



July 2021

In the absence of an in-person celebration for PSC's departing trainees, PSC mentors have offered their written reflections on the PSC Trainee Class of 2021.

Predoctoral Trainees

Mike Booth, HBHE

It was a true pleasure to work with Dr. Booth and to watch him quickly turn his academic goals into reality. Mike came into the training program with years of professional experience under his belt. This experience, combined with his extraordinary focus, allowed him to hit the ground running and to make his way through the program efficiently. I particularly valued how Mike was always exceptionally open to feedback, and smoothly integrated input from a multidisciplinary group of scholars into his work. For his dissertation, Mike dove into some of the more complicated features of the Health and Retirement Study and learned a bevy of analytic methods to make the most of this data. He used Medicare claims data to not only explore patient-relevant research questions about the link between autoimmune diseases and cognitive impairment, but also delved into important methodological issues regarding the validity of identifying chronic illness cases using claims and survey data with alternative algorithms. Mike has also been very successful at turning his dissertation work into publications...and he did all of this while taking care of an expanding family and enjoying his hobbies including competitive biking. Congratulations, Dr. Booth! *Mary Janevic, mentor*

Connor Cole, Economics

It has been an incredible pleasure to work with Connor Cole. We have collaborated on two papers on historical data linking, and Connor has gone on to write a remarkable dissertation about how even small transfers through the tax system to new parents touch the lives of their children well into their twenties. During the last year in quarantine, I have greatly missed Connor's energy and excitement in talking about research. I know his new colleagues at the



U.S. Treasury will enjoy his deep intellectual curiosity, incredible creativity and drive to get to the bottom of important and really hard questions—you are a force of nature, Connor!! (Use the force wisely.) And many congratulations on the your new job. *Martha Bailey, mentor*

Alexa Eisenberg, HBHE

To say it has been a pleasure and an honor to mentor Dr. Eisenberg is pale wording compared to the depth of my respect for what she has accomplished. Dr. Eisenberg stands out among trainees for commitment to producing rigorous research and to understanding the real-world meaning of her data and to applying her work toward progressive action. Through her dissertation research, she is a pioneer toward quantifying the impacts of systematic white supremacy on tax foreclosures in the Detroit Metropolitan area. Starting with historically-informed and complex theory, Dr. Eisenberg explicates a dynamic system whereby predominantly white geographic areas continue to maintain extreme inequity within the full metropolitan area through the various ways they continue to hoard the most resources while having the fewest social welfare needs, applying what appear to be “race neutral” policies that in effect have disparate impacts on historically Black compared to white neighborhoods. Beyond such original and careful scholarly work, Dr. Eisenberg has been active thwarting tax foreclosures in Detroit during the very economically trying times of the last decade. Among other successes in this arena, Dr. Eisenberg drafted a Detroit ordinance to improve access for Detroit homeowners to get property tax exemptions. While pursuing her doctoral studies, Dr. Eisenberg was also awarded the 2017 Advocate of the Year Award from the United Community Housing Coalition. As Dr. Eisenberg continues her work next year as a fellow at Poverty Solutions, I will miss her deep empathy and her equally warm, discerning and delightful sense of humor. *Arline Geronimus, mentor*

George Fenton, Economics

The truly wonderful thing about working with George Fenton, is that I simply never knew what to expect next. Was this week's addition to his thesis going to be a new survey, an applied theory model, a well-identified quasi-experiment, a



careful replication, and extension, or big data applied to important problems? Would the issues draw from the economics literature, from psychology, political science, or philosophy? And would it be about our current problems, or those from the past? Over the past few years working together, the answer inevitably turned out to be all of the above. It's a balancing act that only the very best economists -- no, strike that... the very best social scientists -- can pull off, and it made for an intellectually lively, important, and fun research program. It's a program that means George will continue to speak to the most important policy problems of our time, using whatever tools are most likely to yield insight. And it's going to be a fascinating journey along the way! *Justin Wolfers, mentor*

Postdoctoral Trainees

Heejung Jang

It has been wonderful getting to know and work with Heejung over the last two years. Heejung has been very productive while here at the University of Michigan, building on her important research agenda in aging, social support and health outcomes among older adults. Congratulations Heejung, best wishes on your next chapter! *Natasha Pilkauskas, mentor*

Sarah Patterson

We were delighted to welcome Dr. Patterson back to the midwest as she expanded her interests in family demography to include care for older adults. As a post-doc, Dr. Patterson has made important theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature on work and caregiving and on covid and caregiving. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, she has become deeply involved in the PSC and broader UofM community, always looking for ways to contribute to the growth and development of others. Her enjoyment of pod-casts also made her the perfect choice to narrate the National Health and Aging Trends Study's series of video tutorials. We are excited to have Dr. Patterson remain at ISR for another year as she continues to grow her interests in family caregiving research. *Vicki Freedman & Bob Schoeni, co-mentors*



Nicardo McInnis

Nicardo is ambitious. His goal is nothing less than to understand the intended and unintended consequences of social safety net programs on the health and labor market outcomes of individuals and families. This involves both understanding how various programs interact and how the use of such programs evolve over an individual's life cycle.

Nicardo brought an important insight to his dissertation research that is both scientifically and policy-relevant. Over the past 20 years many investigators have focused on the effect of resources early in a child's life on their later life health outcomes. These researchers have found that exogenous variation in resources early in a child's life is associated with adult health outcomes. Regarding policy implications they stress the importance of government programs focusing on early life. However, many ignore the fact that increased resources early in a child's life will often be associated with increased resources later on in older childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Given these accumulating advantages, is it right to attribute all of the estimated association between early childhood resources and later life health to the resources in early life, per se? Policy makers should want to know the answer to this question...Nicardo is directly addressing this understudied issue.

While in Ann Arbor, Nicardo has started a number of additional projects, including ones with Katherine Michelmore and Natasha Pilkauskas, that extends his thesis work, and projects with a political economy focus. In addition, he is collaborating with former PSC post-doctoral scholar and current affiliate, Tim Waidmann, Arline Geronimus and myself on a project which is closely connected to our current R01.

Nicardo has been an absolute delight to work with and we all wish him well in California. *Excerpts from John Bound, mentor*