

OPUS Workshop Day 2 Speaker Bios

June 5, 2024

Authentically Engaging Communities to Maximize Relevance and Impact



Caree Cotwright, PhD, RDN, USDA, serves as the director of Nutrition Security and Health Equity for the Food and Nutrition Service at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Her research centers on promoting healthy eating among infants through age five, with a particular focus on accelerating health equity among historically underserved populations. She has developed a variety of innovative interventions, which use arts-based approaches. She is the author of numerous peer-reviewed publications and has secured over \$1 million grants focused on obesity prevention and health equity from Healthy Eating Research and the USDA. Previously, she worked as an ORISE

Research Fellow at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, where she was highly engaged in the early care education elements of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! initiative. Dr. Cotwright holds a PhD in foods and nutrition and community nutrition and an MS in foods and nutrition, both from the University of Georgia, and a bachelor's degree in biology from Howard University. She lives in Georgia with her loving husband and three adorable daughters.



Alison Brown, PhD, RDN, is a public health nutrition researcher committed to addressing diet-related health disparities through research, community empowerment, and systems change. Currently, she serves as a program director at the National Heart Lung Blood Institute. She is the past chair of the National Organization of Blacks in Dietetics and Nutrition and serves as adjunct faculty at Prince George's Community College. She is a former AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Diversity Leader, American Society of Nutrition Science Policy Fellow, and board chair of

a community-owned grocery store in Boston. In 2018, she was honored as a 40 under 40 Leader in Minority Health by the National Minority Quality Forum. She also serves on the editorial board for the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, *Journal of Racial Ethnic Health Disparities*, *Health Psychology*, and *Translational Behavioral Medicine*. Dr. Brown has a PhD from Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, received her MS from Columbia University, and a bachelor's degree from Spelman College.



Denise Holston, PhD, MS, RDN, is associate professor at Louisiana State University Agricultural Center and program director of LSU AgCenter Healthy Communities. Dr. Holston is a member of numerous organizations, such as serving on the steering committee of the Louisiana Obesity Council, and member of the National Action for Healthy Kids and National 4-H Youth Development Healthy Living Workgroup. She has helped spearhead initiatives and programs across Louisiana, including the award-winning LSU AgCenter's Smart Bodies Program, a school-based childhood obesity prevention program, for which she was awarded the Southern Region Excellence in Extension Award in 2013. She received her BA in dietetics, MS in human nutrition and foods, and PhD in nutrition and food science from Louisiana State University. She is a registered dietitian and licensed dietetic nutritionist.



Kelli Wilson Begay, MS, MBA, RDN, comes from the Kickapoo, Seminole, and Muscogee Creek people; Tribal Nations now located in Oklahoma. Her lived experience and background as a registered dietitian, public health advocate, nutrition educator, and entrepreneur have allowed her to reach Indigenous communities in multiple ways. Throughout her career, Wilson Begay has addressed nutrition and public health issues affecting Native people and has an in-depth understanding of the unique qualities and complex challenges within Indian Country. Through her firm, Maven Collective Consulting, Wilson Begay and her team connect with clients, programs, and partners to foster strategies that are grounded in Native lifeways and values. She strives to interweave her passions and talents to best serve Tribal communities and ensure that her life's work honors her ancestors.

Food and Physical Activity Environments: Thinking Beyond Food Retail and Green Space



Angela Odoms-Young, PhD (she/her/hers), is the Nancy Schlegel Meinig Associate Professor of Maternal and Child Nutrition and director of the Food and Nutrition Education in Communities Program (FNEC) and New York State Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). Her research centers on understanding the social and structural determinants of dietary behaviors in low-income populations and in Black, Indigenous, and people of color and identifying culturally appropriate programs and policies that promote health equity, food justice, and community resilience. Dr. Odoms-Young has over 20 years of experience partnering with communities to improve nutrition and health and she has served on numerous advisory committees and boards including the Institute of Medicine committees to revise the food packages provided for WIC and the Council on Black Health. Dr. Odoms-Young also currently serves as the inaugural Equity Visiting Scholar at Feeding America.



