



SBS

Social and Behavioral Sciences
HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

newsletter

FALL 2, 2015

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear members of the SBS community,

I hope everyone has enjoyed a stimulating Fall1 semester. Now that the days are getting shorter, it's time to get out the light boxes (20 minutes first thing in the morning). Alan Geller reminds me to tell everyone "Do not use ultraviolet light, full-spectrum light, heat lamps, or tanning lamps for light therapy"! Also – get your seasonal 'flu shots now!

We have another exciting lineup of winter session offerings this year. Rima Rudd will be offering two Health Literacy courses, SBS 515 and 516. Marie McCormick and Mary Jean Brown will lead SBS 550, Program Evaluation (application to participate is now closed) and Nancy Krieger will once again teach WGH 250, Embodying Gender.

On Wednesday, January 27, 2016 we will host our Annual New Year's Celebration in the Kresge Cafeteria. Be on the lookout for a formal invitation.

Best wishes,

Ichiro



Members of our grants team enjoying a "sunny" moment during their workday

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Upcoming events

Mon 10/26, 12:30—How can digital technology influence physical activity and nutrition intake? FXB G13

Tues 10/27, 12:30—October Birthday Celebration
Landmark 403Q

Fri 10/30— Fall2 semester add/drop/change deadline

Mon, 11/16—Fri, 11/20 DLOV
Fri, 12/18—Fall semester ends

SAVE THE DATE:

Wed., 1/27/16, 4:00pm

SBS Annual New Year's Party, Kresge Cafeteria
Invitation will follow!

Research Spotlight



Eric S. Kim, postdoc

First off, how do you define purpose?

I think of purpose in life as a life aim that stimulates and organizes goals, motivates behaviors, and provides a sense of meaning. Self-report assessments have been created to measure purpose. Other cultures share this idea of purpose in life. For example, there is a term in Japan called “ikigai” which roughly translates into “the reason for which you wake up in the morning.”

How did you first become interested in purpose and its effect on physical and mental health?

My research was inspired by my grandparents who led an orphanage. They lived physically healthy lives that were imbued with a deep sense of purpose. After retirement, I witnessed a rapid decline in their health behaviors. There were likely a variety of factors that led to this decline, but I believe decreased purpose was a driving factor. As the population of older adults rapidly expands throughout the world (e.g., # of people aged 65+ in the U.S. is expected to double by 2050) the number of people that experience declining purpose will likely grow. People follow different trajectories of purpose, but large datasets show that, on average, it declines sharply after age 65.

Tell us more about purpose’s life-enhancing effects.

An accumulating body of research shows that purpose foreshadows enhanced health and health behaviors, even after accounting for risk factors and psychological dysfunction. For example, our research shows that purpose predicts a reduced risk of stroke and heart attack. We examined potential mechanisms and found that purpose predicts an increased likelihood of obtaining preventive health screenings (cholesterol tests, colonoscopies, mammograms, pap smears, and prostate exams) but fewer overall doctor visits and hospitalizations.

What can we learn from the “Blue Zones” of the world?

There are parts of the world, called “Blue Zones,” where people live longer and healthier lives. This is an aspirational project, but I think it would be fascinating to use natural language processing and machine learning to hone in on these zones and tap into social media data streaming from them to extract: patterns of thinking, features of social networks/neighborhoods, or other resources that people from these zones share—potential resources that may foster higher purpose and health.

What are your predictions in terms of how purpose interventions can lead to cost-effectiveness in health care?

A lot more research is needed, but if future research confirms and expands the purpose and health research, I believe that one promising and novel way of enhancing physical health and mental health – as well as reducing health care costs – is to create and test interventions that increase purpose. These tailored interventions might range from: structured activities with close friends or spouses, guided thinking or writing exercises, individual or group therapy, and online modules or phone apps. While some purpose interventions might be more time-intensive and costly, others will be relatively brief, inexpensive, and straightforward—therefore more widely accessible and easy to implement.

Student Spotlight



Anvita Kulkarni, SM '16

Congratulations on being selected as a 2015-16 Schweitzer Fellow! Can you tell us about the fellowship and the service project you chose?

I'm one of 16 graduate student Boston Chapter Fellows selected from health professional schools in the Greater Boston and Worcester Area. Fellows embark on their own direct service projects in partnership with a community based organization to address unmet health needs of an underserved population. As a cohort of Fellows, we also receive additional professional development and collaborative learning opportunities. I am working at YWCA Cambridge's Tanner Residence, which is a home for almost 100 adult women currently experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Over the next year, I will be facilitating a circuit of workshops and activities that bring consistent discussions and programming related to nutrition and physical activity; self-care; and resources around health and healthcare. I hope to enable a space where residents feel comfortable to share strategies and support each other, as well as recruit external community organizations to bring some of their resources on-site and sustainably partner with the YWCA Cambridge.

How did you come to select the YWCA Cambridge as your service site?

In the early stages of the application process last spring, all I knew was that I wanted to partner with an agency that worked with women. There are a

number of organizations in the area doing various types of gender related work, and I set up informational interviews with a few. I was especially inspired with the YWCA Cambridge's explicit mission statement ("Eliminating racism Empowering women") and appreciated the staff's enthusiasm in supporting my project and providing mentorship and so, ultimately felt that it would be the best fit.

What health topics do your workshops focus on?

We talk about what health in general means in the context of living at Tanner and frame workshop takeaways as accessible strategies or resources that residents can readily incorporate into their lives. For example, topics in nutrition, physical activity and self-care are respectively framed more as conversations on Splenda versus sugar, beginner's yoga and stretches for aches and pains, and regular arts and crafts nights. If possible, I also hope to have future discussions on managing chronic disease as well as additional relevant information on health insurance and employment.

What have you learned from working with the residents of the YWCA Cambridge?

I've learned stories about Cambridge and Boston from people who've spent their whole lives here. I've been humbled by people sharing stories and food with me, and modelling resilience in everyday ways. I've also learned more about injustices they have faced in various systems, including healthcare and housing, as well as the everyday prejudices experienced in public spaces. The weight of these conversations, and the detail and emotions they carry, is what makes them different (and often more impactful) than learning them in class.

How do you think this experience will help shape your future professional plans in public health?

So many ways! The Fellowship is structured such that we get to see so many angles and stages of a program: from the big picture planning of assessment, program design, implementation, evaluation, sustainability to smaller day-to-day tasks in marketing, recruiting participants and facilitators, data collection, and incorporating feedback from my team. Other Fellowship activities have taught me how to make elevator pitches and converse with donors. More broadly, I am reminded about the value of direct service and the ways in which these interactions impact my growth. I am also even more reflective of the credentials I carry and how to strike a balance in wielding my professional training and honouring the agency of those I wish to serve.

Student Government Rep: Nina Schrager



Hello SBS!

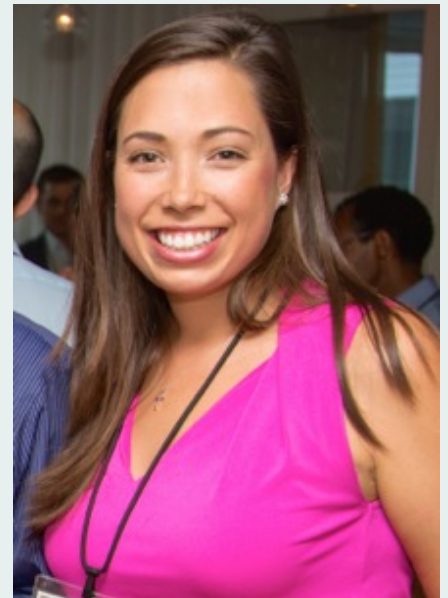
My name is Nina Schrager, and I am excited to represent you in Student Government this year! A little about me: I'm originally from Sudbury, MA, I went to NYU for undergrad and worked in NYC for several years after. I love Boston sports, cooking, DIY projects, and being outdoors (except last winter!). I'm a second year SM2 currently researching social determinants of adolescent health. feedback on your projects and ideas, more resources? Do you have concerns about classes, work-life balance, social integration? Do you have an awesome idea for a program or event?

I'll be soliciting your ideas and thoughts more concretely soon, but in the meantime, please drop me a line at nina.schrager@mail.harvard.edu, or come find me-- I'm on campus every day! I look forward to working with you to make this an excellent year!

Nina

Student Ambassador: Jean Marie Calvo

It is with great enthusiasm that I introduce myself as Social and Behavioral Sciences Department Student Ambassador. I am very excited to work with faculty, students, staff and all members of the SBS department. I am originally from California where I study dentistry at UCSF. As an MPH and SBS student ambassador I plan to work to engage members of our department and disseminate the work of our department to the T.H. Chan School of Public Health community. Over the coming year the SBS department and I hope to host a seminar series with topics relevant to current events. We also plan to host events to engage members of SBS to better get to know the faculty, post docs and staff within the department. The ideas for this coming year are all early in their planning and I encourage any and all of you to share your ideas to improve the department!



Jean Marie JMCalvo@mail.harvard.edu

Integration Committee



We are happy to announce the creation of the SBS Integration Committee, whose goal is to increase opportunities for SBS Faculty, Staff, Students and Researchers to come together in formal and informal activities such as: meetings of SM/MPH students ; tea & cookies hour; departmental seminars; volunteer activities; works in progress; and New Year's celebration, among others.

If you have any ideas/suggestions, please reach out to one of the committee members:

Cindy Lin; Erica Tukiainen; Amiya Bhatia; Claudia Trudel-Fitzgerald; Jean Marie Calvo; Nina Schragger; Robyn Keske; Alan Geller; Elizabeth Solomon and Alfredo Perez-Hidalgo.

We would love to hear from you!

Student Travel Award Recipients

Congratulations to the following SBS students who were awarded travel reimbursements for presenting their research at upcoming conferences!

Elizabeth Janiak, *New insights into determinants of physician provision of abortion care: Qualitative and quantitative approaches and Stigmatizing abortion language: how we recognize it, who we confront it, how we change it*, North American Forum on Family Planning, 2015

Jewel Gausman, *Clustered Risk: The complex Drivers of Adolescent Pregnancy in an Urban Slum in Monrovia, Liberia*, International Conference on Family Planning

Katie Cueva, *Traditional to Contemporary: Linking Storytelling and Technology as an Indigenous Approach to Community-Based Cancer Education in Alaska Native Communities; What is a culturally-respectful distance delivered health education with and for Alaska Native people?, and Alaska's Community Health Workers Speak Out About Digital Storytelling as a Community Engagement Tool*, APHA 2015

Lauren Graber, *Primary Prevention of Childhood Adversity and Mitigation of Toxic Stress in Early Childhood through Trauma-Informed Group Well Child Care*, APHA 2015

Jackie Soo, *Nutritional quality and child-oriented marketing of breakfast cereals in Guatemala*, The Obesity Society Annual Meeting

For more information please visit: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/social-and-behavioral-sciences/conference-travel-awards/>

Announcements

- Cassandra Okechukwu was recently honored for her research on work-family issues. She was awarded the 2015 James Zimmer New Investigator Award, Best Junior Scholar Paper at the VI International Conference of Work and Family and the 2015 Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award for Excellence in Work Family Research.
- Steven Hafner, a third-year doctoral candidate in SBS, was selected for the Research Assistantship Program at the National Institute of Justice, the research, development, and evaluation bureau of the US Department of Justice. Steven's position will focus primarily on violence against American Indian/Alaska Native women.
- Maureen Johnson, a communication specialist, will be joining us October 12th—November 20th from the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne Australia. She'll be working with Rima Rudd on mechanisms for identifying and eliminating literacy related barriers to care and services. Stop in to say hello – Maureen will be in office in Kresge 601.

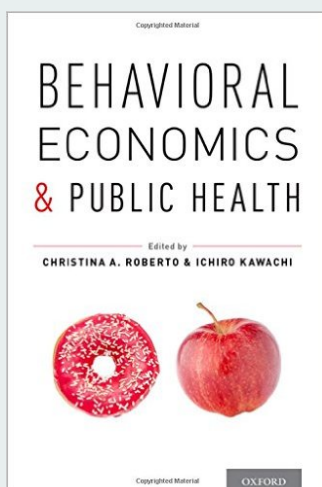


Yongjoo Kim, SD '18 and family welcomed their second baby, **Ethan Jeyoon Kim**, was born on July 24th, 2015.



