

SUMMER 2021 ISSUE

MSU Sociology Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM YOUR DEI COORDINATOR

WELCOME!



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SOCIOLOGY
DEI

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Welcome to the Department of Sociology's first DEI newsletter! The Summer 2021 Newsletter is the first small step towards promoting and ensuring an environment of inclusion through celebrations of our work. The first few highlights that I have the pleasure of presenting in this issue are reflections written by our graduate students on implicit biases experienced in professional and personal spaces and its impact on BIPOC women.

Praveena Lakshmanan's 2019 essay "Pretty Brown: Encounters with my Skin Color," and **Angelica Ruvalcaba, Madeline Nash, Jennifer Lai and Jihan Mohammed's** 2021 reflection "Reclaiming Space: The Narratives of Female Doctoral Students of Color" highlights our complex experiences around skin color, identity, privilege and belonging in varied spaces. In recent student accomplishments, **Ereisa Morales**, a third year graduate student has won the prestigious ICPSR Diversity Scholarship! Also **Yan Zhang**, our most recent PhD, is joining the Center for Demography of Health and Aging at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Please join me in congratulating **Ereisa** and **Yan**.

Information and communication are the key to an inclusive environment, and I hope that the newsletter will gradually evolve into a space where our intellectual, academic and professional accomplishments gets shared and celebrated. In the next 24 months, I invite faculty, staff and students to write short 750-1000 word pieces on how their own work (research, community action and involvement) contributes and creates awareness to the core ideals of DEI, challenges they may have faced, and visions for the future.

April was Arab American heritage month, May celebrates Asian Pacific American, Older American and Jewish heritages and June is Immigration heritage and LGBTQ Pride month. Over the last 14 months several domestic and international events have brought attention to how each of the above groups experienced the pandemic with varied levels of precarity. At the same time racial violence, hate crimes, police violence, healthcare abuse are continuing with alarming rates. And one year after the death of George Floyd, the debates around calls to defund the police continues. Celebrating heritage months are an important way to acknowledge the struggles of various ethnic and marginalized groups. As Sociologists we do this through research that informs public opinion and shapes future policies. We have large number of faculty and graduate students who are currently engaged in rich research on the communities that April, May and June months celebrate, highlighting their unique experiences by asking core questions embedded in sociological literature around religion, diaspora, immigration, refugee interventions during a humanitarian crisis, health and identity. Before I stepped into my new role, I reached to many of them requesting details on research in the above areas, and the information I received is indeed impressive. The newsletter presents a small snapshot. Happy reading!



Department of Sociology
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Graduate Student Accomplishments



Ereisa Morales (2019 cohort) won an ICPSR Diversity Fellowship. The fellowship was established to promote quantitative training among graduate students from underrepresented groups. This is a competitive national fellowship, open to all incoming and current graduate students enrolled in graduate programs across disciplines. We are all very proud of **Ereisa**!



Yan Zhang's (PhD 2021) postdoctoral research associate position is offered by the Center for Demography of Health and Aging at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, one of the twelve demography of aging centers funded by the National Institute on Aging. Zhang will be collaborating with Dr. Jason Fletcher, training in using demographic and econometric methods to understand the importance of place of birth on old age cognitive health. "I hope this position helps me build my career pathway in academia. And as an international student, an Asian woman who come from urban China, I hope my experience could inspire people who have similar backgrounds." Congratulations **Yan**!

Graduate Student Reflections: Addressing Implicit Biases and Reclaiming Space

Lakshmanan, Praveena. 2019. "Pretty Brown: Encounters with my Skin Color" in *Body Battlegrounds: Transgressions, Tensions, and Transformations* edited by C. Bobel and S. Kwan. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press

Angelica Ruvalcaba, Madeline Nash, Jennifer Lai and Jihan Mohammed. 2021. "Reclaiming Space: The Narratives of Female Doctoral Students of Color." *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*. Vol 8(2)



Celebrating Arab American, Older American, Jewish, Immigration Heritage and LGBTQ Pride Through Our Research

Rebecca Karam's research focuses on the lived experiences of Muslim and Arab Americans in Metropolitan Detroit, Michigan. Specifically, she examines parenting practices among these minority groups in order to understand how religious and cultural identities are reproduced across generations. Her latest publication on their strategic assimilation practices, "Becoming American by Becoming Muslim" can be accessed here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870.2019.1578396>. Karam has also been featured in the PBS documentary "No Passport Required: Detroit" which explores local Arab American culture through food (<https://www.pbs.org/food/features/no-passport-required-detroit/>).



