



2016 Scholars



Ndidi Amutah, MPH, PhD

I received my PhD in Public Health with a focus on Maternal and Child Health at the University of Maryland, College Park School of Public Health in 2010. I received my Masters in Public Health from The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services in Maternal and Child Health in 2005. My dissertation focused on infant mortality in Washington, DC and it specifically examined neighborhood level disadvantage, social determinants of health, and race/ethnicity as predictors of infant mortality. I also received a BS in Public Health and BA in Africana Studies from Rutgers, The State University of NJ.

I am a Certified Health Education Specialist. I have taught courses on Program Planning and Evaluation, Research Methods, Adolescent Health, and Minority Women's Health. I have worked as a researcher in community-based research settings in a variety of areas including maternal and child health, health disparities, and HIV/AIDS. I have published and presented both domestically and internationally in the area of HIV/AIDS and infant mortality in urban communities.

Currently, I am an Assistant Professor at Montclair State University in the Department of Health and Nutrition Sciences. In this capacity my research focuses on adverse birth outcomes for women of color, HIV/AIDS and women of color in an urban context, and community based participatory research.

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Prerna Arora, PhD

I am an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Pace University, as well as a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. I earned my Ph.D. from the University of Texas Austin, completed my predoctoral clinical internship at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, with a specialization in Clinical, Community and School Psychology, and served as a postdoctoral research and policy fellow at the Center for School Mental Health at the University of Maryland, School of Medicine. My primary research interests focus on the dissemination and implementation of evidence-based practices in school and community settings for underserved youth and

adolescents. Specifically, using mixed methodology and participatory research methods, I am interested in the adaptation of evidence-based practices for diverse and underserved populations, barriers to uptake of evidence-based practices, and supporting the implementation of psychosocial interventions in pediatric primary care sites. I also have additional interests in the interface of research with policy and international school psychology.

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Fawn Cothran, MSN, PhD

My clinical work with older adults in long term care and community-based care transitions, informed my research in dementia caregiving in the African American community. African American dementia caregivers spend more time as caregivers, are less likely to use formalized community resources, and are less likely to institutionalize loved ones where the burden of caregiving may be disproportionately higher.

The long term goals of my program of research are to develop and test culturally tailored behavioral interventions for African American dementia caregivers to promote healthy physical/mental well-being and enhance their loved ones quality of life. My work is interdisciplinary and I collaborate with experts in social work, psychology, preventive medicine, religion, nursing science, and community stakeholders.

I serves as chair for both the Rush Nursing Center for Aging and Health and the subcommittee of the Faith Based Community Engaged Research Network. My primary teaching responsibilities are in the graduate entry to master's program and the Adult-Gerontological DNP Specialty program.

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Helena Dagadu, PhD, MPH

I am the Inaugural Endowed Assistant Professor of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago. I earned my doctorate in Medical Sociology from Vanderbilt University. My graduate work was supported by a Fellowship from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. I obtained my Master of Public Health in Global Health Policy from The George Washington University. My research interrogates how African immigration contributes to the growing diversity within the U.S. black population and the consequences this has for measuring, understanding, and responding to racial/ethnic

health disparities. My current projects focus on disparities in chronic non-communicable disease patterns among blacks in two contexts: the U.S. and Ghana. I hope findings from my work will inform the development and implementation of social policies and interventions that seek to promote health equity domestically as well as globally.

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Kia L. Davis, ScD, MPH

I am a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Cancer Health Disparities Training Program at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill where my research interests are social determinants of health inequity, chronic stress, and cancer risk factors. I'm particularly interested in identifying structural factors that pattern stress and chronic disease risk (obesity, smoking, etc.) in African-American communities. I'm currently conducting a pilot project examining the impact of stress, discrimination, and low-wage work on the health of child care workers. I received my doctorate in social epidemiology from the

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. My dissertation work examined the relationship between socioeconomic status (education, income, car ownership), chronic stressors (financial hardship, factors in the neighborhood environment, etc.) and smoking and obesity among low-income housing residents in the Boston metropolitan area.

