



# Women Who Lose Children: Consideration of Health Consequences and Potential Solutions



Rosi Andrade, Ph.D. & Corrie Brinley, MSW with Sally Stevens, Ph.D. & Josephine Korchmaros Ph.D.

Southwest Institute for Research on Women at The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona

## The Southwest Institute for Research on Women

### Our Mission

- Improve the lives of women and girls – particularly those living in the Southwest – through interdisciplinary and inter-institutional research and action projects
- Challenge the status quo
- Facilitate the voices of those who experience disparity
- Work with diverse groups of women, men and transgendered individuals
- Seek innovative methods to improve conditions and contexts
- Enact positive change at an individual, social and structural level

### Projects

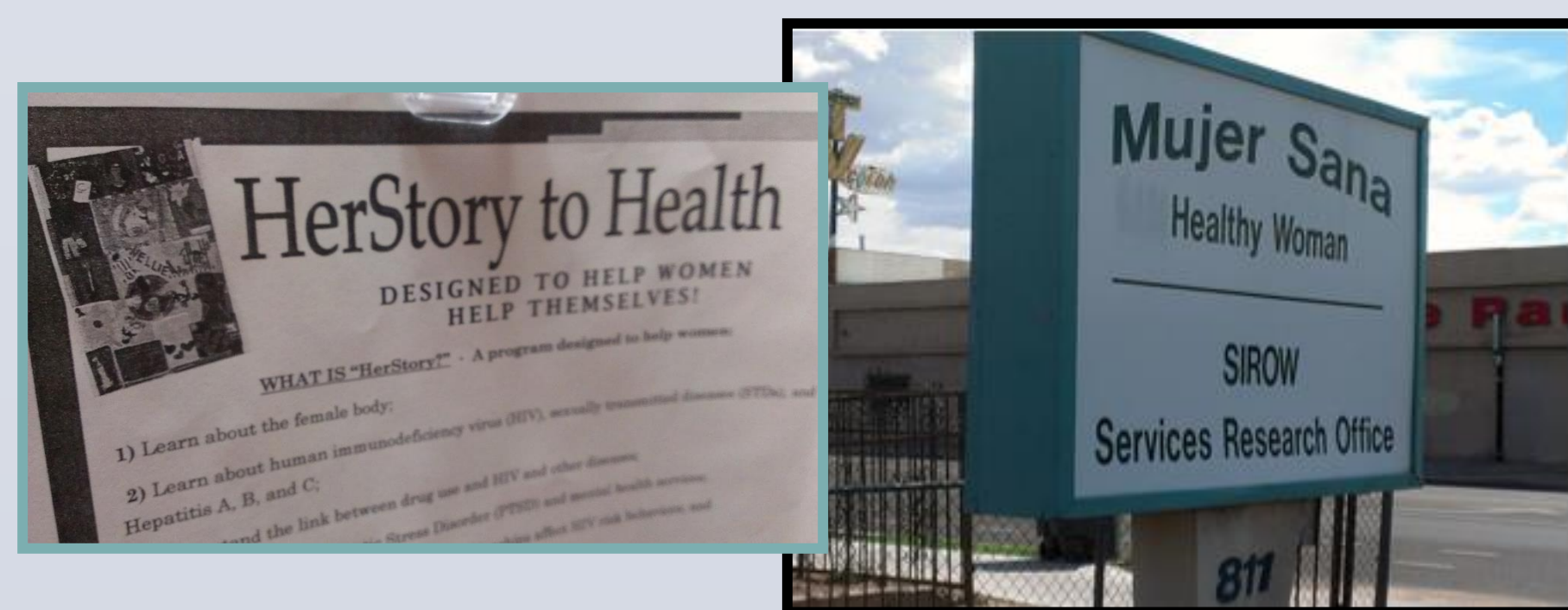
- Include a broad spectrum of themes and issues from health and wellness to education, employment, women's history and the arts

### HerStory to Health

**A community-based center for active drug using women (18 years of age and older) in substance abuse treatment, and for homeless, near homeless women**

- Provides sexual health/PTSD prevention intervention
  - 3-month intervention
  - Six 2-hour groups (sexuality and intersection of sexuality & substance use)
  - Trauma intervention component
  - HIV/STD health screening, treatment and referrals
- Provides additional supports – Computer Kiosk and flash drive to develop resume and online job searches
- Examines baseline and follow-up data (3 and 6 months)

**Total 302 women; 293 at least one pregnancy; average number of pregnancies = 3.7**



### Demographic Information (N=302)

Average age	34.16	(range = 18-64)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Caucasian	132	44
Hispanic/Latina	50	17
American Indian	48	16
African American	21	7
Multiracial	40	13
Asian	1	Less than 1
Other	6	2

