

# HISTPconnections

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## Special Series: Mentor Spotlight

### Fostering Wholeness, Support, and Openness: Dr. Faye Belgrave

By Dr. Rosalie Corona

I am honored to have the privilege to be mentored by Dr. Faye Belgrave. Her mentorship has had a significant impact on my activities as a junior faculty member. Since my first year at Virginia Commonwealth University, Dr. Belgrave has been a continual source of support, always keeping my future in mind and providing me with significant input at each stage in my development.

My development as an HIV

researcher has benefited from my collaboration with Dr. Belgrave on data analysis, manuscript development, and grant writing. Last year, for example, she invited me to be part of a research team that developed a grant to conduct secondary data analysis. This invitation resulted in a recently-published first author article that will contribute to my tenure preparation.

One of the biggest strug-



Dr. Faye Belgrave, Professor of Social Psychology, Virginia Commonwealth University

gles I face as a junior faculty member has been trying to

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### His Door is Always Open: Dr. Mark Roosa

By Dr. Vera Lopez

I first met Mark Roosa in the summer of 1999 at the beginning of my research post-doc at Arizona State University's Prevention Research Center. I had foolishly zipped through my graduate work only to quickly realize that I still had a lot of learning to do before I could hope to embark on a successful academic career. I was instantly drawn to Mark because his research focused on Mexican American children and adolescents and their families, but more importantly he seemed to really care

about the Mexican American community and that meant a lot to me. Plus, Mark was very down to earth, quite approachable, and willing to take the time to mentor me despite many other pressing research obligations. I'm sure those first two years were not easy for him because I frequently stopped by his office, often unannounced, to ask questions related to a number of research and professional issues (data analysis, research design, manuscript writing, job interviewing tips, etc). His door was always



Dr. Mark Roosa, Professor of Social and Family Dynamics, Arizona State University

open and he seemed genuinely interested in helping me succeed. It wasn't until much later

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## Bridging Bethesda to Communities of Color: The Subjective Experience of Ethnic Minority HIV/AIDS Research Trainees

By Rafael M Díaz, PhD

César E. Chávez Institute, San Francisco State University

*Following an exciting and innovative conversation at the 2008 Summer Training Institute about unique experiences of being a faculty/researcher of color within academia, Dr. Díaz was invited to write an article for the newsletter to flesh out some of these ideas. We thank Dr. Díaz for his time in writing this article and his ongoing commitment to the HISTP.*



When I started my work as an HIV prevention researcher in the early 1990s, I was invited to participate in a large review of NIH's HIV/AIDS research portfolio. Among other findings, the review revealed that less than 3% of Principal Investigators (PIs) funded by the NIH to conduct HIV/AIDS-related research were members of underrepresented ethnic minority groups. Despite progress in the form of postdoctoral programs, mentored awards, and training programs, a recent program announcement from NIMH (PAS-06-447), states that "racial and ethnic minority groups remain significantly underrepresented among HIV investigators in the NIH portfolio."

The commitment to train more ethnic minority researchers is not only an institutional correction, but ultimately an imperative to improve science and be better able to guide and impact the national fight against this devastating disease. In other words, we, as ethnic minority researchers, are called to bridge the scientific work of NIH to the realities of disproportionate HIV rates

within ethnic minority communities in ways that make science a useful and relevant prevention tool and to heal the negative consequences of HIV disease.

What is it like to be this bridge? What is the subjective experience of those of us who have been invited to participate in the effort to become NIH PIs and, by so doing, make the scientific endeavor more relevant and effective?

The five criteria by which NIH judges the merit of applications – significance, innovation, approach, investigator, and environment – represent specific social and cultural values. Whether a given problem is "significant" or whether an idea is perceived as "innovative" depends heavily on a given review committee's understanding, an understanding that is shaped by their own culture and values. Ethnic minority researchers often choose to address problems causing great pain or difficulty within their own communities. Having to justify the significance of these problems in terms of their size or epidemic proportions, or through gaps in the existing research literature, can be personally taxing and even demoralizing. The justification of significance requires a change in perspective as an affected member of one's community and the development of a (so-called) "objective" perspective; a perspective that is not so much objective but rather an "outsider" perspective that is in tune with the reviewers' majority culture. It is not surprising that for many of us such objective justification of our research problems requires an emotional distancing that is perceived as a loss of passion and commitment.