Vivica I. Kraak, PhD, MS, RDN is associate professor of Food and Nutrition Policy in the Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise at Virginia Tech. She has over 30 years of professional experience and research to promote resilient and sustainable diets and food systems that support human and planetary health. Vivica earned her PhD degree in population health from Deakin University in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; MS degree in nutritional sciences from Case Western Reserve University and dietetic internship at the University Hospitals of Cleveland in Ohio; and a BS degree in nutritional sciences from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Dr. Kraak has held positions at Virginia Tech, Deakin University's World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Obesity, Save the Children's U.S. programs, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM), and Cornell University. She has co-authored more than 90 peer-reviewed publications, including serving on the NASEM Food Forum and as a fellow for The Lancet Commission on the Global Syndemic that published the landmark 2019 Lancet report.



Deborah Salvo, PhD, is an associate professor of Health Behavior and Health Education in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Education of the College of Education at University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Salvo is a physical activity and public health scientist, seeking to understand the role of context on physical activity and health disparities, with a special emphasis on Latin American populations, both in the United States and abroad. Her research is motivated by the pursuit of health equity and social justice. Dr. Salvo is an active member of multiple highly productive, multi-national research teams focused on developing and applying state-of-the-art physical activity and spatial epidemiological methods for advancing globally-focused physical activity and built environment research. In addition, Dr. Salvo has served as an advisor for several local, state, and national departments. Prior to joining UT Austin, Dr. Salvo held academic appointments at Washington University in St. Louis, UTHealth Houston School of Public Health, and Stanford University. She earned her PhD from Emory University and her bachelor's in science from Universidad Iberoamericana.



Lindsey Smith Taillie, PhD, is a nutrition epidemiologist whose work focuses on designing and evaluating food policies to support healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable diets across the globe. Dr. Taillie is co-director of the Global Food Research Program and currently co-leads a large multi-country project to inform and evaluate an array of healthy food policies around the world, with a focus in Latin America. Dr. Taillie also leads research using controlled experiments to inform policy design, which largely focuses on designing policies to promote health equity in historically underserved communities. Additionally, Dr. Taillie focuses on using policies and interventions to promote more sustainable diets. She is currently leading an EPA-funded grant to develop interventions to prevent household food waste as a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Dr. Taillie is also leading an NIH-sponsored workgroup with the goal of developing a framework to understand dietary patterns and consumer choice in the context of climate and environmental change.

Social Policy as Obesity Policy: The Impact of Addressing Social Determinants of Health



Andrea Richardson, PhD, MPH, is a senior policy researcher at the RAND Corporation and a professor at the Pardee RAND Graduate School. Her research interests include the underlying mechanisms between environment (built and social), behaviors, biology (genetics), and health disparities. She has developed a broad knowledge base in population-based and clinical research. She is particularly motivated to address school policies, neighborhood disinvestment, social injustice, and racial inequity that impact health for people who have been systematically excluded from decision-making about their community.

Dr. Richardson has strong statistical skills and publication history in peer-reviewed journals. Her expertise includes complex longitudinal and structural equation modeling to link environmental determinants to obesity disparities in populations who have been burdened with socioeconomic disadvantage. Richardson received a BS in math from the University of Chicago, an MPH in epidemiology from Emory University, and a PhD in nutrition epidemiology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Caitlin Caspi, ScD, is an associate professor in the Department of Allied Health Sciences at the University of Connecticut, where she serves as the director of Food Security Initiatives at the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health and associate director of the Institute for Collaboration on Health, Intervention, and Policy. Dr. Caspi is a social epidemiologist focusing on evaluating policies and interventions related to food insecurity, diet quality, and weight outcomes. She completed her graduate work at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health. Her research incorporates food policies and other social determinants of health to address inequities in diet-related health

outcomes. She has led several qualitative and quantitative studies aimed at understanding how social policies, such as minimum wage and COVID-19 relief measures, affect health among households with lower incomes. Her work has been funded by the National Institutes of Health, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and HHS Administration for Community Living, among other funders.



Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, PhD, is the Samuel F. and Rose B. Gingold Professor of Human Development and Social Policy, and director of the Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. Her research focuses on the social determinants of racial/ethnic inequities in health, and the role of social policies in reducing those inequities, and the health and wellbeing of children with special needs. She received her BA in public administration from El Colegio de Mexico, and her MPA-URP and PhD in public policy with a concentration in demography from the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Dr. Acevedo-Garcia is project director for diversitydatakids.org, has been a member of numerous committees, and served on the board of directors and on the advisory board for nonprofits.



Carl Gershenson, PhD, is the director of the Eviction Lab at Princeton University. He has published on the causes and consequences of housing instability, with a special focus on how eviction leads to further economic and residential insecurity. He received his PhD in sociology from Harvard University, where his dissertation explored the political and cultural origins of the American business corporation.

Where Do We Go Next? Scaling Systems Approaches for Equitable Obesity Prevention



Jamie F. Chriqui, PhD, MHS, is senior associate dean and professor of Health Policy and Administration in the School of Public Health at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). She also directs health policy research for the Institute for Health Research and Policy at UIC. Dr. Chriqui has over 33 years of experience conducting public health policy research, evaluation, and analysis. She is considered a national expert on policy surveillance and on evaluating laws and policies and their impact on communities, systems, and population health with an emphasis on chronic disease issues including obesity, nutrition, physical activity, substance abuse, and tobacco control. She currently co-directs the CDC's Physical Activity Policy Research and Evaluation Network and is an advisor for numerous federal, foundation, and nonprofit organizations. Dr. Chriqui holds a BA in political science from Columbia University, an MHS in health policy from Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health, and a PhD in policy sciences with a health policy concentration from the University of Maryland in Baltimore County.



Terry Huang, PhD, MPH, MBA, is professor and chair in Health Policy and Management and director of the Center for Systems and Community Design at the City University of New York Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy. He is a global leader on systems-oriented community health, cross-sectoral partnerships, design thinking, collective impact, and the translation of science to policy. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary's Innovation Award in 2010, the NIH Director's Award in 2011, and the National Cancer Institute Award of Merit in 2012. He was named UNMC Distinguished Scientist in 2013. Dr. Huang holds a PhD in preventive medicine and an MPH from the University of Southern California, and a BA in psychology from McGill University. He is Board Certified in Public Health (CPH) and fellow, councilor, and past program chair of The Obesity Society. He is also VP North America of the World Obesity Federation.



Stephenie C. Lemon, PhD, MS is chief, Division of Preventive and Behavioral Medicine at UMass Chan, where she also serves as director of the Prevention Research Center and director of Community Engagement for the UMass Center for Clinical and Translational Science. Her research focuses on building public health sector, community member and lay health worker capacity to implement evidence-based programs and policies, systems and environment interventions related to physical activity, obesity and chronic disease management with an emphasis on low-income urban areas.



Nico Pronk, PhD, MA, FACSM, FAWHP, is president of the HealthPartners Institute and chief science officer at HealthPartners, Inc. and holds an academic appointment as affiliate full professor of Health Policy and Management at the University of Minnesota, School of Public Health. He continues to serve as a co-investigator on research studies in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Dr. Pronk's work focuses on connecting scientific evidence of effectiveness with practical applications of programs and practices, policies and systems that measurably improve population health and well-being. He also

serves on various health-related committees and boards and was confirmed by the White House to serve as co-chair of the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services' Advisory Committee on National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for the year 2030 ("Healthy People 2030"). Nico is a current member of the Food and Nutrition Board and chair for the Roundtable on Obesity Solutions at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. He serves on various health-related committees and boards including the board of directors for the Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) and is the founding and past president of the International Association for Worksite Health Promotion. Dr. Pronk received his doctorate degree in exercise physiology at Texas A&M University and completed his post-doctoral studies in behavioral medicine at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic.