Developing a Coastal Community Database and Analysis of Coastal Versus Adjacent Inland Parishes

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Abstract

Fulfilling my honors thesis through the Center for Bayou Studies at Nicholls State University, I have developed a project to study the medical health of Louisiana's coastal communities compared to neighboring inland parishes. To achieve this, I am participating in work supported by the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management that aims to create a searchable database containing literature that features elements of living near the Gulf of Mexico. I have obtained licensure for the program MAXQDA which allows qualitative oral histories to be coded, curated in a database, and quantitatively analyzed through the SPSS program. For my role in this larger project, I have used MAXQDA to compile, code, and analyze literature relevant to community health such as the effects of the Gulf Oil Spill. With assistance from the project management team, I am comparing variables such as health and demographics, socio-economic status, and environmental impacts between six coastal Louisiana parishes with five adjacent interior parishes. The six coastal parishes are St. Mary, Terrebonne, Lafourche, Jefferson, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard. The five inland parishes selected are St. Martin, Assumption, St. Charles, St. James, and St. John. The coastal parishes, on average, have the positive impacts of higher education, lower unemployment, less poverty, and higher levels of economic well-being. Despite hypothesizing that these parishes are also more likely to sustain negative impacts from hurricanes, coastal land loss, and environmental exposure to oil, infant mortality rates were decreased in the coastal parishes which is a sensitive indicator of overall better health.