

## Welcome Message from the DNC Chair



It gives me great pleasure to introduce the second issue of DNC Outreach, which is the annual spring newsletter of the Society for Prevention Research Diversity Network Committee.








**Phillip Graham** In the current issue of DNC Outreach, we introduce a new piece called, DNC Commentary, for which the steering committee developed a list of current events that may have great implications for prevention science, particularly for underserved populations. Among the list of current events, we chose to spotlight one particular event (obesity prevention in “nanny states”) for the present issue, and we were delighted to have the current SPR President, Felipe González Castro, provide us with his views on this particular obesity-prevention strategy.

In addition, the current issue summarizes several of the DNC-sponsored activities from last year’s 2013 SPR Annual Meeting and then highlights the DNC-sponsored events that will take place at this upcoming 2014 SPR Annual Meeting. I hope you can join us at this year’s meeting because we have a DNC-sponsored symposium and a poster session that we encourage you to attend, as well as the DNC reception and the SPR Fundraising Dance (proceeds help pay for the minority travel awards).

If you see me or any of the DNC steering committee members at this year’s SPR Annual Meeting, please feel free to introduce yourself to us. We look forward to seeing you in Washington, DC.

Sincerely,

DNC Chair Phillip Graham

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# DNC Commentary

This year, the DNC steering committee developed a list of current events (e.g., obesity prevention and “nanny states,” legalization of marijuana in certain states, sequestration, etc.) that have been widely covered in the news. Afterward, we asked **Felipe González Castro**, the current President of the Society for Prevention Research, to comment on one of those events and discuss how it might affect prevention science. Read below to see what he has to say.

**Current Event:** “In the news, there seems to be backlash against the so-called ‘nanny states,’ where laws have been passed to limit the size of sodas and other unhealthy-food purchases. What’s your take on this backlash, and what are some implications for prevention science?”

## “Weighing In” on Obesity Prevention: Can Prevention Science Outweigh Commercial Appeals?



**Felipe González Castro**

Obesity has now rivaled tobacco consumption as one of the major “causes” of preventable disease and disability. Obesity has become an epidemic in the US and worldwide, and it is well accepted that obesity operates as a risk factor for several health-compromising problems

including type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Clearly, the health of the nation calls for reversing this imbalance in caloric consumption to caloric expenditure, which produces fat storage and weight gain. Furthermore, weight gain does not necessarily connote the consumption of calories from nutritious foods. Indeed, it may indicate the opposite, especially among vulnerable and low-income populations.

Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s recent effort to impose a tax on the consumption of “big gulp” soda beverages - those exceeding 44 ounces, serves as a policy-driven

intervention to impose the equivalent of a tax on cigarette consumption. Essentially, it aims to “limit the size of sodas,” as an effort to “limit the size of the people consuming them.” This logic appears to parallel the perspective that cigarette taxes have produced demonstrable reductions in cigarette consumption, although even these taxes affect the behavior of less addicted smokers; heavy smokers keep smoking- they just have to pay more to do so. Critics of Bloomberg’s initiative have ridiculed this approach, referring to it as “nanny state” legislation whereby caretakers will tell U.S. Americans what to do in an effort to “save them from themselves.” These counter attacks feature the notion that U.S. Americans have every right to make their own decisions, free from intrusive “nannies,” and this includes the inalienable rights of eating and drinking themselves to death.

Is ravenous consumption to an early death really what U.S. Americans want? Yes, we are a “consumer nation,” but do we really prefer “death by chocolate?” Moreover, if obesity is the product of excessive food consumption, we aren’t the only ones on earth indulging in this manner. Aren’t we

just following the worldwide norm - everyone else on earth is doing it, so it can't be all bad. From a more rational perspective, how does the manner in which this issue is framed influence the prospects of ending obesity as "a growing problem?" Moreover, if it is difficult to legislate morality, will we be any more successful in legislating sensible eating? Regarding this quandary, it can be noted that tobacco is not a nutritional metabolic fuel, one that is needed to stay alive (although some smokers may think so). By contrast, the consumption of carbohydrates, fats and proteins, which are metabolic fuels, is essential for sustaining life.

