In the vast and pluralistic landscape of American higher education, the research universities must be the agents of change.

– Don Kennedy, *Academic Duty*
The Institute’s new faculty and board leadership dedicated the year to planning for the future needs of social science research at Stanford. Our efforts coincided with consequential developments in technology, such as data we can analyze from applications like chatGPT and the increasing incursions of artificial intelligence into social life, which will have far-reaching implications for how social science is carried out in the coming years. Our planning efforts also coincided with major leadership changes at Stanford. Our flexibility in a changing landscape is a clear indication that IRiSS is poised to ensure that Stanford researchers are equipped to address the human behavior and institutional challenges we face in our community, country, and world.

Highlights of IRiSS planning and program-development work include the following:

- Faculty director Mike Tomz joined Senior Associate Dean Ran Abramitzky in meeting with social science faculty and preparing a comprehensive report to the Provost on the needs of social science research at Stanford.
- Advisory Board Chair Kathy Chou created a board task force on key initiatives for IRiSS. Chaired by Farah Champsi, the task force’s work dovetailed closely with Mike and Ran’s efforts, leading to the identification of three key initiatives that will drive the Institute’s growth in the near to medium term: a predoctoral scholarship program, a survey research center, and more grant-sponsored research.
• We received generous support from Provost Persis Drell and H&S Dean Debra Satz to pilot our new predoctoral program, and support from Neil Penick, the lead development officer for H&S, to fund the survey research center.

• Advisory board member Mark Vander Ploeg led the board’s first subcommittee to guide programming choices for the coming year.

• Kathy Chou, Mike Tomz, Chris Thomsen, and Christopher Fraga paid a visit to the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research (ISR) for a generative and illuminating set of meetings with ISR’s leadership.

We also want to recognize the extraordinary contributions of IRiSS staff, who provided guidance and support for the Institute’s planning efforts while maintaining so much of the ongoing programming that is described in the report that follows. Among this amazing team, we are pleased to note that Carolyn Ybarra was recognized with the school’s first staff award for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) for her work with local community colleges to provide their students with the opportunity to be engaged in social science research at Stanford.

As you read through this report, we invite you to linger over the new policy-relevant research to have come out of our centers, including a major new paper from the Immigration Policy Lab about Europeans’ support for Ukrainian asylum seekers as compared to refugees from other parts of the world. We also want to draw special attention to the stories of a small selection of students and alumni who have benefited from IRiSS programming, including the lead author of the IPL paper, Kirk Bansak (Political Science, ’19), as well as Audrey Guo (Economics, ’19), Tamkinat Rauf (Sociology, ’22), Bethany Nichols (Sociology, ’23), and RA Interns Anam Mughal, Rachel Pham, Maya Marquez-García, and Isabel Schweitzer.
In 2023, the Principal Investigators of the American National Election Studies finalized the public release of the ANES 2020 Social Media Study with merged Facebook/Meta usage data. This unique dataset links consenting participants’ Facebook political posts, exposure to (and interactions with) news reports and political advertisements with their responses to a shortened version of the ANES surveys. The dataset is available to authorized researchers through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.

This study is the first large-scale effort to augment measures of Americans’ political attitudes and behaviors with social media activity. The merged dataset allows analysts to study the political consequences and correlates of interactions with social media, including political polarization, misinformation, candidate evaluations, voting, and other forms of electoral participation.
The 2020 Social Media Study was made possible by a donation from Facebook, Inc. (now Meta Platforms, Inc.) to Stanford University. All usage data from Facebook are made available by permission of Meta. The American National Election Studies are a collaboration between the University of Michigan, Stanford University, Duke University, and the University of Texas, with funding from the National Science Foundation.
Research Support Services
New Publication

Unemployment insurance (UI) in the U.S. is administered at the state level and funded through employer payroll taxes. Using Census datasets of matched employer-employee job spells, Audrey Guo (Economics, ’19) estimated the effect of state UI tax increases following the Great Recession, and found that they lowered employment growth through reductions in hiring. The negative employment effects are strongest for young workers and single-establishment firms.
I worked extensively with administrative Census data while I was a PhD student at Stanford. Now, as an Assistant Professor of Economics at Santa Clara University, being able to maintain my data access through IRiSS has proved invaluable in allowing me to continue researching important yet understudied aspects of firm taxation.
National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)

Launched in 1994 in partnership with Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina

New Publication

Social scientists have long documented a correlation between lower income and increased symptoms of depression, but whether this reflects a causal effect has been an open question. Linking longitudinal data on income and using genetic indices to address various sources of confounding, Tamkinat Rauf (Sociology, ’23) tested how the “income effect” changes over the adult life span.

