

ICPSR Data Brunch Podcast Episode 8: Baby Brains and Sleep
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Transcript

[Music playing]

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM:Hi, welcome to Data Brunch with ICPSR. If you love data, this is going to be food for thought. I'm DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM.

ANNALEE SHELTON: And I'm ANNALEE SHELTON.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM:We are recording these episodes live from our remote offices, so please excuse cameos from canine colleagues, kids in class, and other unexpected moments.

ANNALEE SHELTON: Happy Pride Month, Dory!

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM:Happy Pride Month to you, Anna! And to our listeners in case you missed it, we have a really extensive Pride Month Data Resource Guide that we will link to in our show notes. And before I forget, I also want you to know that we're working on a data resource guide for Juneteenth that we will release on our website by June 14th, ahead of the Juneteenth holiday, which is on June 19. Look for that on our home page and social media and email communications.

ANNALEE SHELTON: I am very excited about that. I loved the Juneteenth resource guide that we had for 2020, and I think the 2021 one is shaping up to be even better. So thanks, Dory, for putting that together.

Let's see, in other current events ... Dory, are you swamped in cicadas?

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM:Not yet, but I will definitely be looking for them when I go camping this month, along with the usual Michigan mayflies.

ANNALEE SHELTON: Oh, no. Oh, I hate the mayflies. I'm sorry, mayflies, but I do hate them. If you, dear listener, have never had the experience of a mayfly windshield, you have not lived. They're really something.

I just saw that in May 2021, there was a working paper that came from the Columbia University Center for Environmental Economics and Policy that uses ICPSR data to look at cicadas of all things. The researcher, Charles A. Taylor, is looking at the impact on human health from the periodic increases in insecticide use that come from the cicadas coming back around every 17 years or so, particularly at apple trees. I'm really interested to read that one.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Thank you for bringing that to our attention and thank you to the ICPSR Bibliography team for putting together these current events in the Bib.

And now back to you, Anna, for all of our new and updated data.

ANNALEE SHELTON: Oh my gosh, I wish I could talk about it at all. There is so much happening right now. I'm going to give you an abbreviated version. As always, there are tons of new data that are available. So if you are listening to this either now or at any time in the future, and if you're looking for data for your papers, maybe as you wrap up the year or as you're getting ready for a dissertation, whatever it is, we have some really great stuff for you.

This week, the American National Election Studies, ANES, which is a collection of national surveys that goes all the way back to 1948. And it includes data on Americans, social backgrounds, and social and political values, and perceptions and evaluations of candidates, different opinions on kind of questions of public policy and how people are participating in public life and political life. There is an update to that. There's new data there. So you can check out ANES.

There are also new data in the National Corrections Reporting Program. That is a compilation of offender level data, looking at admissions and releases from state prisons. And there's some interesting information in there about kind of after release from prison, looking at community supervision and different custody reports from prison. This is meant to be kind of a way to monitor the nation's correctional population and to address policy questions that are related to recidivism and prisoner reentry and demographic characteristics of people who are incarcerated. So this is a really interesting dataset for anyone who's interested in incarceration. You might want to check that out.

There's also some updated data in the Longitudinal Study of American Youth, which is a National Science Foundation funded study. It looks at students' attitudes towards STEM. So science and math, their achievements in science and math, and then what their career interests might be in STEM fields. And it looks at students from starting in middle school all the way through high school. So there's some really, really interesting data in there. And of course you can see these data and the publications through the links that we put in our show notes.

All right, Dory, I'm going to pass it over to you for this incredible interview. I cannot believe that we get to talk to Dr. Carr. Over to you, Dory.

[Musical interlude]

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Hi, everybody and welcome back to ICPSR's Data Brunch. Today, we are honored to have Dr. Deborah Carr with us, who is a Professor and Department Chair of Sociology at Boston University. And also, Dr. Carr is ICPSR's Official Representative at Boston University, which means that she is one of our ambassadors, bringing ICPSR data and resources to her institution. And then I also want to add in that Dr. Carr has

deposited data herself with ICPSR, and so her data is right there in our holdings for people to reuse it in their own research.

Welcome, Dr. Carr. We are happy to have you with us as our final guest on the first season of our Data Brunch podcast.

DR. DEBORAH CARR: Thank you. It's my pleasure to be here. And it's my pleasure to actually use ICPSR data and to contribute back into the pot.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Okay. Here we go. At Data Brunch, we love to hear stories behind data. And so can you give us an overview of your work? How would you describe what you do?