Re-framing this discourse regarding dietary practices in a more sensible manner is quite important. How can we frame this discourse in accord with a rational, scientific and cultural understanding of the genuine needs and wants of consumer groups for a greater likelihood of "winning the war against obesity?" Politically motivated ways of framing such public health issues, often from detractors who value profits over health, will not generate a public health solution to

this problem and will likely contribute to perpetuating it.

Prevention scientists need to "weigh in" on these issues by framing public health issues, such as obesity, in terms that appeal to the genuine healthy self-interests of diverse consumer groups. This means fully understanding the cultural beliefs and practices of these diverse consumer groups, while recognizing the pre-potent influences of immediate rewards from savory self-indulgence, and the less powerful influences of the promise of future health benefits. Also needed is recognizing that changing environmental conditions, such as "food deserts" is essential, given that these environments limit access to affordable and nutritious foods. If there is a "war on obesity" it will need to be fought on several multi-level fronts including: the individual, the familial, within local communities, and with rational legislation at the local and national levels. This realization offers prevention scientists with plenty to consider in designing the most efficacious, and also the most comprehensive, public health interventions which would ultimately succeed in eradicating the public health problem of obesity. ■

**join us!**

## 2014 SPR DNC Reception

**join us!**

You are Cordially Invited to the Society for Prevention Research's

### Diversity Network Reception.



ALL ARE WELCOME!

Wednesday, May 28, 2014

8:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Refreshments will be provided.

Sponsored by the William T. Grant Foundation and New Connections: Increasing Diversity of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Programming.

*Come and share in an evening of fellowship and networking opportunities for SPR's diverse membership. This includes opportunities to become more involved in SPR's Diversity Network Committee, as well as opportunities to identify others interested in conducting prevention science research with racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse populations in the US and across international communities.*



WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

# DNC Symposium at the 2013 Annual Meeting

Written By David Córdoba



David Córdoba

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) represents a major public health concern globally. Despite efforts aimed at curbing the tide of HIV acquisition and transmission, rates remain alarmingly high. Indeed, even more disconcerting is the fact that certain subpopulations, including ethnic and racial

minorities and men who have sex with men, are disproportionately affected (CDC, 2013). The Diversity Network Committee (DNC) hosted a research symposium at the 21st annual conference of the Society for Prevention Research, which took place on May 29, 2013, in San Francisco, CA. The symposium, entitled, “HIV Prevention among Gay Men of Color,”



provided a global perspective on HIV among men of color who have sex with men. Phillip W. Graham, PhD, RTI International, and David Córdoba, PhD, University of Michigan, served as session Chair and Discussant, respectively.

George Ayala, The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF), began the session by highlighting the numerous contextual challenges men who have sex with men (MSM) have, including persistent stigma, discrimination and violence, to accessing appropriate HIV prevention services. In response to these challenges, Ayala described a community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) approach to implementing the Global Men’s Health and Rights survey (GMHR). The GMHR aims to

measure factors associated with access to traditional HIV-related services. His research suggests that, relative to high-income countries, access to condoms, lubricants, HIV testing, and HIV treatment are significantly lower in low-income countries. Additionally, homophobia, provider stigma and negative consequences for being out as MSM were significantly associated with reduced access to services. Conversely, community engagement and comfort with health service providers were associated with increased access.

