

The FPH Chronicle

THE OFFICIAL ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE FAMILY AND POPULATION HEALTH LABORATORY

Edited by Gerald Nowak III, Karessa Weir and Hui Liu

A Message from the Lab Director



Greetings! Welcome to our Fall 2021 newsletter!

The Family and Population Health (FPH) Laboratory consists of a group of scholars across disciplines at MSU who study how family and life course processes impact and are impacted by health and well-being. FPH provides a vibrant research and training environment for faculty and graduate students

to learn about how family dynamics and processes unfold over time to shape the experiences of health and illness. Our work has never been timelier – over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has created serious challenges for our families, societies, and professions. I am truly proud of what our students and faculty have accomplished during this difficult period. Despite the pandemic, the FPH lab is thriving, and great things are afoot. As a group, we have continued our monthly meetings and supported one another throughout these

challenging times. To that end, we successfully held the 6th Annual MSU Medicine, Health, and Society Seminar this past year in a virtual format and we look forward to the next exciting iteration of this event in the Spring of 2022.

I invite you to read this newsletter as it contains information about the adventures, ground-breaking projects, publications, and accomplishments of current FPH members and alumni over the past year. Finally, an enormous thanks to Gerald Roman Nowak III and Karessa Weir for producing this newsletter. They put this publication together in the midst of all their other important activities during the summer and we are all deeply grateful for their time and effort. Please enjoy the newsletter and share it widely within your professional networks!

Hui (Cathy) Liu

FPH Director and Professor of Sociology

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Gerald Nowak III named FPH Lab Coordinator for 2021-2022

We are pleased to announce that Gerald R. Nowak III will be assuming the role

of FPH Lab Coordinator. In addition to being responsible for scheduling monthly workshops and organizing lab activities, he will work with Dr. Liu and other FPH members in conducting research. Prior to beginning of his doctoral studies at Michigan State, Mr. Nowak earned his Master of Arts in sociology at Wayne State University in the Spring of 2019. In his time with the lab, Mr. Nowak aspires to gain the knowledge and skills that are required to compete for a tenure-system faculty position at an R1 doctoral university. He is most interested in the study of demographic disparities relating to mental illness and loneliness. In fact, for his forthcoming dissertation, Mr. Nowak plans to evaluate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental and emotional wellbeing of aging populations.

Yan Zhang named Post- Doctoral Research Associate at University of Wisconsin (Madison)

The Family and Population Health Laboratory is proud to announce that Yan Zhang, our former graduate student coordinator, has been hired by the University of Wisconsin – Madison. She will continue her career as a postdoctoral research associate at the Center for Demography of Health and Aging. Having served as Dr. Liu's research assistant from 2018 through May of 2021, Yan Zhang acknowledges the impact of the FPH lab on her career. When asked about what distinguished FPH from other organizations, she said, "The lab is a space where students and faculty interact with one another as colleagues. Because of this dynamic, I have the confidence to engage senior-level faculty in other settings, such as conferences and at my new place of employment."



The FPH Lab is Accepting New Students

The Family and Population Health Laboratory is a space wherein students and faculty work in partnership in the analysis of population-level data. While some of the core themes of our research are sociological in nature, we are an interdisciplinary organization. The FPH lab is currently admitting students and faculty who are interested in exploring such social phenomena as mental, physical and cognitive health, family, gender and sexuality, social networks, health disparities, and aging and the life course. If you are interested in any topics related to the above areas and would enjoy collaborating with like-minded scholars, we invite you to reach out to us. For more information on joining FPH, please contact lab director Dr. Hui Liu at liuhu@msu.edu.

Visit our website at
[https://sociology.msu.edu/
research/liu-research.html](https://sociology.msu.edu/research/liu-research.html)

Seventeen Unprecedented Months:

An in-depth interview with Dr. Ning Hsieh and Dr. Bill Chopik



Dr. Ning Hsieh joined MSU Sociology in 2016. Their research and teaching focuses on health, sexuality, aging, and social relationships. They enjoy reading novels, listening to podcasts, and traveling to see friends and family while not working.

Dr. Bill Chopik is an associate professor in the Department of Psychology at Michigan State University. He studies how close relationships—and the people in them—change over time and across situations. Dr. Chopik’s work examines phenomena as broad as how relationships and social institutions shape development and as focused as the mechanisms that underlie the link between close relationships and health.



It has been nearly a year and a half since students, faculty, and staff alike were asked to perform their work from home. How has the switch to remote work shaped your approach to research, teaching, and/or service?

NH: I have tried my best to adapt everything to the virtual format—doing interviews online, teaching statistics online, and attending all meetings online, etcetera. I know that something is missing in the virtual space, but I appreciate that our work can still be carried on remotely.

