in the credentials given out by the two-year institutions compared to four-year institutions. I also consider how partisan control, the state of the economy, and the tenets of Human Capital Theory may contribute to the shift in funding allocations. Lastly, I compare the credential output results to the future Indiana employment landscape, where I found a misalignment between types of credentials distributed compared to the talent demand of the Indiana employment landscape, as the types of credentials fail to adequately match the talent demand needs of the state.
Rural Republicans: The Influence of Moral Ideals on Political Opinions

This research examines the moral ideals rural Republicans use in explaining their positions on universal basic income. In the last several decades, support for the Republican Party has remained steady in rural America, even though Republicans typically oppose social policies that could financially benefit rural Americans. To best understand the opinions of rural Americans concerning different social policies, this research aims to analyze the political opinions of rural residents within Greene County, Indiana through semi-structured interviews asking about their opinions on policies, government, and social issues to understand what is important to them. Current research relating to surveyed opinions of universal basic income lacks information about why people feel the way they do. This research will address the reasonings rural Americans use to explain their positions. In order to best help people through federal or state assistance, government officials must understand the needs and opinions of their citizens.
Climate Action Plans: Symbolic Gestures or Action-Inspiring? Understanding Accountability Measures Utilized by Leading Indiana Cities

This study examines how local governments incorporate accountability measures into their climate action planning documents since mayors often appear to public plans that lack details on how to accomplish individual goals. This research evaluates two cities in Indiana—South Bend and Bloomington—that are considered progressive when it comes to environmental protection to see how similar their accountability mechanisms are by analyzing their climate plans. These data are supplemented with interviews conducted with local leaders to understand why they chose specific accountability measures. Through these case studies, it appears that Bloomington’s climate action plan contains more mechanisms for accountability while South Bend’s plan provides more flexibility in how progress is reported. These results highlight the fact that not all sustainability and climate plans are created equal. Local governments and citizens can use these findings to decide how to articulate goals in a way that enables better accountability mechanisms.
Emma Hand  
O’Neill School  
Environmental Science

Faculty Advisors  
Richard Phillips and Kimberly Novick  
Associate Professors

Effects of Nitrogen Deposition and Mycorrhizal Type on Carbon and Nutrient Cycling in Temperate Hardwood Forests

Elevated nitrogen (N) deposition due to human activities has substantially increased soil fertility in forest ecosystems, with the potential to alter soil carbon (C) storage. Increased availability of N has been shown to both increase and decrease C storage in soil organic matter (SOM). To predict how N deposition influences soil C, a better understanding of how microbial and plant communities respond to increased N and influence SOM dynamics is needed. This study assesses changes in the C and N content of microbial, root, leaf and SOM pools in a temperate hardwood forest after eight years of N fertilization. The type of mycorrhizal fungal symbiont a tree associates with can influence soil C and nutrient cycling, so plots were established in forest stands dominated by trees that associate with either arbuscular (AM) or ectomycorrhizal (EcM) fungi. N fertilization was found to alter microbial enzyme activity and microbial N, while the effects of N fertilization on plant and SOM chemistry depended on the type of mycorrhizal symbiont present. Understanding the effects of N deposition on storage of C in forests is increasingly important as we confront consequences of climate change and look to forests for their potential for carbon sequestration.
Examination of Museums as Historic Sites

Over the last decade, historic house museums have been subject to criticism for their outdated interpretative models. Traditionally, they offer tours of the home, yet these events are usually unengaging for contemporary audiences. The falling numbers of visitors support such claims. In response to these criticisms, museum experts have offered interpretative-based solutions. Museum literature has yet to examine whether house museums are beginning to change. Focusing on a regional level, the goal of this research is to determine whether house museums and historic sites have altered their interpretative planning over the last decade. Three case studies on Indiana house museums and related historic sites suggest that museums are altering how they create exhibitions, educational programming, and community outreach projects. This includes adopting minority perspectives, focusing on hands-on learning, and considering how they are part of changing communities. While the recorded change is slow, this research will provide evidence of how historic sites are adopting innovative ways to engage with their audiences.
Medicare’s Hospital Readmission Reduction Program and the Unintended Impact on Racial Disparities in Readmission Rates