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Oscar Gil-Garcia, MA, PhD

I am currently Assistant Professor in the Department of Human Development at Binghamton University, State University of New York. I completed my Sociology Ph.D. at the University of California at Santa Barbara, with a doctoral emphasis on Feminist Studies. I received a Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship, and engaged in health disparities training in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. My past and current work has involved the use of Community Based

Participatory Research (CBPR) in La Gloria, the largest settlement (pop. 3,500) of indigenous Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas, Mexico. I also conducted research with La Gloria kin living in Los Angeles, California.

My scholarship is linked by three interrelated strands of research: First, my work integrates theories of race and gender to understand how the conditional cash transfer program *Prospera* – a state run development program framed as promoting gender equality – impacts gender power relations, reproductive health, and poverty among recipient families in Chiapas, Mexico. A second strand explores how weak development policies by the Mexican state undermine post reconstruction efforts by indigenous Guatemalan refugees that propel ongoing international migration to the U.S. A third strand explores how race, class, and gender shape barriers to the incorporation of La Gloria migrant kin in the U.S. that include legalization and labor exploitation in the garment industry of Los Angeles, California. In 2016, I will begin a follow-up study with 39 La Gloria residents who remain stateless in Mexico to explore how undocumented legal status may impact subjects' long-term health. Along with my ongoing fieldwork, I am also working with colleagues in developing a research agenda to address the health disparities of children and families who have been impacted by anti-immigrant policies in the U.S.

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Stephanie Grutzmacher, PhD

I am Assistant Professor in the College of Public Health and Human Sciences at Oregon State University. I have conducted training programs with women in Afghanistan to improve family food security and dietary quality through backyard gardening. I served as a faculty advisor for Public Health without Borders and the University of Maryland Alternative Breaks program, fostering experiential service learning experiences for undergraduate students in the areas of health and development.

My work focuses on food security, nutrition literacy and the development and evaluation of family, school and community-based nutrition education programs for low-income populations.

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Kimberly Hudson, MSW, PhD

I am currently Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow at NYU's Silver School of Social Work. My primary areas of interest include: attributions and ideas of health and well-being in LGBTQ communities; how these ideas intersect with and across race, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status; and how they are expressed, and transformed, through narratives and counter-narratives.

My research is grounded in critical frameworks and draws upon a variety of methods, including survey, interview, and visual approaches. My practice background is in intergroup dialogue facilitation and training in communities and universities, addressing issues related to race (racism/nativism) and gender and sexuality (heterosexism/cisgenderism). I hold a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree from the University of Michigan and a PhD in Social Welfare from the University of Washington.

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Tourette Jackson, DrPH, MPH

I am an instructor and academic primary care research fellow in the Institute for Health and Society and a trainee in the Faculty Development Master Educator Training Program at the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW). I am also Co-director of the MCW online-MPH Principles of Epidemiology course. My research centers on the surveillance of chronic disease disparities and reducing disparities among underserved adult civilian and military populations. My current quantitative research leverages a nationally representative dataset to develop a causal inference pathway

to detect the effect of social support on selected diabetes measures. I am currently developing a complementary qualitative component, which is a community collaborative to design a community-based diabetes self-management education and support intervention. The goal of this research is to improve the equity of diabetes care and diabetes self-management among vulnerable adult civilian and military populations with Type 2 diabetes within primary care settings. Prior to joining MCW I held numerous positions in the federal and private sectors in support of the Department of Defense and Military Health System. I completed my undergraduate studies in biological sciences at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and Master of Public Health and Doctorate of Public Health degrees in Health Services Management at the University of Kentucky. As an educator and researcher, my work bridges military healthcare, the private sector, academic medicine, and public health to advance global health equity.