BC: Having everything virtual cuts down on some of these spontaneous moments, but we’re trying to recapture them! For teaching, I had to change up my style. When you’re in person, you often have a captive audience. But online, people are often combating more distractions or fatigue from sitting at their computer all day. So, I’ve tried to give students extra resources and guidance to help them along through this period. I’ve also upped the number of “dad jokes,” which...I’m not sure is helping the situation.

The work-life balance has often been a topic of discussion among those affiliated with the academy. How has working remotely impacted your ability to maintain distinct boundaries between your personal and professional life?

NH: It was already challenging to maintain personal-professional boundaries before the pandemic. It has become even more difficult since last year. In the past year, I did almost everything from home, such as work, exercise, leisure, and virtual social events. At some point I had to make myself work only at my desk to rebuild some boundaries. Before the pandemic, on days when I worked from home, I can work on the sofa, at the dining table, and even in my bed. But I had to change that habit during the pandemic, so I stopped feeling like working 24 hours a day and never shutting down.

BC: Many people lament that, now that we work from home, there’s more of a blur between boundaries. This is especially the case among people who have childcare responsibilities or other challenges; the pandemic hit people a lot differently and I’m privileged that it wasn’t as disruptive as it could’ve been. I used to work a bit past 5pm when I was in the office, but now I drop what I’m doing when 5pm hits and I go out for a long walk before dinner! The long walks have been great for my psyche! My consumption of Sour Patch Kids increased tenfold though; I should probably cut back.

The academic job market has become very competitive in the last few decades and there is a possibility that the pandemic will exacerbate this trend. What advice would you give to a graduate student who wishes to pursue a career as a tenure-system faculty member?

NH: I think staying in academia and becoming a tenure-system professor is a good path, but there are also many other good ways to fulfil your research and/or teaching goals. I encourage grad students to be open-minded in when looking for a job. There are many great positions in governments, research institutes, non-profit organizations, and corporations where you can use the skills gained from grad school. Finding a job that allows you to balance your professional goals with personal needs – such as location, relationship, and money – is more important and will make you happier in the long run. The reality of the brutal academic market encourages grad students and faculty alike to be more creative in our career pursuit.

BC: Well—I don’t think everyone needs to become a faculty member! But I’ll try to give some advice: I think both specializing in and getting broad exposure to different methodological and statistical techniques will likely set you up for success in most post-PhD careers you can choose. There are so many things to do when you start a job, like setting up space, new teaching preps, finding Sour Patch Kids, collecting data, meeting new people, eating Sour Patch Kids, being a good citizen, and telling people about Sour Patch Kids all the time. But having a few things that are ready-to-be-worked-on is a major boon! While you’re setting up the infrastructure of your early years, you’ll still have things you can publish on, so there won’t be any dramatic gaps in your CV.

As pertaining to your research agenda, has Covid-19 caused you to consider new investigative directions? Do you hope to study matters specifically related to the pandemic?

NH: I have started doing research on a few pandemic-related issues. stef shuster and I have been collecting semi-structured interview data to study health and social experiences of LGBTQ people in the pandemic. We want to learn about what unique challenges are facing this community during the public health crisis. I have also started a new paper on vaccination inequity this summer.

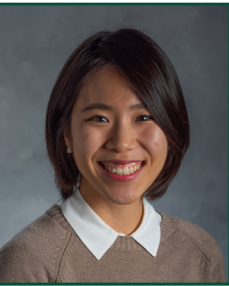
BC: My lab has historically studied a lot of different things, including how relationships change over time and how they are good for your happiness and health. The pandemic created a lot of interesting questions, including how our social ties changed. In addition to studying how the ties of older adults have changed, we’re also examining how people have started new romantic relationships even during times of quarantining and social distancing. We’re also interested in examining group disparities in relationships, mental health, and how well students transitioned to online teaching environments.

This fall, there will be a resumption of many on-campus activities. What aspect of in-person work are you most excited about?

NH: If we can get back to the in-person mode this fall, I’m most excited about reducing Zoom meeting time and talking to people face-to-face. I also look forward to traveling to conferences and catching up with folks from different places. But maybe I will miss working in my sweatpants all the time too.

BC: I think I’m most excited about seeing people in person! I miss the days when fun random/coincidental interactions would be really fun, intellectually engaging, and even lead to new collaborative research. That and not having a bottomless stash of Sour Patch Kids within arm’s reach, like it currently is.

Grad Assistant Spotlight: A sit-down with Zoey Lai and Jeewon Oh



Zoey Lai is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Sociology. She is broadly interested in chronic stress, minority status, and aging and health disparity. Her recent research examines how chronic stress and social relationships shape mental and cognitive health disparities among older minority populations.

