

# MPP Capstone Projects

Some great examples from recent years

Stephen Hershey Kroes  
PUBPL 6950

# Strong visual first page

## Xeric-City USA: Overcoming Barriers to Xeriscape™ Landscape Adoption

Malia McIlvenna

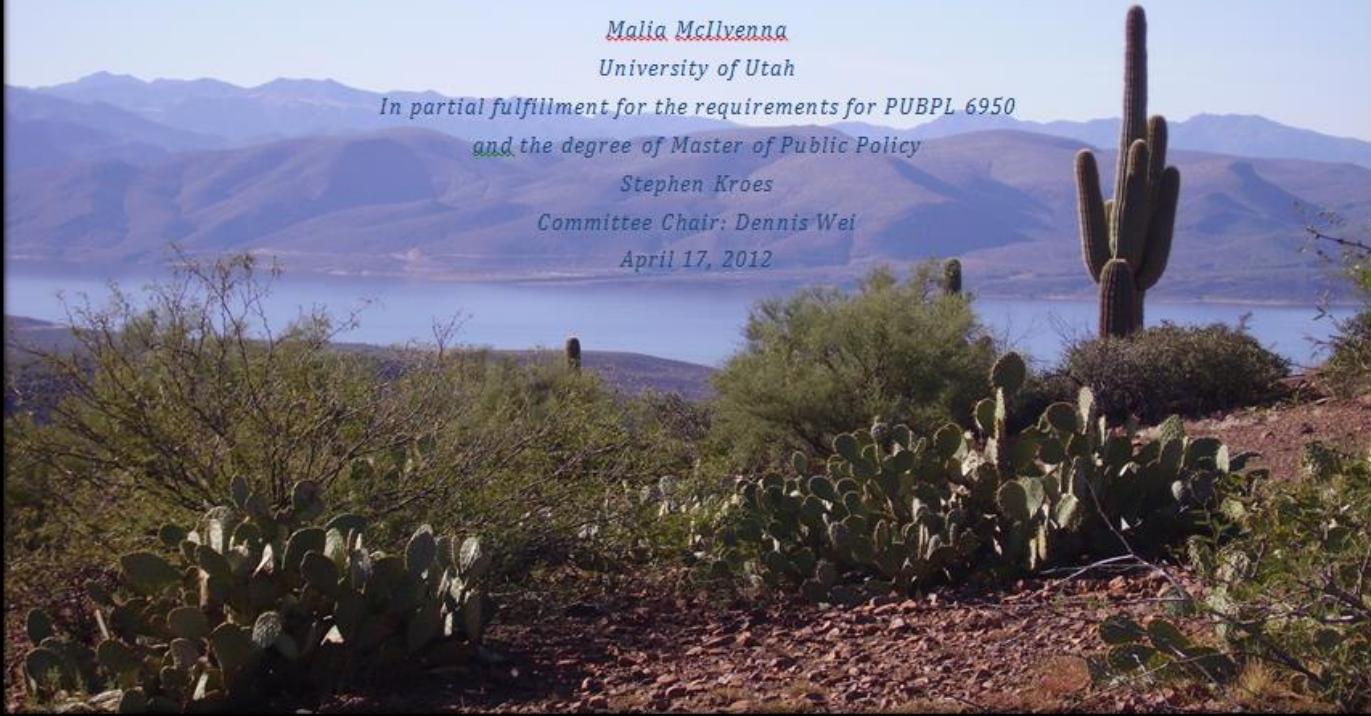
*University of Utah*

*In partial fulfillment for the requirements for PUBPL 6950  
and the degree of Master of Public Policy*

*Stephen Kroes*

*Committee Chair: Dennis Wei*

*April 17, 2012*



# Another strong visual first page

**The Export of E-Waste:  
Preventing Harm to Developing Nations**



Candace Ware

University of Utah Master of Public Policy  
Capstone Project  
April 17, 2012

This image, followed by more images later in the paper, helped to drive home the gravity of the problem.

# An informative first page

Associations between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Depression for  
Women Enrolled in Utah's Family Employment Program  
Chris Cambron, MSW  
April 17, 2012

**Background:** Recent research examining the relationship of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and depressive disorders has determined that strength of associations between ACEs and both recent and lifetime depression increase as an individual reports more ACEs. Therefore, ACEs can be said to increase the risk for depression (Chapman et al., 2004). The current study examined the relationship of three types of self-reported adverse childhood experience (emotional, physical and sexual abuse) to depression. Current research connecting childhood abuse to poorer adult economic outcomes prompted an investigation into the relationship between ACEs and mental health barriers to employment.

**Methods:** Data were gathered from a retrospective study of 1144 men and women enrolled in Utah's Family Employment Program (FEP) being surveyed as part of a study by the Social Research Institute (SRI) at the University of Utah and the Department of Workforce Services (DWS). Males, individuals without complete demographic information and individuals under 18 were excluded from analyses. ACEs, lifetime depression and mental health barriers to employment were assessed by responses to a self-report questionnaire. Current depression was assessed by a standardized instrument. Education, age and race were controlled for in all models.

**Results:** 60% of women indicated lifetime depression and 54% indicated current depression. 65% indicated some form of abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) before the age of 18 with 21% reporting two types of abuse and 26% reporting three types of abuse. Logistic regression was used to estimate odds ratios for increased risk of depression by number of experiences and type of abuse. Reporting emotional abuse increased the risk of depression by 2.2 times for current depression and 2.4 times for lifetime depression after controlling for physical and sexual abuse. Reporting any one form of abuse increased the risk for current depression by 2.0 times and lifetime depression by 2.3 times. Reporting any two forms of abuse increased risk for current depression by 2.5 times and lifetime depression by 2.3 times. Reporting three types of abuse increased risk of current depression by 3.6 times and lifetime depression by 4.0 times. Secondary analyses indicated that 29% of the sample report mental health as their biggest barrier to finding employment. Logistic regression was used to estimate the odds of reporting mental health as the biggest barrier to employment by number and type of abuse experiences. Reporting emotional abuse increased odds of mental health barriers by 2.0 times; reporting sexual abuse increased odds of mental health barriers by 1.4 times. Reporting any one form of abuse increased the odds of mental health barriers by 1.7 times. Reporting any two forms of abuse increased odds of mental health barriers by 2.3 times. Reporting three types of abuse increased risk odds of mental health barriers by 4.1 times. Summaries of all regression models are presented in the appendix.