Stephanie Nawyn is an expert on the areas of migration, refugees, and gender, with a focus on refugee resettlement and the international protection of Syrian and other refugees in the Middle East. She spent a year as a Fulbright Fellow at Istanbul University studying the exploitation of Syrian refugees in Turkey. She has also collaborated with ACCESS, the largest Arab American social service agency in the U.S., and has given talks on Islamophobia and its role in anti-refugee attitudes. Her latest research, funded by the Elrha Foundation, uses cross-country comparative data from Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan to explore how refugee humanitarian interventions have been impacted by Covid-19. A description of the study including recorded webinars, reports, and other publications can be found here: <https://refugeescovid19.org/>.

Celebrating DEI Through Our Research (cont.)



Dementia is a disabling brain disorder associated with severe disability, increased demands for medical and personal care, and premature death. In the U.S., about 5.7 million people were living with Alzheimer's and related dementias (ADRD) in 2018 and the annual estimated cost of dementia care would reach \$277 billion (Alzheimer's Association, 2018). In the last few years **Hui Liu, Zhenmei Zhang** and others have been analyzing the effects on dementia, one of the diseases associated with aging, on gender, marital status, sexual orientations and race. In the paragraphs below are summaries of some of their findings and recommendations for further reading.

Hui (Cathy) Liu and colleagues analyzed data from the Health and Retirement Study and found that all unmarried groups, including the cohabiting, divorced/separated, widowed, and never married, had significantly higher odds of developing dementia over the study period than their married counterparts. Her work further suggested that same-sex partners had significantly higher odds of cognitive impairment than different-sex partners; this disparity was mainly explained by differences in marital status and, to a much lesser extent, by differences in physical and mental health. These findings will be helpful for health policy makers and practitioners who seek to better identify vulnerable subpopulations and to design effective intervention strategies to reduce dementia risk.

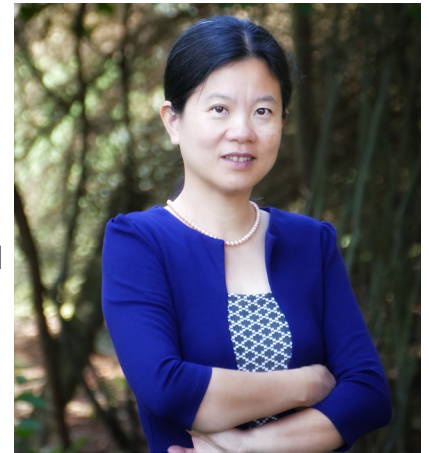
Further readings:

Liu, Hui, Ning Hsieh, Zhenmei Zhang, Yan Zhang and Kenneth M Langa. 2020. Same-Sex Couples and Cognitive Impairment: Evidence from the Health and Retirement Study. *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*.10.1093/geronb/gbaa202. Epub ahead of print.

Liu, Hui, Zhenmei Zhang, Seung-won Choi, and Kenneth M Langa. 2020. "Marital Status and Dementia: Evidence from the Health and Retirement Study." *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 75(8): S1873-S1795. doi:10.1093/geronb/gbz087.

Celebrating DEI Through Our Research (cont.)

Zhenmei Zhang and colleagues examined whether the link between marital loss and dementia risk vary by race and gender. They found that widowhood is associated with a higher risk of dementia for both Whites and Blacks, and the association is stronger among Blacks. Divorce is associated with a higher risk of dementia for Black men, Black women, and White men but not for White women. Economic disadvantage was the major factor that accounted for the higher risk of dementia among the widowed and the divorced. In another related article, Zhang and others examined pathways linking childhood socioeconomic status (SES) and cognition in late midlife. They found that childhood SES predicts cognition in late midlife, and this association is largely mediated by adolescent cognitive ability and educational achievement and to a lesser extent by midlife economic condition and health. The findings underscore the long-arm of childhood SES in cognitive function in later life and highlight the complex life-course pathways underlying the association between childhood SES and cognition.



Further readings:

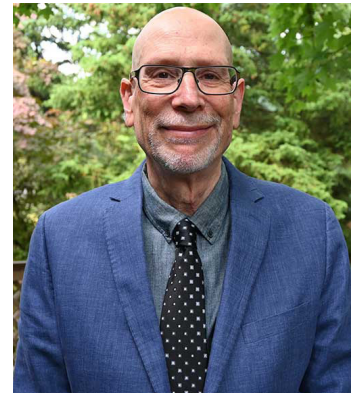
Zhang, Zhenmei., Hui Liu, & Seung-won Choi (2021). Marital loss and risk of dementia: Do race and gender matter? *Social Science & Medicine*, 275, 113808. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.113808 Epub ahead of print.

Zhenmei Zhang, Hui Liu, and Seung-won Choi. 2020. "Early-life Characteristics, Midlife Socioeconomic Status, and Late-life cognition: Evidence from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study." *Social Science & Medicine* 244: 112575. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.112575.

Celebrating DEI Through Our Research (cont.)

