Forthcoming Graduates

2018 - 2019
PHD PROGRAM
Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to introduce you to our upcoming graduates of the PhD program at the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis. We have an exceptionally promising group of graduates who are excited to bring their scholarship, teaching, and leadership experiences to your institution.

As you review their research interests, biographies and curriculum vitae, you will find that our graduates have an impressive roster of publications and presentations at national conferences such as the Council on Social Work Education, Society for Social Work and Research and the American Public Health Association. Some have secured extramural funding of their dissertation research as well.

Please contact the PhD Program Manager Marissa Hardwricnt at (314) 935-2941 or via email (hardwrictm@wustl.edu) if we can help facilitate a meeting with any of our graduates, or if we can provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,

Renee M. Cunningham-Williams
Associate Professor & Associate Dean of Doctoral Education
Director, NIDA T32 (TranSTAR) Pre- and Postdoctoral Training Program in Addictions
Washington University in St. Louis

Melissa Jonson-Reid
Ralph and Muriel Pumphrey Professor of Social Work Research
Director, Doctoral Education in Social Work
Director, Center for Innovation in Child Maltreatment Policy, Research and Training
Director, Center for Violence and Injury Prevention

Doug Luke
Professor
Director, Doctoral Education in Public Health Sciences
Director, Center for Public Health Systems Science
Takashi Amano

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/tamano/bio

Takashi Amano’s research interest is gerontology, with specific emphasis on understanding and supporting lives of older adults with long-term care needs. Prior to pursuing his PhD at the Brown School, Amano was a licensed social worker at a community care center for older adults in Japan. In this role, he became interested in developing community-based interventions for preventing and managing cognitive impairment and dementia.

Amano has experience and expertise in psychosocial interventions for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia, late-life social engagement, and evaluation of long-term supportive services. His teaching experience includes courses in gerontology, social policy, research methods, and aging network services. Amano has published articles in respected journals, and has co-authored book chapters and translations from Japanese.

Amano earned a Bachelor of Human Science in Psychology from the University of Tsukuba in Ibaraki, Japan, and a Master of Social Work with honors from the University of Southern Indiana.

Haley Becker

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/hbecker

Haley Becker’s current research focuses on program development and modeling of the dual burden of malnutrition in developing countries, with a special focus on the role of physical activity in mitigating negative health outcomes. For her dissertation project in Haiti, she is employing both qualitative and quantitative needs assessments for the purposes of developing a school-based physical activity and nutrition intervention.

Becker has expertise in the areas of obesity prevention, physical activity, young child and adolescent nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies (zinc, iron, and vitamin A), and geographic information systems (GIS). She earned her MPH from the University of Missouri–Columbia School of Public Health. Prior to pursuing her PhD, she worked for a non-profit implementing worksite-based wellness interventions and conducting environmental evaluations both for the prevention of overweight and the promotion of physical activity and nutrition.
RESEARCH INTERESTS:

- Activity engagement in later life
- Economic well-being over the life course
- Cross-national aging research

Yu-Chih Chen

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/ychen

Yu-Chih Chen’s research focuses on healthy aging, specifically on activity engagement and economic security over the life course. Chen studies the implications of activity engagement and economic resources on well-being, and how life course antecedents may contribute to disparity and heterogeneity in these two key elements of health aging.

Using six waves of the Health and Retirement Study, Chen’s dissertation uses growth curve and mixture models to explore the longitudinal relationship between the trajectories and patterns of wealth and physical, mental, and cognitive health when the life course antecedents were modeled. This dissertation is supported by an award from the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (CCKF).

Chen’s teaching interests include courses in social gerontology, social welfare and policy, and advanced statistical methods such as propensity score analysis and structural equation modeling. He has multiple publications on top journals in aging, including The Gerontologist, Aging & Mental Health, and Research on Aging.

RESEARCH INTERESTS:

- Program evaluation and formative research focused on food production systems in rural Latin America

Ivy Blackmore

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/iblackmore

Ivy Blackmore is a McDonnell International Academy Scholar whose dissertation research involves conducting a formative assessment of the vulnerability context of three indigenous communities in the Andes of Ecuador. Using mixed methods, Ivy is characterizing population and resource trends, detailing the seasonality of food availability, employment opportunities, and illness, and assessing household asset accumulation and perceptions of household well-being. Blackmore’s dissertation work is funded by a Brown School International Dissertation Award.

Prior to pursuing her PhD, she worked in proposal development for the International Development Group at RTI International and served for two and a half years as a Peace Corps agriculture/food security volunteer in rural Nicaragua. Her time in Nicaragua led to her interest in rural livelihood security and improving socioeconomic development in underserved, hard to reach places.

Blackmore earned a Bachelor of Arts from Bowdoin College, and a Master of Public Policy from Duke University.

