Dear SBS community:

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our incoming MPH-45, MPH-65, SM1 and PhD-PHS students. Welcome back to our returning students. I hope you all enjoyed time off to travel, relax, eat good food, and catch up on your reading. I just finished reading “Brazillionaires: Wealth, Power, Decadence and Hope in an American Country” by the economic journalist Alex Cuadros. It’s a timely expose of the nexus of income inequality, politics and corruption in the country that just happens to be hosting the Summer Olympics right now.

On October 18-19 (Tuesday/Wednesday), our Department will be hosting the Second Forum on Population Health Equity at the Martin Conference Center, supported by the Aetna Foundation. This year we have an exciting line up of speakers including Kathryn Edin, author of “$2/day: Living on Almost Nothing in America”, who was recently quoted in the New York Times in the article, The Millions of Americans Trump and Clinton Barely Mention: The Poor. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/12/us/politics/trump-clinton-poverty.html.

Space is limited at the conference center, so hurry to register at: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/social-and-behavioral-sciences/inaugural-forum-on-population-health-equity-3/

I am looking forward to meeting you all at the SBS Student-Faculty Meet and Greet on September 8, 12:30-1:30 in Kresge 110.

Best wishes,
Ichiro
Congratulations on your recent promotion to Associate Professor. Would you share with me some background on how you first became interested in academic public health?

I always knew I would become a professor—it is the family business! Nigerians, especially my tribe, the Igbo, have high regard for professors, and many family members are professors. After immigrating to the US in 1993, I learned quickly that a successful academic career required not just intelligence but adequate funding, so I pursued an undergraduate degree in nursing because of the high hourly wage and flexible schedule. Nursing is a common occupational entry point for African immigrants in the DC/Maryland area where I grew up.

As my own career trajectory was shaped by occupational segregation, noting these forces and their effects has become a theme in my research. I became interested in the health effects of work environments on workers, documenting the social determinants driving people’s positions in their work environments, and how they got there. My first exposure to public health was occupational and environmental health courses at Johns Hopkins. I loved the focus on creating social change. So instead of my original plan to pursue a PhD in nursing at Johns Hopkins after my MSN/MPH degree, I became an instructor and project coordinator at the University of Maryland’s Center for Environmental and Occupational Health Justice. Working alongside nurses with doctoral degrees in public health inspired me to follow the same path. While I taught and supported the research program at the Center, the part I enjoyed most was working in state legislatures, where we recruited and coached low-wage workers to testify at legislative hearings.

I would love to hear about the path that led you from being a doctoral student to faculty at Harvard.

Pursuit of knowledge has always been an important family value, but there was an esoteric bent to it that did not sit well with me. I was initially dismissive of Social Epidemiology because it seemed to exemplify knowledge for knowledge’s sake, lacking the applied focus that engenders real social change. I reconsidered this appraisal after my continuing part-time HIV/AIDS nursing work prompted me to read a book chapter by Nancy Krieger in an edited volume by Paul Farmer. That chapter captured the themes I loved in occupational and environmental health: social science and activism coming together to promote positive social change. I also had great mentors from within and outside academia who provided guidance every step along the way. When I got to Harvard, I knew I wanted to go beyond Social Epidemiology, so I took classes in all departments with the intention of creating a new field—one that combines understanding of social inequities, awareness of historical disenfranchisement, and building individuals’ capacity to enact changes to foster better health. I also spoke to many professors around Harvard, some of whom became mentors, to learn not just about their scholarship but also about their paths to academia.

Completing the very competitive Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health and Society Scholars postdoctoral program at UCSF and UC...
Berkeley expanded my training beyond Social Epidemiology. The people at UC Berkeley were basically similar to people at Harvard in how they received my work—they applauded my presentations. But UCSF was different. It took time to earn applause at UCSF, especially from physicians, who were hesitant to accept my theories about social determinants of health. Although initially frustrated by their criticism, I learned more about pathophysiology in the process of justifying my theories, and honed my own scholarship. I was recruited to Harvard from the RWJ program, and was attracted by the opportunities to work with leaders in the field in social epidemiology who study workers.

**What projects are you currently leading to create change in how work and home environments interact to shape health?**

Through the Work, Family and Health Study, which has a base at Harvard, I have conducted research highlighting the interconnectedness of the health of nursing home workers, their partners, children, and bosses, including how differences in their opportunities for health are tied to population patterning of health disparities. My work in nursing homes as a clinician and as an academic have opened my eyes to important issues of health equity: nursing home patients are often our most vulnerable elderly, while a majority of their workers are low-income single women, also vulnerable, often raising children at risk of obesity and other deleterious health outcomes.