Her findings—drawn from samples of U.S. adults in early midlife, late midlife, and older adulthood—indicate that increased income does have a measurably beneficial effect on mental health, especially in older adulthood. These results help to sharpen our understanding of the nature of socioeconomic disparities in mental health in the U.S.
Tamkinat Rauf
(Sociology, ’23)
2021–22 IRISS Dissertation Fellow
2021 American Democracy Fellow
Center Updates
Social Mobility Lab

What are children’s chances of moving up in socioeconomic status when they grow up, compared to their parents—a common definition of the “American Dream”? And what factors affect those chances? With growing worries that rates and patterns of intergenerational mobility in the United States are changing in fundamental ways, research to understand these trends and what drives them is critical. Research in the Social Mobility Lab seeks to understand current drivers and patterns of social mobility and other longitudinal outcomes through analysis of linked administrative and survey data, including tax returns, program data, and Census data.

A core project within CPI’s Social Mobility Lab focuses on analysis of occupational mobility, or patterns in the occupations of children versus their parents across generations, an important but under-explored area of social mobility research. This work uses both confidential Census data and tax return data—accessed through the Stanford Federal Statistical Research Data Center (see pp. 10-11)—to examine intergenerational transmission of occupations, geographic variation in social mobility, and effects of family structure and of race, ethnicity, and immigrant status on mobility, among other related topics.

Collaborators include Stanford faculty across multiple disciplines as well as researchers from several other universities.

CPI also partners with Opportunity Insights, the Census Bureau, and many leading scholars nationally in ongoing work to develop the American Opportunity Study. This large-scale panel dataset, built by linking Decennial Census and tax data from 1960 to the present day, will allow for new studies of mobility, new studies of social and demographic processes, and new capacities to carry out quasi-experimental analyses of social programs over the last half-century. Scan code for a description of the American Opportunity Study.
Economic Inclusion Lab

What is the most direct way to cut poverty and reduce wealth inequalities? Directly giving cash is a simple and potentially powerful approach that has attracted significant recent attention from policymakers and researchers. CPI’s Economic Inclusion Lab investigates and provides support for implementation of these kinds of cash policies as potential tools to promote economic inclusion.

A key focus is Guaranteed Income, or basic income, which provides recipients with regular unconditional cash payments as an income supplement or minimum income floor. The Center is currently studying the effects of Guaranteed Income on health outcomes among participants in GI pilot programs in California, in collaboration with Stanford social epidemiologists David Rehkopf and Melissa Bondy and other faculty across multiple disciplines at Stanford and other institutions.

The Center’s capacity in this area expanded when the Stanford Basic Income Lab became part of the Center on Poverty and Inequality in Fall 2023. Founded by former Stanford philosophy professor Juliana Bidadanure, who remains a Senior Advisor to the lab, BIL convenes stakeholders around the politics, philosophy, economics, and implementation of basic income and related cash policies. BIL also serves as a leading online repository of data about basic income programs in the US and globally.

Complementing this focus on cash-based income interventions, the Center is also interested in cash-based strategies to address wealth inequalities. Baby Bonds provide children with savings accounts or trust funds, seeded with initial deposits, that become financial assets these children can use when they enter adulthood to invest in their education or livelihood. CPI is partnering, for example, with Darrick Hamilton and other scholars at the Institute on Race, Power, & Political Economy to examine whether wealth and income floors, when enacted together, have powerful synergistic effects. The Center’s Faculty Director David Grusky and Executive Director Sara Kimberlin also serve on the Advisory Working Group supporting the implementation of California’s recently launched state-funded baby bonds initiative, the California HOPE for Children Trust Account Program.

Scan to learn more about the California HOPE for Children Trust Account Program
Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Europe has welcomed some 7.4 million Ukrainian asylum seekers—the most since World War II. With no end to the war in sight, and many E.U. leaders taking a hardline stance on migration, there are concerns that this welcome may be wearing out.

In a study published in *Nature*, researchers from the Immigration Policy Lab surveyed voters in 15 EU countries—one in 2016, in the midst of the Syrian refugee crisis, and again in 2022 during the influx of Ukrainians. Contrary to concerns that these repeated humanitarian emergencies would create “compassion fatigue” among the European public, the findings suggest that public support for asylum-seekers—especially certain kinds of asylum seekers—may be more durable than we think.
Former CSS Fellow **Kirk Bansak (Political Science, ’19)** was the lead author on the article in *Nature* that presents the findings from this study.

**Key Findings**

- Europeans supported accepting Ukrainian asylum-seekers—mostly because they possess certain traits (e.g., being younger, female, Christian, and more highly skilled) that the public prefers.

