

Leia D. Belt, PhD

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APPOINTMENT

2025 – Present	Postdoctoral Scholar Nicotine & Cannabis Policy Center University of California, Merced
2023 – 2025	Postdoctoral Scholar Department of Sociology The Higher Education Race & The Economy (HERE) Lab University of California, Merced

EDUCATION

2023	Ph.D., Interdisciplinary Designed Emphasis in Sociology, History, and Public Health University of Iowa <i>Dissertation:</i> “Sundown Towns and Contemporary Maternal Infant Health: An Interdisciplinary Mixed-Methods Analysis of Structural Racism and Its Public Health Legacy in the Midwest <i>Committee:</i> Shannon L. Watkins Ph.D, Steven Hitlin, PhD, AJ Adkins-Jackson, Nicole Novak, Whitney Zahnd
2020	M.A., Sociology University of Iowa
2017	B.S., Psychology and Sociology (with honors) Minor in American Sign Language Kent State University

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Medical Sociology; Intersectionality; Mixed Methods; Structural Racism and Health Inequities; Social and Spatial Determinants of Health; Social Epidemiology; Spatial Inequality; Maternal and Infant Health; Social Psychology; Algorithmic Racism and Data Capitalism; Community-Engaged Research; Digital Scholarship and Data Visualization

PUBLICATIONS

*Peer-Reviewed Publications (*denotes equal co-authorship)*

1. **Belt, L.**, Gomez-Vidal, C., Zahnd, W., Mutch, E. & Williams, J. “Sundown Towns and the Racialized Structure of Rural Health Inequities.” *American Journal of Public Health*. Accepted.
2. Oehmen, N. B., Haylett, J., **Belt, L.**, & Clark, J. (2023). Teaching across the FGWC Terrain: Reflections of Sociology Educators. *Teaching sociology*, 0092055X231174512.

Data Products

1. **Belt, L. D.**, & Mutch, E. (2026). *Sundown towns ground-truthed spatial dataset (United States), v1.0* [Data set]. Dryad. <https://doi.org/10.5061/dryad.931zcrk2w>

Media contribution

1. Dorcoo, S., and **Belt, L.** “Unveiling the Complex Racial History of the Midwest: A Call for an Intersectional and Systems Approach in Maternal Healthcare Design”, *Commentary Lancet Race and Health Quarterly*. (October 2024)
2. **Belt, Leia**. *Understanding the Need for Sundown Towns Measures in Health Service Research*. *AcademyHealth* (August 2024).

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3. **Belt, L.**, AcademyHealth. (2024, July). AcademyHealth response to the Coalition for Health Artificial Intelligence (CHAI) Assurances Standards Guide and Reporting Checklist.
4. **Belt, L.**, AcademyHealth. (2024, July). AcademyHealth response to OSTP on disability data needs. White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.
5. **Belt, Leia** and Inderstrodt, J., "It's possible to change low rates of Black breastfeeding, but it starts with acknowledging the legacy of slavery" (August 2023).
6. Inderstrodt, Jill and **Belt, L.**, "Breastfeeding Can Help Save New Black Moms — Who Are Nearly 3 Times More Likely To Die." (August 2023).
7. **Belt, Leia.** "If ChatGPT Reflects Hair Bias, What Other Racial Bias Does It Spread?", New Thinking (March 2023).
8. **Belt, Leia** and Kuuland, K., "AcademyHealth Data and Policy Fellows Reflect on ARM Firsts, Student Engagement, and Building Connections", AcademyHealth (August 2024)
9. **Belt, Leia** and Spates, K. "Invisible Suffering: Confronting the intersection of Online Racism and Black Youth Suicide" (*Under review, HealthAffairs Forefront*)

