NATIONAL ACADEMIES Sciences Engineering Medicine

DIVISION OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION
Committee on Population

Identifying Midlife Social Exposures that might Modify Risk for Cognitive Impairment Associated with Early Life Disadvantage: A Workshop

Speaker Biographies

DEBORAH CARR, Ph.D., is director of the Center of Innovation in Social Science and A&S Distinguished Professor of sociology. She is a life course sociologist who uses survey data and quantitative methods to study social factors linked with health and well-being in later life. She has written extensively on inequality in old age, death and dying, bereavement, family relationships over the life course, and the stigma associated with health conditions including obesity and disability. She has published more than 120 articles and chapters, and several books including Aging in America (University of California Press, 2023) and Worried Sick: How Stress Hurts Us and How to Bounce Back (Rutgers University Press, 2014), Her 2019 book Golden Years? Social Inequality in Later Life (Russell Sage) received the 2020 Richard Kalish Innovative Publication Award from the Gerontological Society of America. She is also co-editor of the Handbook of Aging & Social Sciences, 9th ed. (Elsevier, 2021). Her research has been funded by National Institutes of Health, RRF Foundation on Aging, Templeton Foundation, Borchard Foundation, and most recently Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. She was editor-in-chief of Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences (2015-20) and is principal investigator of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79). She currently serves as editor-in-chief of Journal of Health and Social Behavior (2023-25). Dr. Carr has served on the Board of Directors of the Population Association of America, and as chair of the sections on Aging & the Life Course and Medical Sociology of the American Sociological Association. She is a fellow of the Gerontological Society of America, a member of the honorary Sociological Research Association, and the recipient of the 2022 Matilda White Riley Distinguished Scholar Award and 2023 Outstanding Mentorship Award from the ASA Aging & Life Course section. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2024. Her research and op-eds have been featured in national media including The New York Times, USA Today, CNN, Los Angeles Times, The Conversation, PBS programs including Story in the Public Square and To the Contrary, podcasts including the New Books Network, and other sources.

JESSICA FINLAY, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado Boulder. She has an M.A. and Ph.D. in Geography and Gerontology from the University of Minnesota and completed a postdoctoral research fellowship at the University of Michigan. Dr. Finlay is a health geographer and environmental gerontologist who uses mixed methods to investigate how built, social, and natural environments affect health, wellbeing, and quality of life. In particular, she focuses on aging in place and cognitive health disparities among underrepresented and underserved older adults. Dr. Finlay also investigates impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on neighborhood environments and health among aging Americans.

MICHAEL ESPOSITO, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota who interrogates the (re-)production of racial disparities in U.S. population health through his research. His work investigates how broad, racialized social systems — and their constituent institutions — are configured in ways that layer privileges onto white populations and hazards onto BIPOC populations and how these privileges and penalties subsequently arrive on population welfare. This includes studies that examine how race-cognizant institutions (e.g., law enforcement agencies) contribute to health disparities; research that considers how racialized systems overlap with one another to gate access to generative health contexts; and projects which demonstrate how racism distorts social processes that are made to be

foundational to well-being in the U.S. (e.g., status attainment and health). Dr. Esposito makes use of contemporary statistical methods — e.g., Bayesian approaches and techniques for drawing causal(-ish!) inferences from observational data — in addressing these topics.

JASON FLETCHER, Ph.D., is a Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor of Public Affairs with appointments in Applied Economics and Population Health Sciences. A specialist in health economics, economics of education, and social genomics, Professor Fletcher focuses his research on examining social network effects on education and health outcomes, combining genetics and social science research and examining how in utero and early life conditions affect later life health, cognition, and mortality. He is an affiliate of the Institute for Research on Poverty, Holtz Center for Science & Technology Studies, Center for Demography and Ecology, and the Data Science Institute at UW and a Research Associate with the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) and Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA). He earned an Ph.D., M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in Applied Economics. He was a 2023 Guggenheim Fellow for his work on US mortality.

PAOLA GILSANZ, ScD, is a Research Scientist II at Kaiser Permanente Northern California Division of Research. Her work focuses on examining risk and protective factors of healthy brain aging across the lifecourse, especially as they related to disparities by sex, gender, race, and ethnicity. She co-leads the Kaiser Healthy Aging and Diverse Life Experience (KHANDLE) study, the Study of Healthy Aging in African American (STAR), and the LifeAfter90 (LA90) Study. Her work also examines modifiable risk and protective factors of dementia among individuals with type 1 or type 2 diabetes. Dr. Gilsanz received an M.P.H. in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from the University of California, Berkeley, and doctorate in Social Epidemiology from Harvard University.

