



# Maryland Population Research Center

in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences  
University of Maryland

Fall 2025

## Newsletter

Volume 18, Issue 1

### New Faculty Associates

**Rachel Ellis**, Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice, examines sources of disparity in women's punishment in the U.S. criminal justice system and plans to investigate how and for whom the criminal justice system limits life chances.



Her research interests have practical and policy implications for life chances related to employment, and socioeconomic outcomes by race and SES for women's and family experiences.

**Taylor Hargrove**, Associate Professor of Sociology, comes to UMD from the University of North Carolina where she was a Fellow at the Carolina Population Center and focused on research to uncover and explain the development of health disparities across the life course, focusing on the consequences of race, skin color, gender, and socioeconomic status. She is currently engaged in research that explores linkages among socio-geographic contexts, individual-level characteristics, and biological measures of health in early adulthood.



### New Affiliates

#### External Affiliates

**Ariel Binder**, U.S. Census Bureau, evaluates U.S. income distribution and family structure using a mix of economic, demographic, and sociological analyses - sometimes with an intergenerational mobility lens. Future projects may include efforts to quantify the role of informal childcare

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### Director's Note

Dear MPRC community,

Welcome back all from the summer break. This begins the second year of the current five-year Eunice Kennedy Shriver NICHD P2C Population Research Infrastructure grant. In our first year we awarded three MPRC Seed Grants, and this year we are budgeting again to do the same (see note on the fall Seed Grant call, page 3). As usual, receipt of a Seed Grant comes with the obligation to submit an external research grant proposal on work related to that Seed Grant. On that note, I congratulate MPRC Associates with new awards in 2025 within our MPRC research theme areas, including Federal awards from NICHD and NSF and foundation awards from the Society of Family Planning and the Smith Richardson Foundation (see 'Recent Awards', page 3). Congratulations also to those who have been successful in obtaining regular and no-cost continuation awards on their existing grants. I encourage all investigators to complete as much of their work as possible within the originally-awarded time given the move towards no-cost extensions needing to be applied for and approved by the agency where previously they may have been automatically awarded for an additional year.



I also encourage investigators to complete and appropriately charge for as much of their project work on Federal grants as early as possible within your awarded project terms given the ongoing uncertainties in that environment. Our respective colleges and schools continue to provide us with the administrative infrastructure to submit to grant funders of all types, and I note only that we at MPRC have been given guidance about allowing additional advance time to research grant administration staff to allow for that processing. For grant submissions through MPRC, please continue to use the portal ([go.umd.edu/mprc-grant-support](http://go.umd.edu/mprc-grant-support)) to request services well in advance.


Thank you to all of you who attended our MPRC reception at the 2025 Population Association of America (PAA) meeting in DC this year. I enjoyed very much seeing both current UMD-MPRC community members and MPRC alumni at that event, and having a chance for you all to connect again or to make new connections across our extended community. The PAA meeting itself saw the usual high quality of contributions across diverse research themes in the scientific meeting from our Center population scientists, with a total of 33 PAA program appearances by MPRC Faculty Associates (see report, page 2). You all will have seen that the 2026 PAA Call for Papers is out with an October 5 submission deadline,

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### Southern Population Aging Research Center (SPARC) Launched

The University of Maryland, College Park, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County have launched the Southern Population Aging Research Center (SPARC), a new P30 Demography and Economics of Aging Center funded by the National Institute on Aging. SPARC is a multi-institutional center dedicated to strengthening research on population aging in the South through collaboration, mentoring, and innovative pilot projects. Co-directed by Katrina Walsemann (UMD), Contact PI), Mieke Thomeer (UAB), and Christine Mair (UMBC), the center will provide mentoring and professional development, host a hybrid speaker series, and support early-stage and new investigators through its Emerging Scholars Pilot Program and SPARC Pathways Summer Workshop. Year 1 pilot projects are led by Collin Mueller (UMD) and Myles Moody (UAB). More events and opportunities are being planned.