My research empirically highlights this interconnectedness at all levels. I just submitted a grant proposal to investigate wage pass-through policies, which have been enacted, repealed, and sometimes readopted by 26 states (not MA, unfortunately). These policies provide nursing homes with extra reimbursements that must be used for workers’ wages. Evaluations indicate they improve staffing levels, wages, and quality of care. I want to find out if they impact the health of nursing home workers.

I am currently investigating differences in the occupational consequences of marijuana use using national data, given current liberalization of marijuana laws. If we find that minorities and low-income workers are suffering greater or different consequences for their marijuana use, then states should develop laws that protect workers from such discrimination.

**How does health behavior change theory guide your work in occupational health?**

Using theory to ground my work and teaching a class on theory in public health helps me to stay humble and open-minded to ideas from all disciplines. As a student, I felt that many health behavior theories focused too much on the individual, without acknowledging how difficult our particular environments and circumstances make it to create behavior change in everyday life. Now being the teacher, I see my students struggle with the same criticisms. My experiences at UCSF taught me the value of not simply becoming an acolyte of your field’s main theories, but rather, to expand your repertoire and to be thoughtful and curious in giving and taking critiques.

It sounds like theory is an important topic for students to grapple with. **Would you tell me more about your new theory course to be offered in Fall 1?**

As you might expect, we will cover the major theories and explore the foundational principles of intervention design. But since this course is more applied, for most of the term, we will focus on using public health theories to design community health programs. We will be using the theories to solve real public health problems working with local community groups. Students will get the opportunity to try to design an intervention and to see how difficult it is to make changes in a real-world context where one must deal with time, economic and other constraints.

**Which students is this new version of your course geared toward?**

The course is required for SBS doctoral students, but we also want Masters students to join the class. Having masters’ students bring in their rich work and life experiences improves the class discussions. Also, their perspectives often differ from those of doctoral students focused on social epidemiology, further enriching discussions.

Interview by Christiana von Hippel, SD ‘19
Conference Travel Awards

The SBS Department encourages our students to present their research at professional meetings and conferences. In order to support this initiative, we have instituted student travel awards specifically to help offset the costs of travel to these conferences. Last year SBS students received funding to present at the following conferences: North American Forum on Family Planning, International Conference on Family Planning, American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Obesity Society Annual Meeting, International Cancer Education Conference, Population Association of America Annual Meeting, International Conference on Urban Health and American Psychosomatic Society Annual Meeting.

If you are interested in presenting this year, please review the application requirements on our website: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/social-and-behavioral-sciences/conference-travel-awards/ and contact Elizabeth Solomon with any questions: esolomon@hsph.harvard.edu.

Staff Appreciation Day

As a thank you for all their hard work and effort throughout the year, SBS staff were treated to a Boston Duck Tour and lunch at California Pizza Kitchen. A good time was had by all! Shout-out to Tara Kelly and Robyn Keske for organizing a successful event!
Tips for Incoming Students

Here are some helpful tips for new PHS-PhD, MPH-45, MPH-65 and SM1 students in SBS:

- Weekly digests containing jobs, seminars and events are emailed to all SBS students every Thursday during the academic year.
- The plasma screens on the 6th and 7th floors highlight SBS news and events.
- The 6th and 7th floor study rooms (611 and 723) are available to all SBS students.
- Sebastian’s café offers 20% off to students purchasing meals with Crimson Cash.
- Students receive discounted or free admission to certain museums and athletic/sporting events with Harvard ID. Check the Outings & Innings website for details.
- The M2 shuttle provides free transport between Cambridge and Longwood campuses: http://www.masco.org/lma-shuttles/m2-cambridge-hms
- Countway Library provides classes in PubMed and EndNote: https://www.countway.harvard.edu/classes-events
- Your ideas and input are always welcome! Feel free to speak with Elizabeth Solomon or Alfredo Perez-Hidalgo and they’ll do their best to implement your suggestions.
- Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, familiarize yourself with the various degree program Curriculum Guides as well as the Registrar’s policies and deadlines!

Meet the Grants Team

If you are considering submitting a fellowship or grant application (or even a letter of intent) we are here to support your successful application! Please contact Armand Inezian at 617-432-3762 or ainezian@hsph.harvard.edu and he will triage your request to the appropriate grant manager and/or answer any questions about the process and policies. We look forward to working with you!

