Kathleen Cagney
Professor of Sociology & Public Health Sciences &
Comparative Human Development
The University of Chicago
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 Yuen Visiting Scholars

Yuen Speaker Series: Social Capital and Community: How Activity Space Approaches Provide Insight into the Lives of Urban-dwelling Older Adults

Biography:

Kate Cagney is a Professor at the University of Chicago in its departments of Health Studies, Sociology, and Comparative Human Development. Professor Cagney is also a Senior fellow at the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). Where she directs NORC's Population Research Center, which facilitates collaborative population research by economists, sociologists, psychologists, physicians, and other scientists. She also is associate director of NORC's Center on the Demography and Economics of Aging.

Cagney has focused on bringing together researchers from many scientific disciplines and examining diverse datasets to create a more holistic view of the social environment and its impact on health and well-being. Her work has provided a clearer view into how physical and social factors in surrounding neighborhoods and communities affect individual behavior and outcomes.

Cagney's research interests include urban social context, neighborhood effects and health, race and ethnic differences in access to health care and long-term care, life course approaches to research in health, and health status assessment and measurement.

 Professor Cagney's work examines social inequality and its relationship to health with a focus on neighborhood, race, and aging and the life course. She has developed a series of papers on neighborhood social capital and its relationship to outcomes such as self-rated health, asthma prevalence, physical activity, and mortality during the 1995 Chicago heat wave. She also focuses on the validity of such measures and the development of new neighborhood-based metrics that reflect the perceptions and experiences of older residents. Currently she works on two Chicago-based studies of neighborhood context and older adult health, and is examining the role of the social and physical environment in older adult well-being with the National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project.

Research:

Was a co-investigator on a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded project led by Charlie Catlett, that set up urban sensing instruments around the Chicago that will measure data on the city's environment, infrastructure and activity to scientifically investigate solutions to urban challenges ranging from air quality to urban flooding.

Cagney, will use the Array of Things data in her project (Place, Aging, and Health) to identify neighborhood environmental and demographic determinants of both activity space and health status. She will collect primary data from 450 Chicagoans (age 65 & older). Where she finds that suburban areas are aging more rapidly than comparatively more urban areas. View a comprehensive PowerPoint about this project

She is also leading the NORC's National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project (NSHAP). Which is a longitudinal, population-based study of health and social factors, aiming to understand the well-being of older, community-dwelling Americans by examining the interactions among physical health and illness, medication use, cognitive function, emotional health, sensory function, health behaviors, social connectedness, sexuality, and relationship quality.