

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH/SCHOLARLY ACCOMPLISHMENT

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Since joining to the Department of Sociology at Sam Houston State University (SHSU) in 2006, I have been vigorously engaged in research through independent work and collaboration with colleagues. My research on health and health care among disadvantaged populations has continued to be my main focus. I have also the new area of research, agriculture and foods. During the past five years, my qualitative and quantitative research works has been accepted or published in prestigious professional journals (10 peer-reviewed journal articles). In addition, I have published one peer-reviewed book chapter and one encyclopedia entry, and given 25 presentations in regional, national, and international conferences. I have also received two internal grants and sought out external funding opportunities. Currently, three manuscripts and one National Institute of Health (NIH) grant proposal are under review. As a part of my active scholarly activities in the academic community, I have served as an ad-hoc reviewer (8 journals), associate editor (1 journal), editorial board (2 journals), and guest editor of the rural health special issue (1 journal) for various academic journals, as well as session organizer and chair (6 sessions) in regional, national, and international conferences. My progress to date and my perspective for future research follow.

Health

My primary research has centered on health and health care disparities among social groups, with emphasis on the roles of social contexts, as well as individual characteristics. I have particular interest in the health and health care issues of socially-disadvantaged populations such as immigrants, minorities, children, and rural residents.

Immigrant Health Care. My interest in immigrant health care began from my personal experience as an immigrant and bilingual staff in an immigrant health center. I recognized the importance of contextual factors, as well as individual socioeconomic characteristics, in determining immigrants' health care experiences in the United States. My research addressed the health care disparities among immigrant groups and the determinants in a broader social context, such as health policy, ethnic community, neighborhood, social capital, culture, and social networks. In the research, I employed multiple methodological approaches including in-depth interviews, focus-groups, household surveys, and secondary analyses. This research project culminated in multiple conference presentations and two single-authored articles in prestigious academic journals: *Ethnicity and Health* (1st ranked in the area of ethnic studies in the 2010 *Social Sciences Citations Index* [SSCI]) and *Social Science & Medicine* (ranked one of the top 5 among social sciences-biomedical journals in the SSCI). In addition, two other single-authored papers are under revision (*Qualitative Health Research*) and under review (*Ethnicity and Health*), respectively. A manuscript for an invited book chapter about health policy and challenges of new immigrants is in progress for submission in November 2011. That paper examines

the influence of health policies at the federal and state levels on the health insurance status of new immigrants and the challenges of obtaining health insurance. The potential impacts of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act on health insurance status of new immigrants are discussed as well.

Specific Health Conditions and Disadvantaged Population. The sociological aspect of critical health conditions such as cancer and obesity is another area of my research interest. I was involved in a collaborative research project on the social aspects of cancer. The study explored the patterns of social interaction experienced by cancer survivors with facial disfigurement and suggested social interventions for them at the community and the policy levels. I received the 2008 Faculty Research Grant at SHSU for this research project. The research resulted in the publication of one peer-reviewed journal article and one book chapter.

Obesity is a major area of my current research and will be my research focus in the next 3-5 years. Obesity is a great risk for a host of serious chronic health problems and related to a substantial loss of quality of life and social stigmatization. The obesity epidemics are a growing national and international health concern. Despite a substantial body of research on obesity, the obesity issues of immigrants and rural communities have been relatively understudied. My research has contributed to fill the gaps in the obesity literature. As an initial step, I was involved in collaborative research on the effects of nativity, acculturation, and body perception on obesity among Vietnamese Americans. The study was published in the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*. The perspectives and the scopes of my immigrant obesity research have been extended to national and global contexts. With support of the 2010 Faculty Research Grant at SHSU, I estimated the overweight and obesity prevalences of new US immigrants by place of origin and current residence. The study resulted in a single-authored article that was accepted in the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*. Currently, I investigate how nutrition transition – defined as a series of changes in diet and physical activities – shapes the obesity prevalence and the distribution patterns of US immigrants in the contexts of globalization as well as migration. The manuscript is in progress for submission to a peer-reviewed journal in spring 2012.

Rural children and adolescents are another focus of my obesity research. I have a particular interest in the influence of social and physical environments on childhood obesity in rural communities, with emphasis on the roles of local policies, socioeconomic inequality, and the community partnerships. The preliminary study on the rural childhood obesity was awarded the *Outstanding Conference Poster* in the Annual Research Conference of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at SHSU. The paper, “Children and Obesity Risk: Rural Residence Matters” was accepted for presentation at the 2012 Southern Rural Sociological Association meeting. Moreover, I, as a principal investigator, took the lead in an NIH grant proposal about the development of a community-based sustainable action plan to combat rural childhood obesity. The project is under review, and I am hopeful that this project will be funded.

In addition, I have participated in research projects in the areas of international health (e.g., son-preference and child health care in India, adolescent suicides in Korea) and

immigration (Thai Migrant Workers), as a lead author or collaborator. Three peer-reviewed journal articles were published in international journals on these topics.

Agriculture and Foods

Agriculture and foods is a new area of my research that I have developed after I joined SHSU. With the lead of my colleague, Dr. Douglas Constance who is a well-known scholar in the field, I have engaged in several studies in agriculture, focusing on organics. The collaborative efforts resulted in two peer-reviewed journal articles. Another article is under review and an invited book chapter is in progress for submission. This newly developed research area will provide important perspectives on my rural health research.

Research Service Activities

Based on my expertise in health research and research methodology, I have been an active member serving the academic community in various research areas. In addition to being a session organizer and chair at conferences, I have served as an ad hoc reviewer for eight different regional, national, and international journals in the areas of health and sociology. Since 2009, I have served as an associate editor in the *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*. In 2011, I was invited to serve on the editorial board for two academic journals. With international recognition of my expertise, I was invited to the advisory board in the project, *Development of Healthy Campus Model: College and Community Partnership (CCP)*, funded by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, South Korea. I currently serve as a guest editor of the rural health special issue for the *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 2012. I am also affiliated with two programs: Urban Health Program, Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University; and Center for Rural Studies at Sam Houston State University.

Future Research

My future research agenda will be built upon my past and current scholarship in the field. I will continue to focus on health and health care disparities of racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants, and their communities, but expand to more community involved and policy-oriented research. Obesity in rural communities will be the major area of my research focus. This research will build on a sociological perspective of health and disparities, as well as a community participatory research approach. My research on agriculture and foods will be bridged to my obesity research and provide a valuable perspective on the research. For research support, I will continuously seek funding opportunities as a leader or collaborator. Several independent and collaborative papers and research projects are either already in progress or under preparation. The quality of research and their contributions to the academic, community, and society will be ensured by my continuous scholarly activities based on my networking and collaboration with scholars in the other disciplines and institutions, health professionals, and various groups and organizations in the community. At the same time, I will continue to contribute to academic communities through my service.