### Past 90-Day Drug Use Reported (N=302)

Type of Drug (%)	n	%
Alcohol	162	54
Tobacco	230	76
Marijuana/Hashish	104	34
Cocaine	65	22
Crack	68	23
Methamphetamine	80	26
Other	9	3
Amphetamines		
Benzodiazepines	32	11
Heroin	23	8

### Pregnancy and Childbirth: (N=302)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Pregnant	9	12	14	15	17	15	7	3	3	3	<1	1	1	<1
Ectopic Pregnanc y*	89	5	<1	<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Children Born to*	15	16	20	17	15	7	3	2	<1	0	0	<1	0	0

Mean number of pregnancies = 3.7  
 ~5% of women reported being pregnant at the time of the interview  
 \*These data are missing for 6% of participants

### Children Under Mothers Care (N=302)

Percent of Participants Who Reported Each Number of Children Under Age 18 Under Their Care (Including Non-biological Children)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	71	10	8	6	3	<1	<1	<1

### PARTICIPANTS INVOLVEMENT WITH CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (N=302)

- 49% of participants reported that between 1 and 6 of the children in their care were investigated by Child Protective Services (CPS) (n=117 children)
- 40% of participants reported that between 1 and 6 of the children in their care were removed by CPS (n=95 children)
- 81% of children investigated were removed by CPS
- Sibling cohorts of 2 to 5 children were removed at higher rates (75-86%) than single children (70%)

### Trauma: Loss of Children & Related Level of Upset (N=302)

Type of Child Loss	N	%	Mean level of upset	Mean # of children this happened to (range)
Had your own child(ren) removed by CPS	120	40	5.0	2.4 (1-6)
Your partner or family took your child(ren) away from you	67	22	4.9	--
Your children were adopted	53	18	4.6	1.9 (1-6)
Your parental rights were severed	63	21	4.6	2.2 (1-6)
You had a child who died	23	8	4.8	--

### Intergenerational Involvement with Child Protection Services

- Of the 293 women who gave birth to one child (missing data on 18) 52 (22%) were involved with CPS as a child
- Of these 52 women, 38 (73%) have had at least one child investigated by CPS

### Mothering (Not) and Related Health Consequences

- Difficult for the participants in HerStory to keep their children**
- When children are removed from their mothers:**
  - Mother and child do not bond
  - Mother and child experience trauma and related health problems (depression, anxiety, physical ailments, somatic symptoms)
  - Trauma in mothers contributes to substance abuse
  - Serial birthing, women grieving, hoping to "keep" new baby
  - Children more likely to be CPS involved
  - Children age out of the system and often pursue return to mother
  - Neither mother or child gain relationship skills to reunite in healthy ways or to decrease cyclical interruption of motherhood to loss of child(ren), and childhood to loss of mother

### Potential Solutions

#### Feminist informed programs for women and their children:

- Secure safe long-term affordable housing
- Promote the mother-child relationship (life-work balance)
- Combat stigma associated with drug using mothers
- Include trauma-informed interventions
- Facilitate intergenerational healing activities
- Facilitate innovative humanities-based healing interventions (reading groups; journaling)
- Teach parenting skills with pedagogically appropriate approaches (cognitive/emotional/reflective/experiential)
- Initiate ways for women to be activists in causes larger than themselves

### SIROW's Response



### Working Poor Mothers of Minors (MOMs)

- A comprehensive, gender specific, and culturally competent residential substance abuse treatment, prevention, and recovery support service project for pregnant and postpartum women (18 years of age and older) and their minor children, and inclusive of their non-residential family members
  - 2-months trauma informed residential substance abuse treatment program for women & their children with child care services
  - Trauma education & group/individual trauma counseling for the women & their children
  - Parenting education & play groups for the women & her supports
  - Housing support services
  - Sexual health education
  - 6-months case management & support for the women, their children, & supports
- Examines baseline and follow-up data (3 and 6 months)

### Recovery Oriented System of Care Consortium (ROSCC)

- Engage and meet quarterly to examine, advise on, and implement an efficient and effective, trauma-informed System of Care
- Incorporate a multi-disciplinary perspective (e.g., treatment, psychiatric, medical, spiritual, family, consumer, commerce, policy, prevention)

### Contact Information

Rosi Andrade, Ph.D.  
[rosia@email.arizona.edu](mailto:rosia@email.arizona.edu)  
 &  
 Corrie Brinley, MSW  
[cbrinley@email.arizona.edu](mailto:cbrinley@email.arizona.edu)

Southwest Institute for Research on Women  
 Mujer Sana ~ Healthy Woman  
 811 S. 6th Ave., Tucson, AZ 85701  
 (520) 670-9075