Similarly, what is considered a valid methodological approach by many NIH reviewers is shaped by cultural conceptions of what constitutes "good" science. The privileging of quantitative over qualitative research, the focus on internal validity and experimental control overlooking external validity and generalizability or applicability of findings, and the definition of "evidence" as only information that comes from randomized control trials, are some examples of cultural biases faced by many ethnic minority research trainees. Because standardized measures that were developed in the context of majority populations do not quite fit the constructs we need to study in our communities, it is not surprising that we have to propose a great deal of qualitative and measurement development work. A typical issue that we encounter as ethnic minority investigators is reviewers' re-interpretations of our new constructs in terms of old, previously measured ones. The experience of having constructs re-defined in terms of constructs developed in majority cultures -- in the name of "do not reinvent the wheel" -- is one of those times when ethnic minority research trainees feel a true loss of voice, yet another step distancing us away from the perspective of the communities we want to study and contribute to.

For members of ethnic minority communities, training to become an NIH researcher may involve the experience of loss of passion and the reformulation of concepts, issues, and problems in ways that feel like a loss of personal voice. It is typical for ethnic minority investigators to feel their research

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## Two Models of Contemporary HIV Intervention Research: A Closer Look at Cohort II Pilot Studies

**Michele Rountree, PhD**

University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work

***The Efficacy of a HIV/AIDS Risk Reduction Intervention for African American Women who have Experienced Intimate Partner Abuse***

Dr. Rountree's research centers on the intersection of intimate partner abuse (IPA) and HIV risk. The human and financial costs of IPA and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, are enormous. Currently, culturally and contextually relevant HIV risk reduction strategies for women who have experienced IPA remain limited, with the effectiveness of these strategies unclear. This pilot study will fill the gaps in the HIV/AIDS risk and prevention literature by determining the efficacy of a HIV/AIDS risk reduction intervention for this vulnerable population. Dr. Rountree plans to test the efficacy of a HIV/AIDS risk reduction intervention for African American women who have been exposed to IPA in reducing HIV sexual risk related factors. The following questions will be addressed: 1) Does the HIV/AIDS risk reduction intervention have an impact upon the capacity building (i.e.,

HIV/AIDS awareness, identification of healthy relationships) of participants? 2) What is the impact of the intervention upon the skill acquisition of sexual safety planning (i.e., recognition of relationship power and control dynamics, early warning signs versus immediate danger, communication and negotiating skills) of participants? 3) Does the intervention have an impact upon the development of life skills (i.e., assessment of educational and employment goals, link to self-determined educational and employment goals, assessment of alcohol or drug abuse and depression, link to services and support) of participants? This study will test the efficacy of the HIV/AIDS risk reduction intervention (n=24) to a comparison group of treatment as usual (n=24) with African American women who have experienced IPA and are seeking services in a domestic violence shelter. ■

**Rosalie Corona, PhD**

Virginia Commonwealth University

***Using Media Literacy to Prevent HIV and Dating Violence among Latina Adolescents***

Dr. Corona is interested in the development, evaluation, and translation of interventions to improve the health of Latina adolescents. In light of the disproportionate number of HIV/AIDS cases among Latina women (compared to White women), the goal of this pilot study is to develop and evaluate a gender- and culturally-relevant HIV media literacy program for Latina mothers and their adolescent daughters. The program will aim to help Latina adolescents and their mothers become better consumers of what they see in the media and increase mother-daughter communication about sexuality and HIV prevention. As a result, the program may contribute to reduced rates of adolescent pregnancies and reductions in HIV/STD transmission, resulting in lower health care costs and improvement in medical and psychosocial functioning among Latina adolescents. The multi-phase study will begin with interviews with Latino parents (mothers and

fathers) and adolescents (males and females) to examine media and body image influences on sexual decision making and parent-child communication about HIV and teen pregnancy prevention, with a special emphasis on cultural values (e.g., *familismo*, *simpatia*, *Marianismo*) and socio-cultural processes (e.g., acculturation differences). Based on the information learned from the qualitative interviews, a HIV prevention media literacy program for Latina adolescents and their mothers will be created and focus groups will be conducted to explore reactions to content and method of delivery. Finally, a pilot efficacy trial utilizing a randomized controlled pre-test/post-test design will be implemented to compare the HIV media literacy program to a control group that receives educational material about adolescent health. The outcomes from this pilot will be used to apply for federal funding to evaluate the program in a larger randomized control trial. ■



