



National Latino Research Center

California State University San Marcos

A Quarterly Newsletter from the National Latino Research Center

Vol. 1 No. 1 Spring 2004

GREETINGS FROM THE NLRC DIRECTOR

This newsletter is the first in a series of quarterly issues that will be disseminated to the university and general community. The NLRC has been actively involved in a number of research activities through the San Diego area, the state, and the nation. During the past year, we have initiated new projects, grants, and collaborations involving asthma prevention, migrant health, oral histories, and developmental disorders in children. This past Fall we launched our Latino Research Speaker Series and sponsored a Census Workshop. In total, the NLRC has obtained over \$500,000 in new grants and contracts and has submitted grant proposals totaling approximately \$2 million. The success of the NLRC is driven by a highly skilled staff and depends on the collaboration of interested faculty and students. We hope you enjoy learning more about the NLRC and current research on Latino populations. We look forward to your continued support and participation.

Dr. Gerardo M. González
NLRC Director

“The end of all knowledge
should surely be **SERVICE**
to others.”

— César E. Chávez



Staff at the National Latino Research Center (NLRC)

From left: Ana Ardón, Konane Martínez, Sonia Taddy, Dr. Gerardo M. González, Michael González, Azar Khazian, and Arcela Núñez-Alvarez (not pictured).

About the NLRC

The National Latino Research Center at California State University San Marcos specializes in applied research, training, technical assistance and research-based services that contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the rapidly growing U.S. Latino population.

Through its numerous projects and initiatives, the NLRC works to bridge the academic community to local, state, and national organizations. Key research areas include education, health, public policy, environmental issues, oral history and demographic trends. For more information about the NLRC, please visit the NLRC website at www.csusm.edu/nlrc or contact us at (760) 750-3500.



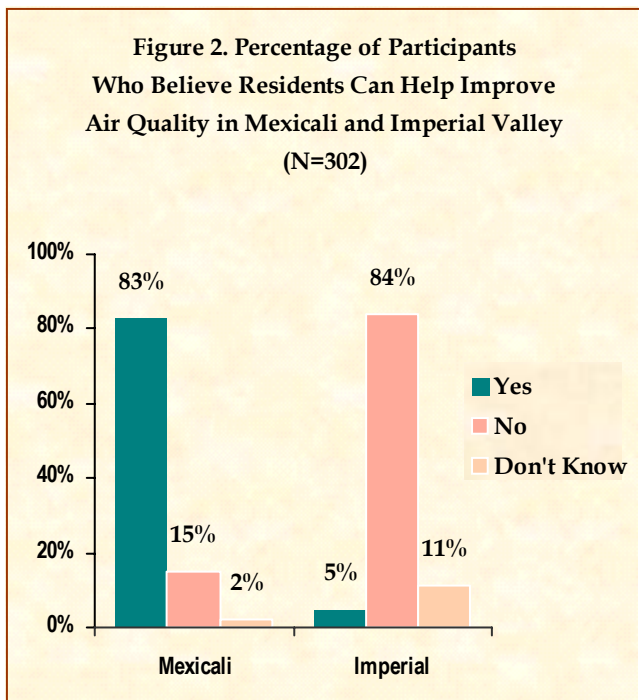
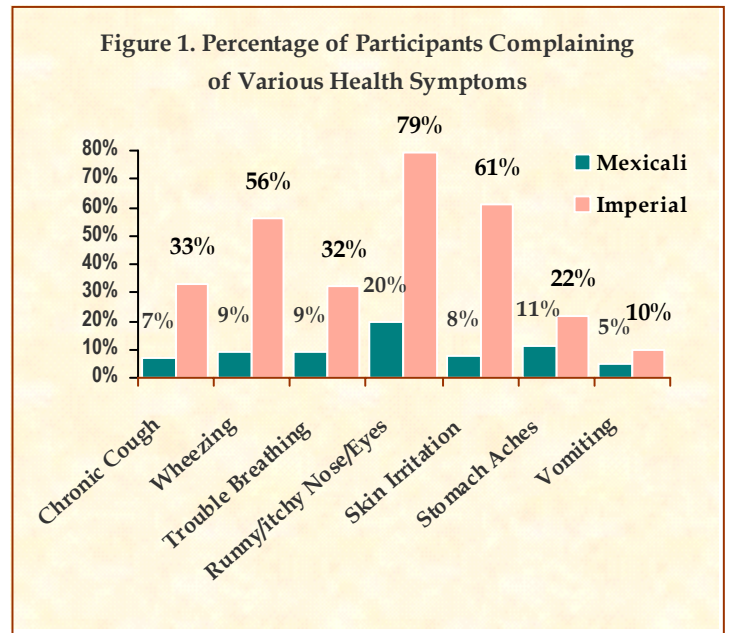
The NLRC Collaborates with the Bi-National Clean Air Initiative

By Sonia Taddy, NLRC Associate Director

In response to unhealthy air quality observed in the Imperial Valley and Mexicali border region, concerned individuals and organizations joined forces in 2003 to form the Clean Air Initiative. The bi-national partnership is working to address regional air quality issues and their effects on health. As part of its effort to inform and engage residents in advocating for improved regulations, the NLRC was contracted to develop a community survey to assess the perceptions and concerns of residents on both sides of the border.

