

Society for the Study of Social Problems Health, Health Policy, and Health Services Division Newsletter



Message from the Newsletter Editor

As we approach the 2026 SSSP Annual Meeting in New York City, we are filled with excitement about our Division's sponsored sessions! The topics span medical education, policy, practice, caregiving, disasters, gender, race, family, and more. We are also thrilled to announce our Division award winners and runners-up. Thank you to the award committee members, session organizers, and Division Co-Chairs for their service!

Looking forward to seeing you all in New York City,

Virginia Kuulei Berndt

In This Issue

Messages from the Editor & Co-Chairs	1-2
Division Sessions at the 2026 Annual Meeting	3-4
Division Awards	5-8
Members on the Job Market	9-11
Division Updates	12-13



**Join us for our
Virtual Annual Business Meeting**

**Thursday, July 30, 2026
12:00pm Eastern Time**

Link:

<https://miamioh.zoom.us/j/83841452443?pwd=0by2gGXrXIGMxire2Exq8aY4BfbAGJ.1>



Outgoing Co-Chair

Raja Staggers-Hakim, PhD, MPH, MSW
Assistant Professor of Sociology
University of Connecticut

It has been a privilege to serve as Co-Chair of the SSSP Health and Health Policy Division. I welcomed this opportunity to help elevate conversations on racial and ethnic health disparities, structural racism, and health equity while contributing to the Division's broad and interdisciplinary mission.

Serving this Division has reinforced the importance of bringing together scholars whose work spans disciplines, methodologies, and lived experiences to address the complex factors that shape health and well-being. I have been honored to work alongside colleagues whose scholarship, teaching, and advocacy continue to move our field forward.

Thank you to our members for your engagement, collaboration, and commitment to advancing health equity through research, policy, and practice. I am confident the Division will continue to thrive under new leadership, and I look forward to supporting its continued growth and impact in the years ahead.

I look forward to seeing many of you in New York this August.



Incoming Co-Chair

Carlos Chapman, PhD
Assistant Professor of Sociology
Grambling State University

I am honored to serve as the incoming Co-Chair of the Health, Health Policy, and Health Services Division. As a medical sociologist, public health practitioner, and Assistant Professor at Grambling State University, my work examines the social and structural determinants that shape health outcomes. My background includes leading community based research initiatives, shaping rural health strategies, and facilitating cross sector partnerships designed to promote equity and improve healthcare systems.

During my term, I look forward to supporting the division's efforts to enhance engagement with critical issues in health and health policy, elevate work that informs meaningful change, and foster a collaborative and inclusive environment for our members. I am committed to contributing to a division that not only advances rigorous inquiry but also centers the lived experiences of communities most affected by health inequities. I look forward to working alongside colleagues to build on the division's strong foundation and to help shape its continued growth and impact.

Health, Health Policy, and Health Services Division Sponsored Sessions for SSSP 2026

Session 013 (Roundtable 1): Problems and Issues in Medical Education, Policy, and the Health Professions in a Time of Social Backlash

- **Session Type:** Works in Progress
- **Roundtable Title:** Problems & Issues in Medical Education & Health Professions
- **Co-Sponsor:** Educational Problems
- **Organizer:** Christine A. Beach
- **Date and Time:** Friday, August 7 - 12:30-2:10pm
- **Location:** Ambassador III

Session 013 (Roundtable 2): Problems and Issues in Medical Education, Policy, and the Health Professions in a Time of Social Backlash

- **Session Type:** Works in Progress
- **Roundtable Title:** Policy in a Time of Social Backlash
- **Co-Sponsor:** Educational Problems
- **Organizer:** Jennifer Roebuck Bulanda
- **Date and Time:** Friday, August 7 - 12:30-2:10pm
- **Location:** Ambassador III

Session 020: Caregivers, Care Recipients, and Health

- **Session Type:** Regular Paper Session
- **Organizers:** William Cabin & Erica FS Jablonski
- **Co-Sponsor:** Sociology, Social Work, & Social Welfare
- **Date and Time:** Friday, August 7 - 2:30pm-4:10pm
- **Location:** Minskoff

Health, Health Policy, and Health Services Division Sponsored Sessions for SSSP 2026

Session 035: Disasters and Health

- **Session Type:** Regular Paper Session
- **Organizer:** Virginia Kuulei Berndt
- **Date and Time:** Saturday, August 8 - 8:30am-10:10am
- **Location:** Manhattan

Session 044: Medicalization and Surveillance of Gender and Sex

- **Session Type:** Critical Dialogue
- **Organizer:** Robert E. Bulanda
- **Co-Sponsor:** Gender, Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities
- **Date and Time:** Saturday, August 8 - 10:30am-12:10pm
- **Location:** Melville