**Conclusions:** Results indicate an individual and cumulative relationship between experiences of childhood abuse and increased risk of both current and lifetime depression for women enrolled in FEP in Utah. Section I provides a literature review of abuse and depression, primary regression model results and a comparison

This project was intended for journal publication.  
Background, methodology, results, and conclusion all on one abstract page

# Executive summaries are useful

## Focus of Investigation

Encouraging individuals to use active transportation, including walking and bicycling, brings with it a societal obligation to protect commuters from both crime and motor vehicle contact as they engage in these modes of travel. This report investigates the impact that driver cell phone use regulations have on non-motorist safety. The research areas investigated within this report include:

- ⇒ Trends in non-motorist transportation and safety
- ⇒ Current state laws addressing driver cell phone use
- ⇒ The impact of driver cell phone use regulations on non-motorist safety

## Non-Motorist Commuters

Non-motorists are defined as persons not in or upon a motor vehicle and consist of walking pedestrians, bicyclists, individuals in wheel chairs or motorized personal conveyances, skateboarders and others.<sup>1,2</sup> Non-motorists are a vulnerable segment of the traveling public. Pedestrians and bicyclists involved in collisions with motor vehicles lack a protective structure, and differences in mass heighten their injury susceptibility.<sup>3</sup>

Protecting non-motorists from motor vehicle crashes is a challenge as road systems are

## Executive Summary

### Driver Cell Phone Use

Driver distraction can take many forms, including, but not limited to, eating and drinking, grooming, talking to passengers, using a navigation system, adjusting music, and using a cell phone or smartphone.<sup>4</sup> Current research indicates that driver distraction and fatality rates will rise as cell phone subscriptions increase. Consequently, driver distraction from cell phone use will continue to be a growing public health issue impacting the safety of motorists and non-motorists.

As of 2013, all but five states have enacted legislation regulating cell phone use while driving in the United States. Forms of regulation include texting bans, handheld bans, and bans targeting specific groups, such as bus drivers or novice drivers.<sup>5</sup>

Assessments of state laws indicate that publicized enforcement of cellphone regulations may impact driver behavior, and that observed behavior changes may not be sustained in the long term if enforcement or publicity is reduced.<sup>6,7</sup>

### Handheld Cell Phone Regulations and Non-Motorist Fatalities

The increasing focus placed upon both the dangers of driver cell phone use and the safety of

This was a unique, appealing summary format. An exec summary focuses busy people on the most important findings, then they can decide if they want to read the details. Reality is that policymakers won't likely read long reports, so this becomes necessary.

# Another executive summary

## Executive Summary

### Background

- The younger an individual begins criminal behavior the more costly that individual is to society.
- The value of diverting a youth from a lifetime of crime ranges from \$2.6 to \$5.3 million in 2008 (Cohen M. A., 2009).
- Intended to divert youth becoming career criminals, peer courts attempt to leverage the social influence peers have over one another in order to implement restorative justice practices.
- Salt Lake Peer Court (SLPC) began in 1993, as peer courts were just emerging in the juvenile justice arena.
  - The program managed 40 youth offender cases and required 15 volunteers.
  - Currently, program handles approximately 300 youth offender cases and requires over 120 volunteers.

### Research

- This study analyzed calendar year SLPC cases from 2007 through 2011.
- 1101 cases were analyzed (Male=618, Female=467, Unidentified=16).
- Of the 1101 cases, 60% of SLPC deferred youth had juvenile court records, disproportionately weighted by males (Male=406, Female=260).
- This study seeks to identify characteristics of youth offenders who are most likely to recidivate to Juvenile Court within one year of being deferred to SLPC.
- Dependent Variables = ordinal or binary recidivism variables.
- Independent Variables = demographics, offenses, sentences.

## Main Findings

400 cases have absolutely no contact with Juvenile Courts and 520 youth do not recidivate back to the Juvenile Court upon SLPC contract completion, suggesting overall program effectiveness.

Substance abuse offenders are 49% to 61% more likely to recidivate.

Violent offenders are 17% to 50% more likely to recidivate.

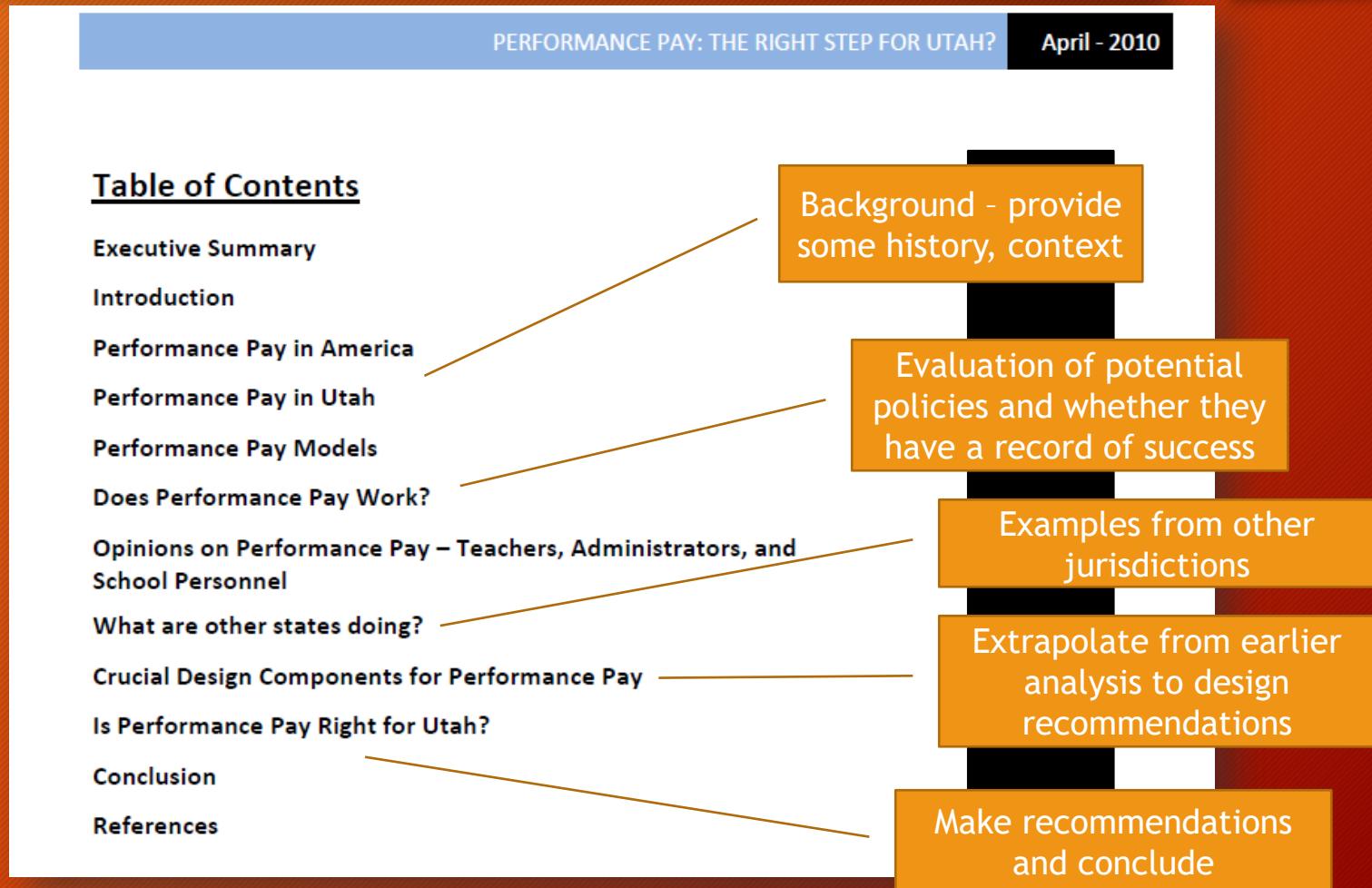
Restitution/Community Service/Mediation and Essays are the sentence variables that most consistently decrease a youth's likelihood to recidivate.