Alan Geller and his wife Vivian Bendix, are delighted to report the birth of their second grandson, **Justin Walter**

Book Launch — Behavioral Economics and Public Health



Congratulations to Ichiro Kawachi and Christina Roberto on the launch of their new book, [Behavioral Economics and Public Health](#), published by Oxford University Press (October 1, 2015). It's the first of its kind to apply behavioral economics to today's persisting problems of health behavior and behavior change.

SBS at APHA 2015

- Katie Cueva will be presenting three abstracts at APHA. 1) Traditional to Contemporary: Linking Storytelling and Technology as an Indigenous Approach to Community-based Cancer Education in Alaska Native Communities; 2) Alaska's Community Health Workers Speak Out About Digital Storytelling as a Community Engagement Tool; 3) What is culturally-respectful distance-delivered health education with and for Alaska Native people?
- Nancy Krieger, Madina Agenor, SD '13, Zinzi Bailey, SD '14, Allegra Gordon, SD '15, Bekka Lee, SD '13 and Sereno Reisner, SD '13 will all be presenting as part of the **Spirit of 1848 sessions** on Monday, November 2, and Tuesday, November 3 at APHA. Read about their sessions and presentations here: <https://apha.confex.com/apha/143am/webprogram/SPT1848.html>
- Nancy Krieger, is co-moderating an IEA-APHA Epi Section joint session on Mon, November 2: **"Epidemiology Across the Americas: Connecting Latin American, Caribbean, and North American Epidemiologists -- A Panel Discussion"**; see: <https://apha.confex.com/apha/143am/webprogram/Session45235.html>
- Madina Agenor will be presenting Sex of sexual partners and human papillomavirus vaccination among adolescent and young adult women in the United States. More information is available here: <https://apha.confex.com/apha/143am/webprogram/Paper332575.html>.
- Lauren Graber (MPH candidate, Kraft Fellow in Community Health Leadership) is excited to be giving an oral presentation at APHA entitled: *Primary Prevention of Childhood Adversity and Mitigation of Toxic Stress in Early Childhood through Trauma-Informed Group Well Child Care*. More information available here: <https://apha.confex.com/apha/143am/webprogram/Session43377.html>
- Ruijia Chen received the "Advancing the Health and Health Equity of Older Americans of Color" award from the Asian & Pacific Islander Caucus for Public Health to attend APHA.

Dissertation Award in Eating Disorders Prevention

For the academic year 2015-16, the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders (STRIPED www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped) is offering the Doctoral/Postdoctoral Research Award in Eating Disorders Prevention Research. Two awards will be given to doctoral students or postdoctoral fellows at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. STRIPED's mission is to provide students with the mentorship, skills, and expertise required to take on the challenge of eating disorders prevention from a public health perspective. Doctoral students who have passed their oral exam and postdoctoral fellows whose research is focused on a topic related to eating disorders prevention are eligible to apply. Applications are due November 2, 2015, and can be found at: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/for-students/dissertation-award/>. For more information, contact STRIPED director S. Bryn Austin at: bryn.austin@childrens.harvard.edu.

Upcoming Events



The Health Communications Concentration hosts Dr May Lwin, Associate Professor in Strategic Communication at the Nanyang Technological University of Singapore and Fullbright Visiting Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Lwin will deliver a talk titled "How can digital technology influence physical activity and nutrition intake? Highlights and insights from Singapore" on **Monday, October 26, from 12:30—1:30pm** in FXB-G13.



Join us for our upcoming SBS October Birthday Celebration — **Tuesday, October 27, from 12:30—1:30 pm** at Landmark 403Q. Open to all the SBS students, postdocs, faculty, and staff.



We hope to see you at some dLOV events during the week of **November 16th**. RSVP here: tinyurl.com/dLOV-RSVP. You can submit creative pieces for the Discrimination Monologues Performance here (you can remain anonymous): Tinyurl.com/dLOVDM15. T-shirts: dLOV.eventbrite.com Facebook: Tinyurl.com/FBdLOV Website: www.dLOV-Harvard.com Co-sponsored by SBS.



SAVE THE DATE: SBS Annual New Year's Party, Wednesday, January 27, 2016, Kresge Cafeteria.
Invitation will follow.

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

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