We are pleased to announce that the Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center (SIRC) at Arizona State University’s School of Social Work received a five-year, $7.1 million award from The National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD), a center in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (award P20MD002316-01). The award establishes SIRC as a Center of Excellence focused on improving health and reducing health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S.-Mexico border region.

“Arizona’s minority communities follow national trends, which point to rapid population growth, overrepresentation in several disease categories, and lack of access to health services,” said Flavio F. Marsiglia, Ph.D., director of SIRC and the grant’s principal investigator. “We will partner with our communities and health care professionals to examine how cultural processes fundamentally affect disease and health outcomes. For example, understanding how strong family connections affect health may lead to new ways of preventing disease, delaying its onset and progress, and delivering more effective healthcare services.”

This renewable funding solidifies SIRC’s research agenda on cultural strengths and resiliency factors found to be characteristic of specific populations. The new Center’s clinical, behavioral, biological and social sciences research will also consider economic and social factors in health disparities. Models of prevention, intervention and health care delivery will be developed to reduce or eliminate disparities specifically in the areas of HIV/AIDS, mental health and substance abuse.

Research on protective cultural factors that buffer some ethnic minority communities against disease is sparse. The National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities selected SIRC for this nationally-competitive grant because of its foundation of prior research in culturally-grounded interventions in partnership with ethnic minority communities. SIRC, which was established in 2002 with support from the NIH/National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), is also known for its keepin’ it REAL program, a national model for drug resistance strategies among minority youth. SIRC’s prior research has focused mainly on Mexican Americans and American Indians. This new infusion of funding will support the inclusion of the next two largest minority populations in Arizona, Asian Americans and African Americans in the Center’s studies. The grant also aims to increase the number and capacity of researchers and professionals from health disparity populations who are trained in biomedical and behavioral research.

Dean Debra Friedman of the College of Public Programs, home of the new Center of Excellence, remarked, “Pulling together an interdisciplinary team to address critical social issues is SIRC’s hallmark, and this is no exception. Dr. Marsiglia has mobilized experts from nine disciplines, and together with more than 20 community partners, SIRC’s team will engage in research that promises to advance the health and well-being of minority communities in the
Southwest and beyond.”

The Center’s location provides an opportunity to assess the impact of a constant influx of immigration and rapidly growing disadvantaged groups. In 2003, the Arizona Department of Health Services rated Latino health “worse than average” in 22 of 70 categories and American Indian health “worse than average” in 39 of 70 categories. These two historical ethnic communities of the Southwest represent 30 percent of Maricopa County’s population. African Americans, who represent four percent of the county’s population, ranked “worse than average” in 53 out of 70 health indicators. While Asian Americans ranked the healthiest among ethnic groups in Arizona with only “worse than average” health indicators in five out of 70 areas, little information exists about this population’s health status, and they are the fastest growing minority group in the U.S. Elizabeth Ortiz de Valdez, M.D., president and CEO of Concilio Latino de Salud, Inc., a member of SIRC’s community advisory board noted, “Our organization has been able to enhance our capacity to serve diverse populations through collaborations with SIRC. We are convinced that this vital research can help remove barriers to access, utilize individual and family strengths, and address universal concerns such as gaps in serving minority populations and addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic.”

In addition to Marsiglia, Dr. Stephen Kulis, Ph.D., is the center’s co-Principal Investigator and director of research (School of Social and Family Dynamics). Other co-principal investigators include Eddie Brown, Ph.D., professor and director of American Indian Studies; Felipe Castro, Ph.D., professor, Department of Psychology; Angela Chia-Chen Chen, Ph.D., RN, APRN-BC, assistant professor, College of Nursing and Healthcare Innovation; Olga I. Davis, Ph.D., associate professor, Hugh Downs School of Human Communication; Mary Gillmore, Ph.D., professor and director, School of Social Work. Other investigators are: Steven Haas, Ph.D., assistant professor, School of Social and Family Dynamics; Cecilia Menjivar, Ph.D., assistant professor, School of Social and Family Dynamics; Michael Niles, Ph.D., assistant professor, School of Social Work; Barbara Robles, Ph.D., associate professor, School of Social Work; and Scott Yabiku, Ph.D., assistant professor, School of Social and Family Dynamics. Patricia Dustman, Ed.D., is the center’s Director of Development and Implementation; Tanya Nieri, Ph.D. is the Coordinator of Research, and Ms. Migs Woodside is the Senior Advisor and Mr. Paul Christensen is the Center Manager.