Sentencing girls to case management decreases her likelihood of recidivism by 244%.

Life Skills Support, Family Support/Counseling/Mediation, and Panel Duty are all sentences that increase a youth's likelihood to recidivate.

This was an unusual style of executive summary, and it was quite helpful to have the main findings highlighted alongside a description of the paper's sections.

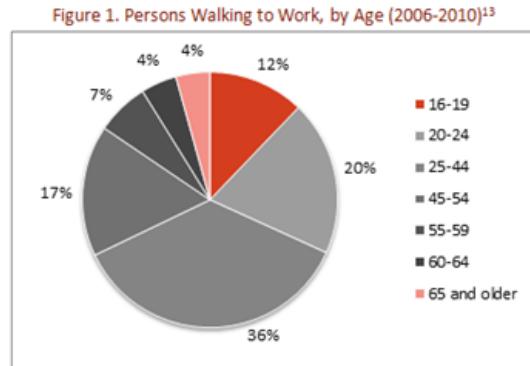
# Organization: a table of contents is helpful, although not required



# Summarize background detail with graphs and tables

## Non-Motorist Commuters

Non-motorists are defined as persons not in or upon a motor vehicle and consist of walking pedestrians, bicyclists, individuals in wheel chairs or motorized personal conveyances, skateboarders and others.<sup>1,2</sup> Non-motorists represent a significant proportion of the traveling public. In 2005, the Federal Highway Administration estimated that 107.4 million (51%) individuals living in the United States used walking as a regular mode of travel on an average of three days per week, and 62 million (29%) used bicycling as a regular mode of travel on an average of 1.3 days per week.<sup>11</sup> The United States Census Bureau reported that from 2006-2010, an estimated 2.84% of workers age 16 and older walked to work, and that 3.3% (2,442,307) of male commuters and 3.1% (2,022,618) of female commuters walked or bicycled to work.<sup>12</sup> Figure 1 shows age group percentages of those walking to work from 2006-2010. Among those who walked to work during this period, the largest age group is those age 25-44 (36%).<sup>13</sup>



government, states and municipalities have conducted research investigations into factors impacting non-motorist safety on roadways. These investigations have generally concluded that driver and non-motorist inebriation, low-light conditions, and increased vehicle speed have detrimental effects on non-motorist safety.<sup>1-3,14-16</sup>

Table 1. Percentage of Bicyclist Fatalities in Relation to Land Use, Non-Motorist Location and Time of Day, 2009-2010<sup>6</sup>

	Percentage of Bicyclists Killed	
	2009	2010
Rural	30%	28%
Urban	70%	72%
Non-Motorist Location		
Intersection	33%	33%
Non-Intersection	67%	67%
Time of Day		
Midnight – 3:59am	8%	7%
4am – 7:59am	12%	11%
8am – 11:59am	14%	13%
Noon – 3:59pm	17%	17%
4pm – 7:59pm	29%	28%
8pm – 11:59pm	19%	25%

Recent investigations have also begun to assess the impact of individual distraction on non-motorist safety. In particular, these assessments explore how non-motorist distraction from portable electronic device use (including cell phones and mp3 players) contributes to accident

A visually appealing format helps engage the reader. Insert graphs and tables in the text, and design a consistent style for all of your figures. Do not merely copy images from another publication unless it is impossible for you to recreate the graph yourself.

# Matrices can help illustrate analysis

PERFORMANCE PAY: THE RIGHT STEP FOR UTAH?

April - 2010

Table 4- Crucial Performance Pay Design Components

Design Component	Optimal Outcome	Considerations
Individual or Group Bonuses?	There are sound arguments for both individual and group bonuses and experts remain undecided. In addition, both structures have produced positive results.	In light of this, policy makers should remain <i>flexible</i> on the issue and allow stakeholders to decide the incentive structure they prefer.
Incentive Size	Here again there are mixed results. Small, widely dispersed bonuses and large, minimally dispersed bonuses have both proven to be effective and have strong theoretical underpinnings.	Again, in light of this, policy makers should remain <i>flexible</i> on the issue and allow stakeholders to decide the incentive structure they prefer.
Base Pay	The teacher base pay must remain fair and sustainable. For most teachers, base pay will remain the extent of their yearly salary.	Performance pay is not designed as a <i>cost saving</i> measure. Policy makers should not withdraw funds from the base pay in order to provide bonuses to high performing teachers. Bonuses must come from an additional, sustainable fund.
Design process	Involve ALL stakeholders in design. This includes teachers, administrators, school board members, school personnel, and community members.	Effective communication during the design process is paramount. It is highly recommended that all stakeholders be given a "best practices" presentation to begin the design with the same information.
Measuring teacher performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Both teachers and policy makers must recognize that standardized tests are pervasive and will likely be a part of any performance pay plan</li><li>Using value-added measurement of test scores is advisable as it provides an equitable base-line for student achievement/improvement.</li></ul>	The primary concern among teachers and administrators is how their performance will be measured. With this in mind, it is <i>crucial</i> that policy makers use sound measurement strategies as well as transparent mechanisms. This is the most important aspect of creating a successful program.

