On September 30, 2007, the Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center (SIRC) at Arizona State University’s School of Social Work received a P20 five-year grant 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 an Exploratory Center of Excellence focused on improving health and reducing, eliminating or preventing health disparities in the areas of HIV/AIDS, mental health and drug abuse co-morbidity among racial and ethnic minorities in the Southwest region of the United States.

SIRC’s prior research has focused mainly on Mexican Americans and American Indians. This new infusion of funding supports the inclusion of the next two largest minority populations in Arizona, Asian Americans and African Americans in the Center’s studies.

Just six months into SIRC’s elevated status as a Center of Excellence it has made measurable progress by establishing research groups, organizing Core teams, preparing the Advisory Boards, uniting our community partners and positioning the Executive Council to address the Center’s key aims in health and health disparities.

The four core groups include the Administrative Core; the Research Core; the Research Education and Training Core (RETC) and the Community Engagement Outreach Core (CE/OC).

The CE/OC has expanded the Center’s outreach efforts and actively recruited additional community partners. Some of the key institutions engaged in minority health disparities issues within SIRC’s Center of Excellence are: Chicanos por la Causa, Concilio Latino de Salud (HIV/AIDS), Maricopa Integrated Health Services (hospital), Medpro (hospital), Osborn School District, Phoenix Indian Center, Terros (mental health), Office of Arizona Health Disparities Center within the Arizona Department of Health Services and the Asian Pacific Community in Action.

Project Leader for the CE/OC is Dr. Olga Davis.

The RETC group’s mission is to develop the next generation of health disparities researchers and scholars through research training and education. Recruitment activity continues for doctoral students, health disparities interns and early career faculty positions. The post doctoral position has been filled scheduled to start in August, 2008. Project Leader is Dr. Mary Gillmore.

The Research Core’s focus is addressing knowledge gaps pertaining to cultural processes and fundamental causes affecting health and health disparities. In line with it’s focus, the RETC group has formed a new Statistical Work Group (SWORG) for faculty and students conducting advanced statistical analysis on health disparities studies. The Research Core is currently assisting the two new main studies and a pilot for the P20 grant. Project Leader for the Research Core is Dr. Stephen Kulis.

The Administrative Core aids in organizing and coordinating activities and events in support of all the Core groups.

SIRC Establishes Firm Foundation as an Exploratory Center of Excellence

SIRC Spring 2008 Events

3/7: Terry Kennedy, MSW, School of Social Work- “Geriatric Education Centers: Perfect Storm or Perfect Example of Market Failure?”

3/26: Dr. Hilda Garcia Perez, Latina/ Latino Studies—CLAS- “Families, Stress, and Substance Use in Guanajuato, MX”


4/9: Monica Parsai, MSW, School of Social Work- "Qualitative Methods in Health Disparities Research"

4/25: 6th Annual SIRC Research Conference—“Reducing Health Disparities through Family Intervention Research” - Dr. Hilda Pantin, University of Miami—Dr. Guillermo Prado, Florida International University—Arizona Club—Chase Tower Building———8:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.
Dr. Flavio F. Marsiglia, Ph.D., is the director of SIRC and the grant’s principal investigator. 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., associate 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, Ms. Migs Woodside is the Senior Advisor and Mr. Paul Christensen is the Center Manager.

PARENT COMPONENT
A Supplemental Parent Education Intervention to Enhance the Efficacy of keepin’ it REAL

SIRC responded immediately to the P20 award by launching two main studies and one pilot. The Parent Component Study is a supplemental parent education intervention to enhance the efficacy of keepin’ it REAL. This study examines the effects of enhancing the quality of the parent-child relationship as a general approach for improving family function and youth skill building to reduce youth risks of alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use. Recent perspectives on ways to address high-risk lifestyles has encouraged strengthening families given that families serve as sources of support, guidance, and problem solving that can directly discourage youth from using alcohol, tobacco and drugs, and from engaging in risk behaviors. Eliminating or reducing risk factors while enhancing protective factors constitutes a known approach for preventing the early use of alcohol and tobacco, the subsequent use of illegal drugs, and the conduct of other risk behaviors that promote illness and disability. By strengthening parent-child communication and promoting adaptive family function, the strategy of teaching parental problem solving to Latino/Hispanic parents can promote effective acculturation and integration into mainstream American social networks. As parents exercise culturally relevant parenting skills that are consistent with promoting the health and well-being of their children, they can serve as direct sources of influence in reducing their children’s risks for using alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, and for engaging in other health-compromising behaviors. The proposed research will adapt a culturally relevant parenting program for Latino families, while also gathering new information on critical life issues affecting Latino/Hispanic and other minority parents and their children.

We have conducted four focus groups (a total of 16 participants) to examine and evaluate the emerging curriculum. One set of focus groups were conducted with Spanish speaking parents and the other with bilingual but mostly English speaking parents. Parental feedback from these focus group sessions provided very rich data. A prominent theme that emerged from these parental focus groups was a lack of aids in facilitating communication with their children regarding high risk behaviors.

