

2019 CFPR Lunchtime Seminar Series

ALTERNATIVES TO AGING ALONE?: “KINLESSNESS” AND THE POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDS

Increasing numbers of older adults cross-nationally are without children or partners in later life and may have greater reliance on non-kin (e.g., friends), although these patterns likely vary by country context. This paper hypothesizes that those without traditional kin and who live in countries with a stronger emphasis on friendship will have more friends. While these hypothesized patterns are consistent with interdisciplinary literatures, they have not been tested empirically and remain overlooked in current narratives on “aging alone.” This study combines individual-level data from the Survey of Health, Ageing, and Retirement in Europe (SHARE, Wave 6) with aggregate nation-level data to estimate multilevel negative binomial models exploring number of friends among those aged 50+ across 17 countries. Those who lack kin report more friends in, particularly in countries with a higher percentage of people who believe that friends are “very important” in life. This paper challenges dominating assumptions about “aging alone” that rely on lack of family as an indicator of “alone.” Future studies should show how friendship is correlated with lack of kin, particularly in wealthier nations. Previous research may have overestimated risk in wealthier nations, but underestimated risk in less wealthy nations and/or more family-centered nations.



Christine Mair (Ph.D.) is an Associate Professor of Sociology in the interdisciplinary Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Health Administration & Policy at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) and holds a secondary appointment in the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health in the School of Medicine at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB). As a sociologist and social gerontologist, her work seeks to document cultural variation in the relationship between social environments and health (e.g., family and friend networks), with particular emphasis on risk and resilience in disadvantaged contexts in the United States, as well as countries that are underrepresented in American journals. Her collaborators include scholars from psychology, social work, criminology, economics, epidemiology, and occupational health sciences and her work appears in various outlets including *Social Forces*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, *The Gerontologist*, *Health & Place*, *Cancer*, and *Journal of Palliative Medicine*.

Chaired by: **Dr Bussarawan Puk Teerawichitchainan**

Associate Professor, Dept of Sociology and Deputy Director of CFPR, NUS

Date: **26 April 2019** | Time: **12noon - 130pm** | Venue: **Ventus Evans room**

Light lunch will be provided. Registration is required.

Pls register at: <https://tinyurl.com/y27xyzto>