RESEARCH INTERESTS:

- Child protective services and policy (US and Taiwan)
- Child neglect epidemiology and etiology
- Implementation and dissemination science strategies to improve child welfare outcomes

Chien-Jen Chiang

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/cjchiang

Chien-Jen Chiang is a Taiwan Ministry of Education Fellow at Washington University in St. Louis. After earning an MSW from Ohio State University, he worked in child protective services in the U.S. and Taiwan for more than 10 years. During his career in the child welfare system, Chiang was invited by the Taiwanese government to assist them in implementing the Structured Decision-Making Model.

Chiang’s research agenda is grounded by his field experience in child protective services. He is committed to developing empirical evidence that can improve the welfare of children who are at risk for or have experienced child abuse and neglect. Chiang’s dissertation is centered around building a better understanding child neglect in terms of epidemiology, intervention, policy, and practice. As a secondary focus, he is interested in cross-cultural differences in response to maltreatment and youth outcomes.
Christina Drymon  →  cdrymon@wustl.edu

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/cdrymon

Christina Drymon's research focuses on identifying public health policies and community-level interventions aimed at enhancing recovery from substance use disorders. Using qualitative interviews, Drymon's dissertation examines the recovery process from prescription opioid use disorder from the perspective of women in Chicago who have recovered without formalized treatment. The work seeks insight into the factors utilized in maintaining recovery. Drymon's graduate study is supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse Transdisciplinary Social Work Training in Addictions Research Fellowship.

Drymon has teaching experience in courses on developmental psychology, clinical social work practice, and research methods. Her research has covered substance abuse, incarceration, and the analysis of social science research. Drymon earned a Masters in Social Service Administration from the University of Chicago, where she researched best practices for addiction counselors, and has work experience with homeless populations with comorbid mental illness and substance use disorder.

RESEARCH INTERESTS:
- Illicit drug use and addiction
- Natural recovery
- Opioid use disorders
- Qualitative research
- Criminal justice

Katherine Marcal  →  kemarcal@wustl.edu

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/kmarcal

Katherine Marcal's research aims to promote child well-being among families experiencing homelessness. Her mixed methods dissertation project applies community-based system dynamics to investigate barriers to efficient homeless service delivery for families with children. Her long-term research agenda aims to develop and test data-informed solutions to homelessness with the goal of reducing risk for mental disorder among low-income children and families.

Marcal has secured over $190,000 in competitive funding including T32 and F31 NIMH pre-doctoral fellowships, as well as the Doris Duke Fellowship for the Promotion of Child Well-being. She has published in social work, psychology, and social services journals. She has experience teaching policy analysis and evaluation, advanced statistical methods, and community-based system dynamics, and received the 2016 Brown School Excellence in Teaching Award.

Marcal earned her MSW from the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis and is a member of the academic honor society Phi Beta Kappa.

RESEARCH INTERESTS:
- Family homelessness
- Child development
- Service delivery for inadequately-housed families with children

Michael McLaughlin  →  mclaughlinm@wustl.edu

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/mmclaughlin

Michael McLaughlin is a policy researcher with an outstanding record of publishing, teaching, and service. McLaughlin’s work explores the effects of government policy on children and families. This research has resulted in six publications in peer-reviewed journals, including Child Abuse & Neglect, BMJ Open, Social Work Research, and Children and Youth Services Review. McLaughlin has also been featured in the New York Times, Huffington Post, and St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

McLaughlin is a highly effective teacher, consistently earning perfect or near-perfect reviews from students in the Brown School and the Olin Business School. McLaughlin has excelled teaching a variety of courses and was voted “Professor You’d Take Any Class With” by the Olin undergraduate student body.

McLaughlin is also the creator of Edspira, a YouTube channel and website that provides free business and finance education to more than 70,000 people in 185 countries.
Robert Motley  

RESEARCH INTERESTS:  
- Community violence  
- Trauma  
- Mental and behavioral health among emerging adults  

Robert Motley’s research broadly examines community violence and related mental and behavioral outcomes for emerging adults 18- to 29- years old. For his dissertation project, he is employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the relationship between exposure to perceived racism-based police use of force, racism-based trauma symptoms, and substance use in a sample of Black emerging adults.

In his role as manager for the Race and Opportunity Lab at the Brown School, he has gained experience in project planning and management, supervision of graduate research assistants and practicum students, data collection and analysis, and manuscript development and submission.

As a National Institute of Mental Health (T-32) Pre-doctoral Fellow, Motley received extensive training in grant review and development and is the principal investigator for three grants that are currently under review. In addition, Motley has first authored and co-authored several peer-reviewed publications and presented research findings at national scientific conferences.