 The most up-to-date information about Center activities can always be found on the website :

[www.popcenter.umd.edu](http://www.popcenter.umd.edu)

## Research Profile

### Transitions to adulthood and transmission of inequality as seen in a 30-year panel from Kagera, Tanzania

**Kenneth Leonard, PI; Sangeetha Madhavan, Co-I, R01, 04/01/2025-02/28/2030**



Despite significant improvements in health care access and education in recent years, the sub-Saharan African region continues to experience high levels of poverty, particularly among youth, young adults, and rural residents.

In a new study to be conducted by Faculty Associates Kenneth Leonard (PI) and Sangeetha Madhavan (Co-I), in collaboration with colleagues from Tanzania and the World Bank, the team will investigate the

pathways through which study participants accumulate human capital, including education, job skills, and the ability to raise a family, all of which are critical for escaping the cycle of poverty. In addition to examining how human capital is accumulated, they will also study the ability of the participants to respond to a range of shocks, including the impacts of the HIV / AIDS crises, the challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, influxes of refugees, and the impacts of weather and climate.

To do so, they will build on a long-term panel of residents from the Kagera region of Tanzania (the Kagera Health and Development Survey) to create a 30-year panel of respondents and their children. The panel will track residents, including those who have migrated across Tanzania or internationally, taking advantage of the demonstrated success in tracking from a pilot study conducted in 2019-2020.

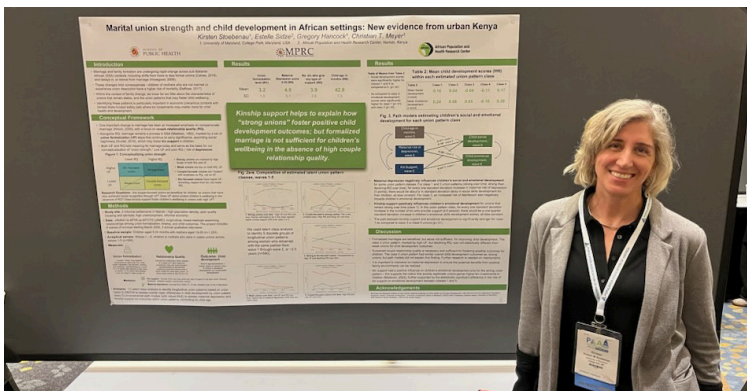
The analysis will focus on measuring the degree of intergenerational transmission of education and consumption (and therefore a measure of permanent income), comparing adults who will be around forty years old to their parents at the same ages in the first wave of the survey. This data will allow the team to examine education transmission in up to four generations, for both men and women, and the transmission of consumption inequality for two generations. Additionally, they will also examine the transition to adulthood of respondents in this sample, focusing on household formation and the role of migration in the transition from schooling to work.

The ultimate goal of this project is to measure the degree to which poverty (both absolute and relative) is transmitted across generations and to describe the process by which the respondents accumulate human capital and respond to shocks.

## MPRC Scholars at PAA 2025

MPRC Faculty Associates provided robust participation (33 presentations) at the 2025 PAA Annual Conference held in Washington DC April 10-13. The program included 19 Faculty Associates who presented 12 papers and 9 posters and who co-authored 7 papers and four posters. Associates served as session chairs on five sessions and as discussants on an additional three. A group of 25 MPRC student scholars presented or co-authored 28 presentations at the meeting.

**Kirsten Stoebenau** received an award for her poster “Marital union strength and child development in African settings: New evidence from urban Kenya”.



**Kirsten Stoebenau** presents her poster at the 2025 PAA Annual Meeting

*New Affiliates, continued from page 1*

provided by grandparents and its implications for population fertility and retirement patterns.

### Faculty Affiliates

With support from the Swiss National Science Foundation, **Souleymane Sanogo**, Postdoctoral Scholar, is working with Sangeetha Madhavan on the “Women’s health in cohabitation and polygamy: a Sub-Saharan African perspective” project and other research opportunities.