DR. DEBORAH CARR: Sure. Well, I'm a quantitative sociologist, so I study questions related to health and aging and family life, but almost wholly using secondary data sources like the ones you have at ICPSR. So I've used data from the MIDUS study and NLSY, Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, a whole range of different surveys. Part of the reason why I use these kinds of datasets is because I'm interested in the life course. So I'm interested in how things that happened really early in life can affect health and wellbeing 10, 20, or even 50 years out. And this is really the best way to look at it prospectively to explore how it is that our relationships in our work and our family background affect how it is that we age, how happy we are, how stressed we are, or how unhealthy we are.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Thank you. Thank you for your work in this area. It's really much needed, especially as we get into what we're going to focus today is how people deal with stress coming out of this pandemic. What have you found out about the link between stress and health with a special focus on coming out of this pandemic?

DR. DEBORAH CARR: Sure. You know, this pandemic has been incredibly stressful for many people, and it has taken a toll on mental health, especially for younger people. I mean, I tend to specialize in old age, but older adults tend to be doing actually a little bit better emotionally than younger people. That helps us to think about what is it about not only the stressors that we're experiencing, but the larger context that we're in.

We know that regardless of whatever the stressor is, whether it's death or job loss or a health problem, one of the most important resources is social support. And close at hand, social support, like someone who lives with you and who understands you is one of the best forms of support because they're there. More distant forms can be good as well. Things like, Facebook friends or phone calls or Zoom calls. But we do find that maybe they don't provide the same kind of support as someone at close hand. And that's part of the reason why younger people have been actually having a much more difficult time with the stress of COVID because their ties tend to be more tenuous, they're more likely to live alone, for instance, and their friends are also going through a very high levels of stress. So oftentimes the people we would turn to for support, cannot give us support because they themselves are just feeling really buried under financial stress or emotional stress.

So yeah, social support is one of the first things that we really need to grapple with stress and whole bunch of other things that I'm sure we'll continue to talk about throughout this call today.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Can you tell us why these data matter?

DR. DEBORAH CARR: Yeah. Data do matter for studying something like stress. It's kind of common sense, oh, when we're stressed out, we feel sad. But I think if we really want to come up with evidence-based solutions or social changes to ensure that we not only attack the root of the stress, but provide resources so that all people can cope with stress in a way that works best for them, we really need to see what's happening at the population level. And we need large data sets that have sufficient numbers of people from all ages, from all genders, from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, from urban and rural regions, because we know the experience is very, very different along all of those criteria. Rural people for instance, have weaker connectivity. So they're not able to reach out to virtual resources the way those of us who live in urban areas do. And those are just a couple of examples of why it is we need large population-based data set, because if we focus on convenient sample of five people, we're not going to be able to dig into those sources' difference. And I think that's so important.

Another reason why we need data from a large population-based data set is because we know the intersectionality is really important. Most of us have multiple identities that encompass our race, our gender, our income level educational level, and those categories of people face different stressors and different sources of obstacles. And so we really want to understand what are the sources of difference, because only then can we point to evidence-based solutions to these problems and providing people the kinds of resources that might help them to cope in a way that people who are quite different from them might not necessarily be able to rely on or want to rely on.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Have there been any unexpected surprises or directions in your work?

DR. DEBORAH CARR: That's a good question. Is there anything that surprised me? I do have to say there has been some interesting research coming out of the pandemic that has been surprising. One was the one that I started off, these kind of age differences. There's the belief that when people get older, that they're depressed and they're alone and their bodies ache. We know certainly that older people, more vulnerable to getting very sick and dying from COVID because of their compromised immune function with age. But I think it was really interesting to show there are these vast age differences and generational differences. And a lot of it has to do less with age actually, but really the opportunities and constraints one faces at different ages.

I mean, your youth, your 20s and 30s should be the most fun time of life for many people. But if you have educational debt and you lost your job because of the pandemic and you can't afford your apartment in New York, or you're afraid to be in a city and you move back with mom and dad and Central PA for instance, and you're all living together in a home that maybe isn't working for anyone. I think for younger people, even though they have a lot of characteristics that help them to cope well, just the structural obstacles and difficulties facing young people during the pandemic were difficult in ways

that they weren't for older adults. I think that's one interesting finding that has come out of data.

