

MIND, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY

Seminar Series

UC MERCED, Fall 2016

Susana Ramirez

University of California, Merced

**The Information Environment and Health:
Toward a Transformative Health Communication Intervention**

The past two decades have seen a meteoric rise in the overall amount of health information available to many individuals, particularly from mass media and other non-clinical information sources. Coupled with a deliberate cultural shift toward a health care model featuring patients who are active participants in their own medical decision-making process, access to a rich information environment – and the ability to make sense of it – is becoming an increasingly important path to health. The mass media may constitute an especially important source for information dissemination in rural regions with geographically-dispersed populations that are harder to reach through other channels, and where local community newspapers – which tell local stories and serve an especially critical role – predominate. However, the unequal distribution of health information is compounded in rural regions that face multiple barriers to health, and thus may contribute to rather than reduce disparities. Access to health information has been considered a social determinant of health, and one that may be especially important in rural settings. In this talk I will discuss a set of projects that aim to improve the availability and quality of health information in the San Joaquin Valley as a strategy to combat health disparities.

Dr. A. Susana Ramirez is Assistant Professor of Public Health Communication at UC Merced. She completed a Cancer Prevention Fellowship (postdoctoral) in the National Cancer Institute's Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences. She earned a PhD in Communication from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, a Masters of Public Health from Harvard University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Santa Clara University. She is a social scientist whose research at the intersection of communication science, public health, and Latino health focuses on communication in the service of social justice and health equity. Dr. Ramirez employs mixed methods to understand the multiple levels of communication influence on health behaviors and to reduce health disparities among Latino populations across the acculturation spectrum. Her published research has examined the development and effectiveness of culturally tailored messages for bicultural Latina populations, knowledge and beliefs about cancer risk factors, and health information seeking behaviors. Currently funded research examines the feasibility of using mobile phones for tailored behavior change communications, examining the rural health information environment, understanding barriers to health care decision-making, multilevel communication strategies to create a culture of health in a diverse community, and community-based participatory research to prevent obesity in rural Latino families.



**MONDAY,
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3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

COB 114

Please contact Jeff Yoshimi (jjoshimi@ucmerced.edu) for more information.