**Matthew Borelli / Causal Inference Project**

1. **Your causal question. What causal effect will you be estimating?**

What is the causal effect of internet access on job search costs? (Note: originally was going to state just for unemployed people, but the data I have from ATUS shows that people in jobs also spend time searching for jobs, so it would be good to compare across employed and unemployed as well). What is the causal effect of internet access on leisure time, particularly waiting for leisure? (We talked about potentially looking into both of these questions as they fall under the same topic of internet access and time use, but if I have to only focus on one of these questions I would choose the first, and I’ll answer these following questions primarily for the first causal question)

**2. Why should we care about this causal effect? (Briefly - no more than a couple of paragraphs - justify the project)**

It is vitally important to understand how the internet is affecting and changing our decisions in life, especially because many people in America don’t have access to internet services. Particularly as many companies have moved their job applications entirely online. If there is a negative causal effect between internet access and job search costs, people who are unemployed and have internet access would hypothetically have a lower barrier to finding jobs than people who don’t have internet access. If this is the case, it is easy to imagine how a gap could occur, as people without internet access would have less access to jobs and therefore income, and thereafter are less likely to afford internet access, keeping them in a loop. There are some government initiatives, primarily led by the FCC, to expand broadband access in the U.S., and if we find this causal effect it could be argued that more government resources should be allocated to these expansion plans. Having towns run public ISP’s would be another potential policy intervention.

**3. What is the ideal randomized experiment you wish you could run if you have unlimited resources?**

I would randomly assign some set of people to have internet access while the others don’t have internet access, and then see how they use their time to perform job searches accordingly.

**4. What natural experiment do you plan to use to estimate your causal effect?**

I don’t have a full natural experiment other than the fact that more people gain internet access every year, moreso comparing how time use changes year-by-year.

**5. What data will you use?**

Data from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS). You can create custom time variables in ATUS, so I will be looking at different ways to represent job search costs and leisure time for individuals. ATUS also carries a lot of demographic data including county, state, race, education, and so on that we can use as controls in this causal experiment. **6. Sketch a simple DAG that you think explains the way in which the treatment and outcome are naturally determined in your context.**