BLUM CENTER
ON POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND DEMOCRACY

The Dr. U.S. Awasthi Initiative in Cooperative Economics

Funded Projects 2021-2024







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Executive Summary

This report showcases the innovative research portfolio supported by the Dr. U.S. Awasthi Initiative in Cooperative Economics at UCSB's Blum Center on Poverty, Inequality, & Democracy since 2021. This initiative, and the research it supports, demonstrate how cooperative economics serves as both a scholarly framework and a practical approach across diverse contexts while fostering innovative solutions to pressing social challenges and needs. The breadth and depth of the research also underscores the enduring relevance of cooperative economics and the opportunities its methodologies and intellectual tradition present for contemporary concerns. Finally, the array of contributing students and faculty from Anthropology, Asian American Studies, Economics, Feminist Studies, Global Studies, History, and Political Science demonstrates the impressive interdisciplinary reach that cooperative economics offers scholars seeking to engage with questions around collective engagement, a more equitable distribution of resources, and prioritizing communal sustainability and prosperity.

Cooperative solutions are being applied to communities in need of housing and access to land use. Jayden Schultz's study of Community Land Trusts shows how these organizations combat gentrification by creating alternative ownership models that keep housing permanently affordable. Similarly, Taft Crowley's research in Honduras and Guatemala reveals how different land reform approaches - particularly communal and quasi-communal arrangements - influence migration patterns and community stability.

Several projects focus on environmental sustainability and resource management. Claudia Mendoza Chavez investigates how cooperative approaches to groundwater management can ensure sustainable water access for rural California communities. Professor Jia-Ching Chen's work

examines how cooperative economics intersects with energy justice during the transition away from fossil fuels, particularly in communities historically affected by environmental inequities. MacKenzie Wade's research on edible insect advocacy explores how cooperative approaches can transform food systems and challenge cultural norms while promoting environmental sustainability.

The Initiative supports research on innovative healthcare and labor models. Professor Diane Fujino's study explores the creation of a holistic health cooperative in Santa Barbara, examining how cooperative structures can deliver more equitable and accessible care while addressing racial, class, and gender inequities. Professor Eileen Boris partners with the United Domestic Workers union to assess the feasibility of establishing a home care cooperative that would improve labor conditions while expanding affordable services. The projects demonstrate how community-organized solutions can address both healthcare affordability and worker rights.

Multiple projects investigate how cooperative models empower marginalized communities. Klarissa Olivarez's research reveals how unhoused populations develop sophisticated resource-sharing networks. Sarah Dunne's study of queer bookstores demonstrates how cooperative business models helped LGBTQ+ communities create sustainable cultural spaces despite discrimination. Yuri Fraccaroli's analysis of Selo Agrupamentos, a Brazilian publishing collective, shows how cooperative economics can amplify underrepresented voices.

Innovative studies on cooperative behavior and market dynamics reveal the motivations and objectives that can support sustained cooperative engagement. Erik Mallory and Marissa Samuels examine how competitive mechanisms could be repurposed to encourage cooperation rather than

competition in resource management. Mariah Miller's comparative analysis of social enterprises across different market economies in Spain, the United States, and China reveals how cooperatives prioritize community needs over market competition, offering insights for social movements and policy development.

The international scope of the research is particularly noteworthy. In addition to the aforementioned projects in Central and Latin America, Lucas Bricca's study examines how Argentina's self-managed secondary schools (Bachilleratos Populares) balance government requirements with community-driven education while maintaining their transformative social mission. Christabel Agyeiwaa's research explores how secondhand dealers' associations in Ghana function as economic and social networks that promote local economic independence. Gehad Abaza's work investigates how Syrian migrants, particularly those of Circassian descent, build new lives and communities in Abkhazia through cooperative labor and housing arrangements. And Nicole de Silva's study of women's international cooperative organizing in the early 20th century reveals how these networks advanced initiatives for global peace and human rights. Together, these studies demonstrate how cooperative principles adapt across cultural contexts while addressing universal needs for equity and sustainability.

The methodological rigor of these projects - combining ethnographic fieldwork, archival research, quantitative analysis, and community-engaged scholarship - generates valuable insights for both academic understanding and practical implementation of cooperative economics. The findings consistently demonstrate how cooperative approaches can create more resilient and equitable systems by prioritizing community needs over market profits and equitable access over social hierarchies.

