

CHET is supported by the Colleges of Medicine, Arts and Sciences, and Public Health; the Center for Clinical and Translational Science; the Markey Cancer Center; and the Office of the Vice President for Research.]

## **Upcoming Events**

[See What's Happening This Fall.](#)

## **Faculty Spotlight**

## **Check Out Our Socials:**

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## CHET by the Numbers:

7 Primary CHET Faculty Members

5 Primary CHET Graduate Research Assistants

16 Core CHET Faculty Members

156 CHET Affiliates Across All UK Colleges

## Message from Director



**Nancy E. Schoenberg, Ph.D**

Director, Center for Health Equity Transformation

Greetings to all. Our inaugural edition of the CHET quarterly newsletter comes at tumultuous times. As described in several pieces in this edition, COVID-19 has illuminated that racism, classism and other preexisting conditions have shaped lives in the most impactful ways. While this illumination has revealed undeniable inequalities, it also provides an unprecedented opportunity to engage with each other, to learn from each other, and to uplift each other.

CHET, by our mission, values, and vision, embodies this opportunity. Join us in our efforts to understand and combat centuries of oppression through transformational training and research.

In solidarity, Nancy

## CHET's Statement on Racism

The Center for Health Equity Transformation (CHET) stands in solidarity with #blacklivesmatter and other organizations and efforts that give voice to the suffering and anger in our communities. These efforts come after centuries of sustained systemic racism that have impacted and exterminated the lives of millions of Black and Brown people. We mourn the latest victims of structural and interpersonal racism: Breonna Taylor, one of our own—a former University of Kentucky student shot eight times by police while sleeping in her home; George Floyd, unarmed and murdered in the public eye while under police custody; Ahmaud Arbery, chased down and murdered by white men while jogging. These

are just the latest and most visible of the heinous acts perpetrated on Black people over 400 years of oppression.

Racism constitutes a public health crisis born out of the legacy of slavery and continued oppression. This public health crisis stems from systemic racism and manifests itself in numerous forms, including police violence that kills Blacks at nearly three times the rates of whites; severely impeded access to healthcare; and the disproportionate prevalence of many preventable conditions including maternal mortality, diabetes, asthma, hypertension, heart disease, and cancer. Like the recent murders referenced above, the inequitable prevalence of COVID-19 highlights this latest public health and societal crisis. Black and Indigenous people's mortality rates from COVID-19 are twice that of all other racial/ethnic groups. These forces contribute to the egregious inequities in life expectancy between Black and white men (72.2 versus 76.6 years) and Black and white women (78.2 versus 81.1 years).

The horrible truth is that none of these events or circumstances is new. For as long as this country has existed, racist ideology has been used to assign lower value to some groups compared with others. This ideology was used to justify the systematic enslavement of Black people for over 400 years and manifests itself today in policies and practices that disproportionately affect communities of color such as mass incarceration, disenfranchisement of voting rights, police brutality, residential segregation, inadequate and underfunded schools, and lack of access to quality health care. At CHET, we acknowledge the unacceptable reality of the disproportionate burden of stress, violence, illness and death on communities of color. We repudiate the legacy of racism in our society that devalues the lives of our friends, neighbors, community members, and ourselves.

Witnessing a newfound awareness on the part of many organizations and individuals who maintain the power structure gives us hope and suggests a critical turning point in conversations about racism, racialized poverty and health inequities. It is encouraging to see and hear people from all walks of life standing up for others; corporations and universities committing themselves to anti-racism planning and employing anti-racist language; and a renewed reckoning and sense of commitment to greater equity, inclusivity and diversity. This widespread attention to long-standing structural racism that pervades our society is welcome, but it will take intentional, deep, and sustained efforts on the part of whites and others in positions of power to make permanent change. We in CHET are taking this opportunity to re-commit to enacting sustained and meaningful change by pursuing bold action beyond mere words. CHET commits to:

- Deploying the most transformative research to foster innovative and impactful solutions to disrupt patterns of racial discrimination;
- Creating and continuing to support research and programmatic efforts focused on health equity and anti-racism;
- Redoubling our efforts to reflect the diversity of our country among our students, staff, and faculty;
- Reforming academic training and hiring practices to create a system that fosters the next, inclusive generation of health equity researchers.

