

Rachel Kahn Best

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POSITIONS

Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Michigan	2021 -
Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Michigan	2014 - 2021
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholar in Health Policy Research, University of Michigan	2012 - 2014

EDUCATION

PhD in Sociology, University of California, Berkeley	2012
MA in Sociology, University of California, Berkeley	2007
BA with Highest Honors, Sociology and Anthropology, Swarthmore College	2004

BOOK

Rachel Kahn Best, 2019. *Common Enemies: Disease Campaigns in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Outstanding Contribution to Political Sociology Award, Political Sociology Section, American Sociological Association
- Reviewed in *British Journal of Sociology* 71:1044-45; *International Sociology* 35(5):563-566; *Mobilization* 25(3):428-29; *The Lancet: Infectious Diseases* 20(5):552

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Linda Hamilton Krieger, Catherine Fisk, Rachel Kahn Best, Yan Fang, and Diana Reddy, 2027. "Diminishing Returns? Predicting Plaintiff Success in Federal Disability Discrimination in Employment Cases, 1979-2018." Forthcoming, *New York University Law Review*.

Rachel Kahn Best, 2026. “‘I Want to Worry About It’: How the drive to optimize health turns people away from their doctors.” *Social Science & Medicine* 407.

Alina Arseniev-Koehler and Rachel Kahn Best, 2025. “Disease Frames and their Consequences for Stigma and Medical Research Funds.” *Social Science & Medicine* 372.

Rachel Kahn Best, Yan Fang, Catherine Fisk, Linda Hamilton Krieger, and Diana Reddy, 2025. “Disputed and Disfavored: Pain, Mental Illness, and Invisible Conditions in Disability Discrimination Cases.” *Social Science & Medicine* 371.

Rachel Kahn Best and Alina Arseniev-Koehler, 2023. “The Stigma of Diseases: Unequal Burden, Uneven Decline.” *American Sociological Review* 88(5):938-969.

- Best Publication Award, Sociology of Mental Health Section, American Sociological Association

Rachel Kahn Best, Yan Fang, Catherine Fisk, Linda Hamilton Krieger, Todd Neece, and Diana Reddy, 2023. “Creative Confluence: Lauren Edelman’s Collaborations.” *Law and Society Review* 57(3):397-403.

Sandra R. Levitsky, Rachel Kahn Best, and Jessica Garrick, 2018. “‘Legality with a Vengeance:’ Reclaiming Distribution for Sociolegal Studies.” *Law and Society Review* 52(3):709-739.

Rachel Kahn Best, 2017. “Disease Campaigns and the Decline of Treatment Advocacy.” *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 42(3):425-457.

Hana E. Brown and Rachel Kahn Best, 2016. “Logics of Redistribution: Determinants of Generosity in Three Social Welfare Programs.” *Sociological Perspectives* 60(4):786-809.

Linda Hamilton Krieger, Rachel Kahn Best, and Lauren B. Edelman, 2015. “When ‘Best Practices’ Win, Employees Lose: Symbolic Compliance and Judicial Inference in Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Cases.” *Law and Social Inquiry* 40(4):843-879.

- Reprinted in *Civil Rights Litigation and Attorney Fees Annual Handbook* 32:333-371, Thomson Reuters.
- Law and Society Association Article Prize, Honorable mention

Rachel Kahn Best, 2012. “Disease Politics and Medical Research Funding: Three Ways Advocacy Shapes Policy.” *American Sociological Review* 77(5):780-803.

- Eliot Freidson Outstanding Publication Award, Medical Sociology Section, American Sociological Association

Rachel Kahn Best, Lauren B. Edelman, Linda Hamilton Krieger, and Scott R. Eliason, 2011. “Multiple Disadvantages: An Empirical Test of Intersectionality Theory in EEO Litigation.” *Law and Society Review* 45(4):991-1025.

Rachel Best, 2010. “Situation or Social Problem: The Influence of Events on Media Coverage of Homelessness.” *Social Problems* 57(1):74-91.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Zeina Mneimneh, Josh Pasek, Lisa Singh, Rachel Best, Leticia Bode, Elizabeth Bruch, Ceren Budak, Pam Davis-Kean, Katharine Donato, Nicole Ellison, Andrew Gelman, Erica Groshen, Libby Hemphill, William Hobbs, Brad Jensen, George Karypis, Jonathan Ladd, Amy O'Hara, Trivellore Raghunathan, Philip Resnik, Rebecca Ryan, Stuart Soroka, Michael Traugott, Brady T. West, and Stefan Wojcik, 2021. "Data Acquisition, Sampling, and Data Preparation Considerations for Quantitative Social Science Research Using Social Media Data." <https://psyarxiv.com/k6vyj/>

Rachel Kahn Best, 2019. "Pink Ribbon Awareness Campaigns Will Never Deliver Public Health." truthout.org, October 23rd, 2019.