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Devlon Jackson, PhD, MPH

I am currently a Study Coordinator at the Maryland Center for Health Equity at the University of Maryland (M-CHE). I earned my PhD in Communications and Culture from Howard University, Masters of Public Health degree from Florida International University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Organizational Communications from the University of Central Florida. My research interests include assessing how telehealth (e.g. mobile health) modalities impact African American's medical decision-making within and outside of the clinical care setting. My interests in communication

inequalities and health disparities stems from over 10 years of public health research and practice experience that has served diverse populations, including underserved racial/ethnic populations within the areas of HIV/AIDS prevention and care, and cancer control. Prior to joining the M-CHE, I was a Cancer Research Training Award Postdoctoral Fellow and Health Communication Intern in the Health Communication and Informatics Research Branch (HCIRB) within the Behavioral Research Program (BRP) of Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences (DCCPS) at the National Institutes of Health's National Cancer Institute.

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Francoise Knox-Kazimierczuk, MS, PhD

I am an Assistant Professor of Health Science at Northern Kentucky University, where I am in the process of developing an accelerated dietetics program. I began my academic career at Concordia University in Chicago, with a double major in exercise science and psychology. Upon completion of my bachelors I went on to earn a master's degree in Kinesiology and Health from Illinois State University with a focus in exercise physiology and athletic training. I also hold master's degrees in dietetics and chemistry. I completed an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and

Health Promotion with an emphasis in cultural studies. In my research, I merge critical race theories with health promotion theories to contextualize and interrogate the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality as it relates to health. My research focus is to better understand how race, class, and gender intersect to inform health behaviors and thus chronic disease outcomes and to gain insights into how to develop culturally tailored interventions, which consider racial identity.

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Saria Lofton, PhD

I am a post-doctoral research associate at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the College of Nursing. I am interested in the influences of maternal child feeding practices on eating behaviors in early adolescent Black youth. I seek to develop a parent-child intervention to improve dietary habits in early adolescent Black youth and their families.

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Kajua Lor, PharmD, BCACP

I am Associate Professor and Research Director at Touro University California College of Pharmacy. I am a board certified ambulatory care pharmacist. I am a Native Hmong speaker with proficiency in Spanish. I am a clinical pharmacy specialist at Ole Health, a federally qualified health care center serving an underserved population. The American Pharmacist Association noted my unique consultation skills and I was selected as the One-to-One Patient Counseling Recognition Awardee. My public health research interests include medication adherence, medication therapy management, patient

activation measures, and vaccinations. I was selected as a Programs to Increase Diversity among Individuals Engaged in Health-Related Research (PRIDE) Scholar in 2012 and completed extensive research training at Columbia University.

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Ashley Munger, PhD

I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Child and Family Studies at California State University, Los Angeles. I received my PhD in Family Science from the University of Maryland, College Park School of Public Health. My research primarily focuses on the ways in which stressors related to economic hardship influence child and family health and wellbeing. More recently, I have focused on the physical health of children and families, particularly concerning healthy eating and household food security, and the role of family relationships in these areas.

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Olihe Okoro, PhD, MPH

I am an Assistant Professor of Social and Administrative Pharmacy at the College of Pharmacy, University of Minnesota (Duluth Campus). My areas of interests include health disparities affecting Minority and underserved populations; social and behavioral factors influencing healthcare services utilization and medication adherence; patient reported health outcomes; and cultural competency in provider-patient interactions. In conducting research, I have worked with various healthcare disciplines and non-medical stakeholders (administrators, communities, and patients).

I am a strong advocate of inter-disciplinary collaborative efforts and community/patient-based participatory approaches where applicable.

