



Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2019 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

POSTER SESSION 1

Commons East, Easel 44

11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Examining Sense of Belonging among Undergraduate Students Participating in a STEM Support Program

MacKenzie Gray, Junior, Health Service Administration, Portland State University

McNair Scholar

Mentor: Erin Shortlidge, Biology Department, Portland State University

Mentor: Emma Goodwin, Biology Department, Portland State University

National calls have been made to strengthen our nation’s STEM workforce by improving preparation and increasing graduation rates. At Portland State University (PSU), Oregon’s largest urban university, over 60% of students transfer from community colleges and the large majority do not live on campus. Transfer students may perceive a loss of support and a drop in GPA during their first term post-transfer, elements of what is known as “transfer shock.” As part of a newly-awarded NSF S-STEM grant, we aim to measure if high-impact STEM support programs can mitigate factors related to transfer-shock and support student sense of belonging. Direct impacts of the S-STEM program are being assessed qualitatively (e.g. focus groups, reflections), and preliminary results for our first cohort of S-STEM Scholars indicate strong bonds among the cohort and feelings of success. To examine how students supported by the S-STEM and other high-impact STEM programs compare to other PSU STEM students, a survey measuring self-efficacy, scientific identity, scientific values, STEM involvement, and sense of belonging was broadly disseminated to students in Fall 2018 and will be repeated in Spring 2019. Initial survey results (n=933) allow us to compare student responses for students supported (n=93) or unsupported (n=840) by programs such as the S-STEM. We will also compare traditional four-year students (n=291), community college transfer students (n=398), and four-year college transfer, returning, and post-baccalaureate students (n=240). Preliminary results indicate that students supported by high-impact STEM programs such as the S-STEM report significantly higher sense of belonging, both at PSU and in STEM groups. Efforts implemented by the S-STEM program to improve STEM student experiences academically, financially, and socially, particularly to the most

vulnerable populations, will ultimately improve and diversify the STEM workforce.

SESSION 1H

POLITICS, PARTY, & POWER

Session Moderator: Margaret O’Mara, History

MGH 242

12:30 PM to 2:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

It’s My Party, and I’ll Vote if I Want To: Partisan Polarization and the Electoral Incentives That Shape Home Style

Aidan Killackey, Senior, Political Science (Internatl Security)

Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science

Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

Scholars recognize that politicians’ perceptions of their electability influence their home style, or the way in which they present themselves to their constituents. Marginality, or the proportion of a politician’s co-partisans in the electorate, is common indicator of electability. However, marginality fails to capture how polarization of the electorate augments politicians’ vulnerability. This study introduces a new indicator of electability that captures statewide polarization in the electorate. Building off the finding that more marginal Senators emphasize support for appropriations to build non-partisan support, I expect that Senators in more polarized states will emphasize their support for appropriations after controlling for marginality. Appropriations credit-claiming builds non-partisan support without alienating more partisan voters. I employ multilevel linear regression analysis to examine the relationship between state-level partisan polarization and topic expression in Senate press releases systematically. A positive relationship between partisan polarization and appropriations credit-claiming may reveal a mechanism by which polarization paradoxically minimizes the partisan content of Senators’ home styles.

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Prosecutorial Discretion over Exculpatory Evidence and Plea Bargaining

Alexandra Nicole (Alex) Fletcher, Senior, Political Science
Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science
Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

Since the 1920s, plea bargaining in the United States criminal justice system has become status quo. Today, over 95% of federal cases have resulted in plea bargains and never been tried in court. The power of the prosecutor within the legal system has also increased substantially over the last century leading many scholars to believe that the proliferation of plea bargaining is a direct result of heightened prosecutorial power. Prior literature has addressed the increased power of the prosecutor and the need for reform if plea bargaining rates are to change, but has not yet provided an empirical observation as to whether prosecutorial reform makes a significant impact in plea bargaining. In this paper I theorize that the prosecutor's discretion over exculpatory evidence plays an integral part in states' reliance on plea bargaining and that states that attempt to reign in prosecutorial power experience reduced rates of pleas. To test this theory systematically, I have run a multivariate analysis at the county-level to compare rates of plea bargaining across states that have reformed prosecutorial discretion and states that have not. If states with a model rule suppressing prosecutorial power show a statistically significant difference in plea rates, criminal justice reform advocates should turn their attention to prosecutorial reform.