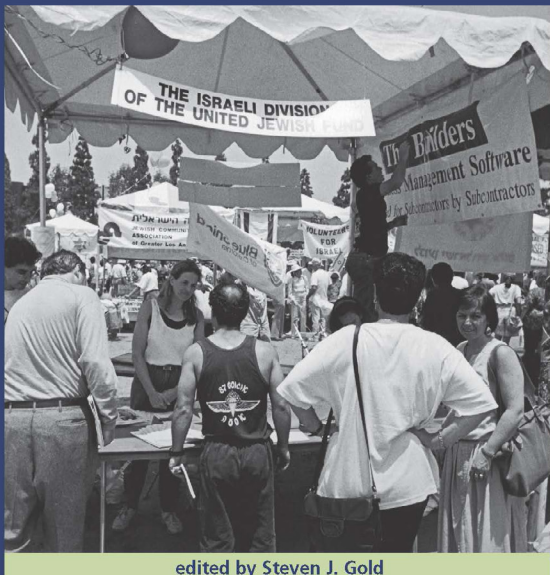
Steve Gold's research for years has focused on the Jewish experience of migration to United States and elsewhere. Despite the importance of historical and contemporary migration to the American Jewish community, popular awareness of the diversity and complexity of the American Jewish migration legacy is limited and largely focused upon Yiddish-speaking Jews who left the Pale of Settlement in Eastern Europe between 1880 and 1920 to

settle in eastern and Midwestern cities. His latest edited book *Wandering Jews* presents the record of a wide variety of Jewish migrant groups, including those encountering different locations of settlement, historical periods, and facets of the migration experience. These include the fate of contemporary Jewish academics who seek to build communities in Midwestern college towns; the adaptation experience of recent Jewish migrants from Latin America, Israel, and the former Soviet Union; the adjustment of Iranian Jews; the return of Israelis living abroad; the experience of diverse Jewish migrants in France and Belgium, and a number of other topics. Interdisciplinary, the volume draws upon history, sociology, geography, and other fields.



WANDERING JEWS

GLOBAL JEWISH MIGRATION



Casden Institute for the Study
of the Jewish Role in American Life
Annual Review, Volume 18

Further readings:

Gold, Steven J. (ed). 2020. *Wandering Jews: Global Jewish Migration*. Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life, Annual Review, Volume 18, West Lafayette Indiana: Purdue University Press.

Gold, Steven J. 2021 "The Jewish Israeli Diaspora," Chapter 26 in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jewish Diaspora*, Hasia R. Diner (ed)., New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Celebrating DEI Through Our Research (cont.)



Hsieh, Ning and **Inna Mirzoyan** recently published an article in *LGBT Health* that addresses health care inequities at the intersection of sexual orientation and gender using national data. Focusing on experience with culturally competent care, a critical facilitator of health care utilization, they showed that sexual minority men and women had quite different experiences. While sexual minority men were no more disadvantaged in receiving adequate care (e.g., being treated with respect by providers and providers asking for opinions about treatment) compared to straight men, sexual minority women were significantly more disadvantaged compared to straight women. In particular, women who identified as bisexual or something other than straight or lesbian had the most negative experiences in health care encounters. Their research implies that sexuality-based stigma, prejudice, and discrimination may not equally impact sexual minority subgroups. More training on providers' knowledge and sensitivity about diverse sexuality and gender will improve the quality of health care encounters for patients with different needs.



stef shuster and **Ning Hsieh** have recently started to collect semi-structure interview data to better understand barriers to health care among sexual and gender minority people. These qualitative data will complement population-level data and provide more nuanced information about how and why individuals of certain sexual and gender identities face more challenges in the health care system.

Further readings:

Hsieh, Ning, and Inna Mirzoyan. Forthcoming. "Disparities in experience with culturally competent care and satisfaction with care by sexual orientation" *LGBT Health*.



Celebrating DEI Through Our Research (cont.)

stef shuster in their most recent book *Trans Medicine* (NYU Press), examines how health professionals approach patients who seek gender-affirming care. The practice of trans medicine charts new medical ground, compelling medical professionals to plan treatments without much evidence to back them up. Drawing on interviews with medical providers as well as ethnographic and archival research, and relying on cultural norms and gut instincts

to inform their treatment plans, shuster shows how medical providers' lack of clinical experience and scientific research undermines their ability to interact with patients, craft treatment plans, and make medical decisions. This situation defies how providers are trained to work with patients and creates uncertainty. As providers navigate the developing knowledge surrounding the medical care of trans folk, *Trans Medicine* offers a rare

opportunity to understand how providers make decisions while facing challenges to their expertise and, in the process, have acquired authority not only over clinical outcomes, but over gender itself.

Further readings:

shuster, stef. 2021. "Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender." New

York: NYU Press

shuster, stef. 2021. "Doctors Treating Trans Youth Grapple With Uncertainty, Lack of Training." *The Conversation*.

shuster, stef. 2019. "Performing Informed Consent in Transgender Medicine." *Social Science & Medicine* 226: 190-197.