Jeewon Oh is a fifth-year graduate student in the social/personality psychology program at MSU. She is broadly interested in positivity in close relationships and singlehood, specifically examining predictors of relational and individual well-being.

How long have you been affiliated with the lab?

ZL: I joined the lab and the research group in the Fall of 2018. By that time, I was still navigating my research topics since I just shifted from another field to aging and health research. Joining FPH was one of the best decisions that I had made in graduate school.

JO: My involvement with the lab started about two years ago. I attended a research talk that focused on the cognitive health of older adults. It just so happened that my academic advisor (Bill Chopik) was in attendance as well – it was he who introduced me to Cathy. My involvement with the lab has continued since that day.

What skills have you developed in your time with the lab? How will these skills help you once you earn your PhD?

ZL: This lab is founded by demographers and sociologists who specialize in quantitative methods and population health. Therefore, I have broadened my skills from hands-on experience working with lab members, especially in advanced quantitative methods, coding, modeling, data management, and analysis of population-level data. In addition, publication and collaboration play significant parts in Ph.D. training; however, not every graduate student has the opportunity to work with faculty as co-authors. So, it is important to note that all FPH faculties are generous and candid in lending their experience in research and publication to graduate students. I am glad that I have honed my academic writing and publishing skills through the authorship opportunities with lab members instead of fumbling along.

JO: In my time with the lab, I have developed my presentation skills in terms of the ability to communicate my research findings to a non-psychology audience. Hearing research presented by scholars from other disciplines really helped me broaden my perspective. I’ve also learned a bit more about different data analysis techniques. After I’ve completed my PhD, I’m planning to pursue positions in academia such as post-docs.

What are your research interests? How has the lab helped you develop your own unique agenda?

ZL: I am interested in the underlying drivers of racial and ethnic disparities in mental health and cognitive health in late life. My research addresses how the unequal distribution of social supports such as financial stress, minority stress and relationship strain bear an influence on health outcomes. More importantly, I examine how these various types of support shape mental health and cognitive health disparities along racial and ethnic lines. I have benefitted from the supportive and collaborative tone that Dr. Liu and the faculty members have set at the group meetings. For example, feedback from several lab faculty members was very helpful when I was navigating my dissertation project, developing my research questions, and crafting my research papers. Because of this mentorship, I now feel more capable of pursuing my self-defined professional and academic goals.

JO: I’m broadly interested in health and well-being in the context of close relationships and singlehood. When I say this, I’m not only referring to psychological well-being but also physical and cognitive well-being. My research spans across romantic relationships as well as elderly relationships and friendships. These topics are a good fit in this lab – there are individuals here who study topics such as marital status and other romantic relationships. I think that my agenda really fits in with the health focus of the group.

Describe the role of the lab in your life during the pandemic. Did you find the virtual meetings to be valuable?

ZL: In the wake of the May 2020 shutdown, many of us felt adrift by the changing administrative decisions regarding the pandemic. I appreciated it that our lab maintained monthly meetings and continued to support one another. During the hardest days of the pandemic, I saw this research group as a dedicated space where we could ask questions, exchange ideas, share vulnerabilities, and work productively to achieve our research goals in the wake of pressure and uncertainty.

JO: It was nice to know that there were people that I could contact when I needed help. Yan Zhang and I kept in touch. Since Yan has just recently been on the job market, she has been sending me information and materials that relate to this new phase of her career – as well as answering questions.

FPH ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2020-2021

Molly Copeland received the Provost's Office Award for the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity's Faculty Success Program.

Hui Liu was awarded the GenCen 2021 Inspiration Award.

Bill Chopik was awarded the Early Career Award (Association for Research in Personality), the Margaret M. and Paul B. Baltes Award in Behavioral and Social Gerontology, and the GSA Age Alive Research in Aging Award (Michigan State University).

FPH MEMBER 2020-2021 PUBLICATIONS

Broman, C. L., M.K. Wright, S. H. Choi and Y. Wang. 2020. "Heavy drug use in young adulthood", *Journal of Substance Use*, 25: 626-631.

Wright, M. K. and Broman, C. L. 2020. "Moving beyond race, gender, and education: Exploring the relationship between disability, depressive symptoms and long-term financial outcomes". *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 47:2, Article 7.

Broman, C. L., M. K. Wright, M. J. Broman and S. Bista. 2020. "Self-medication and substance use: A test of the hypothesis". *Journal of Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse*, 28:6, 494-504.

Broman, C. L. 2020. "Religiousness, familial and sexual behavior among African American adults". *Journal of Black Sexuality*, 7:1, 35-46.