Equally important is to better understand predictors of survey dropout. Keletso Makofane explained the ways in which internet-based HIV behavioral research shows tremendous promise to engage MSM for whom homophobia



Keletso Makofane

limits the possibility of participating in in-person research. Unfortunately, a significant proportion (i.e., 30-40%) drop out of online surveys before answering the last question. Predictors of Survey Drop-out in a Global Survey of Diverse MSM, was presented by Keletso Makofane, The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF). Aimed at developing a fuller understanding of predictors associated with survey dropout, Makofane utilized the Gay Men’s Health and Rights Survey with a sample of 5,779 MSM from 165 countries and conducted in 6 languages, to measure the overall rate of survey drop-out and estimate relationships of survey language and country income with survey drop-out. Findings indicate that 38% of respondents dropped out of the survey, most (~90%) of whom dropped out prior to answering half of the 142 questions. Relative to participants in high-income countries, those from low-, lower middle-, and upper middle-

income countries were more likely to dropout. Furthermore, when compared to English-, Chinese-, and Georgian-language respondents were more likely to drop-out, while Spanish-, French-, and Russian-language respondents were less likely to dropout.



Glenn-Milo Santos, PhD, University of California, San Francisco and Department of Public Health, San Francisco, presented on “Syndemic Conditions Associated with Increased HIV

Risk in Global Sample of MSM.” The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship between syndemic conditions—defined as a cluster of interconnected psychosocial health conditions—and sexual risk behaviors and HIV prevalence among MSM in the 2012 Gay Men’s Health and Rights survey. The research team assessed the syndemic conditions of depression, substance use, violence, and external homophobia. The researchers found that greater syndemic conditions were associated with increased HIV risk behaviors and HIV-status, indicating that intertwining syndemics may be synergistically operating to drive the HIV epidemic among MSM.

Sonya Arreola, PhD, RTI International, ended the session by discussing sexual happiness as an important indicator of sexual health. Arreola’s presentation, “Structural, Community and

Individual Factors Related to Sexual Happiness: Sexual Health among a Global Community of MSM,” examined a factor analyses of sexual happiness items. The researchers identified two subscales, including satisfaction with quantity, and satisfaction with quality of sex. The researchers also explore relationships between structural-, community- and individual-level variables, and the quantity and quality of sexual happiness. Findings indicate that homophobia, internalized homophobia, and psychological distress were negatively related with the quantity subscale of sexual happiness; whereas community engagement was positively related with the quantity subscale of sexual happiness. Additionally, homophobia, internalized homophobia, and psychological distress were negatively related with the quality subscale of sexual happiness; whereas community engagement was positively related with the quality subscale of sexual happiness.

In summary, although HIV directly or indirectly impacts all people globally, MSM are disproportionately affected. The DNC research symposium focused on this vulnerable and overlooked population. The presenters demonstrated the urgent need to remove barriers to and support facilitators of HIV service access. The GMHR is among the first surveys aimed at developing a better understanding of factors affecting MSM from a global perspective. The long-term goal of this program of research is to eliminate HIV health disparities experienced by this population and work toward health equity. ■

### **WANT TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE DNC?**

**Membership in the DNC is open to anyone interested in the DNC’s mission. All members, however, are encouraged to become members of SPR and only DNC members who also are SPR members may participate in DNC elections. If you are interested in joining the DNC, e-mail the Chair Phillip Graham at [dncinfo@preventionresearch.org](mailto:dncinfo@preventionresearch.org).**

# 2013 SPR Minority Annual Travel Awardees

Each year, the DNC is responsible for reviewing the applications and awarding students and researchers of underrepresented racial/ethnic minority groups travel funds to attend the SPR Annual Meeting. The funds are in part supported by tickets sold at the Annual SPR Fundraising Dance to benefit minority travel awards. In 2013 the awardees were recognized at the DNC reception. Featured here is the list of awardees, as well as, statements from awardees regarding their experiences at the annual meeting. ■

## **Tahnee Baker**

*Ph.D. Student*

*Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center  
Arizona State University*

## **Sharon Borja**

*Ph.D. Student*

*School of Social Welfare  
University of Washington*

## **Courtney Coffey**

*Program Associate*

*HIV Workforce Development  
Institute for Public Health Innovation*

## **Ana Maria del Rio Gonzalez**

*Ph.D. Student*

*Psychology Department  
The George Washington University*

## **Nicholet Deschine**

*Project Manager/Research Analyst*

*Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center  
Arizona State University*

## **Vanessa Errisuriz**

*Graduate Student*

*Kinesiology and Health Education  
The University of Texas at Austin*

## **Enrique Ortega**

*Assistant Professor*

*Health Sciences*

*California State University Dominguez Hills*

## **Marcella Smith**

*Ph.D. Student*

*Social Work*

*University of Texas at Arlington*

## **Cheng Wen**

*Ph.D. Student*

*Preventive Medicine*

*University of Southern California*

*“Last year's SPR meeting was one of the best conference experiences I have had as a doctoral student. I appreciated the opportunity to engage with researchers from various disciplines, who all have a unique and significant take on prevention science. Many of the talks and poster sessions I attended were stimulating and emphasized the innovative techniques emerging in this field.”*

• Vanessa Errisuriz

*“Last year's SPR annual meeting proved to be one of the more fruitful academic experiences I had last year. I met a number of foreign investigators which were interested in my line of research and we eventually formed formal collaborations between our institutions. This was possible thanks to programs such as the SPR minority award which afforded us the opportunity to attend the annual meeting.”*

• Enrique Ortega

*“The SPR Annual Conference brings together researchers from various disciplines and different places of the world, willing to share our passion for prevention research. The conference facilitates interdisciplinary learning and collaboration, and is certainly an enriching environment for those of us who are starting a career in this field.”*

• Ana Maria del Rio Gonzalez

*“I attended the SPR conference for the first time last year and it was an amazing experience. The conference gave me the opportunity to network with people from other disciplines as well as people at different stages of their careers (students, post docs, professionals), which was very helpful as I prepare to go through these stages myself. I want to thank the SPR Diversity Network Committee for granting me this award that made this experience possible.”*

• Marcella Smith

*“Attending SPR during my first year of doctoral training was eye-opening. Although I was only able to attend the conference for one day due to schedule conflicts, my experiences at SPR conference really widened my perspectives in research methodology. Moreover, the exposure at SPR conference also greatly helped me to anchor my research interests greatly. I would've missed all these great experiences without the support from the SPR Minority Annual Travel Award.”*

• Cheng Wen

## In the Spotlight: Dawn Witherspoon

**Dawn Witherspoon** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at The Pennsylvania State University.



### **How did you hear about SPR, and what made you decide to attend the conference?**

I first learned about SPR when I was in graduate school at New York University. Ed Seidman, one of my mentors, attended the conference. However, I was never able to attend. When I came to PSU, I began to collaborate with Emilie Smith, and SPR is one of the major conferences that she attends to disseminate her work with the LEGACY Together project. Given my collaboration with her on this project (and subsequent NIDA Diversity Supplement), I decided that SPR was an important professional society for me to be a part of so I attended my first conference and presented my first poster at SPR in 2013.

### **How has your SPR membership (including attending the conference) helped you in your work with underserved populations?**

As a member of SPR, I have attended the conference and have access to a diverse network of prevention scientists from whom I can get valuable advice and feedback. The conference is a wonderful forum for scholars to learn more about the latest research and methods within the prevention field. At the annual conference, there are numerous symposia and poster sessions that highlight cutting edge research, which involves diverse and underserved populations. Further, the workshops offer professional development opportunities for early career scholars to learn more about recruitment strategies as well as about funding mechanisms – an important factor in the development and sustainability of a research

program that seeks to improve and enhance the trajectories of underserved populations.

### **What inspired you to focus on research or intervention with culturally and linguistically diverse populations?**

I have always been interested in how one's environment may shape behavior. This interest began when I was an undergraduate at an HBCU (Historically Black College/University) and explored how this context might be protective for African American college students' drinking behaviors and was further developed throughout my graduate studies in NYC where I explored how contextual and cultural factors are associated with youth's academic attitudes and behaviors. By delving into this area of research and focusing on neighborhood effects on adolescent behaviors, the inequalities in these environments and the consequences for culturally (i.e., racial/ethnic and SES) diverse families became very apparent to me. Therefore, I wanted to explore how one could capitalize on the inherent strengths of neighborhoods to better the lives of diverse families.