We look forward to collaborating with committed campus and community partners to strengthen current and future university-wide efforts to address systemic racism, while amplifying the voices of those most impacted by these issues in the city of Lexington, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and beyond. We invite you to join us in the hopeful struggle to eliminate health and social inequities that erode our society.

# Our Newest CHET Core Faculty



**Rafael E. Pérez-Figueroa, Ph.D**

Rafael E. Pérez-Figueroa, Ph.D is an Assistant Professor of Health, Behavior, and Society at the University of Kentucky College of Public Health. He studies health disparities among historically and contemporary underserved populations. He does this by engaging in theoretically driven research that seeks to disentangle the effects of different social determinant of health on the outcomes of

marginalized populations. Most of his scholarly work focuses on public health issues related to HIV/AIDS prevention and care, healthcare utilization, substance use and abuse, harm reduction, and mental health. He uses a community-based approach to study these issues, focusing on the interplay between social, structural, and environmental factors that influence health systems in which disparities are embedded. He emphasizes on conducting research work and public health practice that directly aligns to the translation, diffusion, and adoption of evidence-based health strategies into community practice and settings. His work has been published in the American Journal of Public Health, AIDS Patient Care and STDs, and Prevention Science, among other high-impact journals. He is a research fellow on Hispanic Drug Abuse from the National Institute on Drug Abuse and a faculty fellow of the New York University Postdoctoral and Transition Program for Academic Diversity.

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**Rachel H. Farr, Ph.D**

Rachel H. Farr, Ph.D, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, College of Arts & Sciences. Dr. Farr's research in developmental psychology focuses on diverse families, particularly those parented by LGBTQ+ adults and formed through adoption. For over 13 years, she has conducted a large longitudinal study about how parental sexual orientation relates to child, parent, and family outcomes among diverse adoptive families across the U.S. Funded by the William T. Grant Foundation, Dr. Farr is currently studying racially, socioeconomically, and geographically diverse adolescents with LGBTQ+ parents.



**Diane B. Francis, Ph.D**

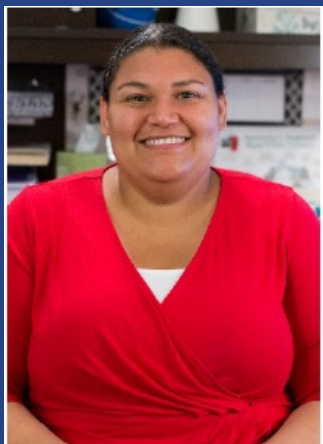
Diane B. Francis, Ph.D is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Kentucky. She is also a fellow with the Obesity Health Disparities PRIDE Program funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. Dr. Francis is a social scientist whose research at the intersection of communication science and public health focuses on communication in the service of health equity among Black populations. Her program of research examines the role of communication in health disparities and knowledge translation to advance health equity and focuses on the mechanisms and effects of health campaigns and culturally appropriate interventions, mediated

health messages, and interpersonal communication in shaping health behaviors and health disparities. She has conducted research to advance understanding of how to harness traditional and new media to promote healthy behavioral changes in young adult Black men and women; the impact of celebrity illness disclosures on communication and health outcomes; and how people communicate about health across various contexts (e.g., interpersonal and family networks, social media). She has published more than 20 peer-reviewed articles in communication, public health, and medicine journals. Her work has been funded by intramural and extramural sources, including the National Institutes of Health. Dr.

Francis earned a PhD in Mass Communication from the Hussman School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, dual Master's degrees in Global Media and Communication from the University of Southern California and the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from the University of the Virgin Islands.

### Candice Hargons, Ph.D

Candice Hargons, Ph.D is an award-winning assistant professor of counseling psychology at UK, where she studies sex, social justice, and leadership, all with a love ethic. Her research examines racial trauma, including the autonomic mechanisms of exposure to racist stimuli and using meditation as an intervention to facilitate recovery from autonomic race-based stress reactions. She also studies sexual health, including sexual pleasure, intimate justice, and sexual health disparities. She is a licensed psychologist and founding director of the Center for Healing Racial Trauma. She has been featured in Good Housekeeping, Women's Health, Blavity, the Huffington Post, and the New York Times.