Jayden Schultz, 2021-22
Poli Sci & Geography Major

Community Land Trusts in the Fight Against Gentrification: A Case Study of Fideicomiso Tierra Libre

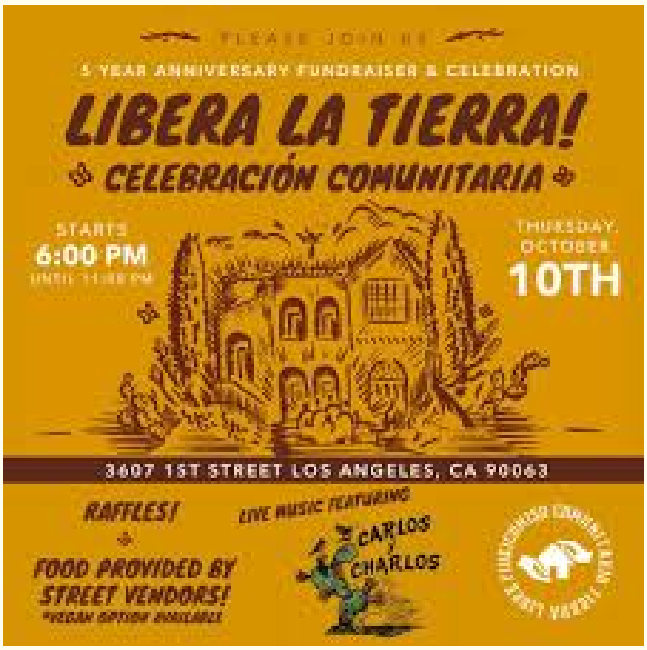


Jayden Schultz's project analyzed how Community Land Trusts (CLT), a system where land is owned by an organization like a nonprofit

Project Summary

or trust that enables prospective homeowners to enter into a long-term, renewable lease instead of a traditional sale, affect community access to housing by reducing housing market speculation and their role in addressing gentrification.

Her research considers how CLTs, as a form of cooperative economics, can be used to combat the effects of gentrification within marginalized communities.





Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Books & Online Reports
- Digital Voice Recorder
- Transcription Resources



Research Methods

- Site Surveys: Conducted detailed site surveys like the Fideicomiso Comunitario Tierra Libre in Boyle Heights and current CLT organizations such as OakCLT in Oakland and Houston CLT
- Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews w/ CLT leaders

Key Findings

Jayden Schultz's work on Community Land Trusts (CLTs) critically examines how these cooperative legal entities—nonprofit organizations that own land and lease it to residents—enable individuals to purchase affordable homes while ensuring the land remains permanently accessible to the community. CLTs are chartered to steward parcels of land in perpetuity. By offering below-market-rate deeds, placing tenants in leadership roles, and advocating on behalf of the community, CLTs help mitigate the effects of gentrification.

Jayden's project highlights that advocating for and collaborating with political groups and community members, such as CLTs, amplifies the principles of cooperative economics. It recenters land ownership within communities rather than leaving it in the hands of an anonymous corporation.

Klarissa Olivarez, 2021-22
Cultural Anthropology Major

Cooperatives as seen through Unhoused Populations



Project Summary

Klarissa Olivarez's project explores how unhoused communities exhibit cooperative behaviors.

By conducting in-depth interviews with community stakeholders, her research examines how individuals share resources like food, money, and material goods by treating them as communal assets that promote mutual support and resilience.





Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Books & Online Reports
- Monetary Incentive for Research Participants
- Transportation
- Digital Voice Recorder
- Transcription Resources



Research Methods

Completed in-depth interviews with key community stakeholders, including:

- unhoused individuals
- law enforcement
- outreach groups in Isla Vista

Key Findings

Klarissa Olivarez's research revealed that the cooperative and collective lifestyles of unhoused communities foster camaraderie, group safety, and access to basic necessities like food and shelter. Unhoused individuals recognized the advantages of cooperative sharing and resource distribution.

Klarissa's study emphasizes the need for additional research on how cooperative economic methods could better support unhoused individuals, particularly through advocacy efforts that merge cooperative principles with initiatives aimed at aiding unhoused populations.

Nicole de Silva, 2021-22
Graduate Student, History Dept.
Currently: Assistant Professor, SUNY-Oneonta

Building a "Housewives' and Mothers' Parliament": Women's International Co-Operative Organizing, 1919-1939



As part of a larger dissertation project, Nicole de Silva analyzes the national, racial, and class identities of women within the International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG) and the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW).

Project Summary

The ICWG organized women involved in consumer cooperatives, while the ACWW included representatives from agricultural cooperatives. Nicole's research explores how national, racial, and class identities influenced both organizations' visions of economic justice. Her project also examines how affiliated members communicated these visions across diverse platforms, ranging from youth camp curricula to League of Nations meetings.



Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Lodging
- Transportation



Research Methods

- Archival research at the University of Wisconsin
- Historical literature research on International Cooperative Women's Guild

Key Findings

Nicole de Silva's study reveals that the International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG) and the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) advanced initiatives for global peace and human rights by promoting socially conscious practices in consumerism, trade, and the expanding international roles of women. As a result, women's international cooperatives transcended the economic sphere, contributing significantly to global peacebuilding efforts.



Mariah Miller, 2021-22
Graduate Student, Global Studies

Cooperative Social Enterprises in a Liberal Market Economy Context



Mariah Miller's project is part of a broader comparative dissertation study on cooperative, nonprofit, and for-profit social enterprises (SEs) across three different market economies:

1. Coordinated market economies (CMEs) in Barcelona, Spain.
2. Liberal market economies (LMEs) in San Francisco, USA.
3. State-led market economies (SMEs) in Chengdu, China.

Project Summary

Her project examines how cooperatives integrate social and economic goals in ways that differ from predictions in the existing literature on SEs. Unlike many nonprofit and for-profit SEs in the U.S., cooperatives tend to prioritize local communities over market-driven competition. Additionally, her work highlights how cooperatives operate differently from the competitive market dynamics typically expected of economic organizations in the U.S. and offers important insights for social movements, research, and policy development.



Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Lodging
- Transportation
- Transcription Services



Research Methods

- Conducted in-depth interviews with cooperative SEs in San Francisco, which included the Network of Bay Area Workers Cooperatives (NBAWC), the California Association of Housing Cooperatives (CAHC), the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC), and the California Center for Cooperative Development (CCCD).

Key Findings

Mariah Miller's research sheds light on the critical role of cooperatives in addressing shared social challenges across different nations, while also evaluating whether, when, and how social enterprises (SEs) can effectively tackle social problems. Despite being often overlooked in these discussions, cooperatives differ significantly from other economic organizations that combine social and economic goals, particularly within a liberal market economy (LME). Furthermore, her findings have important implications for social policy and the promotion of alternative economic models that foster socially just economic relations.

Diane Fujino, 2021-22,
Professor, Asian American Studies Dept.

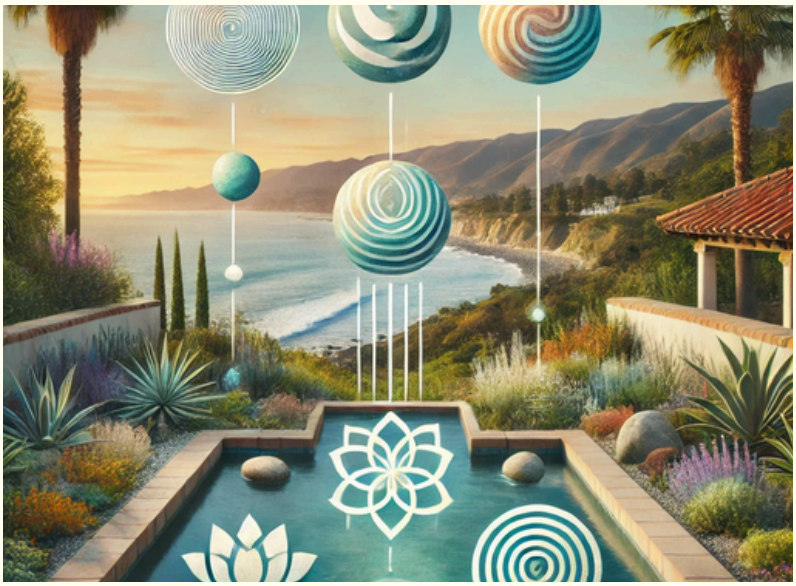
Health and Wellness, Sustainability, and Co-operative Futures



Professor Diane Fujino's project explores the creation of a holistic health and wellness cooperative in Santa Barbara.

Project Summary

This project's community-engaged approach reflects the potential for a community-organized solutions at the local level to address the healthcare industry's high costs and need for alternative approaches to deliver patient care. Additionally, Professor Fujino's research assesses the effectiveness of the cooperative model in delivering holistic healthcare, with an emphasis on addressing inequities related to race, class, and gender.



Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Graduate and undergraduate student researchers
- Stipends for community researchers
- Digital voice recorder
- Transcription resources



Research Methods

Drawing on activist scholarship, this study was conducted through an academic-activist partnership that entailed collaboration at every stage, including design, data collection, interpretation, and dissemination. It also builds on relations between academics and community activists by developing the research questions and methodological design, collecting data, interpreting results, writing reports and publications, and disseminating findings and recommendations.

Key Findings

This study reveals the need for research that contributes to the development of a wellness co-op, while also acknowledging and addressing the tensions between accessibility of services for client-members and financial remuneration and sustainability for practitioners. The activists envision developing both a consumer co-op with members paying monthly dues in exchange for services and a worker co-op where wellness practitioners receive financial remuneration for their labor. They seek to offer mediation, yoga, tai-chi, talking therapy, acupuncture, and specific therapeutic techniques that promote mindfulness, anxiety reduction, and address trauma. This co-op is being established in coordination with Cooperation Santa Barbara, a grassroots organization formed in April 2020 to develop co-operatives and a local cooperative economy.

Jia-Ching Chen, 2022-23
Assistant Professor, Global Studies Dept.

The Impact of the Phase Out of Fossil Fuels on Cooperative Economies and Energy Justice



As part of a larger project complementing prior research on energy transitions, Professor Chen's study serves as a foundation for developing a national comparative analysis in the energy sector.

Project Summary

This research project examines the direct and indirect socioeconomic impacts of phasing out fossil fuels on communities historically affected by energy and environmental injustice. Professor Chen also explores how organizations and networks focused on cooperative economies and just transitions in energy and climate change adaptation perceive and prepare for the fossil fuel phase-out. Specifically, the study analyzes how community organizations in Kern County—a major producer of both oil and agricultural products—and Santa Barbara County navigate the challenges of energy transition.





Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Stipends for Graduate Student Researcher
- Lodging
- Transportation

Research Methods

- Partnership building and community-engaged research framework. This study embraces a co-production model, collaborating with community partners such as the Central Coast Climate Justice Network and the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy. These partners contribute to shaping research objectives, developing interview questions, creating outputs, and communicating findings.
- Conducted semi-structured Interviews with individuals who have been or may be impacted by energy transitions in the oil and gas sectors.

Key Findings

Professor Chen's research uncovers grassroots efforts to link education about the energy transition with climate change impacts and environmental justice issues in the region. His research also highlights a strong push to repurpose "geologic resources" from decades of oil extraction as sites for carbon capture and sequestration. While heavily favored by the oil industry, this approach perpetuates extraction activities without necessarily addressing other forms of pollution or environmental injustice.

In addition, this project's findings further reveal that community organizations are beginning to advocate for transition pathways that meaningfully address historic and ongoing economic and environmental inequalities. These early efforts in energy transition policy and action will shape the structural landscape of struggles for cooperative economies and environmental justice for decades, particularly in regions like California.

MacKenzie Wade, 2022-23
Anthropology, Graduate Student

Edible Insect Acceptance Efforts Toward Food Systems Change: Perspectives from a Midwest Cricket Farm



MacKenzie Wade's project, which is part of a larger dissertation study, examines the U.S. edible insect advocacy community and its efforts to envision and navigate a more cooperative future food system model.

Project Summary

Wade engages with how U.S. edible insect advocates, a collective community of educators, farmers, NGOs, academics, nonprofit organizers, and business owners, envision a future where insect consumption is normalized--despite Euro-American cultural aversions to insects as food. Her research explores the relationships among stakeholders, the balance between profit and socio-environmental value, and the broader structures of power that shape and are shaped by these efforts. Wade's work also highlights how diverse stakeholders navigate social dynamics, reconcile profit motives with socio-environmental goals, and engage with power structures to advance socio-environmental change, offering pathways toward advancing the principles of cooperative economics.



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Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Lodging
- Transportation



Research Methods

- Ethnographic fieldwork: conducted at a small-scale, woman-owned cooperative cricket farm in rural Iowa.
- In-depth interviews: carried out with community members, including family, workers, local townspeople, and customers.

Key Findings

This ethnographic fieldwork laid the foundation for MacKenzie Wade's broader dissertation research project that focuses on the perceptions and activities of women-owned small-scale farming within the rural American midwest and how efforts to enact social and environmental change intersect with existing food production and rural livelihoods. This fieldwork adds new knowledge and deepens the complexity of prior efforts to examine other social actors in the U.S. edible insect advocacy community who are primarily male, operate in liberal urban areas (e.g. San Francisco, Austin, Brooklyn), and engage a different audience. This fieldwork also provides a new ethnographic context to the use of social enterprise theory, which is the study of businesses that are designed to achieve social objectives and create positive change in the world, in focusing on shared and conflicting perceptions of social, environmental and economic value with the U.S. edible insect advocacy community in its attempt to enact food systems change.

Erik Mallory & Marissa Samuels, 2022-23
Economics Major

The Surplus of the Commons: A competition of altruism as a novel mechanism for inducing cooperative behavior in common pool resource games





Project Summary

Contrary to prior research, which has shown that people are willing to pay to sabotage others in order to increase their chances of winning in competitive environments, Erik Mallory and Marissa Samuel's experiment explores whether the same competitive mechanisms that incentivize cheating could also be used to encourage cooperative behaviors. Specifically, they examine participants' willingness to contribute in the context of a common-pool resource game. They hypothesize that by adjusting the criteria for winning a competition to include a target cooperative behavior, individuals who derive utility from competition-based status, prestige, or cost signaling would be more likely to exhibit that cooperative behavior.

Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Compensation for Experiment Participants



Research Methods

A laboratory experiment with 120 participants, each paid $12 upon arrival, was conducted. The experiment involved two rounds:

- 1. Earnings Round: Participants, randomly grouped into threes, competed in an unengaging task (transcribing meaningless symbols). The individual who transcribed the most symbols correctly earned $3, while the others received no additional payment.
- 2. Competitive Cooperation Round: The same groups participated in this round, where performance was ranked publicly. Participants engaged in a sealed-bid auction, contributing any portion of their earnings to a group pool. Contributions were multiplied by 1.2 and shared equally among all group members.
- Treatment Group: Participated in the outlined experiment.
- Control Group: The experimental design was identical, except that individual rankings were made public in the earnings round to differentiate the effects of performance-based status.

Key Findings

Mallory and Samuels's research indicates that inducing team identity through a pre-competition team-building exercise increased contributions by about 20% per round compared to the control group, while competition led to a 15% increase in contributions per round. However, the combination of team identity and competition did not result in a statistically significant improvement over either intervention alone. Additionally, self-reported feedback from contributors indicated that while many participants were motivated by altruism, pragmatism typically prevailed. This suggests that altruistic and monetary motivations are not completely separate, and outcomes may be more influenced by the systems participants engage with. These preliminary findings suggest that both team identity and competition can effectively encourage cooperative behavior.

Gehad Abaza, 2023-24
Anthropology, Graduate Student

In the Economic Wake of War: Homemaking, Labor, and Wartime Displacement in Abkhazia



Gehad Abaza's project, which is part of a larger dissertation, examines how Syrian migrants, particularly those of Circassian descent, construct homes and build new lives in Abkhazia following their displacement from Syria after 2011.



Project Summary

The project specifically focuses on the intersection of housing, gender, and collective labor in a post-war context. In 2014, Abkhazia, an unrecognized state, sponsored the "return migration" of hundreds of Circassian-Syrians as part of its state-building efforts and demographic strategy, offering housing subsidies and work opportunities. Her study examines how housing policies affect daily life, how migrants collectively work to maintain and repair their houses, and how women's labor contributes to community building in Abkhazia. Abaza argues that through their everyday practices and gendered labor, Syrian migrants have become integral to Abkhazia's state-building project. By studying migrant women's domestic and communal work, the research reveals how they create meaningful lives in post-war settings while navigating the challenges of living in a contested state transitioning to a neoliberal economy.

Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Lodging
- Transportation



Research Methods

- Participant observation and fieldwork: conducted in Sukhum focusing on Syrian-Circassian families, particularly women aged 20–65.
- Ethnographic research at a Syrian restaurant in Sukhum.
- In-depth structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and life-history interviews with Abkhazian women.
- Photography and visual documentation

Key Findings

Gehad Abaza's research reveals that while conflict is often destructive, it can also catalyze the creation of new socio-economic networks. Even under the dire conditions of war, individuals develop new daily practices, form collective and gendered work networks, establish social categories, and build communal connections as they strive to create meaningful lives. An incomplete revolution may not fully dismantle a political system, but it can profoundly impact people's homes and livelihoods. In addition, this project also demonstrates that many Syrian-Circassian women, who had never worked in Syria, found themselves navigating a limited labor market in Abkhazia, which presented both new opportunities and challenges. Through their everyday practices and gendered labor, these Syrian war-time migrants have become integral to the statecraft efforts of this contested and unrecognized state.

Christabel Agyeiwaa, 2023-24
History, Graduate Student

Secondhand Dealers Associations in Ghana: Networks for Indigenization of the Local Economy



Christabel Agyeiwaa's research, as part of a larger dissertation project, delves into the history of secondhand dealers' associations in Ghana from the 1960s to the 2000s. Her work explores how these cooperative organizations functioned as economic and social networks rooted in economic democracy, offering protection to their members while promoting the indigenization of the local economy.

Project Summary

Christabel's research is important for understanding the challenges and successes of these associations from an African perspective. By tracing the history of these cooperatives, this project sheds light on significant economic and social movements in 20th- and early 21st-century Ghana and Africa. Specifically, it historicizes associations like the Greater Accra Used Clothing Association and the Ghana National Association of Motor Dealers and Repairers. This project also examines how these organizations fostered local economies and played a critical role in the history of global commodity trade.



Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Digital Voice Recorder
- Lodging
- Transportation



Research Methods

- Archival research at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) in Accra, Kumasi, and Sunyani, as well as the African Studies Institute at the University of Ghana.
- Oral history interviews with leaders of the Kantamanto Used Cloth Sellers' Association.

Key Findings

Christabel Agyeiwaa's project historicizes secondhand dealers' associations and their evolution into social and economic movements in 20th century Ghana and Africa. By using secondhand commodities as a lens, the study offers a nuanced understanding of Ghana's complex relationships with global economic markets and systems. Her research highlights how cooperative societies bolstered local economies and contributed to the history of global commodity trade. Similar to cooperatives, secondhand associations operate on democratic principles, where members engage in collective decision-making. Rooted in the ideals of democracy and cooperation, these associations played a crucial role in safeguarding the indigenization of the local economy.

Eileen Boris, 2023-24
Hull Professor, Feminist Studies Dept.

Assessing a Home Care Cooperative



Professor Boris partnered with the United Domestic Workers (UDW), AFSCME Local 3930, which has represented home attendants and personal care aides serving family or friends through the state's means-tested In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program for over twenty years.



Project Summary

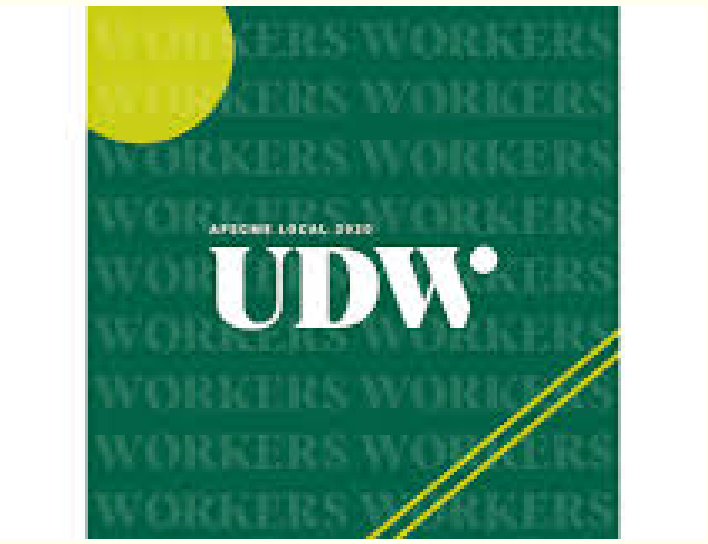
The project assesses the feasibility of establishing a home care cooperative in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. This worker cooperative has the potential to improve labor conditions by negotiating with counties over IHSS wages, while also expanding home care services to clients who can pay on a sliding income scale. The project sought to develop a market assessment, based on guidelines from the International Cooperative Association (ICA), to evaluate whether a unionized, worker-controlled home care cooperative could be established on California's Central Coast.



Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Graduate Student Researchers
- Transportation



Research Methods

- Quantitative analysis utilizing data from the American Community Survey (2022), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022), and Merchant Intellect.
- In-depth interviews with workers from In-Home Supportive Services conducted in both Spanish and English.

Key Findings

In progress.

Lucas Bricca, 2023-24
Global Studies Major

Hierarchizing Effects of Standard Learning Outcomes on Student-Teacher Relationships in Argentine Popular Schools



Lucas Bricca's project explores the impact of implementing standardized curricula on democratic decision-making processes in the classroom. Standardized curricula is required for Argentinian Bachilleratos Populares (BPs), which are free and self-managed secondary schools in Argentina that were created in response to the 2001 financial crisis, in order to receive government funding.

Project Summary

These community-based schools prioritize social transformation as a central educational goal, seeking to challenge power structures and address the historical injustices that shape students' social positions.

Bricca's study proposes educational policies that strike a balance between providing financial support and legitimacy for Bachilleratos Populares while preserving their socially transformative mission. His research emphasizes the importance of strengthening collective decision-making processes to ensure these schools remain true to their foundational values of equity, empowerment, and community-driven education.

Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Books & Online Reports
- Digital Voice Recorder
- Transcription Resources
- Transportation



Research Methods

In-depth interviews with 10 participants, including administrators, teachers, and advisors from the Ministry of Education in Buenos Aires. Examination of two Bachilleratos Populares (BPs):

- an accredited BP, Maderera Córdoba (the second-oldest BP in Buenos Aires, referred to as Maderera)
- an unaccredited BP, Farmacoop

Key Findings

Lucas's project demonstrates a significant divide between formal government policies and their implementation in Bachilleratos Populares. Despite formal curriculum requirements, weak enforcement and informal cooperation among BPs allow these schools to maintain substantial pedagogical and organizational autonomy.

The horizontal governance structure of BPs closely mirrors that of cooperatives, with decision-making centered on assemblies involving both students and teachers. While BPs do not produce material goods like traditional cooperatives, their historical emergence in recuperated factories underscores the deep connection between the production of goods and knowledge. This relationship reflects the importance of creating both outside conventional market systems, reinforcing the transformative mission of Bachilleratos Populares.

Taft Crowley, 2023-24
Political Science, Graduate Student

Land in the Time of Migration: The Unintended Consequences of Land Reform in the Northern Triangle



Taft Crowley's project, part of a broader dissertation, investigates how land reform policies influenced migration decisions in Honduras and Guatemala.

Project Summary

Market-led Agrarian Land Reforms (MALR) supported by the World Bank were expected to address the root causes of outward migration but fell short in providing campesinos (farmers) with sustainable livelihoods. Taft examines the variations in ownership arrangements established during the land reform process. Communities that advocated for and secured communal or quasi-communal land arrangements, which are still held privately, restricted land transferability to transactions within farmers and municipalities. This project seeks to understand how such ownership structures influenced rural community outcomes in Central America.





Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Transportation
- Lodging
- IT Resources



Research Methods

- Ethnographic study and in-depth interviews in Guatemala and Honduras with campesinos, lawyers, coyotes, cocodes (community development councils), mayors, government officials, and NGO aid workers.
- Household surveys in Guatemala and Honduras.

Key Findings

Taft's research reveals a clear link between the type of land reform implemented and migration outcomes. The findings indicate that higher collateralization potential of private plots correlates with increased out-migration. Many participants described a common process: campesinos receiving low-productivity private plots often collateralized or sold their land to fund migration journeys. In contrast, those with communal or cooperative landholdings overwhelmingly remained in their communities, continuing traditional agricultural practices. These findings suggest that communal or quasi-communal land arrangements can mitigate migration pressures and support the long-term sustainability of rural livelihoods.

Sarah Dunne, 2023-24
History, Graduate Student

The Migrating Queer Bookshelf: Queer Bookstores and the Making of Queer Communities in the United States and Canada, 1945-Present



Sarah Dunne's research is part of a broader dissertation project exploring the personal, financial, cultural, and political factors that motivated queer individuals to establish their own bookstores.



Project Summary

Sarah investigates how queer booksellers cooperated to form a transnational network aimed at founding, operating, and defending queer bookstores in the face of state censorship and homophobic violence.

Sarah's concept of the "queer bookshelf" underscores the cooperative nature of these spaces. By curating their inventory to reflect and advance activist principles, queer booksellers prioritized the needs and identities of their communities over profit maximization. They created economic systems where transactions supported cultural empowerment and solidarity, embodying the core values of cooperative economics: democratic decision-making, collective ownership, and community-oriented goals. Through this lens, queer bookstores exemplified the transformative potential of cooperative economics in fostering social change and sustaining marginalized communities.

Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Transportation
- Lodging



Research Methods

Archival research: at The ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ+ Archives, located in Toronto to examine how queer bookstores became focal points for political organizing and community building during the Gay Liberation Movement.

Key Findings

Sarah Dunne's research on the Jearld Moldenhauer and Glad Day Bookshop highlights how queer bookstores operated as dynamic examples of cooperative economics, blending economic practices with principles of community solidarity and mutual aid. These bookstores functioned as more than retail spaces—they were cooperative ventures where booksellers and customers collectively worked to sustain the businesses in the face of censorship, violence, and financial challenges. These cooperative networks enabled bookstores to share shipping costs, exchange stock, and coordinate legal challenges against discriminatory policies, illustrating how cooperative practices can amplify impact. Queer cooperative bookstores not only resisted systemic oppression but also served as models of cooperative economics, using shared resources and collective action to foster resilience and empowerment at a transnational level.

Yuri Fraccaroli, 2023-24
Feminist Studies, Graduate Student

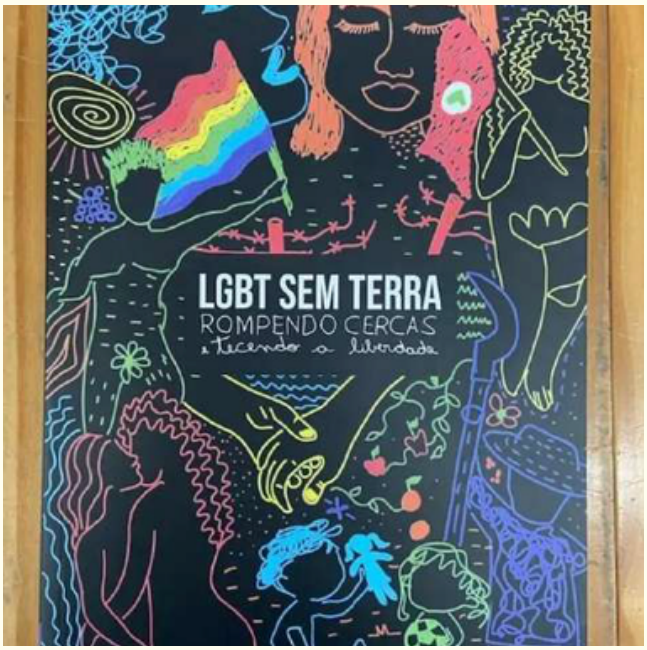
Publishing to find equals: LGBT+ precariat and Cooperative Economics arrangements in Brazil



Yuri Fraccaroli's project analyzed the work of Selo Agrupamentos, a cooperative economic publishing collective based in São Paulo, Brazil.

Project Summary

Yuri explored how this initiative partnered with various social and political actors to create publishing opportunities for authors and social groups lacking economic and cultural capital. Furthermore, Yuri's research highlights how Selo Agrupamentos implemented an economic model that not only provided financial resources to authors but also reinvested funds into the initiative to support future projects, fostering sustainability and community empowerment.





Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Accommodation & Lodging
- Transcription Resources
- Workshop facilitation
- Compensation for research participants



Research Methods

- Archival research at Selo Agrupamentos and Acervo Bajubá, a community archive.
- Creative writing workshop: to explore cooperative arrangements, particularly among LGBTQ+ initiatives.

Key Findings

Yuri Fraccaroli's research identifies two distinct approaches to cooperative management. Whereas Selo Agrupamentos showed limited cooperative practices with centralized decision-making, Acervo Bajubá demonstrated strong cooperative principles through collective governance and equitable resource distribution. This study also uncovered historical LGBTQ+ cooperative networks, including creative marketplaces and informal beauty salon communities, which emerged as responses to marginalization. The research includes a practical component through the "Nossa Playlist" workshop, organized with Acervo Bajubá, which brought together intergenerational LGBTQ+ participants to share personal love narratives. This workshop exemplified how cooperative spaces can foster empowerment and preserve collective memory, while addressing the historical exclusion of LGBTQ+ voices in cultural spaces.

Claudia Mendoza Chavez, 2023-24
Anthropology, Graduate Student

Incorporating Community Engagement in Policy



Claudia Mendoza Chavez's research as part of a broader dissertation proposal focuses on Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation by looking at how Groundwater Sustainabillity Agencies (GSAs)



Project Summary

are utilizing stakeholder engagement for required Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). Inequitable access to water is a crucial problem in California, especially in rural areas. Wells continue to go dry and leave entire communities without water access.

Specifically, this project engages with the Water Leadership Institute and field site studies. The Water Leadership Institute is a GSA program designed by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) in collaboration with the Rural Community Assistance Corp (RCAC) as well as other local organizations which bring interested community members to learn how to get involved in their water leadership and get training on how to become water leaders in their communities. Claudia's focus on the Kaweah Subbasin and the Delta-Mendota subbasin as relevant field sites present unique ideas and methods for SGMA implementation with the former being more water-market driven and the latter focusing more on water conservation.

Findings & Implications

Award

- Research Support
- Transportation
- Lodging



Research Methods

- Ethnographic Fieldwork: at Kaweah Subbasin and the Delta-Mendota subbasin
- Semi-Structured Interviews w/RCAC leaders

Key Findings

Claudia Mendoza Chavez's project provides a roadmap for her dissertation research by bringing the voices of various groups — community members, GSA reps, NGO organizers, state leaders, etc — into a single forum and in conversation with one another. The bridge between water leadership in the state — those making the decisions — and community members is being facilitated mainly by NGOs and community organizing despite the state's "effort" to bridge the gap through stakeholder engagement. SGMA has a 20 year implementation period and a goal of reaching sustainability by 2040. Claudia's initial findings indicate this project's substantive potential to address sustainable groundwater practices in rural areas of California.