A matrix can be a tremendous tool to summarize analysis that you've already written in longer form. It draws attention back to the most important elements of your written analysis and provides a framework for comparing and relating policy components to one another.

# An outstanding outcomes matrix (for print - not really for PowerPoint)

Criteria & Policy Options	Vertical Equity	Horizontal Equity	Sufficient funding for rural schools?	Sufficient funding for high growth areas?	Negative consequences of school district split?	Flexible Organization Capability?	Equal Tax Burden	Local Government Discretion Capability
Status Quo	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Just Recapture	No	No	Somewhat more	Somewhat more	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Just Minimum Levy Rate Enforcement	No	No	Somewhat & likely more than before	Somewhat & likely more than before	Yes	Yes	No, but more than before	Yes
Recapture + Minimum Levy Rate Enforcement	No, but more than before	No, but more than before	Somewhat & likely more than before	Somewhat & likely more than before	Yes	Yes	No, but more than before	Yes
Equal Levy Rate But No State Allocated Funds Equalization	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Equal levy rate + all funds given to state + all decisions made by state agency	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Equal levy rate + funds go to the state + funds allocated by state to school districts + decisions made by school district	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Another great example of a matrix. In this case, the student was using a type of matrix for evaluating potential outcomes of several policy choices. This method is highly recommended and works surprisingly well in reinforcing your analysis.

A great example can be found in: *A Policy Analysis of the BC Salmon Fishery* by Schwindt, Vining, and Weimer. I've placed a copy of that paper on Canvas.

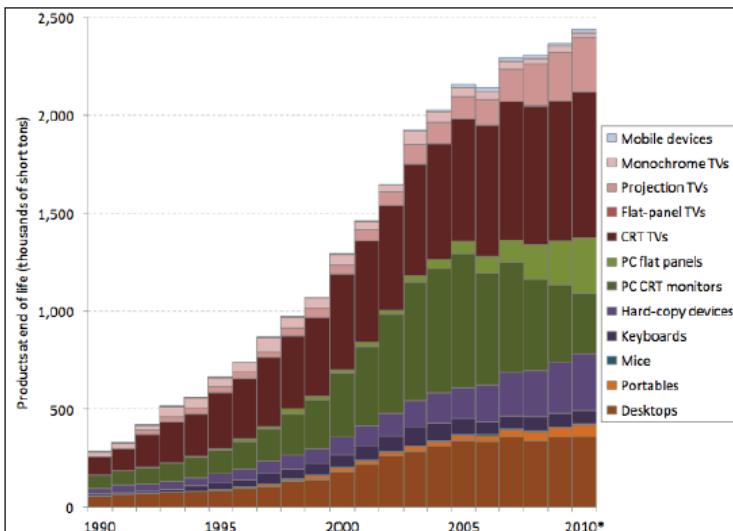
# This matrix worked well for PowerPoint

Evaluation Criteria	Policy Alternatives			
	Public Opinion Driven Change	Status Quo: State Centered Regulation	Federal Legislation Banning Exports	U.S. Congressional Ratification of the Basel Convention
Prevent Harm to Developing Nations	Moderate	Low	High	High
Balance Fairness Between U.S. Stakeholders	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Political Feasibility	High	High	Moderate	Low

If you have a complicated matrix in your print document, don't try to reproduce it for PowerPoint. Either find a way to break it into smaller pieces or summarize it in some way that is digestible on screen.

# An interesting format with pullout quotes

**Figure 3: Quantity of Electronic Products Ready for End-of-Life Management in the United States.** \*Results for 2010 are projected based on estimates from previous years.



Source: EPA May 2011 – Electronic Waste Management In the United States Through 2009

According to the above Figure 3, about 2.3 million short tons of e-waste were ready for end-of-life management in 2009. While about 75 percent of e-waste is disposed of in U.S. landfills or stored by households to be handled at a later date, the EPA estimates that about 25 percent of these tons were collected for recycling. The 2009 figures are in addition to an estimated 5 million tons of e-waste stockpiled in American homes still awaiting end-of-life management.<sup>vi</sup>

**2.3 million tons of e-waste was ready for end-of-life management in 2009.**

**75 percent of U.S. e-waste ends up in domestic landfills and 25 percent is collected for recycling.**

The pullout quotes are a useful tool for busy readers like policymakers. This format was actually borrowed from the Legislative Auditor's Office, where this student worked.

# Attention-getting visuals - in paper and/or PowerPoint presentation

Photo 19 (Washington High)



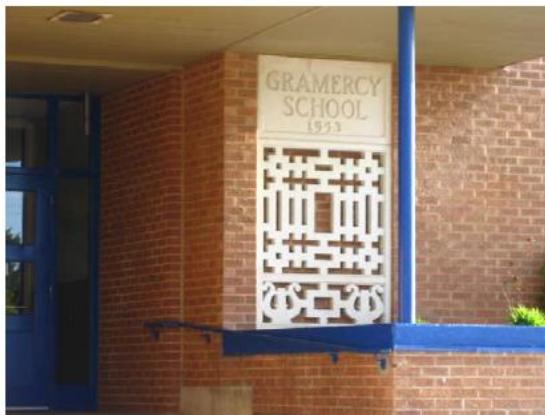
Photo 20 (Washington High)



Photo 21 (Washington High)



Photo 22 (Gramercy Elementary)



Photos 22, 23 & 24: Gramercy Elementary – Ogden School District

Photo 23 (Gramercy Elementary)

Photo 24 (Gramercy Elementary)

Sometimes images can bring power to your words, making your analysis much more tangible to the reader. In this case, the student took a little road trip to some of the worst old schools in Utah and included photos in her paper and final presentation.