Increased readmission rates are a large contributor to excess healthcare spending in the United States. This is also an indicator of the quality-of-care patients are receiving while admitted into hospitals. The excessive and frequent hospital readmissions motivated Medicare’s 2012 program attempting to reduce readmissions with financial penalties. Following the implementation of the Hospital Readmission Reduction Program (HHRP), racial gaps in healthcare quality in readmission rates can be best identified by analyzing socioeconomic status, Census demographics, and readmission ratios for targeted conditions at a county level. Indiana hospitals continue to be fined for excessive amounts of readmission, but very little research has been conducted on the demographics of the population these hospitals serve. This thesis addresses the deficiency of the healthcare industry in providing equal and quality care to admitted patients with pneumonia, heart failure, and acute myocardial infraction. Additionally, it seeks to address the effects on readmission rate of conditions not targeted in the HRRP and whether it is cause for concern when evaluating the effectiveness of the Medicare policy.
Invasive species are the subject of growing concern. They cause substantial ecological damage and are costly to manage. The U.S. functions with a patchwork of state and local laws, regulations, and programs to manage invasive species. State laws tend to be narrowly focused, banning the sale of specific species, limiting their distribution and introduction, or responding to what is affected by the invasive species. In the last eleven years, five Midwestern states passed laws regarding expansive invasive species; Indiana’s was the least expansive in terms of species banned. This research assesses the regional impacts of statewide restrictive invasive species laws. Interviews and document analysis suggest some of the driving factors of the plant industry’s migration away from invasive species in the Midwest were identified. The study was limited to qualitatively analyze the trends in Indiana’s plant market based on responses from nursery industry experts. Experts identified important factors in driving invasive species bans and extrapolated on methods to mitigate the economic impact faced by nurseries when adapting to new species bans.
Reducing Zonings Impact on Educational Disparities

Educational disparities create inequality from the very start of life. If America is to hold true to its ideals of equality of opportunity, then it must work to ensure a level playing field for everyone. This study will examine public high schools in California over time to track changes and analyze the underlying interaction of multifamily residency rates and educational disparities of wealth by city. Poverty concentration creates bad outcomes for students. By expanding the levels of multifamily residency, we may see decreased levels of educational inequalities of wealth. To do this, I recommend reducing the levels of single-family zoning to increase equity.
Fundraising in a Time of Unrest: How Bloomington, Indiana Nonprofits and their Development Plans have been Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, nonprofits across the nation had to retool their fundraising and development plans due to canceled events, financial insecurity due to unemployment, and shifting household priorities. This paper aims to explain how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the different nonprofit sectors in Bloomington, Indiana, which sectors were hit the hardest, what strategies each type used during the pandemic up until the writing of this paper, and lessons learned from pandemic fundraising. Bloomington is home to a robust and broad nonprofit sector, including over 800 public charities in sectors such as arts and culture, social services, and advocacy. Data are collected through the United Way of Monroe County’s COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund grant recipients as well as interviews with the Resource Development Director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Bloomington and the Development Manager of the Buskirk-Chumley Theater. This research informs current discourse and best practices of fundraising, donor cultivation, and donor retention during a time of financial crisis and personal unrest in a robust nonprofit environment. Importantly, this research dives into the later impacts and adaptations of nonprofit and considers what programs were most important for mid-pandemic survival of Bloomington-area constituents.
Abortion TRAP Laws: Effects on Accessibility

This study explores the effects of targeted regulation of abortion provider (TRAP) laws on abortion accessibility in the United States. The existing literature on this topic focuses primarily on abortion incidence statistics in the United States, legal literature pertaining to TRAP laws, or on a singular TRAP law or state. This research seeks to examine the effects of TRAP laws on abortion at the national level to fill a crucial gap in the literature. The study focuses on 16 of the most common and pertinent TRAP laws and measures abortion accessibility by the percentage of women in the state who have an abortion provider in their county. Results suggest an inverse relationship where states with more TRAP laws/more severe TRAP laws have lower percentages of accessibility while states with less TRAP laws/less severe TRAP laws have higher percentages of accessibility. These results demonstrate that TRAP laws effectively reduce abortion accessibility. At a time when courts around the nation are struggling to interpret TRAP laws and their purpose, this research can determine how TRAP laws affect abortion accessibility.
Comparative Analysis of Media Censorship and Terrorism in the United States and Australia