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Montesquieu to Scalia: Cross-National Separation of Powers in Constitutions and Free Expression

Rohnin William Randles, Senior, Political Science

Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science

Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

One of the most common questions that scholars of democratic theory address is how to best allocate and balance power across the different structures within a government. Historically, many theorists and philosophers have postulated that structures with separation of power are more effective at resisting tyrannical rule. Though researchers have established the effects of an imbalance of power between two branches of government, no study has attempted to systematically account for the relative balance of power among all three branches working in tandem or develop empirical metrics to this end. In this study, I theorize that designing separate branches of government that are equally strong strengthens conflicts across institutions, which ultimately leads to more robust protections against tyranny. I evaluate this model quantitatively by developing and introducing a new measure, the Separate Powers Index (SPI). My SPI assesses the balance of power between the three branches of government as postulated in a sample of 130 of the world's constitutions. Using multivariate regression methods, I compare the SPI with a cross-national index of free expression in a cross-sectional analysis during the year 2008, I can systematically examine whether there is a relationship between structural provisions of institutions that distribute power and their outcomes to protect their citizens. In addition to providing a novel measure of tripartite power balance in national constitutions, the result of this study has a large impact on all scholars of constitutionalism and civil liberties.

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Why White Women Voted for Trump

Ramona Ann Bulan Alhambra, Senior, Political Science

Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science

Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

For this project, I examine why the majority of white women voted for Trump in the 2016 election, a fact that came as a shock to many observers. However, with few exceptions, white women have been shown to support conservative candidates in presidential elections since the 1950s. Yet, Don-

ald Trump's election can be considered unique as he was still able to gain most white women's support despite his displays of various behaviors that could be regarded as overtly sexist. In this research design, I analyze white female voters using data from a 2016 Pilot Study by the American National Election Survey and hypothesize that racial resentment and internalized sexism are the primary factors that drove white women to support Donald Trump, controlling for partisanship, economic anxiety and other factors that might influence vote choice. I employ linear regression models using R programming software to examine a relationship between 2016 vote choice, racial resentment and internalized sexism systematically. In doing so, my analysis takes an intersectional approach, where both race and gender dynamics are useful in providing an explanation for white women's support for Trump.

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The New Battleground for Party Politics: Comparing State Legislators' Online Partisanship with Roll Call Votes

Kerry Lin Pemberton, Senior, Political Science

Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science

Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

Although legislative partisanship has traditionally been studied through measures like floor votes or debates, scholars have found that social media also provides a conducive environment for negative and positive displays of party politics. This project codes Tweets from both Washington and Texas State legislators in 2017 as either "partisan" or "neutral" in order to create a proportion for each category and correspondingly identify the extent to which these legislators participate in partisan behavior online. Then, these proportions are compared with an individual legislator's roll call votes, markers of their general level of polarization, in order to view whether or not they are behaving in a more partisan manner online than their votes would indicate. My paper posits that the unique conditions of social media cause legislators to behave differently, resulting in a comprehensive increase in legislator partisanship. This research holds importance in future studies by shedding light on how social media is used by those in our state governments, especially as it pertains to their party posturing online.

