
**National Hispanic Science Network
Summer Research Training Institute
on Hispanic Drug Abuse
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Presenter Biosketches



NATIONAL
HISPANIC
SCIENCE
NETWORK
ON DRUG ABUSE

Hosted by:
University of Houston
Graduate College of Social Work
Office for Drug and Social Policy Research

National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse

Presenters' Biosketches

Edwin J. Barea-Rodriguez, Ph.D.,

is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio. As a neurobiologist he has been investigating the underlying cellular and molecular mechanisms involved in aged-related learning and memory deficits. His principal interest is using interventions such as dietary supplementations and caloric restriction to attenuate such deficits. Dr. Barea-Rodriguez is also involved in outreach activities in San Antonio that are geared to help attract minority students toward research careers.

Alice Cepeda, Ph.D.,

is currently Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Houston (UH) where she is also Senior Researcher at the Office for Drug and Social Policy Research (ODSPR). Dr. Cepeda received her Ph.D. in Sociology from the City University of New York, Graduate Center. Her experience and research interest has been in substance use, crime, violence and urban health issues among the Mexican-origin (Mexican Americans and Mexicans) population. Dr. Cepeda recently completed her tenure as the 2005-2006 Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) Visiting Scholar at UH where she focused on her work on injecting drug use and high-risk sexual behavior among sex workers on the U.S./Mexico border. Dr. Cepeda has had extensive experience during the last ten years working on federally funded research studies in several capacities. At the ODSPR, Dr. Cepeda is project director on a National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) grant focused on risk factors associated with the transitioning from non-injecting to injecting heroin use among a young population of Mexican American drug users. More recently, she is co-investigator of a NIDA funded study focused on examining how disaster related experiences associated with Hurricane Katrina impact changes in substance use and abuse patterns.

Dharma E. Cortés, Ph.D.,

is an Instructor at Harvard Medical School Department of Psychiatry at Cambridge Hospital and Senior Research Associate, Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Dr. Cortés has conducted research with Latinos in the United States for more than 15 years. She has studied culture, mental and physical health, and health and mental health service utilization research. She is an expert in cultural adaptation and has published several papers on biculturalism in Puerto Rican adults and its relation to mental health issues. Dr. Cortés has served as co-investigator in several relevant studies focusing on acculturation, illness, and quality of health care in Latino populations, including health literacy among Spanish-speaking Latinos. Her past work and current research combines qualitative and quantitative research methods. One study, funded by the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH), examined the relationship between acculturation and psychological distress among Puerto Ricans using qualitative and quantitative research. Findings of this study led to the development of an acculturation scale which departs from traditional acculturation models that assume that individuals must give up elements of their culture of origin in order to acquire equivalent elements from the host culture. This scale has been used with Dominicans, Cubans, and South Americans with satisfactory results, and will be used in the currently proposed study.

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John J. Echeverry, Ph.D.,

is a Clinical/Community psychologist who received his doctorate from the University of Maryland at College Park in 1991. His post-doctoral career has included a combination of clinical work specializing on adults with anxiety and mood disorders, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and issues of adaptation to a new culture; research on issues related to HIV/AIDS; and supervision of students in Clinical Psychology and Social Work. For several years Dr. Echeverry was a member of APA's Minority Fellowship Program Advisory Board. He is currently on the faculty of the Departments of Psychology, and Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at The George Washington University in Washington, DC. He teaches seminars on interviewing skills for medical students at GWU's School of Medicine, and supervises psychotherapy trainees in his institution's doctoral program in Clinical Psychology. He was recently awarded a K23 mentored research career development award from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). This 5-year award will enable Dr. Echeverry conduct studies on the use of club drugs among Latino young men, and work with mentors such as NIDDK's own Dr. J. Bryan Page (University of Miami), and Dr. Maria Cecilia Zea (The George Washington University). He published in the areas of Latino access to mental health care, and the psychosocial aspects of HIV-positive status among Latino gay and bisexual men.