Another one that's kind of interesting that we've seen is that there was a fear that people who lived alone and who were isolated, especially for older people, that it would be really difficult for them. And some of the new data coming out shows that people who live alone, people who are lifelong singles, people who are childless, they know how to be alone. They've been alone. They haven't had a spouse, they haven't had kids ever. And so they know how to arrange their world in a way that works for them. So people we might have thought of as isolated and alone, and how are they going to weather this pandemic? They already had their routines and their hobbies down so they didn't actually feel the loss in the same way that someone who is highly social did, people who are volunteering and going to rich clubs and going out dancing. Those are the people whose lives changed.

So I think that was kind of an interesting paradox. Those who we thought of as doing the best at the front of the pandemic, they're the ones who kind of took the biggest dip. For those who were alone, who managed for many years how to be alone, did pretty okay during the pandemic.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: That's fascinating, and it's great to see that data support some of the thinking that at least I personally have seen on social media, where introverts, some of them like you say, having a great time relatively speaking. I mean, yes, it's all about survival, but they do seem to already have the routine down path.

DR. DEBORAH CARR: Absolutely. And people adapt to what they're given. I think that's actually another message that will come out of the pandemic, that most people learn to adapt to the circumstances that they are handed. Sometimes it takes a little bit more time. We know that when any new stressor comes along, whether it's a change in job, a new child, a new marriage, during the early stages, it's difficult for everybody, but they're ones we kind of either adjust our expectations for what reality should be or develop the skill sets or arranged our lives in such a way that just kind of accommodates whatever new stressor has come our way. We tend to do okay over time, right? The first couple of months after any difficulty are the worst, but then it tends to kind of plateau out and people kind of reach some kind of equilibrium where they do okay.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: This is off script, but as a parent, I'm really interested in how, I guess our younger Gen Zs who are in elementary school and middle school, how will they be 10 years down the road having been in a pandemic for a big chunk of their formative years? I'm just really looking forward to the lessons that come from the ... It might not look like stress now, but the stresses that the younger generations are going through.

DR. DEBORAH CARR: Yeah. That's a great question. I think if anything, that children have shown us just how highly adaptable they are. They were tossed into this situation. And some had it slightly easier than others if they have their own computer, but kids from larger families who had a lot of noise in their house, I mean, and only one or two computers. I think it was harder for some rather than others, but at the end of this, I think the young people have shown themselves to become tremendously adaptive. And it will be

fascinating to see what does that look like in the longer term, because in the stress research world, there's this kind of belief and some data just show it that the link between stress and kind of mental health is curvilinear. Curvilinear, I described to students as either a smile or a rainbow that you had the most extremes at the ends and then the average in the middle.

And there is this theory that people who grow up with no stress at all, or with very high levels of stress are the ones who have the greatest difficulty coping in the longer term. Because if you've had too much stress, it's just overwhelming. If you've had no stress at all, you haven't been tested, you haven't forced yourself to develop new coping skills and coping mechanisms. And it's those folks in the middle who have kind of medium stress, tolerable stress that have to troubleshoot, that have to learn new, innovative strategies that end up doing okay because they know that if they've dealt with a problem once, they can deal with it again. And it's just this kind of self-efficacy that we develop from creative problem solving along the way. And anybody who survives the pandemic, even if they feel like they are just fumbling their way along, everybody has developed new proactive coping skills in this process.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: I agree. I don't think we will be the same as we were before.

DR. DEBORAH CARR: We'll definitely appreciate one another much more and appreciate real time interactions.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Okay. We've come to our final two questions. How can listeners find out more about your work or contact you?

DR. DEBORAH CARR: How can they contact me? Well, they can Google me and I actually have a web page, and I can't remember the address right now, but if you go to Deborah Carr at Boston University, you'll find my webpage with links to a whole bunch of papers and books and articles. I'm also on Facebook and against my will, I set up a Twitter account and I think I've tweeted like five times. I don't have that many thoughts. But I swear I will start tweeting more often, but the webpage would be used, probably the best place to go to.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Thank you. And we'll make sure to include those in our episode notes. Okay. Final question. Since we talked a lot about the pandemic, a lot of people have become better cooks in their kitchens during the pandemic. Do you have a special dish that you have developed during quarantine?

DR. DEBORAH CARR: That's a good question. I am a very lucky gal and that even though I don't cook, my partner does, and he's an amazing cook. So he's been baking bread and homemade pizza and for the holidays, homemade hamantaschen, homemade bagels. So I eat a lot and I'm wholly indebted to Sam for being a really good chef. Well, it works so well, I like to eat, he likes to cook. It's a perfect match.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Wonderful. Okay. And I think that brings us to our time. So thank you so much for being with us today.

DR. DEBORAH CARR: Thank you. This was great fun.

ANNALEE SHELTON: Fantastic. Oh my goodness, that was incredible. Thank you so much, Dr. Carr for joining us. I have to say how grateful we are to have people like Dr. Carr as Representatives of ICPSR on these different campuses and at these different institutions. We are so lucky to have people of this caliber who are part of the ICPSR community. So thank you, thank you, thank you.

In some upcoming events, and as always, if you're listening to this episode at a later date, you can always visit us at icpsr.umich.edu. On the left side of our page, you'll see our current job listings and any upcoming events. So always check there. But as of this recording, so today is June 8th, 2021, we are hiring a product manager and loads of software developers and engineers. You can check our show notes for a link to those currently open positions.

And also our Summer Program is in full swing. I love our Summer Program. I love the summers because it's just so much fun to get to be with all the Summer Program folks. The registration for our short workshops is ongoing, but the registration for the first session of the Summer Program will end on June 13th. So second session will stay open until July 18th. But if you want to come to that first full session, you do need to register by June 13th. And then looking forward, coming up in October 2021, we will be hosting our Biennial Meeting, which is virtual this year. And if you haven't been to our biennial meeting, this is every other year we get representatives and other ICPSR community members all together at the University of Michigan for just an incredible few days of learning about data. This year to keep everyone safe, it will be mostly virtual, but that means that you, dear listener, get to come. So we hope that you will join us.

The theme is data positivity and all of the sessions will be in some way about how data is doing good. So please do join us. If you haven't yet, the best way to find out about that is to sign up for our email newsletter. Again, there's a link to that in our show notes, and that's the best way to get registration information. The conference is free and it is open to the public. So please do share this information with anyone you know who is interested in data, and it will include some incredible guest speakers who are going to be talking about how data can do good.

All right. Fantastic. That is the end of our upcoming events. Dory?

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: All right. Well, believe it or not. This brings us to the end of season one of Data Brunch.

ANNALEE SHELTON: I can't believe it.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: Thank you so much, everyone for being with us

ANNALEE SHELTON: And we can't end season one without a very special thank you to our epic producer, Scott Campbell. Scott, you have been behind the scenes for everything, but

man, we could not do this without you. You are the magic behind the Data Brunch and we appreciate you. Thank you for being our producer.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: I second that. Thank you so much, Scott. And even though you don't hear Scott's voice, he is very much there right beside us through every single episode. So thank you.

ANNALEE SHELTON: Thanks Scott.

SCOTT CAMPBELL: You know, nobody ever thanks the two of you for taking on these hosting duties and being like, you know, you're not podcast hosts before we started and now by definition, you've become podcasts hosts, and you're both great at it and you're both really co-producers on the podcast. So this is my one and only appearance at Data Brunch, but I just want to thank you guys.

ANNALEE SHELTON: We are a good team.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: You may add to that.

ANNALEE SHELTON: I wish all of you listeners could be here right now. We have the very best team at ICPSR and we want all of you to come join us, but until then, virtual high-fives to the folks here and to the folks listening.

So season two will include, it will include all kinds of things. We're so excited. We're starting the planning and it's just delightful to get to see what we've got. So we will be talking about the ethical use of data in the news. So watch for that and lots more. We're so excited to come back. It will be in the fall of 2021, and that will be season two of Data Brunch. And in the meantime, we have some bonus episodes coming up during this summer.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: And if you aren't already subscribed, subscribe now to Data Brunch on Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts.

ANNALEE SHELTON: And want to say again, a very special thank you to the ICPSR membership because without you, this podcast would not be possible. So thank you, thank you for allowing Data Brunch season one to happen, and we cannot wait to bring you in for Data Brunch season two.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: I second that. Thank you. And you can get in touch with us by visiting our website, icpsr.umich.edu or emailing us at icpsr-podcast@umich.edu.

ANNALEE SHELTON: I'm Anna.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: And I'm Dory. And stop. I couldn't scroll for a minute and Kai just burst into the room, so let's try that last part again.

ANNALEE SHELTON: Okay. Sounds good. I'm Anna.

DORY KNIGHT-INGRAM: And I'm Dory, and thanks for joining us at ICPSR's Data Brunch.