Robin Blum Flaig, Loretta Alamo, Phyllis Doheny, Armand Inezian, and Alberta Zoummar.
Arrivals

Please welcome Dr. Amy Cuddy, Associate Professor and Hellman Faculty Fellow at the Harvard Business School. Amy is spending her sabbatical year in our Department as a Visiting Associate Professor. Amy is a social psychologist whose work focuses on stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination; the relationship between personal power, psychological presence, and general well-being; and the effects of body posture and movement on feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and physiological variables. She is particularly interested in developing interventions to improve the health, economic security, and general well-being of chronically powerless populations: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/amy-cuddy/

Please welcome Bella Garrison, Academic Affairs Assistant for the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Bella comes to SBS from City Year Boston, where she served as a third grade Corps Member for the John F. Kennedy Elementary School in Jamaica Plain. She received her Bachelors of Arts from Willamette University in Oregon in 2015. Bella works in the SBS Department on Thursdays and Fridays. Please stop by and introduce yourself!

Staff & Faculty Milestones

Congratulations to the following SBS faculty and staff who recently reached a key milestone in their career at the Harvard Chan School.

Jarvis Chen 15 years
Robin Flaig 20 years
Rebecca Mozaffarian 10 years
Angie Cradock 15 years
Caroline Huntington 5 years
David Williams 10 years
Awards & Announcements

- **Katie Cueva, SD ‘19** was awarded a predoctoral slot on the Cancer Prevention Fellowship starting this September 2016. She was also selected to participate in the Collaborative Arctic Summer School in Epidemiology - a program for doctoral students in public health from the circumpolar north that was held in Alaska in June 2016.

- **Scott Delaney, SD ‘18** was awarded a Mind Brain Behavior Graduate Student Award for his project entitled “Early-life Social Determinants of Amygdala Connectivity in the Generation R Study: Lab Visit for Training in Neuroimaging Data Collection and Processing”. He was also appointed as a trainee to the Advanced Multimodal Neuroimaging Training Program, an NIH T90 training grant at the MGH Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging.

- **Hana Hayashi, SD ‘16** was appointed as a member for Fukuoka city’s health task force committee (the fifth largest city in Japan). She will be in charge of public health policy and program development for the city.

- **Kelsey Holt, SD ‘17** and her faculty mentor Dr. Ana Langer (GHP Department), were awarded a 2-year grant from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation to validate a new measure of the quality of contraception counseling perceived by women in Mexico. Kelsey developed this new quality monitoring tool as part of her dissertation work with a seed grant from the Packard Foundation in 2015.

- **Kelly Kohler**, postdoc on the Cancer Prevention Fellowship received a DFCI nodal award! She will be leading a new project in partnership with Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program to improve cervical cancer screening by offering women HPV self-tests.

- **Bekka Lee** received a two-year R21 entitled “Effective Training Models for Implementing Health-Promoting Practices Afterschool” from the National Cancer Institute. The study aims to establish the effectiveness and implementation of in person and online trainings for scaling up an evidence-based nutrition and physical activity intervention. Bekka will work on this project with the Prevention Research Center team, including Steve Gortmaker, Angie Cradock, Katie Giles, Jessica Barrett, Becky Mozaffarian, and James Daly.

Karen Emmons named Dean for Academic Affairs

We are thrilled to welcome back Karen Emmons as the new Dean for Academic Affairs at the Harvard T.H. Chan School. Dr. Emmons was a Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences and will once again have a primary faculty appointment in our Department.

Photo by Rick Sheiber
The SBS Student-Faculty Meet and Greet will take place on Thursday, September 8th, from 12:30-1:30pm in Kresge 110. An invitation was sent requesting RSVPs.

Mark Your Calendars for the SBS 550 Program Evaluation course Information Session! This course meets during Winter Session at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Please Join us on September 19th in FXB G13 from 12:30-1:30pm You must RSVP to Caroline Huntington by September 9th at chunting@hsph.harvard.edu * Lunch will be provided

2016 Forum on Population Health Equity will take place October 18-19, 2016, at the Joseph B. Martin Conference Center at Harvard Medical School, located at 77 Avenue Louis Pasteur, in the Longwood Medical Area. This year’s meeting also will feature Population Health Equity Nano Course Series, a series of six pre-conference training set for October 17, 2016. These courses will offer an intensive overview of specific population health equity topics, including: “Physical Activity and Health,” “Conceptualization, Measurement, and Population Health Strategies Addressing Racial/Ethnic Discrimination and Health,” and “Neighborhoods and Health.” The Forum will feature keynote talks by Drs. Jeffrey Brenner, Kathryn Edin, and Nancy Krieger, as well as panel discussions on “Social Network Interventions to Address Health Equity” and “Housing, Neighborhoods, and Social Mobility.” The Emerging Population Health Equity Researcher Poster Session, featuring posters by public health students nationwide, will be held on October 18. Register today! http://tinyurl.com/PopForumNanoReg

Questions, suggestions, ideas? Email us: sbs@hsph.harvard.edu

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