# More visuals - contrast

Photo 25 (Ecker Hill Middle School)



Photo 26 (Ecker Hill Middle School)



Photo 27 (Ecker Hill Middle School)



Photo 28 (Ecker Hill Middle School)



Photos 29 & 30: Jeremy Ranch Elementary – Park City School District (front doors & side view)

Photo 29 (Jeremy Ranch Elementary)

Photo 30 (Jeremy Ranch Elementary)

And now...  
the nice schools in the  
more wealthy  
communities.  
The contrasts in these  
photos made this  
paper's analysis really  
come to life.

# A case study can help illustrate the need for policy solutions

## Case study: A Utah community active in wildfire prevention programs and planning

*A series of questions were discussed with the homeowners that were based on current literature studies focusing on resident's attitudes towards the aesthetics, neighborhood attachment, cost, educational programs, personal responsibility and trust in management agencies. These questions are part of a larger survey being developed for all residents in communities at-risk to develop a survey response database that is similar to what has been conducted in various research studies.*

### **Big Cottonwood Canyon (BCC): 250 cabins, 230 condominiums<sup>16</sup>**

Prior to the development of the CWPP, there was very little in the form of an organized plan that addressed wildfire prevention or evacuation in the event of a fire. Presently, the plan consists of more than just fuels reduction projects, it addresses all aspects that wildfire may impact. Most people seem to mainly think of defensible space as the purpose of CWPPs, but the plan also discusses topics such as address signs, road signs, fire hydrants, evacuation routes, etc.

#### *Aesthetics*

Similar to what other studies have shown, community members originally did not want to



Cabin in Silver Fork

A strong real-life example, like a case study, helps make the policy issue relevant and more understandable to policymakers, the news media, and the public.

# Video can be a nice touch in final presentation

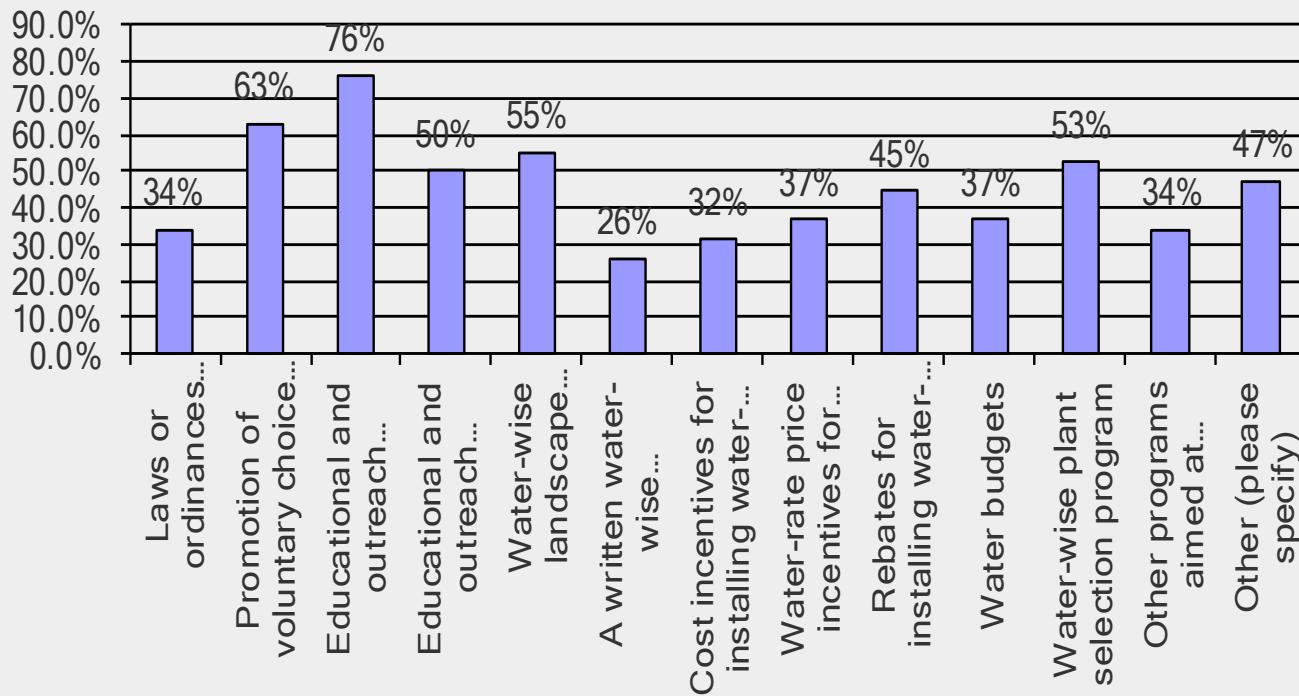


0 00:31 / 10:01

Be careful to keep it short, relevant, and practice with it to avoid technical hiccups. It may be easier to not embed it in the slideshow and just switch to it when needed.

# Surveys can be great to define problems or seek solutions

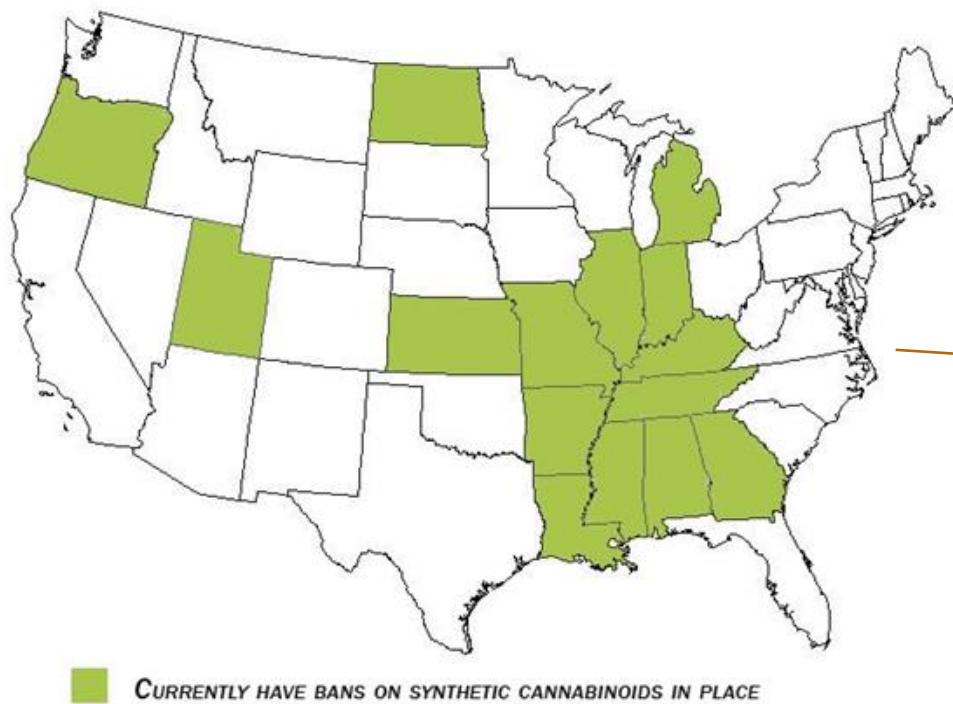
Which, if any, of the following actions are being taken by the state or locality that you represent to address current and future water needs in your state? (Mark all that apply.) (n=38)



