

2025



CISS Undergraduate Research Internship Showcase



2025 CISS Undergraduate Research Internship Showcase Agenda
Friday, May 2, 2025 8:30 am - noon
CISS, 704 Commonwealth Ave, 5th Floor

TIME	PRESENTER	
8:30 AM	Deborah Carr, CISS Director	Welcome/Introductions
8:35 AM	Andrew Severance	Crime and Elections
8:55 AM	Casey Rogers	Comparisons in Public Health
9:15 AM	Thao Thiem	The Labor Market Effects of Franchising
		Break
9:45 AM	Malvika Dey & Ananaya Agarwal	Joint Effectiveness of Three Interventions Aimed to Increase Women's Access to Family Planning and Reproductive Health Services in Malawi and India
10:05 AM	Kaitlin Howlett	Collecting Data for a Critical History
10:25 AM	Ingrid Marques Reginato	WealthTalks
		Break
10:55 AM	Alex Streisand	Exploring the Intersectional Impacts of School Shooting Threats
11:15 AM	Devangi Lamba & Seungjoo "Ashley" Lee	The Experience of Parkinson's Disease Among Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups
11:35 AM	Kiko Yoshihira	State Prison Temperature Policies from DOC Handbooks and Policy Memos
11:55 AM	Deborah Carr, CISS Director	Thank you

CISS Undergraduate Research Internship

The Center for Innovation in Social Sciences (CISS) offers academic-year paid undergraduate research intern support to social science faculty and CISS affiliates. CISS invites faculty proposals for internships where an undergraduate student(s) will focus on three thematic areas: 1) social justice and inclusion, 2) inequality, and 3) sustainability. The research projects draw on social science methods and explore questions related to human society and social behavior. The program is designed to support and advance faculty research and to provide undergraduate students interested in honing their research skills with an experiential learning opportunity. Congratulations to the 2024-25 cohort of interns and faculty mentors on their outstanding research.



Joint Effectiveness of Three Interventions Aimed to Increase Women's Access to Family Planning and Reproductive Health Services in Malawi and India

Mentor: Mahesh Karra, Pardee



ANANYA AGARWAL
CAS '25, ECONOMICS &
MATHEMATICS



MALVIKA DEY
CAS '26, ECONOMICS &
MATHEMATICS

Family planning and contraceptive use remain key public health challenges across many parts of the world. This study investigates the joint effectiveness of three interventions aimed at increasing women's access to family planning and reproductive health services in two distinct regions: India and Malawi. By comparing these geographically and culturally different settings, the study explores the external validity of interventions, offering insights into scalable solutions for improving reproductive health access globally. Survey data from two separate interventions in Malawi and one in Uttar Pradesh (India) were collected over two to three waves between 2018-2021. To enable a unified analysis, we created a combined dataset by identifying and harmonizing common survey questions across locations and waves. Particular focus was placed on questions regarding household characteristics, reproductive intentions, contraceptive preferences, and household dynamics. This harmonized dataset facilitates econometric analysis by providing a consistent structure across diverse contexts. Until now, we have successfully completed the data processing phase, including cleaning and organizing a large volume of complex survey data. The unified dataset now allows for flexible regression analyses to examine the factors influencing family planning use across both regions. This foundation enables exploration of a wide range of variables and their relationships to reproductive health outcomes. In the near future, we will conduct regression analyses to better understand shared patterns and contextual differences, contributing to broader knowledge about what interventions may be most effective and scalable across diverse settings

Collecting Data for a Critical History

Mentor: Paula Austin, CAS/History & AA&BDS



KAITLIN HOWLETT
CAS '25, HISTORY

This research focused on working to map the lives of young Black Washingtonians whose lives Dr. Austin follows in her book: *Coming of Age in Jim Crow DC: Navigating the Politics of Everyday Life*. Her book, which serves as the launchpad for this project, provides a counter narrative to much of the scholarship on the African American Great Migration of the late Progressive Era that creates the problematic argument that Black migration created and expanded a culture of poverty in urban cities.

Kaitlin spent the year scrubbing online digital repositories to find the lives of these youth who have since Dr. Austin's initial body of research, grown and established their adult lives. Her presentation will center around the notion of critical histories and the innovative and creative methods historians like Dr. Austin use to establish histories about folks who often find themselves between the lines of history text that is commonly read. This lack of coverage, of uncommon histories, creates false and harmful understandings of our history. To counter common narratives in historical literature is a challenging task that requires an extremely comprehensive base of primary sources, as well as the nuance to consider previously studied subjects under a new light.

