

Hunter Bacot Research Agenda

Active Projects

- **Comparative Environmental Management in the American States**
Roy Dawes (article manuscripts & book project)
- **Integrating Tobacco Cessation Treatment and Education Programs in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Facilities**
Chris Diaz (article manuscript; under review)
- **Perceptions of Philanthropy: Informal Volunteering Perceptions and Activities**
Vickie Edwards (article manuscript)
- **Neighborhood Governance and Municipal Structure**
Mike Crow (article manuscript)
- **Establishing Indicators to Evaluate a Neighborhood Choice Program**
Marc Wallace (article manuscript)

Potential Projects

- **Informal Volunteering and Community Capital in Neighborhood Organizations**
Vickie Edwards & Mike Crow (article manuscript)
- **Reading, Literacy, and Kindergarten Readiness and: A Case Study of an Arkansas Pre-K Reading Program**
Bryant City Schools, ADE, and Imagination Library of Saline County (article manuscript)
- **Polliteracy: A Primer on Public Opinion Polling**
Kirby Goidel (book project)

Current Research Agenda

Comparative Environmental Management in the American States

with Roy Dawes

This research extends and updates previous state environmental management research in the American states. As much comparative state environmental management research in the 1990s examined determinants of variation in public-sector activity in the American states to deal with environmental problems, these efforts have waned in recent years. This is largely due to 1) data collection challenges and changes over time; 2) multiple approaches for determining (defining) state management efficacy; and, 3) lack of consensus on what best constitutes environmental management/protection success or failure. Though it is well beyond the capacity of any one paper to attempt to address all three of these issue areas, we hope to begin through an examination of critical factors associated with our understanding of contemporary comparative state environmental management.

The maturation of research by environmental scholars in the subfield has over time led to a more specialized focus on environmental media and, as a result, attention has moved away from the overall characterization of state environmental efforts. Though there have been other important questions dealt with by scholars in closely related areas, our goal is to revisit state environmental effort models across a host of economic, environmental, political, and social indicators. In developing this research, we begin by constructing factors demonstrated as robust in depicting a state's environmental management efforts and evaluate alternative factors we believe important (from other policy arenas), as well as factors newly available for assessment. Finally, from this general exploration of relevant factors, we hope to isolate those factors that explicitly depict a state's standing vis-à-vis other states. ~ 2016-17

- Establish indicators: refining dependent variable as a viable depiction of within state environmental efforts (FREE & Green Index long used, but no longer available)
- Currently resolving within-state factors for developing a dependent variable to more accurately and parsimoniously establish an interactive component to reflect a state's regulatory capacity to affect environmental conditions within their borders
- Model comparative state standing; model by media – air, land, & water
- Compare models for years 2007/8 (pre-recession) and 2013/4 (post-recession)
- book manuscript

Integrating Tobacco Cessation Treatment and Education Programs in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Facilities

with Chris Diaz

As current research confirms that those diagnosed with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorder use tobacco at disproportionately higher rates than the general population, this 'special population' becomes of interest in eliminating tobacco use in the U.S. Higher use rates within this population result in higher rates of smoking-related illnesses and mortality among this population. There is however, increasing evidence that concurrent treatment for tobacco and recovery is effective when smoking cessation is integrated into recovery treatment (U.S. Department of Health and Human services, 2007). By providing a holistic recovery environment in these facilities, mental health and substance abuse professionals reduce the effect of tobacco-related health issues on consumers, while encouraging their personal recovery from mental illness and/or substance abuse. Yet, despite the bounty of research documenting the high rates of tobacco use among these special populations, there is less research addressing the effectiveness of tobacco cessation programs for these special populations; thus, this research to evaluate the efficacy of engaging this population in tobacco cessation programs concurrent with treatment strategies.

In this research, we evaluate the performance of tobacco cessation programs for decreasing the number of tobacco users in participating facilities, as well as assessing whether consumers' (users) perspectives about tobacco cessation have changed upon their exposure to treatment and education programs. Using surveys, we assess perceptions of the tobacco cessation program, both pre- and post-program participation, as well as information about tobacco consumption behavior and practices for both consumers and staff. We find ample evidence that tobacco cessation programs are having the beneficial effect of reducing or eliminating tobacco use by these special populations of consumers. The highlights of this evaluation team with outcomes that indicate success with jointly addressing tobacco use and addiction within these special populations of consumers; in fact, these results speak to how successful the program is at reducing or stopping tobacco use for these populations. ~ *fall 2017*

- in process of integrating public health and experimental literature into manuscript as we prepare it for submission

Perceptions of Philanthropy: Informal Volunteering Perceptions and Activities

with Vickie Edwards

A small subset of the volunteerism literature focuses on informal volunteering behaviors; even less attention is paid to differences in how those behaviors are perceived, and how idiosyncratic variation may influence the self-reporting of formal and informal volunteering as well as philanthropic and civic behaviors. Using data from two different surveys, this research examines individual perceptions of informal volunteering, helping, and giving behaviors, as well as volunteer participation based on these perceptions. In examining these behaviors and participation, we find demographic

and regional variations across national and state level perceptions of informal volunteering. ~ *fall 2016-spring 2017*

- received excellent interest and feedback at ARNOVA conference; moving forward with research
- securing applicable and viable datasets on a national level has proved challenging; have secured a dataset and in the process of converting, recoding, and shaping data file for analysis