Antonio L. Estrada, Ph.D.,

is Professor of Public Health and Mexican American Studies and Director of the Mexican American Studies & Research Center at the University of Arizona. Dr. Estrada received his masters and doctorate degrees in Public Health, graduating from the UCLA School of Public Health in 1986. Dr. Estrada's primary interests are in Hispanic and Native American health, focused on health promotion and disease prevention within these populations. Dr. Estrada has numerous publications and presentations in the areas of HIV/AIDS and health, with a co-authored book on

Mexican American health published by the University of Arizona Press (*Mexican Americans and Health: Sana! Sana!*). Dr. Estrada was the principal investigator of a five-year study, funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), to develop, implement and assess a culturally innovative HIV/AIDS risk reduction program targeting Mexican-origin Hispanic drug injectors and their female sexual partners in Tucson (One To One Program). Dr. Estrada has also been a principal investigator for several other NIDA funded research studies including the National AIDS Demonstration Research (NADR) study, the NIDA Cooperative Agreement, a Native American supplement on HIV/AIDS, and an HIV/AIDS risk reduction project on the U.S.-Mexico border. Dr. Estrada also teaches Hispanic health, cultural competency, and sociocultural epidemiology courses at the University of Arizona and the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health.

Bennett W. Fletcher, Ph.D.,

is currently on detail to the Analytic Unit in the Office of the Director of the Division of Epidemiology, Services, and Prevention Research. He served as Chief of NIDA's Services Research Branch from 1996 to 2001, where he directed the program of health services research on drug abuse treatment, including research on the effectiveness of drug abuse treatment and research to study the impact of the organization, financing, and management of health services on the quality, cost, access to, and outcomes of treatment for drug abuse disorders. Recently, Dr. Fletcher has led initiatives to support research in drug treatment financing and economics, on the organization and management of treatment services, and on treating vulnerable populations, including adolescents, women, and those at risk for HIV infection. He has developed research programs on drug abuse treatment for those in the criminal justice system and recently developed a cooperative study on integrating drug abuse treatment in the criminal justice system. He is an investigator on the cooperative Drug Abuse Treatment Outcome Studies (DATOS).

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Joseph Frascella, Ph.D.,

is currently the Director of the Division of Clinical Neuroscience and Behavioral Research at NIDA where he heads a broad drug abuse and addiction program of translational research and research training in clinical neuroscience, human development, and behavioral treatment. Prior to this position, Dr. Frascella served as the Chief of the Clinical Neurobiology Branch for several years and directed a diverse research program on the human neurobiology of addiction. Dr. Frascella has also directed several basic research and research training programs at NIDA. He has been and remains extremely active in issues related to underrepresented minorities and special populations. Before coming to NIDA, Dr. Frascella was a research physiologist at the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, and prior, Dr. Frascella held the position of Assistant Professor within the Department of Psychology at Brown University. Dr. Frascella received an A.B. in Biopsychology from Hamilton College, and an M.Sc. and a Ph.D. degree in Experimental Psychology/Neuroscience from Brown University.

Philip Garcia, Ph.D.,

is Director of Analytic Studies, with the California State University System, Chancellor's Office since 1986. In 2002, Dr. Garcia returned to the Chancellor's Office, following three years dedicated to helping Notre Dame faculty establish that university's Institute for Latino Research. During his three-year stay at Notre Dame, Dr. Garcia was the research director for all extramural projects, and he authored *Understanding Obstacles and Barriers to Hispanic Baccalaureates*, a project-report sponsored by the Hispanic Scholarship Foundation. He also taught sociology and coordinated the activities of the Inter-University Program for Latino Research, a 16-member consortium of university-based think tanks. Dr. Garcia held research and teaching appointments

at the University of Michigan and the University of Southern California. Dr. Garcia has published work on the efficacy of student-retention programs and on how to project enrollments at public colleges and universities. Dr. Philip Garcia has published articles on the unemployment record and earning power of certain segments of the Latino labor force, as well as ethnic settlement patterns in Los Angeles County. Dr. Garcia received his bachelor's degree from California State University, Fullerton, and earned a Ph.D. in mathematical sociology from UCLA.

Felipe González Castro, M.S.W., Ph.D.,

is Professor of clinical psychology in the Department of Psychology, Arizona State University. Dr. Castro's research areas include the study of "deeper" aspects of racial/ethnic minority cultures within the United States, as these aspects relate to prevention science. The ongoing tension between adherence to universal principles of prevention science and cultural sensitivity and competence in their application to diverse sub-populations, serves as a core challenge in his research. Dr. Castro's work focuses on two major areas in the field of drug abuse: (1) the measurement of cultural variables, and via multivariate model analysis, understanding their relationships to health-related outcomes, i.e., as predictors, moderators or mediators; and (2) the study of intervention adaptation to improve the intervention's cultural relevance and effectiveness when applied with members of special sub-populations, including Hispanics/Latinos, and other racial/ethnic or cultural groups.

