

MICHAELA CUSHING-DANIELS

Phone: (717) 321-6259

mic220@pitt.edu

<https://sites.google.com/pitt.edu/michaelacushing-daniels>



Curriculum Vitae

My research agenda interrogates policymaking in U.S. cities and the relationship between local, state, and federal governments in the provision of social policy benefits. Specifically, I focus on the intersection of criminal justice and social policy, two areas where the decentralization of implementation has complicated researchers' ability to explore the impacts of each and both together on vulnerable and marginalized communities. My primary aims are to (1) uncover the ways exclusion from or access to social policy benefits affects material outcomes (health, wealth, and social inclusion) for justice-involved populations, (2) explore how social policy infrastructures can be mobilized to better facilitate community reintegration for people released from incarceration, and (3) to assess the ways the social construction of justice-involved people as a target population for policy has shifted over time, and how it may change in the future. I believe that an abolitionist framework offers a transformative lens through which to view public policy; by developing such a framework, my ultimate goal is to contribute to a body of work that not only critiques existing systems but also provides actionable pathways toward a more just society.

Topical Interests: hyperincarceration, social policy, local politics and policymaking, federalism

Methodological Interests: statistical analysis, causal inference methods, textual analysis

EDUCATION

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| Ph.D. University of Pittsburgh, Public and International Affairs
Dissertation: "Go big and go home? Mobilizing national social policy infrastructure to support justice-involved populations."
Committee: Daniel B. Jones (chair), Brooke N. Shannon, Leah Jacobs, Gary Hollibaugh | May 2026 |
| M.A. Boston University, Political Science
Thesis: "Felon Disenfranchisement and Black Voter Turnout"
Advisor: Douglas Kriner | May 2018 |
| B.A. Boston University, Political Science
Magna Cum Laude | May 2018 |

RESEARCH

Publications/Accepted

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I., Brooke N. Shannon, Daniel B. Jones. “District-Based Elections and Class-based Representation: Evidence from the California Voting Rights Act.” To be published in: *Political Science Research & Methods*.

Working Papers

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I. “Decarceration and...? Local Policy Responses to State-Level Criminal Justice Reform.” Under Review at: *Urban Affairs Review*.

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I. “Beyond Recidivism – Exploring the Potential of Linked Administrative Data to Improve Studies on Justice-Involved Populations.” Submitted to: *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*.

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I., Daniel B. Jones, Brooke N. Shannon. “Spatial Allocation of Government Investment: District-Based vs. At-Large Systems.”

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I. “Go Big and Go Home? Social Policy as a Systemic Solution to Hyperincarceration.” **(Job Market Paper)**

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I. “Beyond Recidivism: Examining the Impact of Social Policy Access on Justice-Involved Individuals' Health Outcomes.”

Conference Papers & Presentations

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I. “Beyond Recidivism: Examining the Impact of Social Policy Access on Justice-Involved Individuals' Health Outcomes” Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Fall Research Conference, Nov. 13-15, 2025.

Panel Organizer, Presenting Author

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I. “Go Big and Go Home? Social Policy as a Systemic Solution to Hyperincarceration” Justice and Injustice Conference, Nov. 6-7, 2025.

Poster Presentation

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I. “Local Policy Responses to State-Level Criminal Justice Reform: The Case of Public Safety Realignment in California” Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Jan. 9-12, 2025.

Presenting Author

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I., Brooke N. Shannon, & Daniel B. Jones., “Spatial Allocation of Government Investment: District-Based vs. At-Large Systems” American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Sep. 5-8, 2024.

Presenting Author

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I., “Social Movements as Drivers of Policy Change: The Case of City Police Budgets” Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Fall Research Conference, Nov. 8-11, 2023.

Presenting Author

Cushing-Daniels, Michaela I., Brooke N. Shannon, & Daniel B. Jones., “Read between the (District) Lines: Effects of Reform on Local Representation” American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Aug. 31 – Sep. 3, 2023.

Presenting Author

PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES

Paper Presentation, “Go Big and Go Home? Social Policy as a Systemic Solution to Hyperincarceration,” ICPSR Summer Program, July 28, 2025.

Internal Research Presentation, “Decarceration and...? Local responses to state-level reductions in incarceration,” University of Pittsburgh School of Public and International Affairs, October 18, 2024.

Internal Research Presentation, “Read Between the (District) Lines: Effects of Reform on Local Representation,” University of Pittsburgh School of Public and International Affairs, April 17, 2024.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Fellowships

Introduction to Quantitative Methods (Graduate)	Fall 2025
University of Pittsburgh, School of Public and International Affairs	

Teaching Assistantships

Introduction to Quantitative Methods (Graduate)	Fall 2023, Spring 2024, Fall 2024
University of Pittsburgh, School of Public and International Affairs	

Intermediate Quantitative Methods (Graduate)	Spring 2025
University of Pittsburgh, School of Public and International Affairs	

Race, Ethnicity, and Quantitative Methods I (Graduate)	Summer 2024
University of Michigan, ICPSR Summer Program	

Race, Ethnicity, and Quantitative Methods II (Graduate)	Summer 2025
University of Michigan, ICPSR Summer Program	

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
Graduate Student Assistant, University Center for International Studies

May 2024 to Aug. 2024

University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
Graduate Student Assistant, School of Public and International Affairs

August 2022 to April 2023

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Achievement in Pedagogy Certificate

University of Pittsburgh, Teaching & Learning Center, April 2025

Description: Completed six workshops covering various topics including syllabus and lesson plan development, principles for teaching inclusively, and combatting ablism in the classroom.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Panel Organizer

Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Beyond Bars: Rethinking Reentry Through Policy, Partnership, and Practice, 2025

Panel Chair/Discussant

Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Marginalization and Participation (Political Participation and Civic Engagement), 2025

Departmental Service:

Chairperson and founding member (AY22-23, AY23-24, AY24-25) – Doctoral Student Peer Mentorship Initiative, University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs

Ph.D. Program Representative (CY2023-2024) – University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs Student Cabinet

Ph.D. Program Representative (CY2023-2024) – University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs Planning and Budget Committee

Student Representative for the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (CY2023-2024) – University of Pittsburgh Council on Graduate Studies

Student Representative (CY2023-2024) – University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs Ph.D. Program Committee

(AY23-24) – Search Committee for Tenure-Stream Faculty Position at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs



HONORS AND AWARDS

Scholarship for Public Administration, Public Policy, and Public Affairs To participate in the 2023 ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods, University of Michigan	2023
College Prize in Political Science Boston University	2018

LANGUAGES

Spanish: Intermediate Listener, Novice Speaker, Advanced Reading and Writing

COMPUTER SKILLS

Programming: R, Stata, SQL

Platforms: Microsoft Office Suite

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management
American Political Science Association
Southern Political Science Association

REFERENCES

Dr. Daniel B. Jones, Ph.D.
School of Public and International Affairs
University of Pittsburgh
W.W. Posvar Hall, 230 S. Bouquet St., Pittsburgh, PA 15260
Email: daniel.jones@pitt.edu

Dr. Gary E. Hollibaugh Jr., Ph.D.
School of Public and International Affairs
University of Pittsburgh
W.W. Posvar Hall, 230 S. Bouquet St., Pittsburgh, PA 15260
Email: gary.hollibaugh@pitt.edu

Dr. Brooke N. Shannon, Ph.D.
Political Science | School of Urban Affairs & Public Policy (SUAPP)
The University of Memphis
423 Clement Hall, Memphis, TN 38152
Email: bshnnon2@memphis.edu