- These “desirable” traits didn’t change from 2016 to 2022. The number of asylum-seekers respondents were willing to accept stayed the same or slightly increased, suggesting public support may be more stable than assumed.

- Despite the rise of populism across Europe, both left- and right-leaning voters supported accepting more refugees.

- While the survey revealed persistent bias in the public favoring Christian over Muslim asylum-seekers, overall support for Muslim asylum-seekers increased in 2022 compared to 2016.
Optimizing Refugee Resettlement through A.I.

Each year, thousands of refugees from around the world arrive in the U.S. fleeing persecution and instability. Resettlement marks a crucial milestone on the path to a fresh start. However, finding the right community for refugees is no simple task—each of the dozens of locations that host refugees around the U.S. offers a distinct set of resources and characteristics. But research suggests there is a lot riding on this decision, including an individual’s economic success.

For decades, resettlement agencies like Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) have managed the complex task of finding a host community for refugees through lengthy weekly meetings, manual updates, and multiple spreadsheets. Thanks to a partnership with the Immigration Policy Lab, staff are now completing this task in minutes using GeoMatch, an A.I. tool for predicting where incoming refugees are most likely to find a job and thrive.

Over several years, IPL and LIRS worked together to develop and pilot GeoMatch using historical data on refugee outcomes. In April 2023, the agency began using the tool with incoming cases. Now, GeoMatch is fully integrated into the agency’s placement process. The results have been powerful: LIRS staff report the tool has dramatically simplified the placement process, saving hours of time, improving accuracy, and empowering them with the information they need to make decisions.
The Omics Initiative

Launched in 2022

Bolstered by generous funding from the Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Research, the Stanford Archaeology Center, and the Stanford Existential Risks Initiative, the Omics Initiative team made substantial progress this year on data recovery in several sites, including Madagascar, Mauritius, and Bosnia. Thanks to additional funding from the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, 7 Stanford undergraduates were able to join the team in Bosnia, where over two dozen individuals were recovered from the Bileća region. This work in Europe is enhancing the Initiative’s database, extending its pathogen assessment to new forms of malaria not present in East Africa.

In June 2023, Saša Čaval was awarded a highly competitive Consolidator Grant from the European Research Council. Having secured five years’ worth of funding, Čaval and her team will be spearheading archaeological work on stećci, tens of thousands of large medieval tombstones found in the Western Balkans. The individuals buried beneath these grave markers will be exhumed and analyzed for traces of the various epidemics that passed through this thoroughfare between Western Europe and Eurasia. The pathogens recovered from these sites will help fill in major gaps in our knowledge of disease transmission.
This year marked the conclusion of the joint directorship of Miyako Inoue (Anthropology), Kabir Tambar (Anthropology), and Jonathan Rosa (Education), assisted by graduate student coordinator Kerem Ussakli (Anthropology). The Center’s programming consisted of a series of four talks.

- Claudia Engel (Anthropology) & Nicole Coleman (Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis), “Ethnography and Digital Humanities: Opportunities and Challenges”


- Alex Mejía (Education, San Francisco State University), “Maya Youth Storying Proletarian Engagements in the San Francisco Bay Area”

Incoming Center Director Matthew Kohrman (Anthropology) and graduate student coordinator Jaime Landínez Aceros took the reins in summer 2023.
Fear in the Archive: Digital Analysis of Ethnographic Concepts in Asylum

with Valentina Ramia
Department of Anthropology

United Nations established that a refugee is a person who "has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, and who, due to such persecution or well-founded fear, is unwilling to return to his country of origin or to a place of previous residence..." (1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951). How fear is interpreted in immigration law in the United States is a legal narrative that has been constructed around the sociopolitical context of U.S. immigration history. The narrative is often framed within a binary of "legitimate" and "reasonable" fear, where "reasonable fear" is defined in terms of the legal, social, and economic context. This narrative is often used to distinguish refugees from asylum seekers. In this paper, we analyze how digital analysis can be used to explore the narratives of fear in the context of asylum law. We use qualitative and ethnographic data to explore how computational and quantitative methods can be used to analyze the narratives of fear in the context of asylum law. We also discuss how the narratives of fear are shaped by the socio-political context and how these narratives are used to shape legal decisions.
Graduate Student Support
American Democracy Fellowship