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Lesliam Quiros-Alcala, PhD, MS

I am an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland School of Public Health in the Maryland Institute of Applied Environmental Health. I am also Affiliate faculty in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. I earned my B.S. in Biomedical Engineering and my M.Sc. in Safety Engineering/Industrial Hygiene from Texas A&M University. I obtained my PhD in Environmental Health Sciences from the University of California at Berkeley where my doctoral work was supported by an EPA STAR Fellowship and focused on evaluating indoor environmental exposures among low-income Latino urban and farmworker children, validating a biomarker of pesticide exposure, and investigating the effects of pesticides on farmworker children's autonomic nervous system. My research focuses on children's environmental health and, more broadly, assessing environmental exposures and their potential health effects in highly vulnerable populations including mothers, children, low-income/underserved/minority communities, and occupational populations. I also seek to take my research a step further and design and implement culturally-relevant interventions to mitigate environmental exposures and minimize the risk of potential adverse health outcomes in these populations.

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Katie Reilly, PhD, MPH

I am a Research Analyst in the Bureau of Epidemiology Services at the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and work jointly with the Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI), an inter-agency data analytics and policy team for the Office of the Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services. I am the primary project manager for mutually beneficial initiatives between DOHMH and CIDI. I have spent many years studying behavioral risk for HIV and in my current position, I am studying health outcomes of homeless populations.

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Charles R. Rogers, PhD, CHES

Currently, I am an Assistant Professor in the Health Disparities Division of the Department of Family Medicine & Community Health at the University of Minnesota (UMN) Medical School. Recently, I completed an National Cancer Institute-funded post-doctoral fellowship with the Cancer-Related Health Disparities Education & Career Development Program at the UMN, which trains its scholars to develop and evaluate interventions to reduce cancer-related inequities among disadvantaged populations in both clinical and population settings, using a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) framework.

In regards to my academic training, I (1) obtained a B.S. in Applied Mathematics with an Accounting minor from North Carolina State University, (2) continued my education with a M.S. in Applied Statistics from Kennesaw State University, and (3) followed this with a Ph.D. in Health Education from Texas A&M University. Yet, this training has not permitted me to expand my research expertise in evaluating and informing policy prevention frameworks that positively impact population health. Thus, I am currently completing an MPH from the UMN focusing on Public Health Administration & Policy.

As an emerging leader of the cancer prevention & control research workforce, I have supplemented my academic training with 15+ extensive research projects across the U.S. and East Africa over the past 12 years. As a transnational researcher and Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES), my research foci include colorectal cancer prevention and control, men's health disparities, behavioral & community-based interventions, health policy, and survey methodology.

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Ninive Sanchez, MSW, MS, PhD

I am an Assistant Professor of Social Work in the College of Human Environmental Sciences at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I received my PhD in Social Work and Psychology from the University of Michigan. My research aims to 1) understand the sociodeterminants of health that contribute to chronic disease, and 2) inform culturally sensitive interventions to prevent and manage chronic disease, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities and groups with low socioeconomic status. My current research examines the psychosocial experiences of adolescents and women with polycystic ovary syndrome; a chronic condition that increases one's risk of developing type 2 diabetes, infertility, cardiovascular disease, and depression. In

addition, I teach courses in research methods and social and economic justice, and I enjoy working with students to help them achieve their academic and professional goals. I am currently conducting research on how fostering metacognition, or the process of becoming aware of one's own thought processes, can facilitate student learning and writing about social and economic justice.

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Nicholas B. Schmuhl, PhD

I am a communications specialist and researcher in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. I received my doctorate in Mass Communication, with an emphasis on health communication, from the UW-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication. While I am trained in the areas of mass media effects, psychology of the media audience, and public opinion of health and science issues, my current focus is on communication between healthcare systems, providers, patients, and the public, and how different communication strategies affect knowledge, access, and outcomes of healthcare. Some recent topics of focus are human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination, reproductive health and contraception, CenteringPregnancy (group prenatal care), and health disparities. I have a growing interest in community-based and patient-centered outcomes research, and look forward to developing my repertoire in those areas.

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Alvin Thomas, MS, PhD

I am an Assistant Professor, and Co-Director of the Center for Excellence in Diversity at Palo Alto University, in Palo Alto California. A graduate of Morehouse College, I completed my doctoral education in Clinical Psychology at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I subsequently held a 2-year position as a Clinical Child Psychology Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Michigan. I investigate risk and protective factors for African American boys who are situated in conditions that imperil them toward negative outcomes including youth violence and suicide. This is closely related to my overall interest in ethnic identity, father-son relationships, and mental health in men and boys. My current work explores training gaps in diversity training specifically related to father (nonresident) involvement in service provision to their children. My work has clinical and primary intervention implications - focusing on the resilience of African American boys as well as the family unit, in the face of under-resourced neighborhood context. I have received numerous awards including the Rackham International Student Fellowship, Patricia Gurin Research Award, Center for the Education of Women Award, and the Rackham Graduate Student Research Grant. I am also an alumni fellow of the prestigious International Max Planck Research School on the Life Course and have presented my research at conferences across the US, the Bahamas, the Caribbean, Switzerland and Germany.

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H. Shellae Versey, MPH, MS, PhD

I am a social psychologist and health researcher, and my interests focus on questions at the intersection of social determinants of health and an aging society. I have also developed a line of research that seeks to understand motivations and expressions of giving, activism and community involvement among women. My research spans the architecture of giving back, links between health and social engagement, and implications of place and policy for older adults. I am currently working on a geographical mapping project for changing neighborhoods, and exploring the dynamics of social engagement in cities.

Previously, I was a research fellow at Rutgers University in the Institute of Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research. My work has been supported by the National Institutes of Health and my scholarship devoted to gender and intersectionality has been recognized by the American Journal of Public Health and the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan.

I grew up in South Carolina and graduated from Tuskegee University with a BS in biology. I then earned my MPH at The Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, an MS in epidemiology from the School of Public Health at The University of Michigan, and a PhD from the Department of Psychology at the University of Michigan.

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Fathima Wakeel, PhD, MPH

I am an Assistant Professor of Public Health at Ferris State University's College of Health Professions. I received my PhD in Public Health at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), with a major in Community Health Sciences and a minor in Psychology. My postdoctoral training includes the Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Health Services Research and Healthcare Quality Improvement Program Fellowship and the Health Disparities Research Scholars (HDRS) Program Fellowship at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health. The goal of my research agenda is to produce knowledge that will help reduce

racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in adverse maternal and child health outcomes. Currently, I aim to explore culturally-relevant measures of personal capital which might better capture the resources that enable women from various racial/ethnic and SES groups to experience healthy pregnancy and birth outcomes.

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Christina Williams, PhD, MPH

I am Deputy Director of the Cooperative Studies Program Epidemiology Center at the Durham VA Medical Center and Assistant Professor in the Division of Medical Oncology at Duke University Medical Center. I have an MPH in Epidemiology and PhD in Nutrition Epidemiology, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in health services research. In general, I conduct population-based research to determine predictors of disease among Veterans, including sources of disparities in health care delivery and outcomes. The specific focus of my research is to compare the effectiveness of cancer treatments and identify factors contributing to racial disparities in cancer treatment and outcomes. My current work is on examining the association between racial differences in receipt of surgery and survival and comparing outcomes of surgical vs. non-surgical treatments for early-stage non-small cell lung cancer.

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Yang Sao Xiong, PhD

I am an assistant professor with a joint appointment in the School of Social Work and the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I completed my PhD in sociology from UCLA. My research examines the various forms, degrees, dynamics and consequences of assimilation that U.S. immigrant groups confront: socioeconomic mobility, linguistic assimilation, spatial assimilation, political incorporation, and health adaptation. Regarding health adaptation, I am particularly interested in the relationship between immigrants' acculturation, health behaviors and health outcomes, and in the relationship between the mobilization of resources and access to health care institutions. Currently, I am conducting a pilot study on health perceptions, behaviors and health outcomes among Hmong American adults in Wisconsin using an adapted and translated version of the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin (SHOW). I look forward to participating in the HELI and to learning from and networking with everyone!

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