Rachel Kahn Best, 2019. "The Trouble with Disease Awareness Campaigns." Oxford University Press blog, September 27th, 2019. <https://blog.oup.com/2019/09/the-trouble-with-disease-awareness-campaigns/>

Rachel Kahn Best, 2019. "Common Enemies: Why Americans Favor Single-Disease Campaigns." HistPhil blog, August 9th, 2019. <https://histphil.org/2019/08/09/common-enemies-why-americans-favor-single-disease-campaigns/>

Rachel Kahn Best, 2016. Review of *Not Tonight: Migraine and the Politics of Gender and Health* by Joanna Kempner. *American Journal of Sociology* 122(2):633-35.

Rachel Kahn Best, 2013. Review of *Contested Illnesses: Citizens, Science, and Health Social Movements* by Phil Brown, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Stephen Zavestoski, and the Contested Illnesses Research Group. *Contemporary Sociology* 42(2):226-227.

David L. Kirp and Rachel Best, 2007. "Life Way After Preschool." Pp. 50-75 in *The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-First Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

WRITING IN PROGRESS

Rachel Kahn Best and Zoe Chanin. "Healthy by Choice? How health control beliefs shape emotions, attitudes, and behaviors." Under review.

Rachel Kahn Best and Brett Kellett. "Who deserves help? How preventability shapes stigma for cancer, heart attacks, obesity, and substance use." Under review.

PRESENTATIONS

"I Want to Worry About It': How the drive to optimize health turns people away from their doctors." Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, 2026.

“Healthy by Choice? How health control beliefs shape emotions, attitudes, and behaviors.”
Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, 2026.

“The Meanings of Disease: Frames, Stigma, and their Causes and Consequences.”
Department of Sociology, Indiana University, 2025 (Invited).

“Disputed and Disfavored: Pain, Mental Illness, and Invisible Conditions in Disability
Discrimination Cases.”

- Center for the Study of Law and Society, University of California, Berkeley, 2024 (Invited).
- Annual Meeting of the Law and Society Association. Denver, CO, 2024.

“The Stigma of Diseases: Unequal Burden, Uneven Decline.”

- Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles, 2023 (Invited).
- Centre for Social Research in Health, University of New South Wales, 2024 (Invited).

“Diseases Unite Us, Diseases Divide Us.” Department of Sociology, Brown University, 2022 (Invited).

“Denying Uncertainty, Failing Patients: Comments on *Divided Bodies* by Abigail Dumes.”
University of Michigan, 2021.

Book Forum for *American Bonds: How Credit Markets Shaped a Nation*. Session organizer.
Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, 2021.

“Stigma by the Numbers: The Social Construction of Disease in News Media.”

- Culture Workshop, Department of Sociology, University of Notre Dame, 2020 (Invited).
- Measuring and Modeling Culture Workshop, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, 2020.
- Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, 2020 (accepted)

“Common Enemies: Disease Campaigns in America.”

- Department of Sociology, University of Notre Dame, 2020 (Invited).
- Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles, 2019 (Invited).
- School of Sociology, University of Arizona, 2019 (Invited).

“One Disease at a Time: Campaigning for Health in America.” Center for Social
Epidemiology and Population Health, University of Michigan, 2018 (Invited).

“Disease Advocacy and the Federal Research Budget.” Population Studies Center, University
of Michigan, 2017 (Invited).

“Prioritizing Publicity, Bypassing Prevention: The Trouble with Fighting One Disease at a Time.” Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Seminar Series, University of Michigan, 2016 (Invited).

“Disease Campaigns and the Decline of Treatment Advocacy.” Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. Seattle, WA, 2016.

“Disease Identity Politics and American Health Policy.” Conference on Political Institutions, University of Michigan, 2015.

Panelist discussing *The Black Power Movement and American Social Work* by Joyce Bell. University of Michigan, 2015.

“When Missions and Lobbying Diverge: Self-Censored Advocacy and the Health Policy Agenda.”

- Jensen Speaker Series. Department of Sociology, Duke University, 2014 (Invited).
- Annual Meeting of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research Program. Indianapolis, IN, 2014.