The mutual and parasitic symbiotic nature of the relationship between terrorists and the media has been acknowledged and studied for some time. In the last two decades, the growth of the internet and social media have given rise to instant communication and the ability of anyone to contribute, increasing the aptitude of terrorist organizations to spread propaganda and broadcast acts of terror live through new media. This study uses data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) managed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) housed at the University of Maryland on the number of terrorist events in Australia and the United States as well as document analysis of media censorship and internet restriction for the years 2000 to 2019. I find that Australia has higher levels of censorship in general and specifically as related to terrorism as well as significantly lower incidents of terrorist events than the United States.
Both domestically and globally, hate crimes are on the rise. This study attempts to measure the effect of media behavior, particularly media that is geared towards a hyper-partisan, sometimes extreme segment of the political spectrum, on hate-fueled behavior. Drawing on nationwide statistics from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting data and the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Hate Map over a decade, this study looks at the effect that the rise of “Alt-Right” media outlets has on racially motivated hate crimes as well as its effect on hate group formation. Initial findings from regression analysis suggest that increased web traffic to selected Alt-Right news sites has a statistically significant positive effect on hate crime incidence while its effect on hate group formation is not significant.
Socioeconomic Vulnerability, COVID-19, and the Opioid Epidemic

Increasing attention has been paid to how social factors, such as the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age affect individual well-being rather than solely clinical factors. Previous research tends to focus on one disease at a time while this research compares determinants of two different mortalities. Comparing factors affecting deaths due to opioid misuse and deaths due to COVID-19 allows for a heightened understanding of which socioeconomic factors and vulnerability are more dominant and universally applicable. The study uses US county level data on mortality due to COVID and opioid overdose in conjunction with the Center for Disease Social Vulnerability Index and socioeconomic data from the US Census. Results suggest that areas with larger minority populations had increased deaths due to COVID-19 while areas with larger white populations had increased deaths due to opioids in 2019. In contrast, other factors such as overall socioeconomic vulnerability only affect one type of mortality but not the other. This research has implications for how policymakers’ direct resources in times of crisis and plan for future epidemics.
Does Expanding Access to SNAP Reduce Crime? Evidence from ABWWD Waivers

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food assistance every month to about one in seven Americans. Past research has linked SNAP access and changes in the administration of SNAP to reductions in criminal activity. Much of this work focuses on how SNAP benefits families with children, and less research exists on how SNAP affects able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD). I use county-level data on waivers to SNAP's work requirement for ABAWD from 2010 to 2017 and data from the Uniform Crime Reports that cover about half of the United States population to provide a difference-in-differences estimate of the effect of SNAP work requirements on crime. I find some evidence that waivers to the SNAP work requirement are associated with reduced arrests for theft among women. This result can help policymakers as they consider whether to reimpose work requirements for SNAP and other safety net programs as the economy recovers from the COVID-19 shutdowns.
The Effect of Workplace Meetings on Job Satisfaction and Employee Productivity

The merits and drawbacks of meetings in the workplace continue to be debated. Many argue that worker productivity is a function of employee job satisfaction, engagement, enrichment, and empowerment. This study aims to determine how workplace meetings impact productivity by inhibiting, or enhancing employee job satisfaction. After establishing a causal connection between job satisfaction and increased productivity, the research investigates the relationship between meetings and job satisfaction and, thereby, the connection between meetings and productivity through interviews that explore perceptions of meeting value and effectiveness. Interview responses define characteristics and traits of meetings that impact job satisfaction both positively and negatively. The data collected suggest that meetings influence job satisfaction, which further demonstrates that meeting satisfaction has a positive correlation with overall employee productivity. More significantly, this study explores commonly perceived characteristics of meetings that either enhance or inhibit productivity.
A Complete Tree Inventory and Management Plan for Indiana University’s Dunn’s Woods