**Joni Brown**, Resident Postdoc, Family Science, focuses primarily on psychosocial and sociocultural factors affecting Black women’s reproductive health. She has particular research interests within maternal health and family planning.

## Faculty and Student News

### Faculty News

Faculty Associate **Sonalde Desai** received the 2025 Harriet B. Presser award at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America in Washington DC. This award is given biannually to honor a record of sustained research contributions to the study of gender and demography.

In July, Faculty Associates **Sangeetha Madhavan**, **Kenneth Leonard**, and **Kirsten Stoebenau** led dissemination workshops in Nairobi, Kenya, to share key findings from the NICHD funded JAMO project with community members and government stakeholders. Findings from the project were featured in *The Standard*, one of Kenya’s leading newspapers. The coverage, including comments from the three investigators, highlighted that women in high quality relationships, regardless of marital status, show the lowest signs of depression.

Faculty Associate Dr. **Marie Thoma** and her colleague Michelle Smith led a convening on women’s health research. The event brought together faculty and students from across disciplines to support the Women’s Health Interdisciplinary Research Collaborative (WHIRC). WHIRC seeks to increase the visibility and impact of research in the area of Women’s health.

Faculty Affiliate **Beka Guluma** has transitioned from his role as a Post-Doctoral Associate to Assistant Professor in the Department of African American and Africana Studies.

External Affiliate **Dhiman Das** published an article in *Margin: The Journal of Applied*

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## Bianchi Fellow Named

**Marcos Fabian Covarrubias** a Student Affiliate in the School of Public Policy working with Professor Susan W. Parker, was awarded this year's Suzanne M. Bianchi Summer Research Award for his proposal, "Protecting Maternal and Infant Health from Drought: The Role of Social Safety Nets". The Bianchi Award commemorates the work of Dr. Bianchi by providing summer funding for a student who plans to present their work at the following year's PAA conference.

## Fall 2025 Seed Grant Call

The Center intends to fund up to three projects during this Seed Grant cycle, to a level of up to \$20,000. All MPRC Faculty Associates are eligible to apply for grants under the Seed Grant Program. Additionally, joint applications for Associate status and a Seed Grant will be considered. Preference is given to applicants who have not received Seed Grant funding for at least three years and to junior faculty. Projects must satisfy the NIH definition of 'domestic', meaning that all Seed Grant activities must be conducted in the United States, either at UMD or in collaboration with U.S.-based collaborators of the Seed Grant PI, including in the case that the research topic area is not in the U.S.

Approved fall projects can begin funded work as early as January 2026. Deadline for fall applications is **October 27, 2025**.

*News, continued from page 2*

*Economic Research* during his affiliation with MPRC. The study examines how households from disadvantaged social groups in India adapt to climate-related shocks, with a focus on migration as a key coping strategy. Using data from two consecutive waves of the Indian Human Development Survey and gridded weather data from CRU at the University of East Anglia, the research finds that while increased dryness leads to higher migration rates overall, disadvantaged groups are less likely to migrate in response to these changes.

### Student News

Student Research Affiliate **Jingwen Liu** recently published an article in *Social Science Research*. The study uses data from the Health and Retirement Study to examine how social connectedness has changed across cohorts of older adults, particularly in light of broader cultural shifts such as declining religious participation, increased digital media use, and the rise of non-kin relationships. The study finds that mid- and late-Baby-Boomers show slower declines in social connectedness as they age compared to earlier cohorts.

## Recent External Funding

Following are some of the projects recently awarded to MPRC Associates.