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Charles E. Holzer, III, Ph.D.

is a Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas. He received his Ph.D. and MA in sociology from the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. His primary research interest is psychiatric epidemiology. This presently is focused on the sociodemographic and cross-cultural distribution of psychiatric disorders, with an emphasis on families. This focus includes a range of disorders, but particularly major depression and substance abuse. Interests also encompass the methodology of psychiatric epidemiology, ranging from design of field surveys, structured diagnostic assessments, and statistical analysis. A particular application of the psychiatric epidemiology is the generation of estimates for mental health services for various states, counties, and local areas to facilitate mental health planning. Another area of interest is the use of computers in psychiatric research. This includes the use of computers for statistical analysis and the development of computer based psychiatric assessment as well as supporting Internet application development.

Charles D. Kaplan, Ph.D.,

is Research Professor at the Graduate School of Social Work and Senior Researcher at the European Graduate School of Neuroscience, Department of Psychiatry and Neuro-psychology at the Maastricht University, Netherlands. He received his Ph.D. from UCLA. Dr. Kaplan has extensive research experience as a medical sociologist and social psychologist with a focus on substance abuse, adolescent and child psychiatry and social epidemiology. Dr. Kaplan has functioned as a Co-Principal Investigator on NIDA and European Commission research grants on community drug abuse epidemiology and treatment. He has worked as an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio. He serves on the advisory board of the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*.

Jag H. Khalsa, Ph.D.,

is Chief of the Medical Consequences Branch in the Division of Pharmacotherapies and Medical Consequences of Drug Abuse, National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health. Dr. Khalsa's interest are in marijuana use, HIV/AIDS, and other medical consequences as a result of drug use.

Alberto G. Mata, Jr., Ph.D.,

is currently Professor in the Department of Human Relations at the University of Oklahoma. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame in 1978. Dr. Mata has served as a staff member on the Presidential Commission on HIV Epidemic. His work with the Department of Health and Human Services, first at the Office of Substance Abuse and Prevention, and later with the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), focused on national and state policies for stimulating and promoting community-based demonstration and applied research studies. Dr. Mata has served and continues to serve on various federal planning groups, grants, and workgroups. Recently, Dr. Mata has served as the General Editor of *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology*. He is also Special Editor on an issue of the *Journal of Border Health* focused on violence and borderland communities. He remains involved in border health and substance abuse issues and recently elected research affiliate to UT/WHO Hogg Foundation's Mental Health workgroup. His efforts to promote cooperative and collaborative research and service demonstration projects are reflected in his research, teaching, consulting and professional organization appointments.

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Cecilia McNamara Spitznas, Ph.D.,

is developing and implementing research grant programs related to psychotherapy and behavioral treatment with an emphasis on adult drug users including dual diagnosis and criminal justice involved populations. Most recently she developed an initiative to modify existing efficacious treatments to improve their acceptability to community treatment programs. In addition she represents DTR&D on the NIDA Criminal Justice Workgroup and Women and Gender Workgroup. Previously she was employed as an Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham where she was project director for a NIDA funded drug treatment research program. This program integrated a novel outpatient day treatment program focused on systematic goal attainment with abstinence contingencies for housing and work.

J. Bryan Page, Ph.D.,

is currently Professor and Chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of Miami. Research on people who engage in socially disapproved behaviors has dominated Dr. Page's professional activity for the last three decades. He has studied patterns of marijuana smoking, poly-drug consumption, self-injection, crack use, and sex trade. These studies have relied on a number of methods, including direct observation of risky behaviors, in-depth interviewing of drug users, qualitative analysis of textual materials, focus groups, and laboratory techniques for determining immune status. He has helped to train epidemiologists from six Latin American countries in the study of drug use. He has helped more than a dozen minority scholars become funded investigators. Dr. Page is currently conducting two research studies funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, but he has also received research support from the National Institute of Mental Health. His publications cover diverse topics ranging from consequences of marijuana smoking to use of medications among HIV positive injecting drug users.