Neighborhood Governance and Municipal Structure

with Mike Crow

In this research, we build upon Professor Crow's research on understating the economic value of neighborhood self-governance. Using results from a survey of neighborhood and property owner associations to evaluate the effectiveness of neighborhood organizations, Crow finds that "neighborhood and property owner associations both have significant positive effects on neighborhood property values relative to unorganized neighborhoods and that the effect of neighborhood associations is larger than that of property owner associations." Combining this research and the recent literature that suggests promoting social capital and neighborhood organization is an effective means for stabilizing and improving quality of life in some urban neighborhoods, our interest becomes those local government institutional arrangements, if any, that beget and sustain vibrant neighborhood organizations within a community/city. As a result, we are interested in exploring effects of these institutional arrangements on neighborhood governance, particularly social capital and level of self-governance, and whether these arrangements affect the neighborhood's capacity to address neighborhood-level collective action problems, and in turn affect expectations about the neighborhood's future, homeowner reinvestment, and entrepreneurship. ~ *2016-17*

- **this research** builds off of Professor Crow's research and proposes to assess whether the institutional infrastructure of the local government catalyzes and supports a culture or builds social capital that emphasizes neighborhood governance that cultivates civic stakeholders based on a political structure that supports such individual and group participation.

This approach is loosely based on Wilson's (1987) perspective of community building, which according to Fraser et al (2003: 420), is summarized to include ". . . educational, economic, religious, recreational, and nonprofit organizations with an emphasis on strong community-based political organizations" that focus on building "community capacity" at the neighborhood level through a ". . . sense of community, level of commitment among community members, the ability to solve problems, and access to resources."

Builds upon Crow's "Exit, Voice and Neighborhood Change: Evaluating the Effect of Sub-Local Governance", which is being

revised and resubmitted to *Urban Affairs Review*, and his research “The Institutional Analysis of Neighborhood Governance” that is under revision for resubmission to *Public Administration Review*. In this research Craw finds that neighborhood and homeowner associations both have significant positive effects on neighborhood property values relative to unorganized neighborhoods; results indicate that the effect of neighborhood associations is larger than that of homeowner associations. He also finds that neighborhood association mobilization and strategy mediate the effect on property values, though this is not so for homeowner associations.

- effort is based on an integration of research projects: a) Professor Craw’s research from an independent project supported by the IOG and b) the IOG’s evaluation of Neighborhood Alert Centers for the City of Little Rock (contract research conducted by C. Diaz and me)

Establishing Indicators to Evaluate a Neighborhood Choice Program

with Marc Wallace

Based on a program evaluation for the City of Little Rock’s Metropolitan Housing Alliance (MHA) application for a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Agency’s Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) grant, our research was to help establish indicators by which MHA could demonstrate its need and capacity to perform across CNI grant components of people, housing, and neighborhood. As the external, neutral third party evaluators our responsibility as program evaluators generally consisted of identifying program goals (both explicit and implicit), implementation strategies, and outcome evaluations that best represent the comprehensive community transformation desired by MHA (and other interested parties supportive of the agency’s application). In the course of our evaluation of the inventory of community factors, data sources, indicators, and benchmarks MHA was planning to use to show linkages across their effort in the target neighborhood and successful progress across these three areas (people, housing, and neighborhood), we inquired about HUD standards for these indicators. Most problematic for us in approaching this project, we found that there are none; HUD prefers for each community to develop indicators relevant to the unique qualities of their community. As a result, we have proposed to identify performance indicators across the primary program components of people, housing, and neighborhood. Based on the literature and the immediate case example of Little Rock, we establish general criteria on which program performance can be approximated. Insight into performance indicators indicative of overall neighborhood transformation across people, housing, and neighborhood is an important first step for establishing performance indicators that truly exemplify and actually approximate community change. ~ *spring 2017*

- very preliminary; similar to research on establishing indicators to assess brownfields

Conceptualization stage:

- **Informal Volunteering and Community Capital in Neighborhood Organizations**

Vickie Edwards & Mike Crow

This potential research project is based on an idea to integrate the work of colleagues on the perception of philanthropy within neighborhood group associations in Little Rock. Using data from a neighborhood survey and incorporating current research on informal volunteering, we can see what, if any influence there is on social/civic capital at this micro-governance level across these neighborhood communities (The survey contained questions inquiring about “helping activities”).

- **Reading, Literacy, and Kindergarten Readiness and: A Case Study of an Arkansas Pre-K Reading Program**

Bryant City Schools, ADE, and Imagination Library of Saline County

Working with a group of reading/literacy advocates, I am engaged with a local (suburban) school district project to assess whether enrollment in The Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) contributes positively to kindergarten readiness; the DPIL is a book distribution program that provides age appropriate books to children (who sign up for the program) on a monthly basis from birth through age 5 (or approximately 60 books before kindergarten). We are working with the school system for permission to get student performance data and acquire parent information about reading in their homes (using a survey at kindergarten registration).

- **Polliteracy: A Primer on Public Opinion Polling**

Kirby Goidel

Based on Herb Asher’s successful book (*Polling and the Public: What Everyone Should Know*), Kirby and I are in the planning stages of putting together a primer on public opinion polling that is accessible to everyone, but especially journalists and an interested public. With polling at an epidemic, there needs to be a *caveat emptor* for polling, i.e., a “lean” guide/manual accessible to all consumers of public opinion polling and can easily illuminate how public opinion polling works, what these results mean, and how these results should be used.