



# SBS

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

## newsletter

SPRING 2, 2016

### LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear SBS community,  
It's spring! This blue-jay is stealing the suet we left out for the Eastern blue birds (different species). Notice – no snow in the yard!



To all our graduating students, I wish you brilliant success in your job searches. It's also the time of year for dissertation defenses. Please keep an eye on the announcement of these public events – everyone is welcome to attend them.

As part of the SBS Seminar series that Jean Marie Calvo (our Student Ambassador) has organized, we are thrilled to host **Dr. Phillipe Copeland PhD, LICSW** from the Boston University School of Social Work on March 30. His talk will be about mass incarceration and its impact on community mental health.

On April 19th **Eric Kim** (postdoctoral fellow in the department) will be the culminating speaker for the SBS Seminar Series and he will present on purpose in life and public health.

Best wishes,

Ichiro

PS: Carolyn Brooks & Scott Delaney – you may come to my room at any time to collect your winnings from the bet we made back in November ;-)

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### Upcoming events

- Tues, 3/22, 8:30am  
MCH/CYF Symposium  
FXB G11
- Tues 3/29, 12:30pm  
Birthday Celebration,  
Kresge 708
- Wed 3/30, 12:30pm  
Mass incarceration seminar  
FXB G13
- Thurs 3/31, 12:30pm  
SBS Lunch and Learn  
Kresge 708
- Tues 4/19, 12:30pm  
Purpose and public health seminar  
FXB G13

## Research Spotlight on the PRC

# After nearly a decade, Boston Public School's competitive beverage policy continues to sustain a healthier environment for students.

*[An evaluation by the HPRC](#) found nearly 90 percent of schools were compliant with competitive beverage guidelines nine years after the district-wide policy was implemented.*

In 2004, Boston Public Schools (BPS) was the first school district in Massachusetts to implement a mandatory nutrition standards policy for competitive foods and beverages—which include any snacks and drinks sold in schools that compete with those available through the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs. The policy prohibited the sale of all sugar-sweetened beverages like regular soda, fruit drinks, and sports or energy drinks, and set specific guidelines on the portion size of other beverages. A 2013 evaluation of beverage availability in 115 schools found that 103 of these schools—nearly 90 percent—met the standards. Further, 75 percent of these schools did not sell any competitive beverages, and the other 15 percent sold only competitive beverages that met the standards.



This study found that overall, 85 percent of our students attended schools meeting the robust nutrition standards for beverages implemented almost a decade ago,” said study author Jill Carter, Executive Director of the Health and Wellness Department for Boston Public Schools. “Even further, 96 percent of students did not have access to any sugar-sweetened beverages at school. It is encouraging to see that our efforts to maintain these strong standards have created a healthier school beverage environment.”

Across the U.S., the situation looks much different. Nationally, the majority of high school and middle school students—around 89 percent and 58 percent, respectively—have access to sugar-sweetened drinks at school. In elementary schools, 12 percent of students have access. These drinks are associated with significant negative health effects, including overweight and obesity as well as tooth decay.

Here in Boston, only four percent of BPS students had access to sugar-sweetened drinks, and most competitive beverages that did



not meet the BPS snack and beverage standards were 100% juices and low-fat flavored or unflavored milks. Although not permitted by the BPS standards, these drinks are permitted according to the federal Smart Snacks in Schools' nutrition guidelines. Research also suggests that milks and 100% juices are not associated with the same health risks attributed to sugar-sweetened beverages.

“Health and government organizations promote the implementation of strong nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold in schools as an important strategy to improve children’s health,” said lead author Rebecca Mozaffarian, an HPRC project manager at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. “Our study shows that strong nutrition standards that school districts can implement may indeed translate into healthier environments for our kids.”

The study points to multiple factors that contributed to the policy’s success, including coordination with ongoing professional education, community identified tools, as well as technical assistance and training. These findings and policy implementation strategies may be particularly encouraging to school districts nationally as they work to comply with Smart Snacks in Schools requirements.

-Brett Otis

*Mozaffarian RS, Gortmaker SL, Kenney EL, Carter JE, Westfall Howe MC, Reiner JF, Cradock AL. [Assessment of a Districtwide Policy on Availability of Competitive Beverages in Boston Public Schools, Massachusetts, 2013](#). *Prev Chronic Dis*, 2016;13:150483.*

Read the Boston Globe article: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2016/03/03/sugary-drinks-have-nearly-disappeared-from-boston-schools-study-finds/D9KM5qT1zGFAUSCEHPWCzN/story.html>

## Meet the SBS Grant Team



Pictured left to right: Phyllis Doheny, Loretta Alamo, Armand Inezian, Robin Blum Flaig, and Alberta Zoumar.