### **Kenneth Leonard PI / Sangeetha Madhavan Co-I**

*Transitions to adulthood and transmission of inequality as seen in a 30-year panel from Kagera, Tanzania, NICHD R01, \$2,700,328, 04/01/2025-02/28/2030.*

### **Rebecca Gourevitch PI / Maria Steenland Co-I**

*The Impact of Abortion Bans on Equitable Access to Prenatal Care, Society of Family Planning, \$75,000, 01/01/2025-12/31/2025.*

### **John Halliwanger**

*Understanding the Nature and Implications*

*of the Surge in Business Formation in the U.S., Smith Richardson Foundation, \$249,765, 07/01/2025-06/30/2027.*

### **Amir Sapkota**

*Belmont Forum Collaborative Research: Awareness Against Health Threats of Extreme Weather Events (AWARE), National Science Foundation, \$864,291, 08/15/2025-07/31/2028*

### **Julia Steinberg PI / Xin He, Co-I**

*Mental Health around Remote Provision of Medication Abortion, Society of Family Planning, \$499,994, 03/31/2025-04/30/2027.*

## MPRC Associates participate in 30th IUSSP international conference

MPRC Faculty Associates Sonalde Desai, Sangeetha Madhavan, and Michael Rendall travelled to Brisbane, Australia, to attend the 30th International Population Conference hosted by the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) in July. They were joined by MPRC External Affiliate Seung Wan Kim, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain. The conference brought together population scholars from around the world to engage in research discussions and global implications of population change.



Rendall, Madhavan, Kim at IUSSP conference

### Research Profile

#### Christopher Antoun, Assistant Professor, Joint Program in Survey Methodology

***An Experimental Comparison of Modular and Non-Modular Approaches for Administering Surveys via Smartphone Apps, Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology (July 2025)***

Long web surveys often place a heavy burden on respondents, increasing the risk of breakoffs and low-quality responses. In this study by Faculty Associate Christopher Antoun and colleagues reported in the *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*, research apps were tested to determine if they could reduce perceived burden and improve response quality. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: a traditional browser-based survey as the control, an app-based survey, a modular app survey divided into seven parts, or a sequential modular app survey that released modules every 48 hours. Antoun and colleagues then compared breakoff rates, reported burden, and indicators of satisficing behavior across groups. Findings from this study suggest that app-based surveys can reduce perceived burden and lead to better quality responses.

*Christopher Antoun, Brady T West, Xin (Rosalynn) Yang, Syed Junaid M A Zaidi, Jennifer Sinibaldi. (2025). An Experimental Comparison of Modular and Non-Modular Approaches for Administering Surveys via Smartphone Apps. Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology; smaf008. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jssam/smaf008>*

## Research Profile

### Sharan Sharma, External Affiliate / Sonalde Desai, Professor of Sociology

#### "Can I Interview Her? Gatekeeping in a Telephone Survey of Female Migrants in India." Survey Practice 19 Special Issue (March 2025).

Despite more than 90% of Indian households having a mobile phone, the sociocultural and economic environment in India presents challenges in implementing them for survey research. Cellphones act like a landline in many households, with several household members sharing a single phone number. Additionally, cellphones have been found to be a "risk to women's reputation" due to fears of digital harassment combined with traditional gendered norms and roles. Due to this, the recruitment of women respondents for telephone surveys can be difficult. Faculty Associates Sharma, Desai, and colleagues estimate the prevalence of gatekeeping, use call record data, and examine different types of gatekeeping and their association with non-response and proxy interviews, and they then model the likelihood of the occurrence of a proxy interview as a function of household, respondent, and interviewer-level variables. The scholars found that, in the India Human Development Survey (IHDS), gatekeeping arises in two stages, with the first one coming at the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) stage when the root household does not share the migrant's telephone number but instead that of the gatekeeper. This propagates through the process when the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) interviewer tries the telephone number and the gatekeeper either does not cooperate, or they insist on a proxy interview. Overall, the team found that gatekeeping was at a prevalence estimate between 56% and 65%. When the gatekeeper is a husband or head of household, making contact with women is easier.



Sharma, Sharan, Bijay Chouhan, O.P. Sharma, Jaya Koti, and Sonalde Desai. (2025). "Can I Interview Her? Gatekeeping in a Telephone Survey of Female Migrants in India." Survey Practice 19 Special Issue (March). <https://doi.org/10.29115/SP-2024-0029>.