In collaboration with members of the initiative and health outreach workers (“promotoras”) from Fuerza Campesina, over 300 door-to-door surveys were conducted in Imperial County and Mexicali during the summer of 2003. Participants were asked questions about household characteristics (socio-economic, education, etc.), the health status of household members, their awareness and perceptions about air quality and pollution, and their beliefs about collective and individual efforts to improve air quality.

The survey results produced valuable information that will be used to design program and outreach efforts in the region. While residents on each side of the border share similar challenges and concerns about air quality, the survey revealed that residents in Mexicali and Imperial had contrasting views about the effectiveness of advocacy and community involvement. The main findings of the survey included:



Awareness About Asthma & Other Respiratory Illnesses: While the survey sample size was small, important issues and differences emerged between Imperial and Mexicali participants. One finding suggests that the number of asthmatics (both diagnosed and undiagnosed) may be higher than current estimates. The California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) conducted by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research in 2001 indicated that 11.2% of children (ages 0-17) and 8.9% of adults in Imperial County had reported being diagnosed with asthma and reported experiencing symptoms within the preceding 12 months. In the Clean Air survey, **17% of the Imperial County participants and 6% of Mexicali participants reported being diagnosed with asthma.** Furthermore, an even higher number of Imperial participants reported asthma-like symptoms with 56% complaining of wheezing, 33% chronic coughing, and 32% with breathing problems (see Figure 1). This suggests there may be undiagnosed asthma as well as a lack of awareness about respiratory diseases and their symptoms.

Community Involvement & Advocacy: While Imperial County participants seemed to be more alarmed about air quality issues, they were less likely to want to get involved or take action (individual or collective) to remedy environmental problems. In fact, only 1% of the Imperial participants said they were interested in actively participating in programs or activities. Mexicali residents, on the other hand, appeared to be far more politically active and willing to get involved in efforts to improve the environment.

Awareness & Access to Information: Residents appear to be very concerned about air quality issues but are uncertain about what sorts of actions they can take (individually and/or collectively) to make a tangible difference. A high percentage of participants on both sides of the border expressed interest in receiving more information (with no obligation of involvement), indicating a need and opportunity to expand educational and community organizing efforts around air quality and environmental health issues. Clearly, these efforts should be geared appropriately to the educational levels of the target audience and may include opportunities (such as community forums) for residents to voice their concerns, ask questions, participate in identifying priorities, and claim a sense of ownership in the process. The observational data and notes collected by the interviewers further supports that many community residents would like to be involved in this process but may have never been asked or invited to participate.

In summary, residents on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border shared a high level of concern about poor air quality and the need for more information about its effect on health. Despite the fact that Mexicali residents were more primed for civic engagement, the survey results indicate a need in both Mexicali and Imperial for a coordinated campaign that clearly articulates specific activities that residents can do to improve air quality and/or advocate for better regulations and compliance.

The bi-national Clean Air Initiative is administered by the American Lung Association of San Diego and Imperial Counties and is funded by The California Endowment. A complete copy of the survey report can be downloaded from the NLRC website at www.csusm.edu/nlrc.



Announcements & Events

- ◆ **NLRC Commissioned to Conduct Research on Border Health:** In January 2004, the NLRC was contracted by The California Endowment to conduct research on critical border health issues in San Diego and Imperial Valley. The project will include key informant interviews and focus groups with health-related organizations working in the border region. For more information, contact Konane Martinez at (760)750-3505.
- ◆ **Imperial and Mexicali Bi-National Environmental Conference:** The NLRC will present the findings of the community survey at the Bi-National Environmental Conference on April 7, 2004 (8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) in Mexicali, Mexico. The event is sponsored by the Clean Air Initiative and the American Lung Association. For registration information, contact Vivian Perez (American Lung Association) at vivian.perez@usa.net.
- ◆ **“A Look at Immigration”:** The North County Times and the San Diego World Affair Council are hosting a series of discussions on immigration by renowned experts in the field. Sessions will be held on January 27, February 24, March 30, and April 20 from 7:00 to 8:30 PM at the Escondido Public Library. For more information call (858) 673-7398 or (619) 325-8200.
- ◆ **The Center for Health Improvement** is pleased to announce the addition of three new policy profiles to their award-winning website, Health Policy Coach. *Health Policy Coach* is a resource for people seeking to improve community health prevention – focused policy change. For more info please visit www.healthpolicycoach.org
- ◆ **10th Annual Rural Minority and Multicultural Health Conference** will be held from May 25-29 at the Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina in San Diego, CA. For more information go to www.nrharural.org

