



Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

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CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

***America's Changing Religious Identity.* By Daniel Cox, et al. Public Religion Research Institute. Sep. 6, 2017.**

<https://www.prrri.org/research/american-religious-landscape-christian-religiously-unaffiliated/>

"In California, only 24% of state residents surveyed identified themselves as both white and Christian.... [T]he religious demographics of all Californians most closely mirror those of younger Americans under 30 in other states, making California a good forecaster for future attitudes across the country.... The survey found religion closely tied to politics. Almost half of white evangelical Protestants and 34% of white Catholics said they were Republican. Non-white Christians and those of other faiths including Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism tended to be Democrats." ([Sacramento Bee](#), Sep. 6, 2017).

EDUCATION

Portraits of Change: Aligning School and Community Resources to Reduce Chronic Absence. By Hedy Chang. Attendance Works. Sep. 2017. 37 p.

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Attendance-Works-Portraits-of-Change-Main-Document-Final-Sept.-1.pdf>

This brief highlights some key findings on chronic school absence: 1) about 31% of schools have problems with significant chronic absence (defined as 10-19% of their students are chronically absent); 2) about 22% have problems with extreme or high chronic absence (20% or more of students are chronically absent); and 3) chronic absence problems are not always centered in urban schools—California’s chronic absence levels are higher in rural communities than urban areas. The researchers suggest holistic approaches to solving this problem. Community organizations may be employed, as well as the schools themselves. Absentee data should be used to target the areas of greatest need.

The Impact of Price Caps and Spending Cuts on U.S. Postsecondary Attainment. By David J. Deming. Harvard University and National Bureau of Economic Research. Aug. 2017. 52 p.

https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/ddeming/files/DW_Aug2017.pdf

“Increasing the postsecondary attainment rate of college-age youth is an important economic priority in the U.S. and in other developed countries. Yet little is known about whether different forms of public subsidy can increase degree completion. In this paper, we compare the impact of the marginal taxpayer dollar on postsecondary attainment when it is spent on lowering tuition prices versus increasing the quality of the college experience.... We find large impacts of spending on enrollment and degree completion. In contrast, we find no impact of price changes. Our estimates suggest that spending increases are more effective per-dollar than price cuts as a means of increasing postsecondary attainment.”

EMPLOYMENT

Disappointing Facts about the Black-White Wage Gap. By Mary C. Daly, et al. Federal Reserve Bank San Francisco. Sep. 2017. 5 p.

<http://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/publications/economic-letter/2017/september/disappointing-facts-about-black-white-wage-gap/>

“The most important fact highlighted by our decomposition is that a significant portion of the wage gap between blacks and whites is not traceable to differences in easily measured characteristics, but rather is *unexplained* within our model. Perhaps more troubling is the fact that the growth in this unexplained portion accounts for almost all of the growth in the gaps over time. For example, in 1979 about 8 percentage points of the earnings gap for men was unexplained by readily measurable factors, accounting for over a third of the gap. By 2016, this portion had risen to almost 13 percentage points.... This implies that factors that are harder to measure—such as discrimination, differences in school quality, or differences in career opportunities—are likely to be playing a role in the persistence and widening of these gaps over time.”

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Oroville Dam Spillway Incident: Interim Status Memorandum. Oroville Dam Spillway Incident Forensic Team. Sep. 5, 2017. 7 p.

<https://damsafety.org/sites/default/files/files/IFT%20interim%20memo%20final%2009-05-17.pdf>

“The clues that the main spillway at the Oroville Dam could fail were embedded deep in state records, but officials did not recognize the evidence before the structure broke apart in February.... The main spillway

... broke apart when underground water pressure lifted a massive section of the concrete floor into the flow of water and caused rapid erosion of the foundation.... The underlying causes included a combination of aging, design flaws and maintenance shortcomings. The report found an inadequate drain system under the spillway, thin sections of concrete and repaired fissures that allowed water to penetrate into the foundation." ([Los Angeles Times](#), Sep. 5, 2017).

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mergers May Rescue Declining Suburbs. By Aaron Renn. Manhattan Institute. Sep. 2017. 16 p.
<https://www.manhattan-institute.org/sites/default/files/IB-AR-0917.pdf>

"Between 2000 and 2015, the growth in suburban poverty accounted for more than half of poverty expansion nationwide.... But the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank, released a report this week arguing that suburbs can return to their relatively well-off past—by crossing over from suburban to urban.... Mergers would break this cycle [of tax increases and shrinking tax base] ... by connecting suburbs to existing municipal services that are more robust than what smaller communities can provide themselves. But, the report adds, 'Mergers should improve services in the suburb but not at the expense of reducing them in the central city.'" ([Pacific Standard](#), Sep. 14, 2017).

HUMAN SERVICES

Unfair Shares: Racial Disparities and the Regional Housing Needs Allocation Process in the Bay Area. By Heather Bromfield, et al. UC Berkeley Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society. Aug. 2017. 27 p.

http://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/haasinstitute_unfairshares_rhnabayarea_publish.pdf

"Every eight years, a state law requires cities to plan for a certain amount of new homes to keep pace with projected population growth for people of various incomes.... Bay Area cities that have higher percentages of white residents had lower home building goals for low- and middle-income Californians.... The UC Berkeley report found that for the current goals to build in the Bay Area through 2023, cities with larger shares of white residents had lower targets to house residents of lower incomes than those with larger black, Latino and Asian populations." ([Los Angeles Times](#), Aug. 23, 2017).

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

"Engaging for a Good Cause: Sophia's Story and Why #BugsR4Girls." By Morgan D. Jackson, et al. *Annals of the Entomological Society of America*, vol. 110, issue 5 (Sep. 1, 2017). pp. 439-448.
<https://academic.oup.com/aesa/article/110/5/439/4103474/Engaging-for-a-Good-Cause-Sophias-Story-and-Why>

"It all started last year when Sophia's mum Nicole reached out to the Entomological Society of Canada (ESC), looking for advice on how to encourage her daughter's interest in the field of insect study despite teasing by other kids.... The good folks at ESC took to the task wholeheartedly, sharing Nicole's email on their Twitter account with a new hashtag [#BugsR4Girls](#), and inviting entomologists to connect with Sophia.... The paper goes into detail on how the original tweet and the [#BugsR4Girls](#) hashtag contributed to science communication and public perception of entomology, and as a case study it also summarises several helpful social media lessons for other science communicators." ([Science Alert](#), Sep. 15, 2017).

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Harnessing High-Speed Rail: How California and Its Cities Can Use Rail to Reshape Their Growth.
By Egon Terplan, et al. SPUR. Sep. 12, 2017. 31 p.

http://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/publications_pdfs/SPUR_Harnessing_High-Speed_Rail.pdf

“Without state and local intervention, San Joaquin Valley cities with high-speed rail stations will become bedroom communities, sending out waves of tech workers on express trains to the Bay Area and Los Angeles.... While the Central Valley could potentially serve to supply the cheap housing that has eluded Bay Area-based workers, [the report] says that would fail to capitalize on perhaps the single greatest infrastructure investment the state will make this century. Rather than being the tide that lifts all boats, high-speed rail could widen already-stark income disparities between central valley regions and wealthier, more populated coastal neighbors.” ([San Jose Mercury News](#), Sep. 13, 2017).

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