Session 052: Intersecting Margins: Comparative Health of African Diasporas and Racial Minorities in the Americas

- **Session Type:** Critical Dialogue
- **Organizer:** Raja Staggers-Hakim
- **Date and Time:** Saturday, August 8 - 12:30-2:10pm
- **Location:** Melville

Session 082: How Institutional/Systemic Factors Impact Family, Health & Well-Being

- **Session Type:** Regular Paper Session (Thematic)
- **Co-Sponsor:** Institutional Ethnography
- **Organizer:** Hans-Peter de Ruiter
- **Date and Time:** Sunday, August 9 - 12:30-2:10pm
- **Location:** Broadway I

Congratulations



Outstanding Scholarship Award Winner
J. Michael Ryan, PhD
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú

Michael is currently a Professor-Researcher at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, although he has previously held academic positions at leading universities across five continents and has also worked in governmental positions.

During his time as an Associate Service Fellow at the National Center for Health Statistics in Washington, D.C during the Obama administration, Michael served on a number of executive-level, United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) interagency advisory committees focused specifically on addressing policy gaps related to minority health, including the HHS Office of the Secretary Transgender Issues Listening Panel and the Healthy People 2020 Federal Interagency Workgroup for LGBT Issues. He also led multiple cognitive interviewing studies aimed at improving question formulation on the National Health Interview Survey and the American Red Cross Blood Donor History Questionnaire.

In recent years, Michael has made significant contributions to understanding the social, cultural, and political dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic. He is the founding Series Editor of Routledge's The COVID-19 Pandemic Series, where he himself has eight volumes, including COVID-19: Social inequalities and human possibilities (co-authored with Serena Nanda). His pandemic related work reflects his larger focus at the intersection of health, policy, and cutting-edge issues (and doing so on a global scale).

Michael is also one of the co-editors of the recently released *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Health, Illness, Behavior, and Society*, 2nd edition (2025) (with William Cockerham, Stella Quah, and Jonathan Gabe), which is arguably the most comprehensive, interdisciplinary, health-focused major reference work available in the social sciences today.

Congratulations



Outstanding Scholarship Award Runner-Up
Mary Ellen Stitt, PhD
University at Albany

Mary Ellen Stitt's book *Trial by Treatment: Punishing Illness in an Age of Criminal Legal Reform* (University of Chicago Press, 2025) analyzes an important trend in health services and policy: the provision of mental healthcare via the criminal legal system. Drawing on ethnographic research, interviews, an experiment, an original national survey, and administrative data, the book shows that programs designed to divert people out of criminal court and into mental health treatment—widely celebrated as a key advance for public health—in fact widen the reach of the criminal legal system and lead to harsher punishments for the most vulnerable people.

Ultimately, the book calls for policy changes that shift responsibility for mental healthcare provision away from the legal system. Rather than expanding the court-mandated treatment programs that have encouraged legislators and courts to increase the criminalization of illness (as the book shows), we could invest in accessible healthcare, housing, and other key services outside of the legal system. Rather than relying on those programs, which Stitt finds systematically sort people along lines of inequality and often leave the least advantaged worse off than they began, we could reduce punishment by changing laws that criminalize things like drug use or being unhoused in the first place. Stitt's careful analysis lays bare the limits of what even the best-intentioned prosecutors, judges, diversion program staff, and individual providers can do when the criminal courts are asked to perform a task at odds with their fundamental mandate to sort and mark people for punishment.

Stitt is continuing to study the complex intersections between health, healthcare, and the criminal courts as part of a new project supported by the Russell Sage Foundation, Arnold Ventures, and the Racial Democracy Crime and Justice Network.

Congratulations**JOB
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PAGE 10!**

Graduate Student Paper Competition Award Winner
Ting-Hui Lin, PhD Candidate
University at Buffalo

Ting-Hui Lin's paper, "Social Vulnerability and COVID-19 Vaccination Rates: A Comparative Analysis Across U.S. States and Counties," examines how area-level social vulnerability shaped COVID-19 vaccination rates in the United States. The paper is part of her doctoral dissertation research, which examines how social vulnerability, political context, and public health infrastructure shape unequal access to health resources.

