

Lucia Harrison Colloquium

2021-2022 Series

Deconstructing Food Access: Public Health, Geographic Information Systems, and the Power of Maps

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Date: March 18, 2022

Day: Friday

Time: 2 P.M.

Location: Wood Hall 2119



The rise of food access research is intimately tied to availability of GIS technology and data on store locations. This presentation discusses the importance of mapping technology in shaping food desert research as well as research on the environmental impacts of health in general, as well as the use of food desert in popular communication. Much of the power of the term lies in the use of maps. The food access or “desert” concept visualizes inequality through the use of GIS. The fact that studies of food access often begin and end with easily accessible store address data, which is also easy to put into a map, has promoted the analysis of food access data by academics and non-academics alike. Issues with these data, as well as debates about how to analyze them, are often overlooked in public discussions. This presentation addresses the history of popular discourse on food deserts and the importance of maps and mapping technology in shaping this history.

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