ERIC GRODSKY, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology and Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin- Madison. He is a co-director for Educational Studies for Healthy Aging Research (EdSHARe) and MPI for High School & Beyond: 80 and the National Longitudinal Study of the Class of 1972. Grodsky also serves as co-director of the Madison Education Partnership, a research-practice partnership between the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and the Madison Metropolitan School District, and Deputy Director of the Interdisciplinary Training Program in Education Sciences. He has written extensively on inequality in education across the life course, from early childhood through college and graduate education and into midlife. His work has appeared in the American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Social Forces, and the Annual Review of Sociology among other venues.

PAMELA HERD, Ph.D., is the Carol Kakalec Kohn Professor of Social Policy in the Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her research focuses on inequality and how it intersects with health, aging, and policy. She is also an expert in survey research and biodemographic methods. She is currently one the Co-Principal Investigators for General Social Survey, an Investigator with the Wisconsin Longitudinal Survey, and Chair of the NIH Data Advisory Board for the National Study of Adolescent Health. She has received grant awards for her work from the National Institutes for Health, National Institutes on Aging, the National Science Foundation, and the Russell Sage Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and AARP. Herd also does research on administrative burden, or the bureaucratic obstacles that people encounter when trying to access government benefits, services, and rights. She is especially interested in how this burden both is shaped by and further reinforces inequality. She has a book published by the Russell Sage Foundation: Administrative Burden. Policymaking by other Means, which has received numerous awards.

ELIZABETH MUÑOZ, Ph.D., is assistant professor of Human Development and Family Sciences, and faculty affiliate of the Center on Aging population Sciences and the Population Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. Muñoz's research activities center on identifying early and modifiable predictors of adult cognitive health outcomes with a focus on addressing racial-ethnic inequities. Her three active lines of investigation include: 1) the links and mechanisms between psychological, social, and contextual stress on cognitive functioning across the lifespan; 2) examinations of salient sources of stress and their links with cognitive function among Latinx adults; 3) applying a within population lens to

evaluate associations between social and ethnicity-related sources of stress on cognitive function in Mexican-origin adults. She employs a variety of research designs to address her research questions, including longitudinal studies across years of assessments, ecological momentary assessments, and an integration of both (e.g., measurement-burst designs).

PRIYA PALTA, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Neurology in the Department of Neurology at University of North Carolina. She is formally trained as a chronic disease and aging epidemiologist with a multidisciplinary research portfolio in the epidemiology of cardiovascular disease and aging, specifically, cardiovascular risk factors and modifiers of cognitive decline and dementia. Her early work evaluated the relationship between cognition and diabetes among older adults. More recently, she has extended this to examine associations between lifecourse sociodemographic and cardiovascular health metrics and subclinical measures of cardiovascular disease with cognitive and physical function outcomes. Her current work focuses on the role of modifiable risk factors, such as physical activity, on cognition, physical function and quality of life metrics. She has extensive experience working with several population-based studies, including, the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, and Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos. She is currently funded through a K99/R00 Pathway to Independence Award from the National Institute on Aging which aims to quantify the role of regular physical activity in reducing age-related impairment in cognitive functioning and Alzheimer's disease risk. Dr. Palta received her Ph.D. and M.H.S. in epidemiology from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and completed an NHLBI T32 postdoctoral fellowship in cardiovascular disease epidemiology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

DRAVID REHKOPF, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of Primary Care and Population Health and in Health Research and Policy at Stanford University. He is a social epidemiologist who studies how federal, state and local policies exacerbate or diminish socioeconomic and racial/ethnic inequalities in health. In order to answer these questions, he examines the potential benefits of additional biological information (genotype, telomere length, DNA methylation) for understanding the links between changes in the environment and chronic disease. He received a Master's degree in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from University of California, Berkeley, and his Doctorate from the Harvard School of Public Health.

KATRINA M. WALSEMANN, Ph.D., is the Roger C. Lipitz Distinguished Chair in Health Policy and professor at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy and an MPI of the Network on Education, Biosocial Pathways, and Dementia across Diverse Populations (EdDem). She is a population aging and life course researcher whose work focuses on understanding how race and class disparities in educational quality, school segregation, and educational attainment influence physical, mental, and cognitive health. Her current research explores how state and local educational contexts during childhood relate to cognitive impairment and dementia risk later in life.