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 the team lead and Associated Director of Research Administration & Finance, Robin Blum Flaig ([rblum@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:rblum@hsph.harvard.edu), 617-432-0081; Kresge 701A) and she 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!

## Landmark Update



Fellows from Landmark participated in several activities over the last few months. We met on December 4th for another rewarding social-research activity with our faculty guest, **Dr. Ichiro Kawachi**, who provided insightful input and fostered great discussion for improving our work. In November we had a productive group work session (with popcorn!). This concluded a successful 2015 year filled with scientific and friendly activities. The new year started with a job talk practice in February. Another social-research activity will be held in April with **Dr. Nancy Krieger**.

**Ester Villalonga-Olives** and **Claudia Trudel-Fitzgerald** are grateful to everyone who contributes to a sense of belonging at Landmark, since its inception in October 2014!

## SBS Discussion Series

The first of three SBS department discussion series events was hosted on February 18, 2016. Over 30 students, faculty, staff and guests attended the discussion about the proposed federal **policy to ban smoking in public housing**. **Dr. Vaughan Rees PhD**, from the Center for Global Tobacco Control, moderated the discussion of panelists. Panelists included **Dr. Dan Wikler PhD**, a professor in Global Health and Population, **Dr. Inez Adams PhD**, research fellow in the SBS department, and **Vivian Lee**, **Lorelee Stewart**, and **John Kane** from the Boston Housing Authority. There was a lively discussion about the implications, alternatives and future of this policy among panelists and attendees.



See page 8 for the next two events planned in our discussion series!

# Student Practica Research Gathering

On February 24th, students, faculty and staff gathered for an informal research presentation organized by SBS Student Government Rep, Nina Schrager, MPH '16.

- Kristen Nishimi, MPH '16 presented *Developmental Timing of Trauma Exposure and Depressive and PTSD Symptoms in Adulthood*
- Jackie Jahn, MPH '16 presented *Product Reformulation After New Competitive Food Law in Massachusetts Schools*
- Cindy Lin, MPH '16 presented *Impact Evaluation of a Rural Community Development Model in Villapuram, Tamil Nadu, India*
- Leeann Siegel, MPH '16 presented *Evaluation of a Health Education Text Messaging Intervention for Homeless Individuals with Diabetes and/or Depression*
- Emily Lisker presented *Capacity and Gaps of Behavioral Health Services in San Francisco*



The gathering provided an informal setting for community-building as well as being informative and educational. For more information on public health practice resources please visit:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/public-health-practice-resources/>

## Tips for a Successful Job Search

For **students graduating this May**, the Career Advancement Office, located in the Kresge G4 suite, offers an array of resources related to your job search, including (but not limited) to the following:



- Tip Sheets on the job search overview
- Resume/CV and cover letter writing guides
- Acing the Interview Guide
- Recorded presentations on networking, salary negotiation and career advancement
- Career coaching appointments
- Drop-in hours for quick review of job application materials

Visit their website <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/career-services/> or contact [careers@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:careers@hsph.harvard.edu)