SESSION 2Q

PUBLIC POLICY, INEQUALITY & POLITICAL EXCLUSION: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES & REMEDIES

Session Moderator: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science

JHN 026

3:30 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

The Effect of State-Level Immigration Policy on Populations of Undocumented Immigrants and Immigration Flows

Wren Cavanaugh, Senior, Political Science, History

UW Honors Program

Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science

Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

Since the 1990s, legislation in many US states has increasingly criminalized and restricted undocumented immigration. However, despite these restrictive policies, the population of undocumented immigrants has increased and overall immigration flows from Mexico to the US only began to decline following the 2009 recession. This research responds to decades of increasingly punitive policy and intends to test the efficacy of these policies. Many studies have focused on the efficacy and implications of federal policies, but far less attention has been given to state-level policies in the US. This paper analyzes the efficacy of punitive, state-level immigration laws from 2010 to 2016 in the United States. I hypothesize that there is no significant relationship between the passage of punitive state-level immigration policies and the year-to-year change in state populations of undocumented immigrants. However, I also hypothesize that the introduction of punitive state-level immigration policies affects yearly immigration flows—or the number of people immigrating from Mexico to a specific US State. To conduct this study, I created an index that aggregates a broad spectrum of laws, including policing, licensing, education, public benefits and labor. I then selected a few high-profile state laws intended to deter or curb undocumented immigration. I used multivariate regression analyses to test whether the introduction of punitive policy immigration policy systematically influences migration flows and changes in migrant populations while controlling for relevant economic and demographic factors.

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Public Transit and Private Car Ownership: How to Best Help Low-Income, Urban Workers

Cj (CJ) Robinson, Senior, Political Science

Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science

Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

This study seeks to understand how to best support low-income, urban employment mobility through transportation. While scholars have studied the effects of urban planning, access to a private vehicle and public transportation for low-income residents, there is no consensus in the academic community for which method of transportation is most effective. Utilizing responses from the 2004 General Social Survey, the study measures perceived access to public transit, car ownership and employment mobility—the ability to switch to an equally desirable job—among low-income residents. Additionally, I employ census data measuring willing job-to-job transfers, car ownership and low-income public transit commuting time as a proxy for transportation access. I expect to find a positive relationship between car ownership and employment mobility, while I predict no relationship between public transportation and mobility. I utilize a multivariate regression analysis for the census data. This study has important implications for transit policy, as it can help inform how to better fund public transit to help low-income individuals and may lead to experimental policy like low-income car subsidies.

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Welfare, Punishment, and Political Participation: Assessing Welfare Punitiveness and Voting Behavior

Allyson Rose Mc Kinney, Senior, Political Science, Law, Societies, & Justice

Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science

Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

This study evaluates whether more punitive state welfare policies depress rates of voter turnout in communities with high concentrations of welfare recipients. While scholars have studied the influence of demographic group belonging and the effects of state institutional contact (prison, welfare, etc.) on political participation and voting, researchers have not studied how voting behavior shifts in response to policy-level variations in welfare states. To address this gap in the literature, I use data from the Urban Institute's Welfare Rule's database to generate a novel index of state welfare punitiveness that will be broadly useful for scholars interested in state welfare policies and political socialization. I use multivariate regression analysis to test whether high concentrations of welfare recipients in more punitive states systematically affects voting behavior. Results of this study will be relevant for scholars concerned with voting behavior, political learning, institutional contact, and democratic participation.

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In the Jailhouse, Not the Statehouse: Racialized Felon Disenfranchisement and Black Descriptive Representation

Jeani Rene Atlas, Senior, Law, Societies, & Justice, Political Science

Mentor: Rebecca Thorpe, Political Science

Mentor: Emma Rodman, Political Science, Center for American Politics and Public Policy

The purpose of this study is to analyze how felon disenfranchisement laws affect Black descriptive representation in state legislatures. In recent decades, scholars have shown that laws restricting or eliminating the voting rights of convicted felons disproportionately prevent Black people from voting. Scholars have also found that Black voters are more likely to vote for Black political candidates than voters of other races. However, researchers have yet to link felon disenfranchise-

ment with political representation or access to political power. To address this issue, I theorize that states with more severe felon disenfranchisement laws will have lower levels of Black descriptive representation than other states. I employ multiple regression analysis to systematically examine whether the harshness of felon disenfranchisement laws reduces the percentage of Black state legislators in each state as a function of the overall Black population. The project raises serious questions about the racialized political consequences of felon disenfranchisement policies and whether these laws distort statewide democratic outcomes.