Lucas, R. E., & Chopik, W. J. (in press). Testing the buffering effect of social relationships in a prospective study of disability onset. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

Purol, M. F., Keller, V. N., Oh, J., Chopik, W. J., & Lucas, R. E. (in press). Loved and lost or never loved at all? Lifelong marital histories and their links with subjective well-being. *Journal of Positive Psychology*.

Chopik, W. J., & Johnson, D. J. (2021). Modeling dating decisions in a mock swiping paradigm: An examination of participant and target characteristics. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 92, 104076.

Lu, P., Oh, J., Leahy, K. E., & Chopik, W. J. (2021). Friendship importance around the world: Links to cultural factors, health, and well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 570839.

Leahy, K. E., & Chopik, W. J. (2020). The effect of social network size and

composition on the link between discrimination and health among sexual minorities. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 32, 1214-1221.

Oh, J., Chopik, W. J., & Kim, E. S. (2020). The association between actor/partner optimism and cognitive ability among older couples. *Journal of Personality*, 88, 822-832.

Copeland, Molly. 2021. "The Long Shadow of Peers: Adolescent Networks and Young Adult Mental Health." *Social Sciences*, 10(6), 231.

Kamis, Christina* and Molly Copeland. 2020. "The Long Arm of Social Integration: Gender, adolescent social networks, and adult depressive symptom trajectories." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 61(4): 437-452, Featured on WWJ 950 AM – Detroit NewsRadio.

Hsieh, Ning, and Inna Mirzoyan. 2021. "Disparities in experience with culturally competent care and satisfaction with care by sexual orientation" *LGBT Health* 8(3):222-230.

Hsieh, Ning, and Zhenmei Zhang. 2021. "Childlessness and social support in old age in China" *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 36:121-137.

Hsieh, Ning, Hui Liu, and Wen-Hua Lai. 2021. "Elevated risk of cognitive impairment among older sexual minorities: Do health conditions, health behaviors, and social connections matter?" *The Gerontologist* 61(3):352-362.

Hsieh, Ning, and Jaclyn Wong. 2020. "Social networks in later life: Similarities and differences between sexual-minority and heterosexual older adults" *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*.

Liu, Hui and Rin Reczek. 2021. "Birth Cohort Trends in Health Disparities by Sexual Orientation." *Demography*, 58 (4): 1445-1472.

Liu, Hui, Ning Hsieh, Zhenmei Zhang, Yan Zhang and Kenneth Langa. 2021. "Same-Sex Couples and Cognitive Impairment: Evidence from the Health and Retirement Study." *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 76(7), 1388-1399.

Liu, Hui, Zhenmei Zhang, Seung-won Choi and Kenneth Langa. 2020. "Marital Status and Dementia: Evidence from the Health and Retirement Study." *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* 75(8): 1783-1795.

Zhang, Zhenmei., Hui Liu, & Seung-won Choi. 2021. "Marital Loss and Risk of Dementia: Do Race and Gender Matter?" *Social Science & Medicine*, 275, 113808.

Zhang, Zhenmei, Xu, Hongwei, Lydia W. Li, Jinyu Liu, and Seung-won Choi. 2020. "Social Relationships in Early-Life and Episodic Memory in Mid- and Late

Life." *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*.

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* Volume, 244, 112575.

ALUMNI UPDATES

Seung-won Emily Choi (Assistant Professor of Sociology, Texas Tech University) who graduated with a PhD from Michigan State's sociology program in 2019, has published an astounding six peer-reviewed articles this year. Said Choi of this accomplishment, "I have published my dissertation chapters and worked on dementia and COVID-19 related topics lately. I have greatly benefited from our lab's rigorous training and collaborations. [The lab's] support to students also inspired me a lot to be a better researcher and teacher. So proud to be an alumna of the FPH lab!"

Shannon Shen (Assistant Professor of Sociology, Texas A&M University-San Antonio) received a \$77,000 grant from the Meadows Foundation to support her work on the Student Health and Success Initiative (SHASI). SHASI collects data to examine interactions among social, behavioral, cognitive, and biophysical factors and academic success in first-time freshmen college students, particularly Mexican American students. SHASI is housed at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, but includes researchers at Texas A&M University – Kingsville and the University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley in the fields of kinesiology, sociology, psychology, and education. Dr. Shen was also invited to be a Fellow with the National Social Life and Aging Project (NSHAP) Fellows Program for 2021-2023. The NSHAP Fellows Program is a two-year fellowship for scholars currently producing high quality publications utilizing the NSHAP dataset. This fellowship recognizes outstanding scholarship using NSHAP data and potential for collaboration with NSHAP Investigators, NORC researchers, and Graduate Research Assistants.