

# Pilar Parra

## Web Bio

### Information

#### Biography

##### Biographical Statement

The focus of my research in the U.S. and in the international field is one of prevention with special emphasis on applied research. My research informs the design, test and evaluation of interventions to achieve long-term health behavioral change. I examine: 1) the behaviors and practices that enhance or detriment health status of groups and individuals; 2) the effect of social and economic factors on health; 3) and how culture and ethnicity shape health values, attitudes and behaviors among minorities and immigrant populations. I examine issues related to food safety in recent immigrant populations to assess gaps in knowledge and practices to design and test effective prevention educational material.

My work in developing countries focuses on the implementation of prevention services through programs based on local resources and knowledge. Special attention is given to women's roles and the promotion of community members' participation.

##### Department Website Summary

The focus of my research is health prevention with special emphasis on applied research. It informs the design, test and evaluation of interventions to achieve long-term health behavioral change.

#### Teaching

##### Teaching and Advising Statement

The main objective of my teaching is to provide students with the analytical skills to evaluate the research literature on the health status of minorities in the U.S.A. The primary goal of this course is to examine beyond the biological and clinical health outcomes; and identify the socioeconomic and cultural determinants in the health status as well as access and utilization of health services of Latino and other ethnic minorities in the U.S.

In my advising to majors in Bio and Society and Nutrition (HBHS majors), and as a mentor to student organizations, I aim to help students to build on their strengths in their path to adulthood, and guide them through their decision making to attain their academic objectives and develop leadership skills. As I build trust with the students I am more able to recognize any sign of distress students may have and react appropriately.

#### Professional

##### Current Professional Activities

2000 –present Faculty Fellow. Latino Living Center.  
2003 –present Faculty Advisor for Lambda Pi Chi Latinas working for the community.  
2006 –present Board member Latino Studies Program  
2007 –present Faculty Advisor. Student Organization. Community Health Action  
2013 -present Faculty Advisor. Student Organization: Hope Renewed in Campus  
2014 -present. Faculty Advisor. Student Organization: Operation Smile  
2011 - present Faculty Advisor for Nutritional Sciences HBHS Major

Member American Public Health Association (listed as a reviewer)  
Reviewer Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health

Reviewer Journal Women's Health and Urban Life

Reviewer Journal of Rural Sociology

#### Research

##### Current Research Activities

Two complementary projects are under study: 1) a follow-up to the project that examines the integration of immigrant populations in rural communities (Hatch NYC-159441), 2) a collaboration with Professor Michael Shapiro and Professor Robert Gravani's Hatch to test and develop most effective messages to reduce risk perception and unsafe home food preparation practices among recent immigrant Latino populations.

In the first project we build on findings from our completed Fund for Rural America project in five New York communities. We continue working with identified churches in rural New York to examine the viability of programs to foster immigrant access to jobs, housing, English language and other training, schooling and health care. The overall research objectives are: 1) production of detailed knowledge about the determination of the most common pathways and barriers to immigrant integration in new immigrant destination communities; 2) identification and development of

community-base programs to foster social network formation and promote the integration of immigrants into the community social and economic life; 3) identification of relevant mechanism used by immigrants to adapt and integrate the social and economic life in their new destination immigrant communities; 4) to facilitate links to local programming like 4H Programs, as a mechanism of integration for Latino youth living in rural communities. To follow up on the role of churches in the integration of immigrants we fielded questions in the state wide Empire State Poll to assess what community members expect of churches in integrating immigrants into the social and economic life of the community. Results showed that the most common responses were that churches should work to build social ties, followed by facilitating or providing education to adults and children, from teaching about American culture to language classes, and charitable services. The importance of building social ties between immigrants and the community was most pronounced in rural communities in Upstate New York where few co-ethnics live. We established a working partnership with a church in Upstate New York that serves predominantly the Hispanic community. We have carried 4 workshops during the last 4 summers, and we are in preparations of a report to inform other agencies how to reach out and work with the immigrant population in rural areas. One workshop was with parents who are interested to improve the diet in their families and ways to counter the impact of fast food and junk food in their children. Another workshop was aimed to children ages 11-16 on how to achieve healthy bodies and healthy minds. It included nutrition classes, preparation of healthy snacks and exercise. The workshop was framed within a discussion of identity challenges to address some of the issues children of immigrants face living in the U.S. In the summer of 2013, we carried 2 workshops, a nutrition workshop for kids in collaboration with CCE Wayne County, and the second, a workshop for girls with the aim to build a strong bicultural identity, self-esteem and goal setting. During the summer 2014, we expanded to other venues the implementation of workshops. We carried successfully 2 workshops in Orange County at the Catholic Charities in Middletown with immigrant mothers. In Wayne County we carried a food science base workshop to children 12-15 years old to encourage interest in sciences and safe food practices. As before, healthy nutrition and exercise was encouraged and practiced through snacks and lunch meals. Participants and their parents of the past four summers workshops confirmed findings from our previous interviews and focus groups with immigrants. They expressed that activities in the church premises were trusted, they felt welcome to attend, and that more programs would be desirable. They were pleased to see community members interested in their well being and the opportunity to learn about the American culture. Last year I expanded the project to other venues. Since few churches have a considerable number of Hispanic parishioners, we identified other organizations that have developed efforts to reach out immigrants in rural and semi urban areas. We contacted Catholic Charities in Middletown, NY where a group of mothers was meeting regularly. After discussion with the staff, we agreed to have a workshop during the summer. We assess needs and interests of this group of mothers and developed a two session workshop. The objectives were to reinforce knowledge and awareness of: 1) nutrition related issues; 2) sources and factors of bacteria growth and contamination. By emphasizing the microbiology behind food safety issues, good practices were reinforced. Knowledge gaps included: types of food borne illnesses, symptoms and mechanisms to avoid contamination. A section of importance of micronutrients and foods rich in micronutrients, portion size and junk food was included.

