



## SYSTEMS PLUS COLLEGE FOUNDATION

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (#2013-10) (Thursday, October 17, 2013)**

### **Psychosomatic Illness Evidence Found in 3-year Study of Military Filipino AmerAsians by PARC-SPCF Researcher Reported in National University of Singapore's Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work & Development**

**SINGAPORE** – An unexpected finding of somatic illness and probable psychosomatic disorder among 16 participants in a three-year long study of stigmatization and its impact on the mental health of military Filipino AmerAsians has been published in the September, 2013 issue of the prestigious *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development (APJSW&D Journal)*. The findings, originally contained in a broader, 3-year long study (2007-2010) that examined the overall impact of stigma, discrimination and psychosocial risk on the mental health of marginalized African (Black) and Anglo (White) AmerAsian adolescents and young adults - living in the vicinity of the former Clark air base near Angeles, Pampanga - reported that more than half (56%) of the original 16 member sample registered significant somatic complaints. The original ancillary finding was first reported as a psychosocial risk and mental stress factor in the 266-page Ph.D. doctoral dissertation titled, "*Stigma, Psychosocial Risk and Core Mental Health Symptomatology among Amerasians in the Philippines: A Multiple-Case Study,*" published in 2011 by Dr. P.C. "Pete" Kutschera.

Kutschera, Visiting Professor and Director of the Philippine Amerasian Research Center (PARC) at Systems Plus College Foundation (SPCF College) in Angeles, Pampanga, the Philippines, wrote in the Singapore journal that the detection was entirely unexpected despite an overall finding in the study that 62% of participants scored significantly elevated levels of anxiety, depression and stress when results from the DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scales) were tabulated. Participants also reported substantial psychosocial physical risk and mental health stress levels linked to stigma and depression brought about by being at risk biracial, mixed-heritage AmerAsians; these included homelessness or housing insecurity, joblessness or under employment, low educational levels, stress fostered by name-calling and personal harassment, unresolved grief due to abandonment by U.S. military personnel fathers, identity and personality conflicts, family disorganization or disintegration, social isolation, low self-esteem (inferiority complex) and other maladies.

Somatic complaints and ailments –amply detected among the study sample – included the presentation of a wide assortment of often seemingly unrelated physical ailments. These included

persistent headaches, backache, digestive or gastrointestinal issues, prolonged menstrual periods, unexplained feelings of being unwell, indefinable general physical pain, insomnia and episodes of worrying and generalized anxiety, among several others. "Psychosomatics are routinely described as illnesses in which somatic or physical symptoms are present. However, due to mental trauma they are unrecognized as such by the patient and thus susceptible to misdiagnosis by medical doctors; general practitioners, medical, hospital or clinical social workers, or psychiatric nurses who may be among the first to receive and examine them in a health-care setting, the article held," the article stated. Thus, somatic complaints and illness may mask or hide presenting mental psychopathology, a challenge for social workers dealing with socioeconomically marginalized Filipino AmerAsians the article stressed. There are an estimated 220,000 to 250,000 first and second generation military AmerAsians of all ages alive in the Philippines today according to a PARC-SPCF College paper presented by Kutschera and Dr. Marie A. Caputi of the College of Social and Behavioral Studies, Walden University, Minneapolis, MN at the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Philippines (ICOPHIL-9) conducted at Michigan State University in October, 2012; most were abandoned or stranded by U.S. military personnel including corporate defense contractors and U.S. civilian government employees during the protracted period of colonial, commonwealth and military bases presence in the archipelago (1898-1992).

The journal article conceded that the study findings were "preliminary" and "pilot" in nature. Broader based and more sizeable participant cohorts and specific study methodologies focusing on the presence of somatic complaints, illness and probable somatization disorder among AmerAsians need to be conducted. "Larger samples of the magnitude of 150-170 participants employed in the Vietnamese Amerasian refugee studies, or the 443 Filipino AmerAsians selected for the 1999 study titled, "*Filipino Amerasians: Living in the Margins*," co-authored by University of Philippines-Diliman Asian Studies and Anthropology Professor Dr. Carolyn I. Sobritchea, need to be conducted.

"Publishing this finding in a research journal with the professional gravitas of National Singapore University's APJSW&D Journal is another indication that the quality of empirical enquiry and research literature being generated by the Philippine Amerasian Research Center (PARC) of Systems Plus College Foundation (SPCF College) and Dr. Pete Kutschera is on the cutting edge globally of academic investigation into the plight of forsaken military AmerAsians," declared Prof. J. Vicente A. Tago, SPCF College's Vice President for Academic Affairs. "Our vision is to duplicate this kind of research journal response both throughout East/Southeast Asia and North America - and specifically the U.S.," Prof. Tago mainland.

The full paper was co-authored by two licensed social workers, Kutschera, a native New Yorker and Founder/Chief Academic Officer of the Amerasian Research Network, Ltd. - PARC-SPCF College's U.S.A.-based research affiliate - and Prof. Mary Grace Talamera-Sandico, R.S.W., M.M.P.M, a former SPCF College faculty who is a professor of social work and social sciences at Don Honorio Ventura Technological State University, Bacolor, Pampanga, Luzon. Prof. Talamera-Sandico was Dr. Kutschera's field research assistant in the Philippines when the original AmerAsian study dissertation was being conducted (2007-2010). The journal article will be available free to researchers, scholars and social scientists on the Amerasian Research Network, Ltd. website at: [www.amerasianresearch.org/somatic](http://www.amerasianresearch.org/somatic)

The abstract and additional biographical information are also available on the Taylor and Francis publishing site at URL:

**<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02185385.2013.818200?prevSearch=kutschera%2Band%2Btalamera-sandico&searchHistoryKey>** Dr. Caputi, Ph.D., of Ft. Lauderdale, FL, edited the journal research article “and is very deserving of praise and much gratitude for her expert knowledge, mentorship and familiarity with the geo-political history and social dynamics of formation of the Filipino and Pan Amerasian diaspora,” Dr. Kutschera maintained.

*APJSW&D Journal* is published by the Department of Social Work of the National University of Singapore (NUS), an internationally ranked research, academic and teaching institution; it is the “flagship” university of the Republic of Singapore. Singapore, a dynamic, modern city-nation state has one of the highest individual per capita income levels in the world and is a leading university and study center of Southeast Asia. The 2013-1014 World University Rankings for research and learning institutions ranked NUS globally as number 29; NUS also usually falls in the Top 5 of academically rated institutions in East/Southeast Asia. It is the best university in Asia proper according to the 2013 QS Rankings, the Wikipedia website reports. Founded in 1905 with its main campus at Kent Ridge, AUS is largely heralded for its global approach to research and academic learning.

*APJSW&D Journal* is published four times per year by the NUS Department of Social Work in collaboration with the Asian and Pacific Association of Social Work Education; all articles chosen for publication undergo a most vigorous peer review, based on initial editor screening and anonymous screening and review by at least two referees. The journal is cited in the Social Sciences Citation Index. Professor Tago noted that *APJSW&D Journal's* decision to publish the research paper “constitutes a seminal event in the context of all the incipient and energetic effort we have been performing at PARC-SPCF College since the research unit’s formation in 2011; it lends a definite authenticity and validity to all that Dr. Kutschera and Professor Jose Maria G. Pelayo III have been doing.” In describing the Singapore publication Dr. Kutschera said, “you could, metaphorically speaking, say that a social work research article being published in *APJSW&D Journal* in East/Southeast Asia is equivalent to a physician, medical doctor or medical researcher having her/his findings published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* or the U.K.’s *British Medical Journal* – it really doesn’t get much better!”