Dunn’s Woods, like other urban woodlands, is important for preserving biodiversity, mitigating local climate change impacts, and providing social ecological benefits for the surrounding community. However, Dunn’s Woods has been largely ignored in past years, allowing invasive plant species and small, less desirable tree species to take over the woodland and outcompete native, more desirable species. This research seeks to establish a clear, data driven inventory of the current state of Dunn’s Woods, compare those findings to the last inventory completed in 2006, and offer a management plan base on woodland research. The tree inventory was conducted by identifying every tree above 10 cm by species and diameter at breast height, then tagging and recording each tree for further analysis. The current findings show that maple saplings dominate both the understory and overstory, accounting for about half of the total number of trees in the woodland. Based on the results from this inventory, a management plan that aims to create a woodlot with higher biodiversity, fewer invasive species, and more beneficial trees like oak and hickory can be established. This research is relevant to the university because it can be utilized to create a healthier woodland for students and community members to enjoy.
Equitable Sharing to State and Local Law Enforcement: Is it Worth It?

Law enforcement can seize the property of criminals if that property is suspected of past or future use in a criminal act. This process of asset forfeiture is used every day by law enforcement officers across the country. In addition to using this process to cripple criminals of their assets and property, asset forfeiture provides federal, state, and local law enforcement additional revenue through the selling of seized assets. All forfeiture revenue that occurs within federal courts is put into the Asset Forfeiture Fund run by the U.S. Department of Justice. To incentive help from state and local law enforcement, an equitable sharing program exists in which state and local law enforcement can share in the proceeds of federal forfeiture. This study aims to investigate this asset forfeiture revenue from federal forfeitures shared with states. Does the money from the equitable sharing program given to states have an effect on crime? The findings of this study suggest there is no statistically significant linkage between Equitable Sharing Payments and crime. This finding aligns with previous research and provides an important start to thinking about where this money can be used more effectively.
How Food Insecurity Impacts Food Access in United States Counties

This paper examines Congressional rhetoric surrounding the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Program created by the US Department of Homeland Security to assess the level (or lack) of concern surrounding Islamophobia. The scholarly and practitioner literatures establish that CVE disproportionately targets and surveils Muslims and that the program has failed to demonstrate its effectiveness in preventing or identifying potential acts of terrorism. These findings have been made known to members of Congress. This research aims to evaluate their reaction and response such findings and compares these responses with demands for legislative action coming from activists and watchdogs.
How Food Insecurity Impacts Food Access in United States Counties

Most studies regarding food security or food access focus on the impacts of either variable separately on outcomes such as obesity rates or levels of nutrition. In general, research on food access follows four categorical subjects. However, based on a multiplicity of studies, I argue for a new group of four categories related to food access that should be studied instead: 1) average income, 2) differences between chain and non-chain grocery stores, 3) consumer preference, and 4) population density. Although I control for those factors in a linear regression model, they are aspects of poverty and, to a smaller degree, of food insecurity. As a result, the correlation between food insecurity and limited food access is fairly strong. I also found that there are more high-food-access counties than low-food-access counties experiencing food insecurity, potentially disproving any causal relationship.
Resolving the Troubles: Theories on the Peace Process in Northern Ireland

Throughout the 20th century in Northern Ireland, civil unrest terrorized the region in a violent conflict known as The Troubles. The political and ethno-national differences between the Protestant Northerners and Catholic Irish came from decades of dispute over territorial claims to the land by both the British and Irish, as well from the marginalization of Irish Catholics living in the region. The inability to compromise between the two groups led to a conflict that heightened in the late 1960s and lasted nearly 30 years. The end of the conflict culminated in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, creating a devolved system of government that has been widely accepted as representing an end to the violence. When looking at what helped lead to the end of this violent conflict, we cannot attribute peace to one cause. From the national government to grassroots community organizations to paramilitary organizations, the work in many different sectors helped to create the social and political changes needed to allow for peace accords. Although it will take time before the conflict in Northern Ireland is entirely settled, the peace process teaches us lessons about communication and continual peace building efforts that can be applied to future cross-cultural conflicts.