“The Rise of Disease Advocacy: How Illness Identities Became Interest Groups.” Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. New York, NY, 2013.

“Symbolic Compliance and Judicial Inference in Federal EEO Cases: How ‘Best Practices’ Win and Employees Lose.” (with Linda Krieger and Lauren Edelman).

- Annual Conference of the Research Group on Legal Diversity, American Bar Foundation. Chicago, IL, 2013.
- Annual Meeting of the Law and Society Association. Boston, MA, 2013.

“The Interdependence of Social Movements: Disease Advocacy as Zero-Sum Game or Synergy.”

- Interdisciplinary Consortium on Organizational Studies. University of Michigan, 2013 (Invited).
- Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. Denver, CO, 2012.

“Politicization and Politics: Disease Advocacy and Political Metrics, Beneficiaries, and Worthiness.” Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. Las Vegas, NV, 2011.

“Health Social Movement Disparities: Race, Gender, and Medical Research Funding.” Annual Meeting of the Research Committee on Social Stratification and Social Mobility of the International Sociological Association (RC28). Iowa City, IA, 2011.

“Devolution, Inequality, and Social Citizenship: State Variation in the Children’s Health Insurance Program.” (with Hana Brown). Annual Meeting of the Law and Society Association. San Francisco, CA, 2011.

“Disease Politics: Health Social Movements and Federal Medical Research Funding.”
Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. Atlanta, GA, 2010.

“Deserving Patients: Perceived Beneficiaries, Politics, and Culture.” Annual Meeting of the
Law and Society Association. Chicago, IL, 2010.

“Multiple Disadvantages: An Empirical Test of Intersectionality Theory in EEO Litigation.”
(lead author; with Lauren Edelman, Linda Krieger, and Scott R. Eliason).

- Stanford Law School, 2011 (Invited).
- Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. Atlanta, GA, 2010
- UCLA School of Law Critical Race Studies Symposium, Los Angeles, CA, 2010.
- Berkeley Law Faculty Workshop, 2010 (Invited).
- Center for the Study of Law and Society Speaker Series, 2009 (Invited).

“Health Social Movement Disparities: Race, Gender, and Disease Non-profits.”

- Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. San Francisco, CA, 2009.
- Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems. San Francisco, CA, 2009.

“Measuring Intersectional Disadvantages in Equal Employment Opportunity Litigation”
(lead author; with Lauren Edelman, Linda Krieger, and Scott R. Eliason). Annual
Meeting of the Law and Society Association. Denver, CO, 2009.

Discussant, Children in Crisis Conference, UC Berkeley, 2009.

“Shaky Footholds: The Effects of Social Origins on Employment Stability.” Annual Meeting
of the Research Committee on Social Stratification and Social Mobility of the
International Sociological Association (RC-28). Stanford, CA, 2008.

“The Academy and the Press: Reflecting on Tensions and Tradeoffs.” Annual Meeting of the
Pacific Sociological Association. (with Laura Mangels). Portland, OR, 2008.

“The Production of Doctrinal Capital in Employment Discrimination Litigation” (lead
author; with Lauren Edelman, Scott Eliason, and Linda Krieger). Annual Meeting of the
Law and Society Association. Montreal, Canada, 2008.

“Situation or Social Problem: The Influence of Events on Media Coverage of Homelessness.”
Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. New York, NY, 2007.

FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND GRANTS

Rackham Distinguished Graduate Mentor Award. University of Michigan. 2026.

Partnerships for Access, Community, and Excellence Fellowship. Rackham Graduate School,
University of Michigan. 2024.

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Best Publication Award, Section on the Sociology of Mental Health, American Sociological Association. For “The Stigma of Diseases: Unequal Burden, Uneven Decline.” (with Alina Arseniev-Koehler). 2024.

Michigan Sociology Faculty Recognition Award. 2023.

Class of 1923 Memorial Teaching Award, University of Michigan. 2021.

Outstanding Contribution to Political Sociology Award, Political Sociology Section, American Sociological Association. For *Common Enemies: Disease Campaigns in America*. 2020

Honorable Mention, Law and Society Association Article Prize. For “When ‘Best Practices’ Win, Employees Lose: Symbolic Compliance and Judicial Inference in Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Cases.” (with Linda Hamilton Krieger and Lauren B. Edelman). 2016

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Scholars in Health Policy Research Fellowship. University of Michigan, 2012-2014.