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Michael A. Sesma, Ph.D.,

joined the National Institute of Mental Health as Chief of the Research Scientist Development Program in the Office for Special Populations. He has responsibility for creation and management of the comprehensive program for the development of research scientist in mental health who are from underrepresented groups. Dr. Sesma received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Riverside in 1981. He received postdoctoral training from 1981-1985 at the Departments of Anatomy and Cell Biology, and Psychology at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Sesma has served on a variety of academic and NIH committees including the Society for Neuroscience Committee for Neuroscience Literacy.

Merrill C. Singer, Ph.D.,

is the Director of Research at the Hispanic Health Council in Hartford, CT, a Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Anthropology, University of Connecticut, and a Research Affiliate of both the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS, Yale University and the Center for HIV/Health Intervention and Prevention, University of Connecticut. In addition, Dr. Singer is the Community Connections Core Director for the Center for Excellence in Health Disparities among Latinos in Connecticut. Much of Dr. Singer's work focuses on community based health and intervention among low income populations, especially substance abuse and AIDS. He has published widely in the health and social science literatures, including 12 books and 175 articles and book chapters. He is the recipient of the Prize for Distinguished Achievement from the Society for the Anthropology of North America (2005) and the Practicing Anthropology Award (2004) from the Society for Medical Anthropology. An activist scholar, Dr. Singer's work is informed by critical medical anthropology, a theoretical perspective he helped to develop.

Yonette F. Thomas, Ph.D.,

is a medical sociologist/social epidemiologist, with postgraduate training in demography and epidemiology. Before NIDA, Dr. Thomas served as a study director at the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council and held teaching and research faculty positions at American University and Howard University. Dr. Thomas' primary and secondary research included HIV/AIDS risk and prevention behavior among minority women, implications of underlying versus multiple-cause of death for preventive health behavior using the 1986 National Mortality Follow Back Survey, migration patterns and the spread of disease in particular HIV/AIDS, and issues affecting social bonds between the aged and their families. In addition, process and impact evaluations of research demonstration projects focusing on family support, youth opportunities, high-risk youth, and communities at risk, including ethnographic surveys and qualitative fieldwork. Her research interests are the social epidemiology of drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, gene-environment interactions, and the effects of cumulative disadvantage on health behavior. Dr. Thomas' program area covers: Effect of cumulative disadvantage at the individual, family (including biologic and genetic), and community level on risk and protection; intergenerational effects, including gene-environment interactions; long-term consequences of poor health behaviors, drug abuse and HIV; Role of social contexts (e.g., family and households, religious institutions, work places, neighborhoods and communities, geographic location, residential segregation) in drug abuse and HIV risk and protection; and Drug abuse and HIV risk among older adults, minority women in particular; intersection of biology, chronic disease, and drug abuse.

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Keith Trujillo, Ph.D.,

is Professor of Psychology and Associate Director of the Office for Biomedical Research and Training at California State University San Marcos. Keith received an Associate of Arts degree in Biological Sciences from Shasta College, Bachelors degrees in Biological Sciences, Psychology and Chemistry from California State University, Chico, and a Ph.D. in Pharmacology and Toxicology from the University of California, Irvine. Following completion of his doctorate he worked as a Postdoctoral Fellow and a Research Investigator at The University of Michigan. Keith is a neuroscientist and psychopharmacologist with a longstanding interest in the neural basis of drug abuse and addiction. He has performed laboratory research on drug reward, tolerance, sensitization and physical dependence, among other areas. In addition to his laboratory research, Keith has strong interests in Hispanic issues, in increasing diversity in science and academia, and in training the next generation of scientists. He received the National Award of Excellence in Mentorship from the National Hispanic Science Network in 2005.

Avelardo Valdez, Ph.D.,

is currently Professor at the University of Houston, Graduate School of Social Work and Director of the Office for Drug and Social Policy Research. Dr. Valdez received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California in Los Angeles. Dr. Valdez has extensive experience as Principal Investigator on several National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) grants. He has also been PI on grants for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). His more recent publications include research among Mexican American "hidden populations" such as youth gang members, injecting drug users and non-injecting heroin users and sex workers on the U.S./Mexico border. His most recent NIDA grant is on substance use and other consequences among Katrina Evacuees in Houston. He has published articles comparing diverse ethnic and racial groups within the United States giving him an understanding of the importance of cultural differences in substance use and social and health problems in otherwise overlooked populations.