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2024	University of Minnesota Public Health Center for Antiracism Research for Health Equity Ignite the Spark Program funding from Robert Wood Johnson (\$72,000)
2023	Black Mammals Matter Alliance (BMMA) Inclusive P Incubator Pilot Cohort in partnership with Iowa Black Doula Collective (\$10,000)
2022	Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio Summer Fellowship, University of Iowa Libraries
2021	Summer Graduate Fellowship, Graduate College, The University of Iowa
2019	Humanities for the Public Good Summer Fellowship, Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, The University of Iowa
2022	Digital Summer Research Fellow, The University of Iowa Libraries, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA
2013-2015	Ronald E. McNair Scholar Research Fellow, "Sisters United Now" funded by the Program for Research on Anxiety Disorders among African American Adolescent Girls, Department of Psychology, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

FELLOWSHIPS AND RESEARCH APPOINTMENTS

2024-2025	Health Affairs Equity Fellowship, Washington, D.C.
2024	National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Born-Digital Scholarly Publishing Institute, Brown University Library, Providence, RI
2024	AcademyHealth Health Data Policy Fellowship, Washington, D.C.
2023	The Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR) summer mentoring program
2022-Present	Research Consultant, Iowa Black Doula Collective, Iowa City, Iowa
2020-2022	Qualitative Research Assistant, Black Maternal Health in Iowa, The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, University of Iowa,
2022	AcademyHealth Public Voices Fellowship with The OpEd Project
2019	Research Consultant, Johnson County Public Health: Cold Weather Health Campaign with Johnson County Department of Public Health
2016-2019	Research Coordinator, Moral Schemas, Cultural Conflict, and Socio Political Action funded by the Minerva Research Initiative
2014-2015	Qualitative Research Assistant, "Gender and Identity in the Context of Migration," Department of Pan African Studies, Kent State University
2013-2015	Ronald E. McNair Scholar Research Fellow, Black Women's Reproductive Health" funded by the Farris Family Innovation Award, Department of Sociology, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio

PRESENTATIONS

1. **Belt, L.,** Durazo, A., Zamperlin-Redondo, G., & Yen, I. (2026, November). Developing a community-partnered data dashboard for tobacco and cannabis prevention in California's San Joaquin Valley and surrounding foothills [Oral presentation]. American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo, San Antonio, TX.
2. Spates, K., **Belt, L.,** Amoah, G., & Diaz, J. (2026, November 3). Mapping mental health equity in Pittsburgh: Black psychiatric workforce representation and population need [Oral presentation]. American Public Health Association Annual Meeting and Expo, San Antonio, TX.
3. **Belt, L.,** (2025). Unveiling the Legacy of Sundown Towns: Understanding Historical Harms and Health Inequities in Pennsylvania. Area Health Education Center (Oral Presentation)
4. **Belt, L.,** (2025). Unveiling the Intersection: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Structural Racism, Sundown Towns, and Health Equity. Health Systems and Population Health Department, University of Washington (Oral Presentation)
5. **Belt, L.,** (2025). Interdisciplinary Approaches to Structural Racism, Sundown Towns, and Health Equity, Spring Speaker Series Public Health Department, University of California- Merced (Oral Presentation)
6. **Belt, L.** (2024). Keynote Speaker, "It Starts with US" Conference: Community Action Pennsylvania (CAAP), Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
7. **Belt, L.,** (2024). Hot Topics: AI and Large Language Models (LLMs), Research, and Policy AcademyHealth, Health Policy Orientation (Panelist)
8. **Belt, L.** (2024). Unveiling the hidden legacy of sundown towns: Measuring structural racism through an interdisciplinary geospatial lens. Oral Presentation at the American Public Health Association (APHA) (Oral Presentation)
9. **Belt, L.** (2024) Birthing Leaders Optimizing Outcomes in the Midwest (BLOOM). Ignite the Spark Program (ISSP) National Convening (Poster Presentation)
10. **Belt, L.** (2024). Sundown Towns, Structural Racism, and Inequities in birth outcomes in Iowa. Oral Presentation at the Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science (IAPHS) (Oral Presentation)
11. **Belt, L.,** Bailey, E., Iowa Black Doula Collective (2024). Oral Presentation at the Black Mamas Matter Alliance (BMMA), Atlanta Georgia 2024, September 2024
12. Nelson, K., Ngwa, A., **Belt, L.,** & Brown, E.A. "Exploring differences by racial names using Artificial Intelligence: Does Jill or Aisha have better outcomes in ChatGPT?" Poster at Virginia Public Health Association 2024 Annual Conference, Richmond, VA: September 2024.
13. **Belt, L.** (2024). "Canonizing Whiteness and maleness: The Overt and Covert Forces Shaping Sociological Thought" Oral Presentation at American Sociological Association (ASA) 2024 Annual Conference, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, August 2024.
14. **Belt, L.** (2024). "A Conceptual Framework For Using Sundown Towns as an exposure measure for structural racism on perinatal health". Oral Presentation at the Association of Black Sociologist (ABS) 2024 Annual Conference, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, August 2024
15. **Belt, L.** (2024). ARM (Poster Presentation)
16. **Belt, L.** (2024). "A mixed methods analysis of the Institutionalized Marginalization of Du Bois in Sociological Canon". Legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois: Crossing Boundaries for Social Justice Conference. Brown University (Oral Presentation)
17. **Belt, L.** (2024). "A Historical Case Study of Sundown Towns in Iowa: Unveiling Black Resilience". 24th Annual Black Issues Conference. Bowling Green State University
18. Bailey, E., Garrin, A., **Belt, L.** (2024). "Iowa Black Doula Collective". Black Mamas Matter Black Maternal Health Institute and Incubator, Atlanta, Georgia (Oral Presentation)
19. **Belt, L.** (2024). "Sundown Towns and Health Equity in Pennsylvania". Racial Equity Speaker at the Pennsylvania Department of Health Equity Summit 2024
20. Covington, L. & **Belt, L.** (2023). "Digital Sociology Workshop". Presented at the Association of Black Sociologist
21. **Belt, L.** (2022). "Using Geospatial Mapping to understand Black maternal morbidity and infant mortality". Presented at the Digital Publishing Summer Fellowship Symposium, August, Iowa City, IA (Oral Presentation)
22. **Belt, L.** (2021). "Racial and Gender Marginalization in the Sociological Canon" Presented at the Sociology of Education Conference, Virtually, (Oral presentation)

23. Member, Presented at the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Winter Meeting, (Oral Presentation)
24. **Belt, L.** (2020). Black Maternal Health: Digital Health Campaign. Accepted at the Digitalizing Blackness Conference. May 2020, Iowa City, IA (Postponed due to Covid-19)
25. **Belt, L.** (2019). "Fashion Identified: a WeVideo presentation of the sociology of fashion and style of dress". April 2019, Iowa City, IA (Video presentation)
26. **Belt, L.** (2018). Citation Diffusion in Social Psychology. Presented at the University of Iowa Political Science Network Analysis Graduate Student Symposium, Iowa City, IA (Poster presentation).
27. **Belt, L.** (2017). The Integrated Theory of Identity Control and Double Consciousness. Presented at the University of Iowa Sociology Department Social Psychology Graduate Student Symposium. (Oral Presentation)
28. Davis, M., Petti, K., **Belt, L.**, Neal-Barnett, A., Statulis, R.E., (2015). Build Your Own Theme Song. Northeast Ohio Undergraduate Symposium, Kent, OH (Poster Presentation)
29. Davis, M., Petti, K., **Belt, L.**, Neal-Barnett, A., Statulis, R.E., (2014). "Sisters United Now," Presented at the Division 45 Conference: Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity and Race, Eugene, Oregon (Poster presentation)
30. **Belt, L.** (2014). Black Women's Reproductive Health Study. Presented at the 17th Annual National McNair Scholars Research Meeting, Denton, TX (Poster Presentation)
31. **Belt, L.** (2014) 20th Annual McNair Research Conference, presented at the Annual McNair Research Conference, Buffalo, New York (Poster presentation)
32. **Belt, L.** (2014). Presented at the Annual McNair Research Institute Symposium, Kent, Ohio (Oral Presentation)