Program Launched in 2020

Fellow Spotlight

Political Science PhD Soyoung Lee (*23) will be spending the 2023–24 academic year as an America in the World Postdoctoral Fellow at Duke University before starting a tenure-track position at Yale University in the fall of 2024. Her research seeks to explain why some political issues come to be regarded as vital to national interest while others do not.
During her time at Stanford, Soyoung made unparalleled use of IRiSS’s programs. Drawing on the training she received in the Survey Lab and funding from an American Democracy Fellowship and a Research Data Grant, Lee conducted a series of survey experiments to test her theory of how something like a territorial dispute over an uninhabited island could suddenly become a high-value issue for the American public. She found that issues with diffusely spread benefits tended to be more highly and more widely supported by the public, regardless of the type of benefit involved. Interestingly, her experiments also found that economic benefits tended to be perceived as more likely to serve only certain domestic groups, and were thus less likely to constitute high-value issues.
Fellow Spotlight

Sociology PhD Bethany Nichols ('23) set out to understand the social factors that influence survivors’ resilience after experiencing significant trauma. Compiling an original dataset of interviews with 83 survivors of sexual trauma in the Bay Area, Nichols was able to highlight the ways that support networks and social institutions both facilitate and constrain resilience. Her qualitative analysis of these interviews sheds especially valuable light on women’s experiences of trauma and its effects on their economic, educational, and professional outcomes.
Since 2020, Bethany Nichols has also distinguished herself as a highly engaged mentor to community college participants in IRiSS’s RA Internship Program. After training interns Alex Luna, Anam Mughal, Rachel Pham, Maya Marquez-Garcia, and Isabel Schweitzer in trauma-informed interviewing, she empowered them to conduct their own analysis of her data. In Summer 2023, they presented their own original research, based on Nichols’s project, at a poster session in the courtyard of the Sarafan ChEM-H Building.
Meet former RA intern
Alexis Takagi
Year of Internship: 2017–18

As a student at Foothill College, Alexis worked directly with Carolyn Ybarra on a study of community integration and independent living for young adults with disabilities. She helped to turn a conventional Qualtrics survey into an interactive game that would be better suited to respondents with developmental disabilities. In the process of developing a pilot, Alexis gained valuable experience reviewing scholarly literature, securing institutional approval to work with human subjects, and analyzing data in specialized software like R and NVivo.

Alexis transferred to Santa Clara University.

Because of Carolyn and her mentorship through the IRiSS program, I am the researcher that I am today.
Looking forward:
Alexis sees herself working at a think tank or getting involved in policy-related work after graduation.

After completing her bachelor’s degree, Alexis enrolled in Santa Clara University’s School of Education and Counseling Psychology, where she is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in Social Justice Leadership.

Her dissertation will examine the academic retention of Latinx community college students, focusing specifically on the memorable messages they receive from institutional agents. She intends to draw on research methods that she first started learning as an RA Intern at IRISS: surveys, qualitative interviews and focus groups.

In 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom appointed Alexis to a two-year term as a student representative on the California Student Aid Commission, where she advocates in support of college affordability and other key issues affecting California’s student population.

This year, Alexis became the first-ever student appointee to the California Cradle-to-Career Data System, a statewide toolkit that will help students reach their educational roles and find their desired place in the workforce.
Leadership & Advisory Board
This year’s distinguished speaker was **David Kennedy**, Donald J. McLachlan Professor of History, Emeritus. His talk, “The Southern Border Crisis: Some Historical Perspectives on Immigration Past, Present, and Future,” put twenty-first public discourse on the so-called “border crisis” in the US in sociological and historical context.
Our fourth cycle of board briefings featured a mix of social scientists and a special presentation by University Architect David Lenox.

Political science professor Andy Hall briefed the Advisory Board on his recent research on emerging trends in out-of-state campaign donations.

Economics professor Ran Abramitzky previewed his new book, Streets of Gold: America’s Untold Story of Immigrant Success (with Leah Boustan).

Sociology professor Tomás Jiménez presented the key findings from his co-authored book States of Belonging, a comparative study of immigration policies, public opinion, and belonging in New Mexico and Arizona.

University Architect David Lenox introduced the board to the history behind the design of Stanford’s campus, and the long-range vision for its continued development.
Leadership

Michael Tomz
Director, Institute for Research in the Social Sciences
Director, Center for American Democracy

Chris Thomsen
Executive Director of IRiSS

David Grusky
Director, Center on Poverty & Inequality

Jens Hainmueller, David Laitin, and Jeremy Weinstein
Co-Directors, Immigration Policy Lab

Miyako Inoue, Jonathan Rosa, and Kabir Tambar
Co-Directors, Center for Global Ethnography

Krish Seetah
Director, The Omics Initiative
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Partner, Population Health Partners

Roger Clay
Former President, Insight Center for Community Economic Development

Karen Cook
Founding Director, Institute for Research in the Social Sciences
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Mary Dent
Former CEO of Green Dot Bank

Craig Falkenhagen
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Thomas Geiser
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Mark Vander Ploeg
Emeritus Board Member, The Spencer Foundation

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