### Corrine Williams, Sc.D

Corrine Williams, Sc.D is an Associate Professor in the Department, of Health, Behavior & Society, College of Public Health, with a joint appointment in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, College of Medicine, at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Williams has conducted research on various women's health and maternal and child health topics, and generally focuses program evaluation and quality improvement. She was part of the research team for the project, "Green Dot across the Bluegrass: Evaluation of a primary prevention intervention," a CDC-funded collaborative agreement to evaluate the effectiveness of a violence prevention program targeted to high school students. Related to the Green Dot intervention, she also received funding to evaluate this program among college students. In addition, she served as the evaluator of the Kentucky Health Access Nurturing Development Services (HANDS) program, a statewide voluntary intensive home visitation program for high-risk (including young maternal age), primarily low-income, first-time parents that provides services from the prenatal period to the child's third birthday. This work ultimately led to the HANDS program being declared an evidence-based home visiting approach.

## Spring 2020 Highlights

### CHET Hosted Year of Equity Event with Samuel K. Roberts, Ph.D

On March 6th Dr. Roberts gave a talk entitled, "Drugs, Politics, and Pariahs: Or, How to Think Historically About Race and Harm Reduction in an Opioid Epidemic" in the Senate Chamber of the Gatton Student Center.

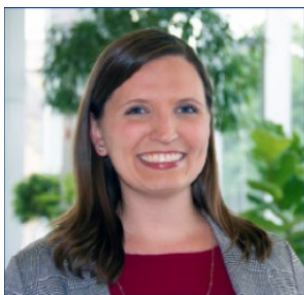
This event was sponsored by the Center for Health Equity Transformation, Departments of African American and Africana Studies, History, Sociology, and Health, Behavior, and Society, and the Vice President for Research Substance Use Priority Research Area (SUPRA).





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### CHET Speaker Series: Jessica Thompson, M.Ed.



CHET hosted visiting doctoral candidate Jessica Thompson, M.Ed., for a talk on February 13th entitled, "Contextualizing Cardiovascular Disease among Rural Appalachian Women: What Methods Should We Use?"

Ms. Thompson research interests include community-engaged approaches, chronic disease prevention, rural and Appalachian women's health, mixed method research, and systems science approaches to community health research.

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### COVID-19 toll in black community no surprise to UK researcher. Racism 'embedded' in healthcare.



Anita Fernander, Ph.D, chair of CHET's Core Faculty was recently featured in an article discussing the racism in healthcare and COVID-19 cases in Black community.

[Read Full Article Here](#)

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### Madeline Dunfee

Congratulations to the recipients of the University of Kentucky Appalachian Center's James S. Brown Graduate Student Award for Research on Appalachia, including one of our Graduate Research Assistants Madeline Dunfee!

She received the award for her project "Conducting social network analysis among adults with cardiometabolic disease in Appalachia." This award honors the memory of UK sociology professor and Appalachian Studies pioneer James S. Brown.



## COVID-19 Response

### CHET Op-Eds on COVID-19 and Racism



Systemic Racism in the U.S. Now Shows us a Tale of Two Pandemics

This op-ed was written by Ariel Arthur, Carrie Oser, Anita Fernander, Nancy Schoenberg, Lovoria Williams, and Vivian Lasley-Bibbs.

[Read Full Article Here](#)

## Upcoming Fall 2020 Events

Join us for our upcoming talks from these health equity scholars:

Edith Williams, Ph.D

**Edith M. Williams, Ph.D.** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), with a dual appointment in the Division of Rheumatology, and is examining whether a new, culturally tailored peer mentoring intervention improves disease self-management, indicators of disease activity, and quality of life in African American women with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE).



Brandy Kelly Pryor, Ph.D



**Brandy N. Kelly Pryor, Ph.D.** is the Senior Director of Programs at The Humana Foundation. In this role Dr. Kelly Pryor oversees the Foundation's strategy, research and impact for the over \$14 million grants portfolio. Dr. Kelly Pryor has expertise in various frameworks of youth development, community based participatory research and advancing equity, and her transdisciplinary research focuses on the perception and performance of hope in marginalized communities; development of domestic and international social policy regarding youth; and the relationship between gender and race/ethnicity in the development of health narratives over the life course.

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## In the next issue:



- Introducing our Graduate Research Assistants
- Special edition journal submission opportunities
- Faculty and student spotlight
- Active funding opportunities
- Pilot grant funding announcement

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