GUEST LECTURES

1. What is Community Engaged Scholarship. Course: Research Methods. Instructor: Jullanar Williams. Department of Sociology. Cal State University, Domingez Hills. Spring 2026
2. *Intersectionality and Community Methods*. Course: Intersectionality. Instructor: Armari Beck. Department of Sociology. Dartmouth College. Fall 2025.
3. *The Use of Mapping in Community Engaged Research*. Course: Community Research Methods: An Anti-Oppressive Toolkit. Instructor: Cristina G. Vidal. Department of Society, Environment, and Health Equity (SEHE). University of California—Riverside. Spring 2025.
4. *Exploring Structural Racism, Sundown Towns, Rurality and its Impact on Maternal and Infant Health*. Course: Black Mental Health. Instructor: Kamesha Spates. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA. Spring 2025.
5. *AI and Health* Course: AI and Health Equity. Instructor: Shannon Watkins. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA. Fall 2024.
6. *Exploring Structure, Sundown Towns, and Health*. Opening Plenary: "It starts with the US" Conference. Community Action Partnership Pennsylvania Lancaster, PA. Fall 2024. (In-person)
7. *Dissertation writing in Sociology of Health*. Course: Undergraduate Capstone. Instructor: Kamesha Spates. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA. Spring 2024. (Virtual)
8. *Measuring structural racism*. Course: Reproducing inequality. Instructor: Hannah Espy. Sociology Department. Lycoming University, Williamsport, PA. Spring 2024.
9. *Qualitative Research Methods*. Course: Qualitative Methods. Instructor: Shannon Lea Watkins. College of Public Health. University of Iowa, Iowa, IA. Spring 2023.
10. *Qualitative Research Methods*. Course: Qualitative Methods. Instructor: Shannon Lea Watkins. College of Public Health. University of Iowa, Iowa, IA. Spring 2022.
11. *Intersectionality*. Course: Introduction to Sociology. Instructor: Jennifer Haylett. Sociology Department. University of Iowa, Iowa, IA. Spring 2022.

SERVICE TO PROFESSION

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| 2024 | Undergraduate Student Success Internship (SSI) Mentorship Program, University of California, Merced |
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2024	Occasional journal reviewer, Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, HealthAffairs, Health Equity
2024	Occasional abstract reviewer, American Public Health Association (APHA), HealthAffairs, AcademyHealth, Interdisciplinary Association of Population Health Science (IAPHS) Conference
2024	Orientation Facilitator, The United Automobile Workers (UAW 5810)
2024	Application reviewer, Public Voices AcademyHealth Public Voices Fellowship with The OpEd Project
2022	Consultant, National Ethnic Studies Coalition
2020	Organizer and Moderator, Justice Framed Conference: Activism in its Forms panel track, UI
2021	Panelist, First-Generation and Graduate Student of Color Panel, UI
2020	Consultant, Black Lives Matter at School National Coalition, Iowa
2018	Graduate Mentor, McNair Scholar Mentor for a day program, UI
2017	Organizer, Department of Sociology Orientation Committee, UI
2016	Committee member, Department of Sociology Orientation Committee, UI
2014	Organizer and Moderator, BUS 'Kent Talks' A Collaborative University Series, Kent State University
2013	Organizer, Black United Students Anti-Racism Speaker: Tim Wise, Kent State University

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT), American Black Sociological Society (ABS), American Sociological Association (ASA), Association for the study of African American Life and History (ASLH), American Public Health Association (APHA), Interdisciplinary Association of Population Health Science (IAPHS), AcademyHealth, Society for the Analysis of African American Public Health Issues (SAAPHI), National Women's Studies Association (NWSA), National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD), Society of Black Graduate & Professional Students (BGAPS), Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) Network, Ronald McNair Scholar

Software Competencies

STATA, SPSS, R, ArcMap, QGIS, ArcGIS Map, NVivo, Gephi, Dedoose, Qualtrics