**Michele Rountree PhD**  
Cohort II Training Fellow

***"Intimate partner violence is a key factor contributing to women's risk of HIV transmission. Culturally relevant interventions that address the interpersonal and social context of gendered power inequity are long overdue."***

***- Nabila El-Bassel, HISTP Director***



**Rosalie Corona, PhD**  
Cohort II Training Fellow

## Mentor Spotlight

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balance family life in the context of seeking tenure. Dr. Belgrave is always available to listen to my concerns, and to provide me with support and guidance. Importantly, she is aware of how my cultural background affects my family and career decisions.

Dr. Belgrave prioritizes mentorship time despite her own busy academic and personal commitments. I especially appreciate our impromptu meetings and am always happy when she "pops" into my office after a faculty meeting. This generosity is a welcome source of support as a junior faculty mentor. I know that I always have someone who is inter-

(Continued from "His Door is Always Open," page 1)

that I learned that Mark, like me, was a first generation college graduate. Maybe that's why I clicked with him so well. He seemed to "get me" and I felt completely accepted in his presence.

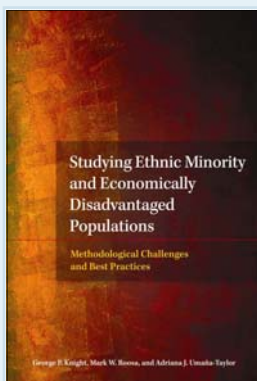
I am grateful to Mark for so many reasons. On a professional level, we have published 4 articles together. More recently, Mark served as a co-Investigator on my first NIDA R21 proposal. His involvement is hands-on and he frequently reviews manuscripts making both specific and general suggestions for improvement, responds promptly to emails, meets with me regularly, helps me navigate institutional challenges, and generally encourages me to keep moving forward. Mark has also written many letters of support for me. When I asked him to write a letter for my current faculty

position at Arizona State University in 2001, Mark jokingly said, "Well...I don't know...If I write this letter, I might have to see you around campus for a long, long time!" The good news is that he wrote that letter anyway and his prediction came true because for the last 8 years I have continued to call upon Mark for advice and encouragement. And as usual, his door is always open.

Finally, Dr. Belgrave is honest and open in her mentoring relationships. She shares her experiences as a mother, racial/ethnic faculty member, researcher, and woman. These conversations are valuable and just as useful to me as strategizing about publications or grants.

In sum, I appreciate so much the time and energy Dr. Belgrave commits to myself and many of my peers. I am thankful for her expertise, availability, support, openness, and encouragement over the last five years. Muchisimas gracias, Faye!!! ■

Mark is a mentor in the truest sense: he values community-based research and believes that it is important to grow and develop the next generation of prevention researchers. I cannot say enough good things about my mentor. Mark, thank you for everything you've done on my behalf over the last ten years, but most importantly, thank you for always keeping that door open. ■



### Congratulations to Dr. Mark Roosa on his forthcoming book:

### Studying Ethnic Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Populations *Methodological Challenges and Best Practices*

[www.apa.org/books](http://www.apa.org/books) | ISBN 978-1-4338-0474-8

Save the Date:

**The 2009 HISTP  
Summer Training Institute.  
June 15<sup>th</sup>—19<sup>th</sup>**

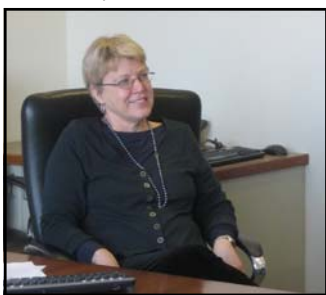
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK



## The 2009 Winter Institute:

### Facilitating the “Work”

The idea for the Winter Institute, held January 29 – February 1, 2009 at Columbia University School of Social Work, evolved out of discussions with Fellows about challenges in finding dedicated work time to focus on research-related “deliverables.” The primary purpose of Winter Institute was to provide Fellows with time, space, and support to work on pilot study analysis and manuscript and grant development. Prior to the Institute, Fellows developed and submitted work plans including specific products they wished to walk away from the Institute. Strategic workshops were offered (see sidebar) that

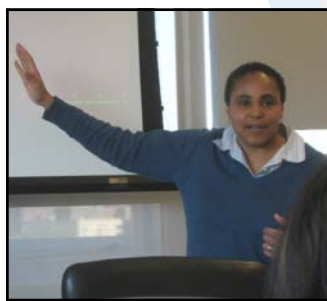


Dr. Deborah Padgett at the 2009 Winter Institute

would address concrete needs identified by the Fellows.