Whitney Sewell  

RESEARCH INTERESTS:  
- Biomedical HIV prevention strategies for Black women  
- Social networks  
- Implementation science  

Whitney Sewell’s research focuses on the implementation of culturally appropriate interventions addressing the sexual and reproductive health of Black women. She is especially interested in developing evidence to improve health outcomes for Black women, specifically HIV/STI and pregnancy-related morbidity and mortality.

Sewell’s methodological training has involved both qualitative and advanced statistics, including social network analysis. She is also utilizing social network analysis for her dissertation, examining the role of social network members in pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) uptake for HIV prevention in 200 Black women ages 18-44, recruited from family clinics in St. Louis, Missouri.

Sewell’s training and research was supported by more than $150,000 in funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), Transdisciplinary Training in Addictions Research (TranSTAR), T32 DA15035, pre-doctoral fellowship; the National Association of Social Workers Foundation Jane B. Aron Doctoral Fellowship; and the Chancellor’s Fellowship for Graduate Studies from Washington University in St. Louis.

Mary Joe Stahlschmidt  

RESEARCH INTERESTS:  
- Child Maltreatment  
- Child Systems science methodology  
- Child Organizational factors that impact child welfare service delivery  

Mary Jo Stahlschmidt has been an enthusiastic child welfare researcher for more than 10 years. The goal of her current research is to improve child welfare services by examining how organizational factors impact frontline service delivery and determining the best places in the system to leverage effective and sustainable change. Stahlschmidt is passionate about using systems science methods in her research.

Prior to beginning her PhD, she managed a variety of child welfare studies at the Brown School, including, a mixed-methods study on engaging fathers in parenting programs to prevent maltreatment and a trial of a new service delivery model to connect child-welfare involved families to a home visitor via their child welfare caseworker. She has a master’s degree in industrial/organizational psychology and has served as a teaching assistant or co-instructor for management and organizational theory and behavior courses.
Harry Taylor  ➤ hotaylor@wustl.edu

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/htaylor

Harry Taylor’s research focuses on loneliness and social isolation among older adults, with specific emphasis on older African Americans. Taylor plans on using his research to increase awareness of loneliness, social isolation, and their harmful effects. He also plans to mitigate the prevalence of loneliness and social isolation by informing risk assessments and interventions to reduce these conditions among older adults.

Taylor’s dissertation research focuses on longitudinal risk factors for social isolation and loneliness among Black older adults and is funded by the National Institute on Aging. His work has been published in Journal of Gerontology, Series B: Social Sciences, Journal of Aging and Health, and Journal of Gerontological Social Work. Taylor earned his MSW/MPH from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

RESEARCH INTERESTS:
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Social relationships and social networks
- African American adults
- Older adults

Yi Wang  ➤ yiwang@wustl.edu

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/ywang

Yi Wang’s cross-national research aims to investigate neighborhood environments’ influences on health behaviors and subsequent health outcomes among older adults in the U.S. and China. Her dissertation was awarded the Social Work Health Care Education and Leadership Scholars (HEALS) doctoral fellowship from the National Association of Social Workers Foundation.

Wang has published several book chapters, and newspaper articles; she has also published journal articles in top-tier gerontology journals, such as The Gerontologist. She is involved in a community-engaged research project in collaboration with Age-Friendly St. Louis County Initiative and Senior Commission in Ferguson, Missouri. Her research experience includes several projects in Beijing and Hong Kong.

As a doctoral student, Wang had extensive teaching experience. She independently taught MSW courses, SAS labs, and a discussion section of undergraduate students. She also completed teaching practica in several doctoral-level courses. Originally from China, Wang earned her MSW from the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

RESEARCH INTERESTS:
- Social and environmental determinants of health disparities
- Neighborhood and healthy aging
- Community services for older adults
- Aging and race/ethnicity

Roger Wong  ➤ RogerWong@wustl.edu

TO ACCESS A CV, PLEASE VISIT: sites.wustl.edu/rwong

Roger Wong’s research focuses on the epidemiology of aging, with an emphasis on racial health disparities and Alzheimer’s disease. Using seven waves of data from the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS), his dissertation examines the influence of lifestyle behaviors on racial differences in Alzheimer’s disease risk. His research is currently supported by two national foundations: the Alzheimer’s Association Public Health Dissertation Scholarship; and the Social Work HEALS Doctoral Fellowship, a collaborative endeavor of the National Association of Social Workers Foundation and the Council on Social Work Education.

Wong’s teaching interests include courses on epidemiology, gerontology, quantitative data analysis, research methods, and systematic reviews. He has previously taught Research Methods and Systematic Reviews as an independent instructor at the Brown School of Washington University in St. Louis. Wong received a BS in neurobiology and behavior from Cornell University, and a MPH and MSW from Washington University in St. Louis.

RESEARCH INTERESTS:
- Epidemiology of aging
- Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias
- Racial health disparities
Founded in 1925, the George Warren Brown School was named with a generous gift from Betty Bofinger Brown in memory of her late husband.