This student sought out officials in state agencies and large cities and phoned them, asking if they'd take a short online survey using Survey Monkey. 49 officials completed it.

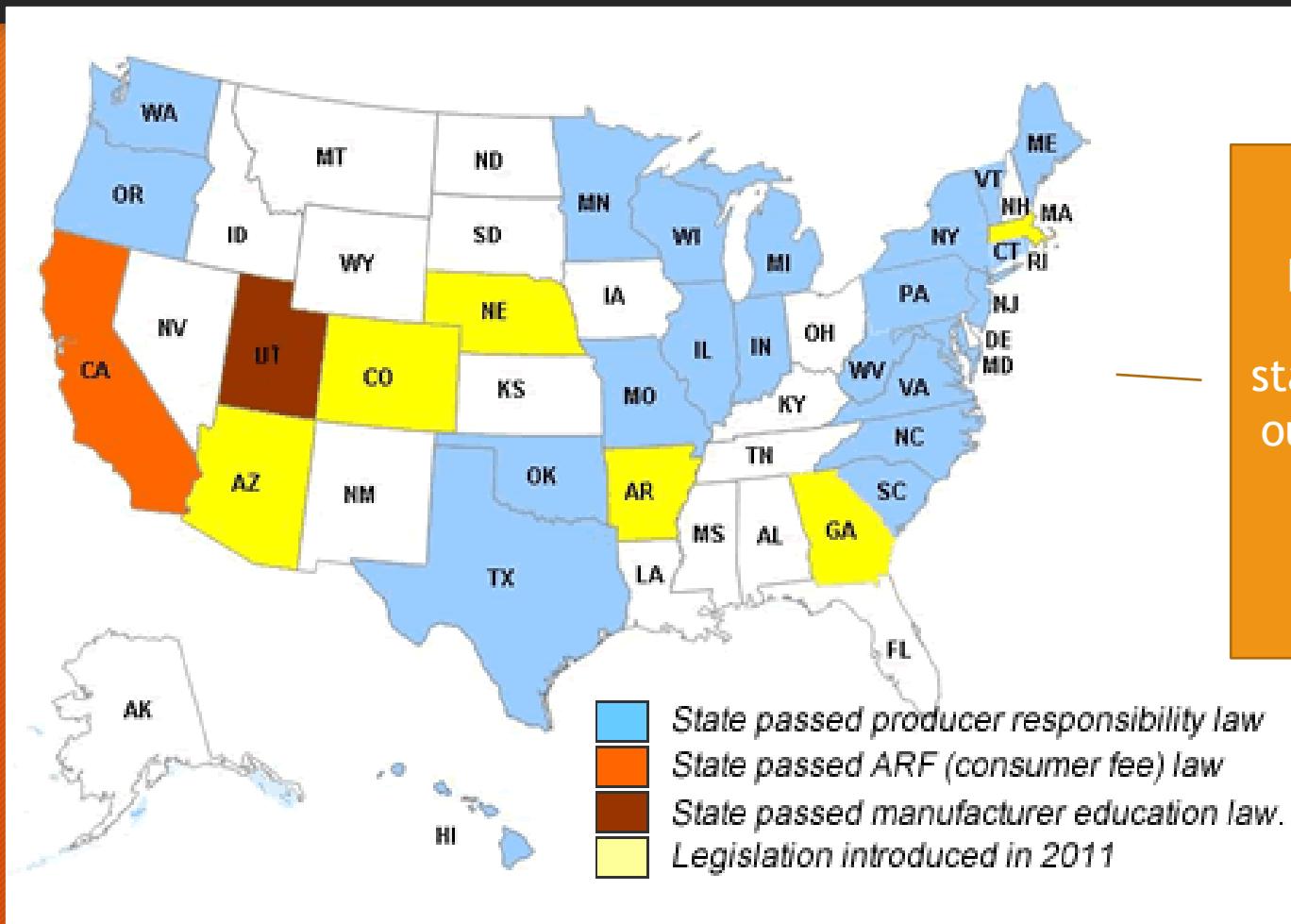
# Maps often show regional patterns

## + Statewide Prohibitions



A map can be a great visual tool in your paper or your slideshow presentation. More than a list of states with similar policies, it can help illustrate geographic trends/likenesses/differences that may be uniquely relevant to the policy decisions you are analyzing.