The second research effort, is an extension of the project "Home food safety knowledge and practices among Mexican American." A published paper and a webinar were produced. The project will carry interviews with Mexican origin and Mexican American on food safety to look at best ways to prepare educational messages for this population. A second paper under preparation "The role of acculturation in food safety practices among Mexican American and Mexican origin populations"

## **Extension**

### **Current Extension Activities**

Mentor and recipient of CCE-CALS Summer Internships

Working relationship with CCE Wayne County to link immigrant families to current extension programs. Special emphasis in facilitating participation of children of immigrant families in 4H

Working with three counties to test pilot 4-H initiatives (Wayne, Orange and Sullivan) Hatch Preproposal submitted for consideration for 2015-2018

## **Education**

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In my advising to majors in Bio and Society and Nutrition (HBHS majors), and as a mentor to student organizations, I aim to help students to build on their strengths in their path to adulthood, and guide them through their decision making to attain their academic objectives, develop leadership skills, etc. As I build trust with the students I am more able to recognize any sign of distress students may have and react appropriately.

Following the initial workshop in Marion, NY to Spanish speaking immigrant women with children, "Adoption of American Foodways among Recent Immigrant families," A second workshop was developed during the spring 2012 and carried out in the summer. Three students participated and included, nutrition, exercise and positive reinforcement to their bicultural identity. The workshop aimed to children 11-16 years old. The first and second workshops were carried by an undergraduate students from Human Ecology, Marion Robine, CALS Roxana Orellana and Brooke Parsons, and A&S Nicole Salach. Marion Robine successfully defended her honor thesis. The third year, two workshops took place (2013), one carried by staff from Cornell Cooperative Extension, Wayne County, "Cooking up fun" with children ages 9-14 in the church premises, and alumni, Kayle Repasy joined in the effort. A second workshop was developed by Delia Ramirez (A&S). The fourth workshop (2014) a CALS student from Food Sciences develop two workshops one for children ages 12-15 on sciences (Wayne County) and a second aimed to mothers living in Orange County. Her poster and presentation in CCE Poster Session (October 7, 2014) was well received.

Currently, we are working on a summary report of the three year workshops, and a manual to be distributed among agencies working with recent immigrant populations, and will be posted in the web.

Guest faculty to IARD 4020 and IARD 6020. Attended all seminars and presented a lecture " Women in Agriculture: In Search of Policies for Gender Equality" September 13, 2013, supervised student work related to gender, health and nutrition.

Trip to India, faculty. January 2013., January 2014

As faculty advisor of the Latino Living Center I have the opportunity to engage with students regularly during the semester in a setting outside the classroom, where I try to encourage communication with faculty to discuss non-academic issues of their interest or need.

## **Courses**

### **Courses Taught**

Sociology of Health and Ethnic Minorities (LSP/Dev Soc 2200)  
Guest faculty. International Agriculture and Rural Development (IARD 4020 and 6020)

## **Websites**

### **Related Websites**

<http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/publications/research-and-policy-brief-series.cfm>

[http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/publications/upload/11-2004-immigrants\\_community.pdf](http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/publications/upload/11-2004-immigrants_community.pdf)

[http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/publications/upload/04-2005-immigrants\\_community.pdf](http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/publications/upload/04-2005-immigrants_community.pdf)

[http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/publications/upload/09-2005-immigrants\\_community.pdf](http://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/publications/upload/09-2005-immigrants_community.pdf)

[http://cardi.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/publications/upload/10-2005-immigrants\\_community.pdf](http://cardi.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/publications/upload/10-2005-immigrants_community.pdf)

## **Administration**

### **Publications**

#### **Selected Publications**

Parra Pilar A., HueKyung Kim, Michael Shapiro, Rober Gravani, Samuel D. Bradley. Home food safety knowledge, risk perception, and practices among Mexican-American. *Food Control* 37 (2014) 115-125.