Although COVID-19 vaccination was a central public health intervention during the pandemic, vaccination rates varied substantially across communities. This paper moves beyond explanations focused on individual attitudes or vaccine hesitancy by examining how area-level social vulnerability was associated with vaccination rates. Drawing on Fundamental Cause Theory, it asks whether socially vulnerable areas experienced lower vaccination rates and whether different dimensions of vulnerability shaped vaccination outcomes in distinct ways. Using county- and state-level data and hierarchical linear modeling to account for counties nested within states, Ting-Hui analyzes the overall Social Vulnerability Index, its component dimensions, and area-level vaccination rates. The findings show that the aggregate negative association between social vulnerability and vaccination masks divergent underlying patterns: socioeconomic status and household characteristics functioned as important access barriers, while racial and minority status emerged as a positive predictor of vaccination rates after adjusting for urbanicity. This pattern may reflect targeted federal interventions and community-based mobilization in areas with larger racial/ethnic minority populations. Rural status remained a negative predictor, pointing to spatial disadvantages in vaccine distribution infrastructure. These findings extend Fundamental Cause Theory to the county level by showing that structural disadvantage need not be deterministic when policy design actively counteracts it. The paper highlights the importance of pairing decentralized vaccine distribution with community-based mobilization in future pandemic preparedness efforts.



Congratulations

Graduate Student Paper Competition Award Runner-Up
Kathleen Rita Jackling (D'Alfonso), PhD
University at Buffalo

Kathleen's paper "Health Insurance Patterns and the Transition to Adulthood in the United States" is based on her recently defended dissertation in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at the University at Buffalo (UB).

Young adults' experiences with navigating health insurance systems in the United States (US) are messy at this time in life. Yet not much research has contended with what that means for young adult coverage. Kathleen's dissertation, "Health Insurance Coverage Across the Transition to Adulthood," addresses this concern by describing patterns of health insurance coverage and analyzing how instability shapes long-term health outcomes. The paper highlighted in the upcoming newsletter draws from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) to document patterns of insurance coverage across the transition to adulthood and how race, gender, and educational attainment (both parental and individual) structure these patterns. Findings demonstrate that health insurance status is vulnerable to change in the transition to adulthood, even among the most advantaged individuals.

Kathleen is currently an adjunct lecturer across New York for SUNY Plattsburgh, Monroe Community College, and UB's Educational Opportunity Program and Department of Sociology and Criminology. These experiences will be one of 25 across the US highlighted in the upcoming *Thriving as an Adjunct: Keys to Success as Part-time Faculty* book coming out in 2027. Kathleen will be starting in a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor role at Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming this fall 2026.



On the Job Market

Christine A. Beach, PhD

NSF Fellow, University of Arizona

Website: [\[link\]](#) | E-mail: christinebeach@arizona.edu

Christine is a 2023 – 2026 NSF fellow at the University of Arizona, a medical and health simulation educator, and a board-certified clinical laboratory scientist with over two decades of clinical and allied health experience. They are a recent Fulbright U.S. Scholar alternate selectee for their research project on the cultural elements of simulation health programs in Alicante, Spain. Christine's dissertation, *Drawing with Light: An Exploration of International Medical Learner Experiences in U.S. Academic Medical Centers Through Informed Photography*, is a three-article exploration of a select group of future physicians, a comprehensive analysis with deep theoretical, methodological, and conceptual grounding. Christine's scholarship reflects the complex use of qualitative, multi, and mixed methods within medical and science education—often drawing from a framework of Foucauldian social theory and inhabited institutionalism—to center learners as agentic beings who make significant epistemic and cultural knowledge contributions from their positions both inside and outside of their institutions. In their fellowship work, Christine studies the interdisciplinary practices, epistemic beliefs, and the cultural differences between disciplines through a multiyear ethnographic study of graduate-level learners in Ecosystems Genomics and related subdisciplines.

Christine is interested in pursuing a research professorship or a combined research and teaching faculty position.



On the Job Market

Ting-Hui Lin, PhD Candidate
University at Buffalo

Website: [[link](#)] | E-Mail: tlin53@buffalo.edu

Ting-Hui Lin is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University at Buffalo. Her research examines how social and political contexts shape health inequality, with particular attention to how place-based disadvantage, institutional arrangements, and public policy structure unequal access to health resources. Bridging medical sociology, political sociology, and social inequality, she uses quantitative methods to study how macro-level conditions become embodied in population health outcomes.

Her dissertation investigates COVID-19 vaccination inequality in the United States. Drawing on the Fundamental Cause Theory and Social Determinants of Health framework, she examines how social vulnerability, political context, and public health infrastructure shaped vaccination rates across U.S. counties and states. Using county- and state-level data, hierarchical linear modeling, and spatial measures of vaccine access, her dissertation shows that vaccination inequality was not simply a matter of resource availability, but was shaped by whether local social and political conditions enabled communities to convert health resources into improved outcomes.