**Healthy Families / Familias Sanas: SIRC & MIHS receive award to improve interconception care among Latina mothers**

The aim of this study is to increase Latino mothers’ access to inter-conception care to enhance their well-being and that of their children. This project is a collaboration between Maricopa Integrated Health System (MIHS) and SIRC researchers. The project will develop, implement, and test a psychosocial educational intervention with Latina mothers attending a prenatal clinic. The study has four objectives: (1) To identify assets for and barriers to access to prenatal and inter-conception care among Latina clients across the acculturation continuum; (2) To identify cultural norms, values and practices across the acculturation spectrum influencing the utilization of prenatal and inter-conception care by Latina mothers; (3) To develop a culturally grounded health education intervention for prenatal and postpartum Latina clients across the acculturation continuum; and (4) To increase utilization of inter-conception care by Latina mothers through a culturally grounded health education intervention.

The intervention will be evaluated through a randomized controlled trial measuring participants’ clinic visits during interconception as well as other well-being measures of the mothers and newborns.

The study is funded by the Hispanic Health Services Grant Program through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (1H0CMS030207)

**Continuing Externally Funded Research Projects**

**Latino Acculturation & Health Project**

The Latino Acculturation and Health Project (LAHP) is a collaborative study between research teams at Arizona State University and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. The study examines how acculturation plays a role in the families’ coping strategies, family dynamics, social networks, and cognitive processes and how these processes are related to aggression, suicidal ideation, and alcohol, tobacco, and substance use. One long term aim is reducing health disparities among this group. The sample consists of 150 families in the greater Phoenix area, and 150 families in North Carolina. Researchers collected data from one adult and one adolescent 14-18 years of age in each participating family.

LAHP is a 3-yr study funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, award #K01 CE000496-03. The project is in its third year, and data collection has been completed. The research team is now working on manuscript development.

ASU PI: Flavio F. Marsiglia, Ph.D.; ASU Project Coord.: Monica Parsai, MSW.

UNC PI: Dr. Paul Smokowski.

**Drug Resistance Strategies: keepin’ it REAL for 5th Graders**

This NIDA-funded study (award #R01 DA005629-09A2) is a 5-year, longitudinal randomized trial of an adapted and enhanced version of the school-based substance use prevention program keepin’ it REAL, involving 7 Phoenix school districts, 32 schools, 96 teachers, and over 2000 students. Study aims are: (1) to describe the development of ecological risk and resiliency factors as Mexican/Mexican American students transition from 5th to 8th grade and undergo acculturation processes; (2) to enhance the existing 7th grade keepin’ it REAL multicultural intervention (a SAMSHA model program) by increasing the dosage by adding acculturation-related material, and by examining the most efficacious age of intervention, 5th versus 7th grade; and (3) to examine ecological risk and resiliency factors, such as
parental monitoring, perceived discrimination and acculturation stress, as moderators of prevention effects. Surveys are conducted at several points in time, including a pre-test and 5 post-tests, with the last occurring in the Spring semester of 8th grade.

ASU PIs: Flavio F. Marsiglia, Ph.D.;
Stephen Kulis, Ph.D.
Penn State PI: Michael Hecht, Ph.D.

**International Initiatives**

**Guanajuato Youth and Family Health Project**

SIRC and the Sistema Avanzado de Bachillerato y Educación Superior-SABES (Alternative Secondary School System of the State of Guanajuato) held a conference in October 2007 to present preliminary findings of the project “Guanajuato Youth and Family Health”.