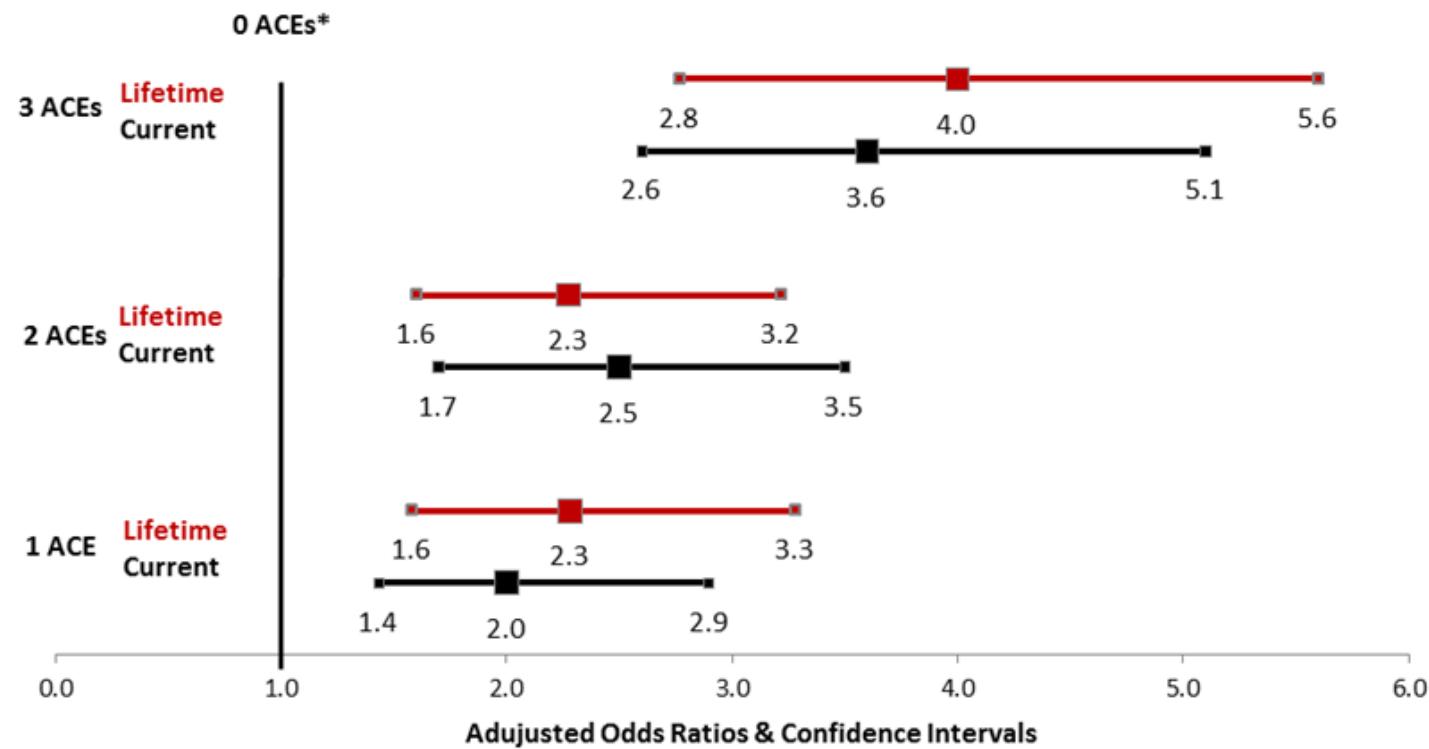
# Another map example



Maps can be particularly useful when the subject state stands out as an outlier, either within its region or compared to the entire nation.

# Find clear ways to display complicated data

## Comparison of Odds Ratios



# More on complicated data...

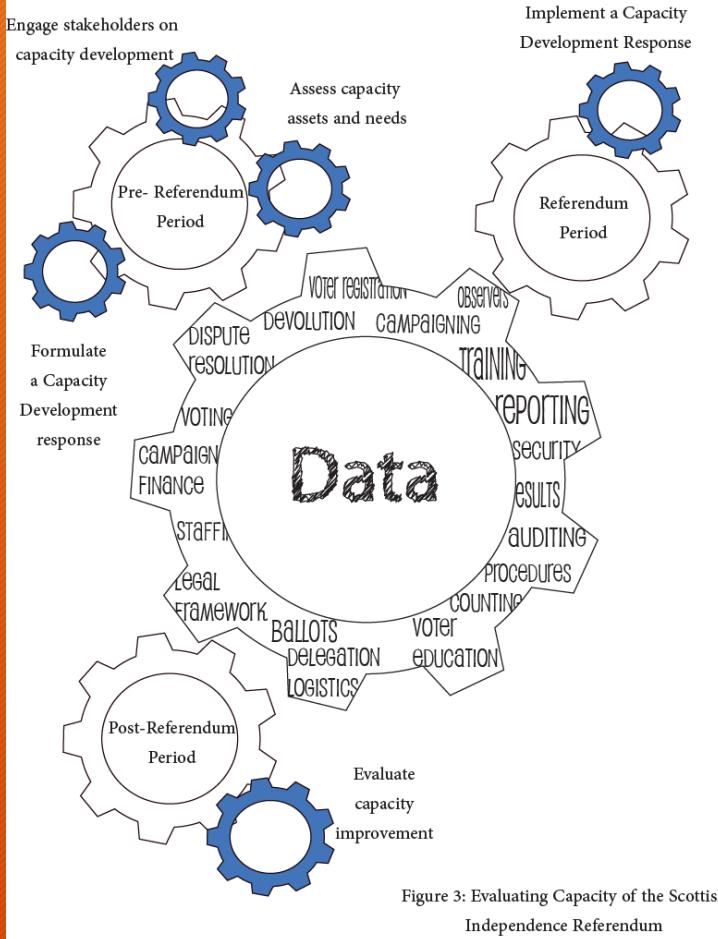
Table 3: Regression Analysis					
Variable	Without Asset		With Asset		
	Estimate	Standard Error	Estimate	Standard Error	
Intercept	48.34	7.10	49.11	7.20	
Gender	2.29	2.42	1.85	2.36	
Age	-0.20	0.16	-0.28	0.17*	
Kids in Household	-3.56	1.31**	-3.51	1.30**	
Caucasian	7.63	4.03*	7.82	3.99*	
Monthly Income	0.08	0.19	0.07	0.19	
Marital Status	3.75	3.19	3.74	3.09	
TANF/AFDC	-14.57	6.64**	-12.68	6.7*	
Business Ownership	6.76	4.58	4.41	4.52	
Checking Value	-0.06	0.13	-0.08	0.13	
Savings Value	-0.59	0.79	-0.71	0.77	
Education Asset <sup>i</sup>			1.55	2.76	
Business Asset			7.7	4.13*	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.18		0.19		

\*\*=significant at the .05 level \* =significant at the .1 level

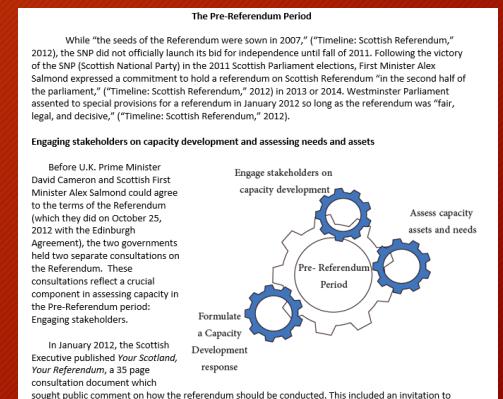
<sup>i</sup>The omitted asset is home

If you choose to do a project with complicated statistical methods, work very closely with your faculty advisor(s) to ensure you fully understand the methods and the conclusions you can legitimately make from such methods. And know that it's OK if you run your analysis and find that your hypothesis isn't clearly justified.