Eliot Freidson Outstanding Publication Award, Medical Sociology Section, American Sociological Association. For “Disease Politics and Medical Research Funding: Three Ways Advocacy Shapes Policy.” 2013.

Leo Lowenthal Fellowship. Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley, 2011.

Honorable Mention, Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Award, Collective Behavior and Social Movements Section of the American Sociological Association. For “Politicization and Politics: The Direct, Distributive, and Systemic Effects of Advocacy Organizations on Medical Research Funding.” 2011.

Berkeley Empirical Legal Studies Fellowship. Center for the Study of Law and Society, University of California, Berkeley, 2010.

Gertrude Jaeger Prize for best paper by a female graduate student in Sociology at UC Berkeley. For "Situation or Social Problem: The Influence of Events on Media Coverage of Homelessness," 2009.

Dean’s Normative Time Fellowship, University of California, Berkeley, 2009.

John J. Pisano Travel Grant. National Institutes of Health, 2008.

Graduate Summer Research Grant. Science, Technology, and Society Center, University of California, Berkeley, 2008.

Regents’ Intern Fellowship, University of California, Berkeley, 2004-2006.

Phi Beta Kappa, Swarthmore College, 2004.

Highest Honors, Swarthmore College, 2004.

Bramson Prize, awarded to a graduating senior for outstanding academic achievement in Sociology and Anthropology at Swarthmore College, 2004.

Sarah Kaighn Cooper Scholarship, awarded to the member of the junior class at Swarthmore College with the best record for scholarship, character, and influence, 2003.

TEACHING

Teaching Honors

Class of 1923 Memorial Teaching Award, University of Michigan. 2021.

Teagle/Spencer Teaching Fellow. UC Berkeley, Spring 2010.

Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award. UC Berkeley, 2009.

Teaching Experience

University of Michigan:

Sociology 210: Elementary Statistics

Sociology 310: Research Methods

Sociology 497: Proposal Writing

Sociology 498: Data Collection and Analysis

Sociology 499: Senior Honors

Sociology 500: First Year Graduate Proseminar in Sociology

Sociology 507: Logics and Strategies of Sociological Research Inquiry

Sociology 510: Statistics

Sociology 575: Sociology of Health and Healthcare (with Renee Anspach)

Sociology 595: Science and Politics

Sociology 800: Social Movements Workshop

Elsewhere:

Sociology 94: Sociology of Mass Communication. Mills College, Spring 2011

Sociology 155: Sociology of Illness and Medicine. UC Berkeley, Summer 2009

Sociology 5: Evaluation of Evidence. UC Berkeley, Fall 2008

DEPARTMENT AND UNIVERSITY SERVICE

University of Michigan Sociology Department:

Director of Graduate Studies, 2022-2026

Executive Committee, 2015-2016 and 2021-2022

Social Work Supervising Committee Liaison, 2020-2021

Colloquium Committee, 2019-2020

Graduate Admissions Committee, 2018-2019

Personnel Committee, 2016-2017

Lecturer Review Committee, 2014-2015

Other University of Michigan Service:

Michigan Humanities Emerging Research Scholars Program Mentor, 2017

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching Seminar on Preparing Future Faculty,
Panelist, 2016

University of Michigan Office of Research, Proposal Reviewer, 2013

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Awards Committee Member, Sociology of Mental Health Section, American Sociological Association, 2025.

Editorial Board, *Mobilization*, 2023-2026.

Editorial Board, *Sociological Theory*, 2019-2022.

Council Member, Political Sociology Section, American Sociological Association. 2018-2021.

Nominations Committee Chair, Medical Sociology Section, American Sociological Association. 2014-2016.

Nominations Committee Member, Theory Section, American Sociological Association. 2014.

Council Member, Sociology of Law Section, American Sociological Association. 2012-2014.

Editorial Board, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*. 2004-2005.

Reviewer

American Journal of Sociology

American Sociological Review

Biosocieties

BMC Health Services Research

Engaging Science, Technology, and Society

Global Public Health

Johns Hopkins University Press

Journal of the American Medical Association

Journal of Health and Social Behavior

Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law

Journalism

Law and Policy

Millbank Quarterly

Mobilization

National Science Foundation

PLOS ONE

Research Policy

Routledge, Taylor & Francis

Social Currents

Social Forces

Social Problems

Social Science and Medicine

Society and Mental Health

Socioeconomic Review

Sociological Forum

Sociological Quarterly

Sociological Theory

Sociology of Education

Socius

Stanford University Press

Theory and Society