Parra Pilar A. Farmworkers Health. In: [Encyclopedia of Immigrant Health](#). Sana Lou and Martha Sajotovic (editors). Springer. Heidelberg. Germany. 2012

De Lima Philomena, Pilar Alicia Parra and Max J. Pfeffer. Conceptualizing Contemporary Immigrant Integration in the Rural United States and United Kingdom. In: *Rural Transformations and Rural Policies in the United Kingdom and the United States*. Shucksmith and Brown (editors). Routgers Series on Development and Society. United Kingdom. 2012

Pfeffer, M.J., Parra, P.A. "Upstate and Downstate Differ in Response to Needs of Immigrant Community." *NYSAC News* 30(9):23-24, 2009

Pfeffer M.J. and Parra P. Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Human Capital: Latino Immigrant Employment Outside the Enclave. *Rural Sociology*. Issue 74(2):241-269. June 2009

Pfeffer M.J. and Pilar A. Parra. Community Response to Immigrants in New Destinations. *Research and Policy Briefs*. Community and Rural Development Institute (CARDI). Department of Development Sociology. Cornell University. November 2008

Parra Pilar A. and Max J. Pfeffer. New Immigrants in Rural Communities: The Challenges of Integration. In: *The Border Next Door: New York Migraciones*. *Social Text* 88, Vol 24., No.3, pp 81-98. Fall 2006.

Pfeffer Max J. and Pilar A. Parra. Immigrants and the Community: Community Perspectives. Cornell University. 1500 GPP Report #4, October 2005. *Development Sociology*. Division of Nutritional Sciences.

Pfeffer Max J. and Pilar A. Parra. Immigrants and the Community: Former Farmworkers. Cornell University. 1500 GPP 060047. Report #3, September 2005. *Development Sociology*. Division of Nutritional Sciences

Parra Pilar A. and Max J. Pfeffer. Immigrants and the Community: Farmworkers with Families. Cornell University. 1500 GPP 050357. Report #2, April 2005. *Development Sociology*. Division of Nutritional Sciences

Pfeffer Max J. and Pilar A. Parra. Immigrants and the Community. Cornell University. 1500 GPP 11607. Report #1, November 2004. *Development Sociology*. Division of Nutritional Sciences

Book Review: *The Worm in the Wheat*. Rosalie Evans and Agrarian Struggle in the Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley of Mexico, 1906-1927, by Timothy J. Anderson, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998. In: *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 65. No.3.

Rodriguez E. and P. Parra A Review of New York's Health and Health Care Status: The

Challenges Ahead for 2000. In: New York in the 21st Century. Hirschl T. & Heaton T. (eds.) Praeger Publishers. Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. 1999:272-284.

“The Lost Knowledge: Breastfeeding Among Puerto Rican Women.” In: Proceedings of the International Workshop in Dietary Assessment Methodologies. Diva M. Sanjur and Mauro Valencia. Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo (C.I.A.D). Camino a la Victoria Km. 6. Sonora, Mexico. Division of Nutritional Sciences-Cornell University. Ithaca NY. pp.153-168.

Parra Pilar A. and P. Guarnaccia. Ethnicity, Culture, and Resiliency in Caregivers of a Seriously Mentally Ill Family Member. In Resiliency in Ethnic Minority Families: Native and Immigrant American Families. McCubbin H., Thompson E., Thompson A., and Fromer J. Sage. Newberry Park, CA. pp. 431-450.

Cerdá Magdalena & Parra Pilar. “El Taller: Una Guía Para Extensionistas.” (The Workshop: Guidelines for Agricultural and Health Extension Workers). Division of Nutritional Sciences and Cornell International Institute for Food Agriculture and Development.

Guarnaccia Peter, Pilar A. Parra. Ethnicity, Social Status and Families Experiences of Caring for a Mentally Ill Family Member. Community Mental Health Journal. Vol. 32(3):243-260

Aguirre-Molina M. and Pilar A. Parra. Latino Youth and Families as Active Participants in Planning Change: A Community-University Partnership Pp. 130-153. In Latino Families: Developing a Paradigm for Practice, Policy and Research. Zambrana Ruth (ed.) 1995. Sage. Newberry Park CA.

Parra, Pilar A. Midwives in the Mexican Health System. Social Science and Medicine. Vol.37. (11): 1321-1329.

Guarnaccia Peter, Pilar A. Parra, Aura Deschamps, G. Milstein, N. Argiles. Si Dios Quiere: Hispanic Families' Experiences of Caring for a Seriously Mentally Ill Family Member. Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry. Vol 16:187-215.

Parra Pilar A. La Mujer Rural, las Comadronas y el Sistema Mexicano de Salud. Revista Estudios Demográficos y Urbanos. Vol. 6 No.1. 1991:69-88