Landmark Study Brings Health Disparities to the Forefront

By Konane M. Martínez, NLRC Health Projects Coordinator

A landmark study by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies confirms what many already know. Racism and discrimination exist in health care. *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care* is the result of a request by Congress in 1999 to study the types of disparities experienced by U.S. racial and ethnic minorities and non-minorities; factors contributing to these inequities in health care; and strategies in eliminating these disparities through policy and practice. The IOM reviewed over 100 scientific studies that evaluate the quality of health care received by racial and ethnic minorities while controlling for access related factors, income, and insurance. The IOM research findings indicate that minorities are less likely to receive needed services, including those deemed clinically necessary. Minorities are also more likely to receive “less-desirable” procedures. Diabetics, for example, are more likely to receive a lower limb amputation. The IOM attributes conclude that these disparities may be the result of bias, prejudice and stereotyping on the part of health care providers. The IOM recommends awareness and systems change within health care as a way to begin reducing health care disparities. Inarguably the study findings will make health disparities a national health care priority. While it still remains to be seen how the report will be utilized to affect change in the area of health disparities its findings offer promise in furthering policy and research that aims to achieve health parity in the U.S.

Health Disparities Links

IOM—Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care
<http://www.oim.edu/report.asp?id=4475>

The Office of Minority Health Resource Center
<http://www.omhrc.gov>

National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care
Office of Minority Health
<http://www.omhrc.gov/clas/>

REDHI-Reduce or Eliminate Health Disparities through Information Initiative
County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency
<http://www.rehdi.org/>

The CLAS Room
The Cultural Awareness Program
Vista Community Clinic
<http://www.clas-sd.org>
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Summary of Findings

Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care

Finding 1-1: Racial and ethnic disparities in health care exist and, because they are associated with worse outcomes in many cases, are unacceptable.

Finding 2-1: Racial and ethnic disparities in health care occur in the context of broader historic and contemporary social and economic inequality, and evidence of persistent racial and ethnic discrimination in many sectors of American life.

Finding 3-1: Many sources—including health systems, health care providers, patients, and utilization managers—may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

Finding 4-1: Bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and clinical uncertainty on the part of health care providers may contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in health care. While indirect evidence from several lines of research supports this statement, a greater understanding of the prevalence and influence of these processes is needed and should be sought through research.

Finding 4-2: A small number of studies suggest that racial and ethnic minority patients are more likely than white patients to refuse treatment. These studies find that differences in refusal rates are generally small and that minority patient refusal does not fully explain healthcare disparities.

Latino Research Speaker Series

The Latino Research Speaker Series is a multidisciplinary event that promotes the dissemination of research information addressing issues that concern Latinos, with the purpose of enhancing and supporting the Latino community in our region.

~ March 8th ~

Dr. Maribel García
Assistant Professor, Women's Studies

**“Women's Subjectivity, Structural Inequality
and Borderland's Ethnography”**

Kellogg Library
Room 4400
3:00 to 4:00 PM

This lecture is also part of Women's History Month and the International Women's Day celebration at Cal State San Marcos.



If you are interested in presenting research findings or would like more information about the series, please contact the NLRC at (760) 750-3500 or nlrc@csusm.edu

Researcher Spotlight Dr. Sonia Ruiz

I have been working with the NLRC on two projects since Spring 2002. The first project is a program evaluation for Neighborhood Health Care's Nutrition for Life/Childhood Obesity Program (located in Escondido). I was asked to conduct the evaluation because of my research and clinical interests in childhood obesity in Mexican American families. This program targets overweight/obese children and their families and provides a 9-week treatment program to help Latino families learn how to change unhealthy habits (poor diet, sedentary behaviors) and improve knowledge of nutrition, healthy diet, and the importance of physical activity. This experience has been invaluable to me as a clinician, a researcher, and a community member of North County San Diego as this epitomizes the field of community psychology.



I am also working with Ana Ardón on the MANA Hermanitas® Mentoring Program. This is a longitudinal national project that has contracted the NLRC to evaluate six-sites in the country (three sites in California, one each in New Mexico, Texas, and Michigan) that are implementing the Mentoring Program for Latina youth. Both of these projects have allowed me to conduct community-based applied research which is my goal here at CSUSM.

The NLRC is a wonderful resource to both the community and to faculty like me who are interested in working with the community.

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