The Experience of Parkinson's Disease Among Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups

Mentor: Alice Cronin-Golomb, CAS/Psychological & Brain Sciences



DEVANGI LAMBA
CAS '27, BIOLOGY



ASHLEY LEE
CAS '27, PSYCHOLOGY

The inclusion of underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups in Parkinson's disease (PD) research has been disproportionately low. There are notable disparities in the prevalence, diagnosis, and treatment of PD amongst these groups. This lack of diversity adversely impacts our understanding of PD outcomes and limits our ability to provide care to all persons with PD (PwPD). This study aims to examine and compare PD symptomatology (motor and non-motor symptoms) and health-related quality of life among PwPD from racial and ethnic minority groups with those of non-Hispanic White individuals. The Boston University Online Survey of Parkinson's Disease (BOSS-PD) was conducted in previous years to evaluate experiences of PwPD, and while 347 PwPD responded to the survey, a limitation of this dataset was the sample's lack of diversity: most were White and highly educated. The current study optimizes the same survey to evaluate demographic and clinical information, motor and non-motor symptoms, and solicits advice from PwPD from racial and ethnic minority groups to healthcare professionals, family members/friends and newly diagnosed PwPD. The end goal is to recruit 60 PwPD from racial and ethnic minority groups via collaboration with the Boston Medical Center, PD support groups, and social media. By evaluating differences between motor and non-motor symptom profiles and quality of life disparities, we hope to advance understanding of the specific challenges and unmet needs of PwPD from racial and ethnic minority groups, so actionable guidance can be offered to clinicians to improve communication and tailor interventions.

WealthTalks: How Do People Talk About Wealth Inequality?

Mentor: Jonathan Mijs, CAS/Sociology



**INGRID MARQUES
REGINATO**
CAS '26, SOCIOLOGY

WealthTalks was a research project involving the U.S., Botswana, Brazil, South Africa, and Germany which seeks to study how everyday people talk about wealth, and how those conversations influence beliefs about wealth inequality. Though people generally tend to oppose large wealth inequalities, they are often skeptical to support efforts to minimize the gap. Utilizing a focus group approach, we studied how social interactions influence broader discussions about wealth inequality, and utilize the data collected in each country to combine perspectives in the global North and South. In our branch of the project, the Boston branch, 8 focus group discussions were held, with around 6 participants and two moderators each. The discussion was organized to begin with a broader discussion about wealth inequality, then transitioning to a hypothetical scenario based discussion. Though we are still processing our findings, the discussions in Boston reveal themes such as inequality in education, comparisons between generational cohorts, and the power of wealth in generating more wealth. Definitions of wealth describe a sense of stability, excess, and freedom. By studying conversations and social interactions, we can better understand how wealth inequality is argued about in society, and, ultimately, how these narratives can be changed.

Comparisons in Public Health

Mentor: Joseph Harris, CAS/Sociology



CASEY ROGERS
SARGENT '25, HEALTH
SCIENCES

Situational comparisons can be an effective way to educate aspiring public health professionals on how certain public health infrastructures work in the geopolitical context. The purpose of this project was to provide background on public health events and infrastructure through various comparisons that identify key elements of said public health topics. Health politics is a developing discipline that requires ample research and context. This investigation aimed to provide context to two public health citations:

1. To compare and contrast family planning programs between two different dictatorships, that of Indira Gandhi in India, and that of Suharto in Indonesia, and
2. To compare and contrast the centers of disease control in the United States and China and identify key similarities and differences.

The investigation relied primarily on literature reviews on various databases including PubMed and JSTOR among others. The key findings of the first investigation found that the Indian family planning programs were more aggressive due to external pressures from western society. Key findings from the second investigation found that both CDC's are strong in their function as research institutes and disease protection, with the U.S. CDC being moderately stronger.

This investigation calls for further research into the level of fragmentation of both the U.S. and China's CDCs.

Crime and Elections

Mentor: Arjun Vishwanath, Political Science



**ANDREW
SEVERANCE**
CAS '25, POLITICAL
SCIENCE, ECONOMICS &
DATA SCIENCE

Politicians, in an attempt to win over additional support from voters, often tout that they plan to be tough on crime within their jurisdiction and make voters feel safer. But do they actually follow through? Do voters hold their elected officials accountable for completing that campaign promise? This project analyzed data from elections between 1960 and today, where we examined the changing vote share for incumbent lawmakers—specifically governors and attorneys general—in relation to the crime rates examined in the months leading up to their election. We limited our crime analysis to this portion of time to account for voters' heightened perception of key decision-making factors in close proximity to the election. Using this electoral data in conjunction with violent crime data provided by the FBI, we examined how voters react to changing levels of violent crimes at the ballot box. Regressions quantify these effects for each major party.

