WELCOME OUR NEW ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, PATRICIA LOUIE

Submitted by Ari Asercion on September 23, 2020 - 1:52pm

Patricia Louie joined us this summer as a new Assistant Professor of Sociology. Pat received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Toronto, where she specialized in the study of health disparities. Just before she arrived in Seattle, Pat was quoted in *The Washington Post* about her research on the underrepresentation of darker skin tones in medical textbooks. This fall, she will be teaching SOC 230, “An Introduction to Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities” during a global pandemic that has revealed the critical effect of disparities in health and access to healthcare. In addition to her appointment in Sociology, Pat is a faculty affiliate at the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology and will have connections with the Population Health Initiative and the Center for Statistics and the Social Sciences.

We consider ourselves extremely fortunate to have Pat as our newest colleague. To help you get to know her, we've asked Pat to answer a few questions about her research background, teaching style, and what it was like for her to move to Seattle in the middle of a pandemic:

What steered you toward your research on race, mental health, and healthcare?

As a multiracial person, I've always been keenly aware of how race (or racism) powerfully structures our social world. My unique placement in the racial structure—as in-between two groups, but not fully part of either—sparked my interest in how racialized social systems operate both in the U.S. and other countries.

My interest in race and health grew from a desire to understand how racism at the micro, meso, and macro-level of society gets under the skin to shape the social patterning of health. Mental health, in particular, is a good measure of social inequality because it serves as a “social mirror,” reflecting the inequities experienced by individuals in environments. In other words, differences in mental health are often a reflection of the way social systems are organized.

What has it been like moving to Seattle in the middle of a pandemic?

It has been interesting...to say the least. I am fortunate because I have family in Seattle so they were able to help me get settled here. In addition, I've been able to connect with other incoming faculty through the Faculty Fellows programs. Finally, the Sociology Department here is very welcoming and collegial, so I already feel like I have an academic home at UW.

How do you approach teaching, especially when it comes to online learning?

My approach to teaching is guided by a desire to convey how a sociological approach can help us better understand the way the social world works. I draw on up-to-date articles, current events, podcasts, videos, and integrate lots of group activities to engage students in my course content. Most importantly, I try to meet students where they are and get them excited about learning. In terms of online learning, I carry over much of the same pedagogical approaches, but I've heard that there is a greater desire for peer-to-peer and peer-to-instructor connection online. As such, I've integrated a lot of interactive activities that can be executed through breakout rooms, Poll Everywhere, and Canvas.

What are you working on now? Where do you hope to take your research in the future?

I am currently working on a cross-comparative project that examines race, nativity, and health in Canada vs.
the U.S. Canada and the U.S. serve as an ideal “natural experiment” for understanding the role of social context in driving racial inequities in health because these two countries have similar racial categorization systems, yet differ in their racial histories, social welfare systems, and migration patterns. This paper examines whether there is heterogeneity in the health status of Black and White populations across nation states and how different social contexts influence the racial patterning of health.

My future research will expand on this project by investigating race and health in a global context. I plan to integrate at least five other countries into this project to examine whether the meaning as well as the implications of race as a social status varies across nation states. More broadly, this project seeks to identify the extent to which the association between race and health across nation states is due to racialized differences in the procurement of health-related resources across these states.

People Involved: Patricia Louie
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