JENNIFER WEUVE, Ph.D., is a professor of epidemiology at the Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH). She is co-Director of the international initiative, MEthods in LOngitudinal research on DEMentia (MELODEM) and PI of the NIH-NIA grant that supports it. She is also PI or co-investigator of several NIH-funded projects that examine whether and how exposures to toxicants in the environment—e.g., air pollutants, noise, heavy metals—affect the aging brain and body. With engagement of multi-disciplinary teams, this research informs the use of environmental policy and other strategies outside of clinical medicine realm as a means for reducing dementia and disability risks in whole populations. This research also comprises a foundation for extending inquiries into the role of environmental injustice in generating dementia inequities. Dr. Weuve earned degrees in epidemiology at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health (M.P.H.) and the T.H. Chan Harvard School of Public Health (ScD), and held a post-doctoral fellowship in environmental health at the T.H. Chan Harvard School of Public Health. Prior to joining BUSPH, she was on the faculty of the Rush Institute for Healthy Aging in Chicago.

REBECA WONG'S, Ph.D., is a Professor of Preventive Medicine and Community Health at the University of Texas Health San Antonio. Dr. Wong's research agenda focuses on the social and economic consequences of population aging, particularly in Mexico and among immigrant Hispanics in the United States. Her population-based research has been continuously funded by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) for the last 30+ years. She serves as the principal investigator of the Mexican Health and Aging

Study (MHAS), currently funded by NIA and the Statistical Bureau (INEGI) in Mexico. The study follows a national sample of adults in urban and rural Mexico, focusing on Mexico's unique health dynamics in a broad socioeconomic context. The MHAS is a collaboration among institutions in Mexico and the United States and is highly comparable to the U.S. Health and Retirement Study. Dr. Wong has edited volumes, published in numerous professional journals, and regularly presents at national and international conferences. She has served on national and global committees, including as a member of the boards of the Population Association of America and the Mexican Society of Demography. She has contributed to the editorial boards of the publications Demography, Journal of Aging and Health, Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences, and Papeles de Población. She has served as member of scientific committees for the U.S. National Academy of Sciences including its committee on population, and as member of the Advisory Council of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. In 2024, she was elected as an honorary member of the National Academy of Medicine of Mexico. Dr. Wong, a Mexican-born scholar, received a bachelor's degree in actuarial science from the National University of Mexico (UNAM), followed by a master's degree in applied economics and a Ph.D. in Economics with a concentration in Population Economics from the University of Michigan

YANG CLAIRE YANG, Ph.D., is the Alan Shapiro Distinguished Professor at the Department of Sociology and the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, and Fellow of the Carolina Population Center and Carolina Center for Population Aging and Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is a biodemographer, medical sociologist, and social statistician interested in population health, aging and the life course, and quantitative methodology. She conducts transdisciplinary research that aims to explicate the life course process by which social stress contributes to aging related diseases and mortality, to uncover how it is that exposures and experiences "get under the skin" to manifest in health differences, and to understand and find solutions to problems arising from reciprocal interactions between individuals' social and physical worlds. She has extensive expertise on the social biology of aging and health and new statistical methodologies of cohort analysis for interdisciplinary population health sciences. She has led a number of NIA-funded projects that brought integrative biosocial theoretical perspectives to bear on the analysis of diverse forms of big health data (e.g., vital statistics, household surveys, clinical biomarkers, and administrative records) and revealed new knowledge about social disparities and underlying biological mechanisms in life course trajectories of chronic diseases of aging. Her current research focuses on innovative life course research designs and methodologies of complex coordinated analysis and integrative data analysis of multiple longitudinal cohort studies. She and her team recently employed novel integrative data and methods to model cognitive aging across the full life span, reveal early and midlife social disadvantages (socioeconomic and social relationship deficits) that are associated with cognitive declines with aging, and explicate the biological pathways (inflammation, cardiometabolic dysregulation, chronic infection) linking social disadvantages with cognitive impairment over the life course. (https://yangclaireyang.web.unc.edu/biography/)

ADINA ZEKI AL HAZZOURI, Ph.D., is the Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at Columbia University. She is a social epidemiologist, and her primary research focus pertains to how social and cardiovascular exposures from across the life-course influence cognitive function, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, stroke and other related health outcomes in old age. In Dr. Zeki Al Hazzouri's work on cognitive aging, she also focusses on minority populations. Her ultimate research goal is to employ life course models to better understand how modification of social and cardiovascular factors or their timing may reduce the burden of cognitive aging and dementia disparities. Dr. Zeki Al Hazzouri is currently leading two NIH-funded R01 projects that use causal inference methods to understand determinants of dementia and selection biases.