At least at the state level, we found that a correlation exists between the change in violent crimes and an incumbent's vote share when they stand for their general election. While this project will be expanded upon to include more localized races—such as for mayors and city council members—in the future, we hope that this context provides politicians with results conducive to them delivering on their campaign promises, and voters with the perspective to anticipate electoral shifts in response to changing crime rates.

Exploring the Intersectional Impacts of School Shooting Threats

Mentor: Sarah Miller, CAS/Sociology



ALEX STREISAND

SPH '25, SOCIOLOGY

MPH '25, HEALTH POLICY &
LAW

This research aimed to explore the current gap in research on school shootings by examining the intersectional impacts that the threat of these events has on the relationships, dynamics, and experiences of young adults. While existing research has focused on the causes, mental health effects, economic impacts, and educational outcomes of school shootings and those affected by them, this project focused on the lived experience and culture that surrounds, and interacts with, these young adults as they grow up in the so-called “Generation Columbine”. Data collection methods consisted of content analyses of fictional media representations of school shootings, as well as analysis of social media representations via TikTok video data collected 2021-2022.

This research will continue to be carried over the next academic year, and will focus on the completion of fictional and digital media analyses, as well as the conducting of interviews with those who have experienced both school shooting threats and actual events. Future data will come from in-depth interviews with young adults who have experienced a school shooting. While still in the early stages, emerging themes have been the salience of the bullying narrative, humor as a coping mechanism, and the normalization of both the threat, and actuality, of school shootings. Moving forward, the findings from this work will inform a more holistic understanding of the social, cultural, and political environments that young people are coming of age in, and how that shapes their relationships with both themselves and each other.

The Labor Market Effects of Franchising

Mentor: Johannes Schmieder, CAS/Economics



THAO THIEM
CAS '26, ECONOMICS AND
MATHEMATICS

This project investigated the impact of franchising on labor market outcomes including wages and working conditions in the United States. This topic is important as franchising currently employs more than 9 million workers, many of whom doing low-wage and low-skill jobs. However, research about how franchising impacts job quality remains limited due to insufficient available data. To examine this question, they used administrative data from the U.S. Census Bureau which includes the Linked Employer-Household Data (LEHD), the Business Register, and the Economic Census. A key challenge was that datasets do not directly identify whether an employer is a franchisor or franchisee. To address this gap, a new dataset containing about 22,000 prospect headquarters addresses from 9,000 franchises was built through merging data from Franchise Disclosure Documents (FDDs), web-scraped data, and AI-generated address lookups via Perplexity. The standardized and geocoded data reveals patterns of geographic concentration and naming inconsistencies, which prevent accurate verification of true headquarters locations. Our initial observations showed that franchise headquarters are primarily located in California, Texas and Florida. While validation remains ongoing, this dataset provided a fundamental resource for upcoming empirical research on franchising and employment structures and supports policy efforts to better understand and regulate working conditions in franchised industries.

A key future step is to integrate this dataset with government business and employment records to identify franchisor and franchisee establishments. The integration will enable researchers to conduct comparisons across business types and enable analysis of wage structures and employment conditions within franchised businesses.

State Prison Temperature Policies from DOC Handbooks and Policy Memos

Mentor: Jessica Simes, CAS/Sociology



KIKO YOSHIHIRA
CAS '26, POLITICAL
SCIENCE,
ENVIRONMENTAL
ANALYSIS & POLICY

Extreme heat events have become more prevalent due to climate change and are projected to worsen. Harsh prison conditions, such as extreme heat, may increase risks for mortality in incarcerated people, who are rarely able to control their thermal environment. Prisons have limited air conditioning, poor heating and ventilation, and strict clothing requirements, among other conditions, which exacerbate exposure to extreme temperatures.

To investigate these conditions, we documented existing policies with the U.S. states' Department of Corrections' handbooks and policy memos that mention temperature, extreme heat, or extreme cold policies. By developing a database, we aimed to utilize legal epidemiologic methods and synthesize and compare policies among the different states. Our findings indicated that nearly half of the states do not have temperature policies. Of those that do, most are spread along the South and west coast, with some additional states in the midwest and northeast. Additionally, among states that define heat-sensitive populations, certain states contained differing definitions from one another. By synthesizing policy similarities and differences, this study should be able to evaluate policy effectiveness among states, and prevent mortality caused by extreme temperatures in state prisons.



Boston University Arts & Sciences
Center for Innovation in Social Science

704 Commonwealth Ave
5th Floor
Boston, MA 02215
www.bu.edu/ciss
ciss@bu.edu

CISS Team:

Deborah Carr, CISS Director, Internship Program Director
Shannon Landis, CISS Administrator, Internship Program Coordinator