### **Describe one of your projects with implications for underserved populations.**

To date, many of the research projects that I have worked on examine how neighborhoods affect youth's outcomes. The goal of these projects is to elucidate the positive neighborhood processes that are inherent in "distressed" neighborhoods and to capitalize on community capacity. One project that I

am working on uses a mixed-methods approach with families in a small city that has experienced a lot of violence, but it is a place where neighborhood attachment and connection is strong. For the families who participated in this project, they were given a “voice” and they identified ways to improve their community and ultimately their own lives. With this project, many of the families felt empowered to make a change. In collaboration with Emilie Smith as part of my NIDA Diversity Supplement, I am examining the ways in which neighborhood characteristics (demographic and social) may affect the implementation of an afterschool intervention to reduce problem behavior and substance use among school-aged children. Afterschool programs are “safe havens” for many youth; however, the resources available to these programs are highly variable. The purpose of this project is to identify how the contextual reality of intervention and prevention programs may impact how the intervention is implemented with the aim of ultimately improving practices in afterschool programs that affect the lives of diverse youth.

**What advice would you give to (early-career) interventionists or researchers who are interested in prevention science with underserved populations?**

Conducting research with underserved, culturally diverse populations can be difficult; however, it is imperative that researchers engage meaningfully in this research to identify ways to reduce inequalities. Sometimes this may require that we “think outside the box.” Collaboration is important; interdisciplinary approaches to understanding our questions usually uncover various ways to approach a problem and make us consider the universe of alternatives. Early career scholars should seek out professional mentors who have been successful in conducting this type of research and who have ultimately been able to translate basic research into practice. It is also important to remember that there is a community of researchers/interventionists that have similar interests and are available to support you. We must empower ourselves so that others can be empowered. ■

**PLEASE JOIN THE DNC, FRIENDS, & COLLEAGUES**  
*at the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Fundraising Dance*

Dance to the music of

*The Mothers of Prevention*



**Thursday, May 29, 2014**

**9:30 PM – Midnight**

**(Ticket sales support the Minority Travel Awards)**

## Membership News

- **Dr. Sean Joe** has accepted a position as the Benjamin Youngdahl Professor of Social Work in the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. His current research focuses on patterns of black adolescents' mental health service use, the role of religion in black suicidal behavior, salivary biomarkers for suicidal behavior, and development of father-focused, family-based interventions to prevent urban African American adolescent males from engaging in multiple forms of self-destructive behaviors.
- **Dr. Jennifer A. Kam** has accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of California at Santa Barbara (starting 7/1/2014). Her research focuses on cultural stressors that place adolescents from underserved backgrounds at risk for substance use. She also studies how communication with parents and friends affect adolescents' substance-use beliefs and behaviors, as well as attenuates the negative effects of cultural stressors.

**Have news that you want  
included in the next issue of  
DNC Outreach?**



**E-mail your news to:  
dncinfo@preventionresearch.org**

## Recent Publications

- Castro, F. G., Barrera, M., Mena, L. A., & Aguirre, K. (2014). Culture and alcohol use: Historical and sociocultural themes from 75 years of alcohol research. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 17, 36-49.
- Córdova, D., Huang, S., Garvey, M., Estrada, Y., & Prado, G. (2014). Do parent-adolescent discrepancies in family functioning increase the risk of Hispanic adolescent HIV risk behaviors? *Family Process*. Published first online. doi: 10.1111/famp.12067
- Huang, S., Córdova, D., Estrada Y, Brincks A, & Prado, G. (in press). Efficacy of a family intervention in reducing illicit drug use among high-risk Hispanic adolescents: An application of the complier average causal effect analysis. *Family Process*. Published online first. doi: 10.1111/famp.12068
- Gonzales, N. A., Wong, J. J., Toomey, R. B., Millsap, R., Dumka, L. E., & Mauricio, A. M. (2014). School engagement mediates long-term prevention effects for Mexican American adolescents. *Prevention Science*. Published online first. doi:10.1007/s11121-013-0454-y

## 2014 SPR Presentations

- Barrueco, S. (Wednesday, May 28, 2014). "Bilingual Assessment in Early Childhood & Prevention Science."

