

Rachael D. Weaver

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Department of Sociology
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EDUCATION

- In progress Ph.D. Sociology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA
- In progress Graduate Certificate in Gerontology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA
- 2026 M.A. Sociology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA
Thesis: *Aging in the Shadow of the Great Recession: Pathways from Cumulative SES Risk to Accelerated Epigenetic Aging among Black American Women*
Committee: Drs. Man-Kit Lei (Chair), Steven Beach, Leslie Gordon Simons
- 2023 B.S. Psychology, University of Georgia, Athens, GA
Area of Emphasis: Neuroscience
Minor: Criminal Justice Studies
Certificate in Legal Disparities and Equity
Magna Cum Laude

AREAS OF INTEREST

Sociology of Health; Family, Life Course, and Aging; Quantitative Methods

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Publications (indicates corresponding authorship)*

Lei, M. K., **Weaver, R. D.**, Beach, S. R. H., & Mielke, M. M. (2026). Racial discrimination accelerates age-related increases in serum neurofilament light chain among African American women: Examination of change from midlife to older adulthood. *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 81(5), gbag041.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbag041>

Weaver, R. D.* & Lei, M.-K. (2026). Comorbid diabetes and hypertension in early adulthood predict neurodegeneration in midlife: Insights across racial/ethnic groups using a blood-based biomarker of dementia risk. *Alzheimer's & Dementia: Behavior & Socioeconomics of Aging*, 2(1), e70069. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsa3.70069>

Lei, M.-K., **Weaver, R. D.** (2025). The buffering effect of social support on the link between biologically embedded childhood maltreatment and adult cardiovascular disease. *Social Science and Medicine*, 118530. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2025.118530>

Simons, R. L., Ong, M. L., Lei, M.-K., Beach, S. R. H., Lu, Y.-W., **Weaver, R. D.***, & Mielke, M. M. (2025). Diabetes and hypertension at midlife predict increases in biomarkers of dementia among Black Americans. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 13(2), 1005-1012. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-025-02310-2>

- Interviewed for coverage in UGA Today, WSB Atlanta

Rigg, K. K., **Weaver, R. D.**, & Kusiak, E. (2023). Attitudes toward methadone treatment among Black/African Americans: Implications for engagement and retention. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 93(6), 476-485. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000692>.

Manuscripts Under Review

Weaver, R. D.*, Austin, K., & Lei, M.-K. The power of control: Mastery buffers the association between cumulative SES risk and accelerated epigenetic aging among middle-aged Black American women.

Weaver, R. D.*, Lei, M.-K., & Beach, S. R. H. An intervention that protects parental engagement leads to increased academic motivation and disrupts the path from neighborhood crime to delinquency.

Lei, M.-K., **Weaver, R. D.** The protective role of family cohesion and support in cyberbullying and depressive symptoms: A representative cross-sectional study in Taiwan.

Manuscripts in Preparation

Weaver, R. D. & Lei, M.-K. Aging in the shadow of the Great Recession: Pathways from cumulative SES risk to accelerated epigenetic aging among Black American women.

Weaver, R. D. Social mobility following the Great Recession: Cumulative SES risk across midlife and patterns of accelerated epigenetic aging among Black American women.

Weaver, R. D. & Lei, M.-K. Adolescent violent victimization and age-related differences in a biomarker of neurodegeneration in early midlife.

Books in Preparation

Lei, M.-K., **Weaver, R. D.**, & Ong, M. L. *Understanding the Social Determinants of Health*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

PRESENTATIONS

- 2026 **Weaver, R. D.** & Austin, K. "The Power of Control: Mastery Buffers the Association between Cumulative SES Risk and Accelerated Aging among Middle-Aged Black American Women." Southern Sociological Society, Jacksonville, FL (April).
- 2025 **Weaver, R. D.** "Interpreting and Analyzing Quantitative Data." Invited guest lecture for undergraduate Research Methods in Sociology course, University of Georgia, Athens, GA (October).
- Weaver, R. D.** "Racial/Ethnic Health Disparities in Aging: Understanding Social Determinants, Key Theoretical Frameworks, and Innovative Research Techniques." Invited guest lecture for undergraduate Introductory Sociology course, University of Georgia, Athens, GA (April).
- 2022 **Weaver, R. D.** "Attitudes toward Methadone Maintenance Treatment among Black/African Americans." Symposium on Substance Use Research, Rural Drug Addiction Resource Center, University of Nebraska, Remote (November).
- Weaver, R. D.** "Attitudes toward Methadone Maintenance Treatment among Black/African Americans." Summer Research Institute Symposium, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL (August).

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 2025-Present *Research Assistant*
Center on Biological Embedding of Social Events and Relationships, University of Georgia
PI: Drs. Steven Beach, Man-Kit Lei
- 2024-Present *Research Assistant*
Families, Communities, and Health Workshop, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia
PI: Drs. Ron Simons, Man-Kit Lei, Leslie Gordon Simons
- 2022 – 2024 *Research Assistant*
National Cannabis Legalization Research Study (NCLRS) Lab, Owens Institute for Behavioral Research, University of Georgia
PI: Dr. Lydia Aletraris
- 2022 *Research Assistant*

Summer Research Institute, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute,
University of South Florida
PI: Dr. Khary Rigg

2020 – 2021 *Research Mentee*
Google Computer Science Research Mentorship Program, Kennesaw State
University

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2024-Present *Teaching Assistant, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia*
Research Methods in Sociology
Introductory Sociology (online)
The Science of Happiness

HONORS & AWARDS

2026 Tim Futing Liao Graduate Award in Sociology (\$1,000)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Ad hoc Journal Reviewing

Journal of Black Studies	Psychological Reports
Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities	Public Health
Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma	The Journals of Gerontology, Series A:
Genes & Nutrition	Biological Sciences

Department of Sociology, University of Georgia

2025-Present Graduate Student Mentor

2025 Graduate Student Recruitment Committee Member/Host Coordinator

2024-Present Sociology Graduate Student Society Member

University of Georgia

2025-Present UGA-CARMA (Consortium for the Advancement of Research Methods & Analysis)
PhD Representative

2022 – 2023 American Society of Law, Medicine, & Ethics Social Media Manager/Co-Vice
President

Students for Psychedelic Advocacy, Research, & Connection Member

2021 – 2022 Doctors Without Borders/Friends of MSF Member

Kennesaw State University

2019 – 2020 Honors College Member

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

2026-Present Southern Sociological Society

2025-Present American Sociological Association

Sections: Medical Sociology; Aging and the Life Course; Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility

TRAINING

2024 Elevate & Excite: Designing Meaningful Learning Experiences, Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Georgia

2022 Research Ethics & IRB Practices, Summer Research Institute, University of South Florida

Social & Behavioral Research, CITI Program

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2021-Present Patient Care Assistant, Acumen Fiscal Agency

2021 – 2023 Crisis Counselor, Crisis Text Line

2020 Companion, Papa: Companion Care for Older Adults and Families

2019 Builder, Habitat for Humanity