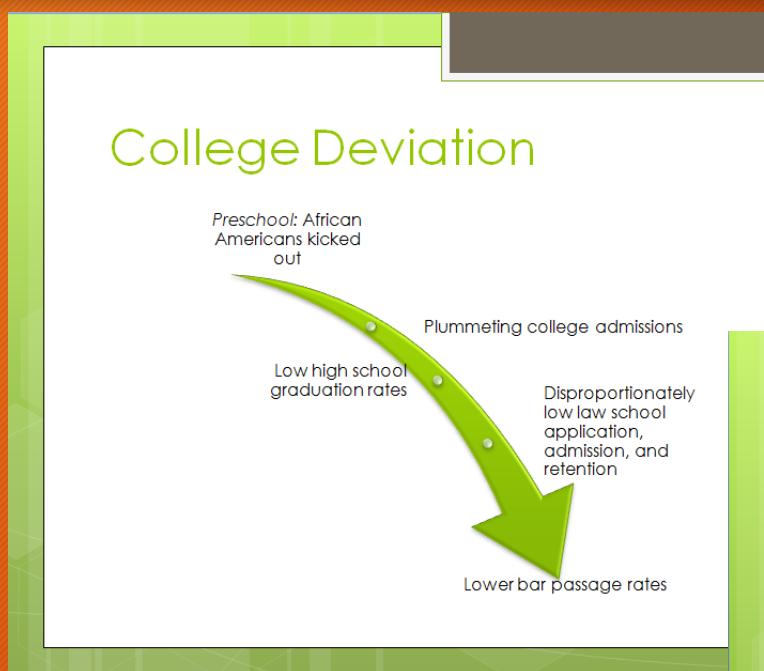
# Try out some creative graphics



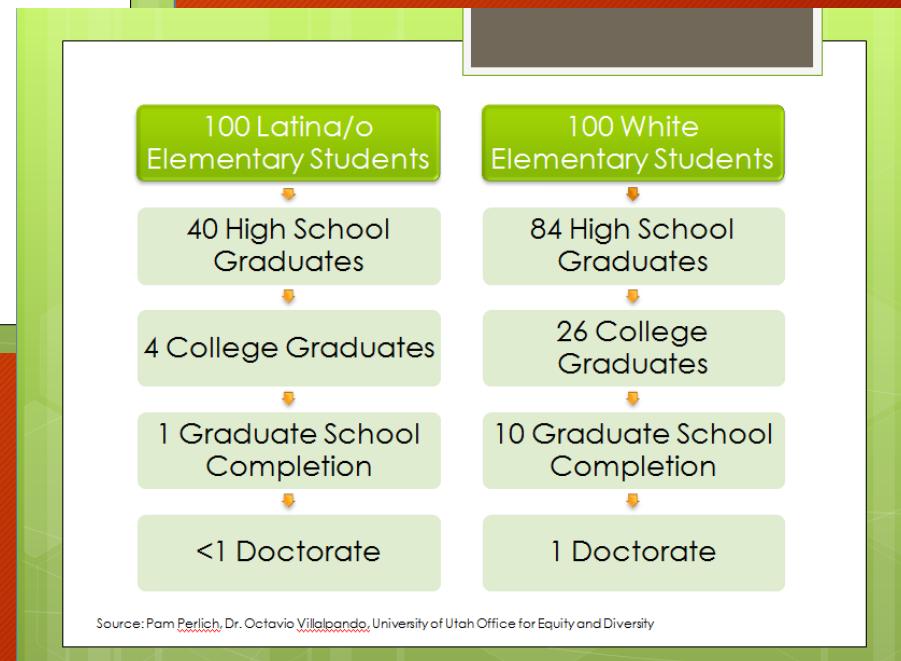
- Maybe you can make some infographics with your data.
- Maybe, like this, you can create an illustration that shows how a process works.
- Elements of this graphic were used to identify main sections of the report.



# Simple but useful graphics for screen presentation



In your final presentation, simple formats are often best. Avoid crowding the slides with too much information. This student did an exceptional job of finding ways to illustrate her points with simple, appealing design.



# Grading the final paper

Grading Criteria	Points Possible
Substantial policy content	25
Strong methodology and analysis	20
Organization	15
Grammar	10
Visual appeal and writing style	10
Overall score (40% of course grade)	80

# Other guidelines

- Final paper length: around 15-25 pages, single-spaced, but not a hard rule
- Definitely document sources well
  - Choose APA, MLA, or Chicago Style references. Any convention is acceptable, although I think APA and MLA are more academic and less appealing to policymakers.
- If doing policy analysis, it's helpful to use the Bardach method (borrow the book, A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving, if you don't have it):
  - Definition of a public policy problem
  - Evidence of the problem (data to back up your definition)
  - Alternative ideas for addressing the problem
  - Criteria for judging the alternatives
  - Projection of outcomes from the various alternatives and description of trade-offs among them
  - A recommendation of a preferred solution or set of solutions

# Other guidelines...

- Even if not doing classic policy analysis, conclude with specific policy recommendations if at all possible
- Final presentation: about 15 minutes, presented with PowerPoint, Prezi, or a similar medium.
  - If using something other than PowerPoint, make a PDF of the presentation to turn in
- Avoid making your presentation too cluttered
- **Don't put every word on the screen** that you plan to speak (I can't emphasize this enough! The slideshow is to aid us in focusing on your concepts, not to be your teleprompter.)
- Face and engage the audience - resist turning and looking at your slides. Place your computer in front of you to aid this.
- Roughly one to one-and-a-half slide(s) per minute - that would mean 15-22 slides for 15 minutes