## 2025 Fall Seminars and Events

A full schedule of seminars and other events is planned for Fall 2025. Seminars will be held primarily in-person with an online option via Zoom. The Fall Seminar Series will open with a presentation on September 8 with Melissa Noel (right), Assistant Professor of Criminology, Temple University. Other visitors include Claudia Persico, Associate Professor of Public Policy, American University; Janet Currie, Professor of Economics, Yale University; Angela Henneberger, Research Associate Professor in the School of Social Work, University of Maryland Baltimore; John MacDonald, Professor of Criminology and Sociology and

Director of the MS in Criminology program, University of Pennsylvania; Iliya Gutin, Assistant Professor at the Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs, Syracuse University; Daniel Ragan, Associate Professor in the Development of Sociology & Criminology, University of New Mexico; Rebecca Ryan, Professor in Psychology, Georgetown University; and Aubrey Jackson Soller, Associate Director of the Center for Social Science Scholarship & Associate Professor in Sociology, Anthropology, and Public Health, University of Maryland Baltimore County.



Noel

Additionally, Mónica L. Caudillo, Associate Professor of Sociology; Erich Battistin, Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics; Héctor Alcalá, Assistant Professor of Behavioral and Community Health; and Demar Lewis, Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice will be presenting from UMD.

The student-organized Journal Club will host two meetings this fall as well.

The complete fall schedule and relevant, detailed information on topics and speakers can be found in the Events section of the MPRC website.

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and I encourage your participation again in that excellent forum for joining with our wider population research community at St. Louis, Missouri, May 6-9, 2026.

We look forward to another stimulating weekly seminar series, for which the fall list has been recently announced (see item, below, left). We look forward to welcoming Dr. Melissa Noel from Temple University at our first in-person seminar of the year next Monday September 8, title "Navigating Stigma and Ambiguous Loss: A Qualitative Study of Adult Children of Incarcerated Parents." I thank outgoing seminar series coordinator Wade Jacobsen and incoming series coordinator Susan Parker for bringing us an exciting set of speakers for the fall semester, and additionally thank Wade for serving as Acting Associate Director of MPRC during the 2024-2025 year and welcome Susan back as Associate Director for 2025-2026.

## Grant Submissions

Since January 2025 MPRC personnel assisted researchers with proposals of over \$6.3 million in new funding. Recently awarded proposals are indicated by an asterisk (\*).

### Taylor Hargrove

"Network on Life Course Health Dynamics and Disparities in 21st Century America", R24 sub from USC / NIA, \$142,148

"Multilevel Forms of Structural Racism and Racial Inequalities in ADRD Risk" R01 sub from Univ. of North Carolina / NIA, \$304,133

### Sangeetha Madhavan

"Measuring and modeling volatility to advance a holistic approach to women's health", Global Grand Challenges, Gates Foundation, \$149,844

"Preparing Data from the Kinship Support Project in Nairobi, Kenya for Public Use", R03, NICHD, \$156,000

### Susan Parker

"Pathways to Safety and Economic Empowerment: Assessing the Impact of Family-Centered Programs in Mexico", Gender and Economic Agency Initiative, JPAL, \$70,312

### Michael Rendall

"Change in contraceptive behavior and unintended fertility following the Dobbs decision", R21 sub from Univ. of Delaware / NICHD, \$168,401

"Changes in postpartum contraceptive care for low-income and minoritized persons after Dobbs: State-level policy impacts", sub from Univ. of Delaware, Society for Family Planning, \$74,945

### Katrina Walsemann

\* "SPARC Southern Population Aging Research Center", NIA P30, \$2,586,256

"Early Childhood Education and Cognitive Aging: Variation in Policy, Timing, and Risk", NIA R01, \$2,744,733

**MPRC offers comprehensive support for grant proposal development and management**



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