# DNC-sponsored Organized Poster Session

## Wednesday, May 28, 2014: 1:00 – 2:30 PM



### Interventions for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention in Native American Populations

**Chair:** *Kathy Etz*, Division of Epidemiology, Services and Prevention Research, National Institute on Drug Abuse

**Discussant:** *Aria Davis Crump*, Prevention Research, NIDA/NIH

**1) Development of a New Substance Prevention Program Using Culture for Urban Native American Youth**

- *Daniel Dickerson*, Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior David Geffen School of Medicine, University of California, Los Angeles, & *Ryan Brown*, RAND Corporation

**2) Community-Based Intervention to Reduce Tobacco Use Among Pregnant Alaska Native Women**

- *Christi Patten*, Psychology, Mayo Clinic Rochester

**3) Building a Culturally Grounded Substance Use Prevention Program for American Indian Youth and Families: Integrating Scientific Evidence and Cultural Knowledge**

- *Nancy Whitesell*, Colorado School of Public Health, University of Colorado Denver

**4) A Primary Prevention Trial to Strengthen Child Attachment in a Native Community**

- *Cathryn Booth-LaForce*, Family and Child Nursing, University of Washington

**5) Indoor Air Quality Interventions with American Indian Populations: Community Capacity Building towards Public Health Intervention Development for Indigenous Communities**

- *Annie Elise Belcourt*, Pharmacy/Public Health, The University of Montana

**6) Development of a Web-Based Smoking Cessation Program for Tribal College Students**

- *Won Choi*, Department of Preventive Medicine and Public Health - Medical Center, University of Kansas

**7) Community-Based Partnerships between Tribal Colleges and the Center for Indigenous Health Research**

- *Bonnie Duran*, School of Public Health, University of Washington

**Join Us!**

Join us!

# DNC-sponsored Symposium

## Friday, May 30, 2014: 8:30 – 10:00 AM



### The Role of Culture and Diversity in Prevention Science: Implementation and Leadership Development



**MS. MAISHA SIMMONS**, MPA, is a Program Officer on the Vulnerable Populations Team where she is responsible for coordinating the Forward Promise Initiative. Forward Promise is the Foundation's new \$11.5 million initiative that aims to improve the health of middle school- and high school-aged boys and young men of color, as well as their opportunities for success in school, work and life.

**MS. SIMMONS' PRESENTATION TOPIC:** As a program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJ), Ms. Simmons will discuss the development and implementation of RWJ's Forward Promise work and its relationship to the President's Initiative.



**MR. MICAH GILMER**, PhD, is an expert in applied research, social innovation and the non-profit sector. He serves as Senior Partner with Frontline Solutions, a social change organization that provides consulting services primarily to government, philanthropic and non-profit organizations. His current projects include work for Open Society Foundations, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Southeastern Council of Foundations.

**MR. GILMER'S PRESENTATION TOPIC:** Mr. Gilmer will discuss Frontline Solutions' efforts to support the Forward Promise work and its "Under Construction" project. Under Construction is a multimedia online exhibit showcasing some of the best and brightest organizations working with men and boys of color.



**MS. SUSAN TAYLOR BATTEN**, MSW, has more than 20 years of experience in directing, evaluating, and advising both public and foundation-related efforts to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. Ms. Batten joined the Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE) as President and CEO in January 2009. ABFE's mission is to promote effective and responsive philanthropy in Black Communities and counts among its members some of the most influential staff, trustees and donors of grant-making institutions in the U.S.

**MS. BATTEN'S PRESENTATION TOPIC:** Ms. Batten will discuss ABFE's efforts to build leadership and forge collaborations to support and facilitate the implementation of appropriate strategies in communities of color. She will also discuss RWJ "Connecting Leaders Fellows program" as an example of AFBE's efforts to build partnerships and transcend boundaries. ■