## Awards, Arrivals & Announcements

- **Madina Agénor** was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences on February 1, 2016. Previously, she was a postdoctoral research fellow in the joint Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Educational Program in Cancer Prevention. Dr. Agénor earned a Doctor of Science from our Department in 2013 and also holds a Master of Public Health in Sociomedical Sciences from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. In her scholarship, Dr. Agénor uses both quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate and address health inequities, especially social inequalities in sexual and reproductive health by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic position, and sexual orientation among women and girls. Welcome Dr. Agénor!
- On **April 26**, the Native American Student Organization will host representatives from the US Department of Justice, the Justice Center at the University of Alaska-Anchorage, and American Indian Development Associates to discuss current research on violence among American Indians and Alaska Natives. Contact SBS students **Kau'i Baumhofer**, **Katie Cueva**, or **Steven Hafner** for more information. This event is co-sponsored by SBS.
- **Monica L. Wang**, ScD, MS (SBS Instructor; Assistant Professor at Boston University School of Public Health, SBS ScD alum '12; MS alum '09) has been selected by the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) to receive the 2016 Early Career Investigator Award.
- On February 10, the following SBS staff and faculty were honored at the Annual Celebration with the Stars for reaching a key milestone based on benefits-eligible years of service: **Katie Giles**, 5 years, **Cassandra Okechukwu**, 5 years, **Whitney Waddell**, 5 years, **Rubim Rwakabuba**, 15 years, **Elizabeth Solomon**, 25 years, **Loretta Alamo**, 30 years. Thank you to all for your hard work and commitment over the years!
- Starting in Fall 2016, **Jess Marden** will be a postdoctoral fellow on the Psychiatric Genetics and Translational Research T32 in Harvard Chan's Epidemiology Department. She will be working with Dr. Karestan Koenen and other researchers at MGH and the Broad Institute on the interplay between social and genetic risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia research.
- **Jess Marden** was a finalist for the Tyroler Student Prize Paper Award, given by the 2016 Epidemiology Congress of the Americas, for her dissertation paper "Lifecourse Socioeconomic Status as a Predictor of Cognitive Function and Decline".
- **Morgan Shields**, SM '16 will be presenting "*The relationship of quality of inpatient psychiatric care and consumers' trust in the mental health care system*" at the 4th Annual MGH Public and Community Psychiatry Symposium.



**Lara Bishay**, SM1 '16 and her husband Rajan Sonik welcomed their first son on Leap Day! Valentino Rustin Bishay Sonik was born at 8:21pm at 3.05kg with 10 fingers and 10 toes. Everyone is doing well. Congratulations Lara and Rajon!

## SBS Annual New Year's Celebration



Staff members Whitney Waddell, Tara Kelly, Robin Blum Flaig and Loretta Alamo.



Bekka Lee and Cassandra Okechukwu.



Doctoral students Kafui Adjaye-Gbewonyo and Christine Simon.

Thank you to those of you who attended our Annual New Year's Party on Wednesday, January 27th. Over 100 students, postdocs, faculty and staff enjoyed delicious food, drinks and great company set to the backdrop of a live jazz band! Special thanks to Tara Kelly, Alfredo Perez-Hidalgo and Whitney Waddell for organizing!



Postdocs Yusuf Ransome and Adolfo Cuevas, with Ichiro Kawachi.



Postdocs Claudia Trudel-Fitzgerald, Emily Sparer and Kelly Kohler.



Rima Rudd, Eve Nagler and Cassandra Okechukwu.

*-Photos by Monika Szperka*

## Events

- The MCH/CYF Concentration and The EPI Department present a joint-Symposium—***Get It and Forget It Birth Control: Potential Impact, Barriers to Use, and Lessons from the Field about Long-Acting Reversible Contraception*** on **Tuesday March 22, 2016 8:30 – 10:30 AM in FXB G11**. **Featured speakers: Alyssa Bennett, MD** Clinical Fellow/ LEAH in Adolescent Medicine, Boston Children's Hospital; **Mark Edwards** Co-Founder, Upstream USA; **Jill Clark, MPH** Acting Director, Sexual and Reproductive Health Program, Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- SBS presents **Neurodevelopment of the Very Preterm Infant: A Longitudinal Perspective**, a talk by **Lianne J. Woodward, PhD**, Director of Research, Department of Pediatric Newborn Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, **Tuesday, March 29, 2016, 10:00—11:00am in Kresge 502**.
- **Birthday Celebration, Open to the entire SBS community. Tuesday, March 29, 12:30 –1:30pm in Kresge 708.**



- **Dr. Phillipe Copeland PhD, LICSW** from the Boston University School of Social Work will be hosting a presentation and discussion on **mass incarceration** and its impact on **community mental health** on **Wednesday, March 30, 2016, 12:30 - 1:20pm in FXB G13**.

- **SBS Lunch and Learn: 10 Ways to Communicate Better** featuring **Celeste Headlee**. View and discuss Celeste Headlee's TED talk on improving communication. Bring your lunch! Open to the entire SBS community. **Thursday, March 31, 2016, 12:30—1:30 in Kresge 708**.
- **Children and Adolescents' Human Rights Webinar** featuring **Jacqueline Bhabha, JD, MSc**, Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights, FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, **Wednesday, April 6, 2016, 12:30-1:20pm in FXB G12**.



- **Dr. Eric Kim, PhD** and SBS research fellow will present on a topic relevant to purpose in life and public health on **Wednesday, April 19, 2016, 12:30 - 1:20pm in FXB G13**.

**Questions, suggestions, ideas? Email us: [sbs@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:sbs@hsph.harvard.edu)**

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