The findings are based on a probabilistic sample of students attending public high schools in rural and semi-rural communities in the central Mexican state of Guanajuato. In-school surveys were completed by 702 students in February 2007.

The study collected data on demographic variables, access to medical care, family migration patterns and the youths’ health risk behaviors. Some of the health issues addressed at the conference are factors that contribute to adolescents’ unintentional injuries, exposure to violence at home and in the community, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use, unintended pregnancy, dietary behaviors, physical activity, depression and suicide.

ASU PIs: Flavio F. Marsiglia, Ph.D.;
Stephen Kulis, Ph.D.; Hilda García, Ph.D.

Guanajuato Co-PI: Dr. Diana Alvarez

**Monterrey, México**

In collaboration with Mexican researchers at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, SIRC is continuing culturally-specific drug abuse research in Monterrey, Mexico. The project is focused on studying the etiology of youth drug use in Monterrey and adapting and testing an existing prevention curriculum, *keepin’ it REAL*. The Monterrey project is in the data analysis and manuscript development stage.

ASU PIs: Flavio F. Marsiglia, Ph.D.;
Stephen Kulis, Ph.D.

**Universidad Autónoma de Monterrey PI:**
Ma. Gregorio Martínez

**The Galicia-Spain project**

The research partnership between the Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (USC) and SIRC continues to produce important articles based on the survey conducted with Spanish and Latin American immigrant youth in Galicia-Spain. In order to continue the joint analysis and dissemination efforts SIRC is hosting Dr. Paula Villar from USC Department of Psychology as SIRC’s International Visiting Research Professor during Fall 2007. Stop by SIRC and say *hola* to Dr. Villar.

ASU PIs: Flavio F. Marsiglia, Ph.D.

USC PI: Ma Angeles Luengo, Ph.D.

**Research Incubator Initiatives**

**Latina Stress Pilot**

*Stress Across the Borderlands* is a pilot study of stress among immigrant Mexican women living in the Valley of the Sun. The study collected psychosocial and biological data on 100 women during the period of February to June 2007. The bio-markers used in the study included blood pressure and heart rate variability. The major aim of the study is to investigate whether psychosocial measures of stress correlated with bio-markers. The study received funds from the Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center.

ASU PIs: Flavio F. Marsiglia, Ph.D.; Kathy Matt, Ph.D.

Project Coordinator: Monica Parsai, MSW

**HIV/AIDS**

This study group leads community-based research projects in partnership with local agencies with an emphasis on investigating the cultural dimensions of HIV/AIDS prevention. Partners include TERROS Behavioral Health Services and Concilio Latino de Salud.

SIRC has recently undertaken a research partnership with Dr. Bertram Jacobs from the School of Life Sciences assessing the impact of a college course on students’ HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors through a survey.

**SIRC Hosts 5th Annual Research Conference**

The Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center hosted our 5th Annual Conference on April 20, 2007. The conference was held at the Downtown Phoenix Campus of Arizona State University. The conference’s theme *Drug abuse prevention and treatment: intersections of gender and ethnicity*, stimulated intellectual exchanges among 100 participants from ASU, other universities, and community organizations. The keynote address, *Issues in the Treatment of Drug Abuse among Women*, was presented by Dr. Bonnie Carlson, Chair of the Department of Social Work at ASU West.

SIRC would like to congratulate those recognized for their commitment and leadership to evidence based prevention research. Anne Marie Cardinal, M.S.W., with Med-Pro at Osborn School District received the SIRC Leadership Award for outstanding leadership and support of school based research with children and youth. Manuel Medina, Ph.D., with TERROS Behavioral Health Service Inc., received the SIRC Leadership Award for outstanding leadership and support of evidence based research with communities of the southwest, while Dale Rinard and TERROS received SIRC Community Partner Appreciation Award in recognition of their commitment and leadership in providing evidence based prevention services to communities of the Southwest, and their continued support of SIRC.
HOT OFF THE PRESS!
A sample of recent SIRC publications


For a complete listing of our publications and presentations, visit our website at: [http://sirc.asu.edu](http://sirc.asu.edu)