Seven Fellows attended the Winter Institute, spending time on

a R34 submission, preliminary analysis of pilot data, IRB applications, and revisions of manuscripts. Although organized activities



Dr. Scarlett Bellamy at the 2009 Winter Institute

were kept to a minimum to provide maximum work time, Fellows were encouraged to schedule individual consultations with secondary mentors and workshop presenters. In addition, Fellows instigated collaborative work with one another, including conference co-presentations and co-authoring publications. Institute feedback was again very positive, with Fellows describing the set aside time as functioning as a mini “course buy-out.” Fellows also appreciated the ongoing collaboration with their peers and the uninterrupted time to work (e.g., no competing work or

#### Institute Workshops

*Doing Qualitative Research: Balancing Flexibility with Methodological, Ethical and Practical Considerations*

**Dr. Deborah Padgett**

Professor, New York University  
School of Social Work

*Power and Sample Size Calculations for Study Design*

**Dr. Scarlett Bellamy**

Assistant Professor, Center for Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics,  
University of Pennsylvania  
School of Medicine

teaching tasks). It was exciting to see the cross-fertilization of research ideas among the Fellows – it is hoped that the HISTP experience will continue to cultivate these seeds as Fellows head back to their respective institutions. ■

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questions and problems are radically changed or watered down by what is considered important by NIH reviewers. In the name of getting funded, the experience may involve a troubling sense of distancing from our own communities and we no longer feel eager or competent to embark on the projects we wanted to undertake when we first came to the training process. I would argue that the experience can be one of double marginalization, where the research trainee, in the midst of training, may feel very different and distant from both places – the community of NIH researchers and their own ethnic communities – they are supposed to bridge. It is for these reasons that training programs must pay increasing attention to the trainees’ subjective experiences of loss and marginalization as potential threats to the important bridging task at hand.

What has helped? I go back to my earlier studies of childhood bilingualism where I learned the distinction between “subtractive” versus “additive” bilingualism. In a subtractive bilingual situation, a child becomes competent in a second language at the expense of the first; thus at one point in time the child is not fully competent in either language (“semi-lingual”) with negative educational consequences; the end result is a child who is monolingual in the

second language, a true loss of opportunity. In the additive situation, the child learns the second language as he or she is supported in the continued development of the first language; the end result is a fully bilingual child, a condition associated with many cognitive and social gains. What has helped me the most in my career is to, first of all, understand the cultural aspects of the NIH’s criteria of scientific excellence and become competent in such culture. However, I have tried to achieve such cultural competence in an additive rather than subtractive way, and have made a point in remaining very close to the voices and experiences of the community I serve, honoring their historically constructed knowledge as evidence as much as the findings from randomized trials. This is much easier said than done; above all, it involves holding the cultural tensions in ways that are not easily resolved.

I encourage all of us, with the support of our training programs and mentors, to reflect on these acculturation processes and keep mindful of our subjective experiences in the process. More often than not, our subjective negative experiences point to the larger structural and institutional forces we are asked to challenge courageously in order to make our science more relevant and useful for the health and well-being of our communities. ■

## HISTP STAFF

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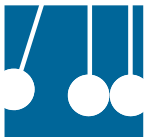
**Gina Espinoza**

**Operations Coordinator**

The HIV Intervention Science Training Program for Racial/Ethnic Minority New Investigators aims to facilitate the growth and development of a cadre of racial/ethnic minority (REM) scientists who will focus their research upon disparities in HIV/AIDS and co-occurring mental health disorders. We seek to promote REM scientists to increase contributions to the empirical knowledge base on the design of contextually and culturally congruent interventions, through training, mentoring, and interdisciplinary networking with senior REM scientists in the fields of HIV/AIDS, health disparities, and mental health and substance co-morbidities. Moreover, the mentoring process will be evaluated to understand the integral elements of successful mentoring of REM scientists.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **The 2009 HISTP Summer Training Institute will take place June 15th - 19th, 2009.**
- **Visit us online for the latest HISTP news and announcements.**



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