

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE
MPH RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ACCULTURATION STRATEGY AND THE
RISK OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR IN DEAF ADULTS**

Thomas T. Fogg, MS

Deaf people in the U.S. are highly heterogeneous, have a distinct culture, constitute a disadvantaged minority population, and experience substantial health risks. Health disparities within the Deaf population are documented, but little is known about potential causes. Acculturative stress experienced by Deaf individuals as they make day-to-day choices regarding interactions with the hearing world may produce adverse health outcomes. In hearing populations, it has been shown that acculturation strategy, i.e., the manner in which an individual chooses to adapt to a culture other than his or her own, is related to acculturative stress and health outcomes. It is not unlikely that similar mechanisms act in the Deaf population. The goal of this study will be to determine if acculturation strategy is related to reported suicidal behavior in Deaf adults. Berry proposed a four-fold model of acculturation strategy, whereby individuals choose a strategy of integration, separation, assimilation or marginalization. This study applies Berry's framework to the Deaf population, and considers suicidal behavior as the health outcome of interest. Suicidal behavior is a significant public health problem around the world, and preliminary data suggest that reported suicidal behavior is more prevalent in the Deaf population than the hearing population. This study will investigate the question of whether acculturation strategy influences suicidal behavior in Deaf adults. The investigation will make use of survey data collected by means of an innovative sign language-based instrument developed by the National Center for Deaf Health Research. We define suicidal behavior as reported suicidal ideation within the last 12 months, and also as a reported attempt to commit suicide within the last twelve months. Logistic regression analyses will be performed separately for these two outcomes to test the hypothesis that an integrationist acculturation strategy is associated with a reduced risk of suicidal behavior.

**Committee Chair:
Edwin van Wijngaarden, PhD**

**Committee Members:
Steven Barnett, MD
Nancy P. Chin, PhD, MPH
Scott Smith, MD, MPH**

**Wednesday, May 20, 2009
12:00PM – 12:30 PM
Helen Wood Hall, Room 4W301**

EVERYONE IS WELCOME