More broadly, Ting-Hui's work moves beyond individual-level explanations of health behavior by foregrounding the area-level social, political, and institutional conditions that shape health outcomes. Her research shows that structural disadvantage does not operate uniformly across places: political context shapes both the distribution of public health resources and the conditions under which those resources are converted into more equitable health outcomes. This work contributes to medical sociology, political sociology, and the sociology of inequality by examining how institutions and policies reproduce, reshape, or mitigate health disparities.



MEMBER
ON THE
JOB MARKET!

On the Job Market

Jamilah Watson, PhD Candidate

University of Delaware

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Jamilah A. Watson is a Sociology PhD candidate at the University of Delaware with research and teaching interests in medical sociology, health equity, gender, and the sociology of the family. Her dissertation research is a narrative-based study drawing from 40 narrative, semi-structured interviews with queer and straight Black women between the ages of 24 and 72 across 16 U.S. states. The social connections of interest include, but are not limited to, alternative kinship structures, such as fictive and chosen family networks. Her research asks, “To what extent, and how, do social connections positively shape the health and well-being of straight and queer Black women?” She expects to defend her dissertation in spring 2027.

Jamilah’s research is grounded in exploring the lived experiences of marginalized populations and how they interact with healthcare systems, as well as the ways community resilience buffers these impacts. She is also interested in the role of technology and artificial intelligence in ameliorating and exacerbating health-related inequities.

Her work has been published in the *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, and she is an award-winning educator, including receiving the University of Delaware Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice 2025 Student Teaching Award. She is also a recipient of a 2017 Fulbright U.S. Student Teaching Assistantship. Jamilah’s international teaching experience as an ESL instructor, along with her previous career as a Community Health Worker, informs her pedagogical approach. So far, she has independently taught four undergraduate courses focused broadly on factors related to race, health, and society.

Member Updates

Awards

Deborah Omontese

- **Deborah Omontese** won an Award for Teaching Excellence from the University of South Florida's Department of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Social Sciences.

Publications

Bill Cabin

- **Cabin, Bill.** 2026. "‘It’s too late to matter’: A Qualitative Study of Home Health Nurses’ Views on Medicare Advantage Home Health." *Home Health Care Management and Practice*. [[Link](#)]

Nicolas Gutierrez

- **Gutierrez III, Nicolas** and Megan Welsh Carroll. 2026. "‘They Really Target People for Helping Other People’: The Criminalization of Mutual Aid during Encampment Sweeps in Los Angeles, CA." *Punishment & Society*. [[Link](#)]

Abou Ibrahim-Biangoro

- Hsieh, Shinyi, Erin R. Johnson, Nicol Foti, Antoine S. Johnson, **Abou Ibrahim-Biangoro**, and D’Anne S. Duncan. 2026. "Creating Structures of Opportunity Through Proactive Pedagogy: Course Development for Institutional Change in Graduate STEMM Education." *Education Sciences* 16(6): 863. [[Link](#)]

Nels Paulson

- **Paulson, Nels**, Andrew D.A. Marshall, and David M. Levine. 2026. "Equity in Innovation: Shaping Hospital At Home Programs for Inclusive Care." *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. [[Link](#)]

Ashley Rondini

- **Rondini, Ashley C.** 2026. "Anti-Transgender Rhetoric Fuels Violence." *The Progressive* (June/July): 9-11. [[Link](#)]

Member Updates

Publications

Jason Smith

- Kristen M., Budd, Heather E. Dillaway, David C. Lane, Manjusha Nair, Marko Salvaggio, and **Jason A. Smith**. 2026. *Global Agenda for Social Justice* 3. Policy Press. [[Link](#)]

Paul Steele

- **Steele, Paul**. Forthcoming (August 12, 2026). *Civil and Criminal Justice Responses to the Sexual Victimization of American Indian and Alaska Native Children: Contexts, Decision, and Outcomes*. Oxford University Press. [[Link](#)]

Jamilah Watson

- **Watson, Jamilah**. 2026. "The Invisible Patient: Racism, Risk-Avoidance, and Structural Inequities in Modern Healthcare." *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*. [[Link](#)]

Amy Zhou

- **Zhou, Amy**. 2026. *Unequal Worlds of Care: The Politics of Global Health in Malawi*. 1st ed. University of California Press. [[Link](#)]

Research

Bill Cabin

- **Bill Cabin** has accepted the nomination to be the next Editor in Chief of *Social Work Research* based on recommendations of the NASW Press staff, and in recognition of his contributions to their sister journal, *Health & Social Work*, as consulting editor and member of the editorial board.