To provide an aid for parents, a curriculum is under development with six lessons in draft format. We continue to review the drafts to incorporate feedback and comments from informants/focus group participants. Two school liaisons have been hired and are working on collecting important information regarding the schools that will be participating in the trial, and on the communities in which these schools are located. One facilitator has been hired, and is currently becoming familiar with the curriculum and participating in its development.

Expected completion of this study is May, 2008. Project Leader for the Parent Component Study is Monica Parsai.

AMERICAN INDIAN PROJECT
Culturally-Specific Substance Abuse Prevention for Urban American Indian Youth

Morbidity and mortality rates of many preventable conditions are disproportionately high in many American Indian (AI) populations. Well documented health disparities for AI adults and youth related to abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs extend to the growing urban AI population, who now constitute over 60% of the total AI population. AI youth report higher rates, earlier onset, more severe consequences, yet less perceived risk of harm of substance use compared to their non-native counterparts. To thwart the early onset and aftermath of substance abuse, primary prevention efforts have been undertaken with AI youth in several U.S. regions. But programs have not explicitly targeted urban AI youth using rigorous culturally grounded prevention methods. The proposed study draws upon the project team’s research on the etiology of substance use among AI youth of the urban southwest to conduct translational research that recognizes salient risk and resiliency factors identified by these youth, social and relational contexts that expose them to substances, and their culturally appropriate drug resistance strategies. The first aim of the study is to create a culturally grounded substance abuse prevention intervention targeting urban AI youth in 7th and 8th grades through a modification of a SAMSHA Model universal prevention program, keepin it REAL.

The key activities accomplished in the initial months of the grant include recruiting and orienting the project team, which now includes all the proposed members namely: Faculty PIs, expert curriculum designer; two doctoral level 50% FTE Graduate Research Associates; school site implementation director and a logistics coordinator.

A Steering Committee has been recruited, composed of 8 American Indian community leaders representing two school districts, the major local provider of services...
to urban American Indians, and tribal or inter-tribal councils. Two committee meetings have been held to explain the nature of the study, to solicit feedback on its design, and to identify community members who may be recruited for the adult focus group phase of the study. Steering Committee members provided culturally specific feedback that is being integrated into the first draft version of the curriculum. The Steering Committee also suggested names and strategies for recruiting focus group participants, and commented on formats that would make the focus groups more effective.

The SIRC team is preparing for two adult focus groups with American Indian parents and community leaders as expert informants from whom we hope to elicit feedback on the goals and methods of the study, and curriculum issues with the model prevention program (content and format) that is the basis for the adaptation. A draft agenda for the focus groups has been prepared, potential participants have been identified and contacted, and two focus groups are already scheduled.

The team is also coordinating with Phoenix Indian Center and the Washington School District. These are the local community agencies that conduct the after school programs with urban American Indian youth, and the school district from which middle school students will be recruited to participate in the pilot and randomized control trial phases of the study. Principal Investigator for this study is Dr. Stephen Kulis.

**ADD HEALTH**

Pilot Study: Longitudinal pathways linking acculturation and family factors to risky sexual behavior, substance use and depressive symptoms among Mexican-American and Chinese-American youth

There has been a 57% growth in the U.S. immigrant population in the last decade, and majority of immigrant youth have Latino or Asian origins, mostly Mexican or Chinese, representing unprecedented cultural and linguistic diversity in the U.S. The well-being of U.S. society will increasingly depend upon children who are currently living in immigrant and racial/ethnic minority families. Despite ample evidence suggesting that racial/ethnic minorities suffer disproportionately from preventable diseases resulting from risky behaviors established during childhood and adolescence, health issues of Mexican American and Chinese American youth have not been adequately addressed.

Utilizing data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), this pilot study aims to examine the level of acculturation and family factors in relation to Mexican-American and Chinese-American youth’s risky sexual behavior, substance use and depressive symptoms over time. HIV/STDs, substance use and mental health disorders have disproportionately affected racial and ethnic minorities, thus the critical need to develop effective culturally appropriate interventions to prevent these serious health problems. Gaps in prior research include research on Chinese-Americans (perhaps because of the “model minority” assumption); and, a focus on protective factors. Finally, Mexican and Chinese cultures are family-oriented, however there is very little understanding about how family factors interact with adolescents’ acculturation level to influence their risky sexual behavior, substance use, and depressive symptoms over time among these groups.

**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 pre-natal 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 inter-conception 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)

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

MIHS co-PI: Dean Coonrod, M.D.

**Research Incubator Initiatives**

**Latina Stress Pilot**

*S 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:
WHO IS SIRC?

- 25 Faculty Research Associates
- 19 Graduate Students
- 22 Community Partners
- International Scientific Advisory Board
- Funded by NIH/NCMHD P20MD002316 and ASU

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HOT OFF THE PRESS!

A sample of recent SIRC publications


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