The current research and scholarship of:

**Leigh Tenkku Lepper, PhD, MPH**
Core Faculty, Master of Public Health Program  
Director of Research, Master of Public Health Program  
Associate Research Professor, Social Work

**Focus**
Dr. Tenkku Lepper's research is focused on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) to include: epidemiological studies that elucidate the pattern of alcohol use among women, interventions to help women change their alcohol use at preconception and conception to have a healthy baby, interventions for youth and young adults with FASD, and training and education of health professionals on FASD and alcohol screening and brief interventions. She recently designed and implemented a CDC funded intervention for youth and young adults with FASD to decrease poor social behaviors among the youth and to increase coping skills and decrease stress among their caregivers. She was recently funded for a $1.1 mil CDC-funded Mental and Reproductive FASD Practice Implementation Center (MRPIC) project for four years that began October 2014 and will be working with the disciplines of Social Work and OB/GYN along with national partners to include University of Texas-Austin (Social Work) and ACOG. She also continues to work with Advanced Epidemiological students (at SLU School of Public Health) in the conduct of secondary data analyses focused on alcohol use among women.

**Most Interesting Finding**
In the work we have done on reducing alcohol-exposed pregnancies, we have learned that while brief interventions using motivational interviewing techniques are effective, it may also be true that just asking questions about alcohol use moves women to change their drinking behaviors. This has been supported through numerous studies in the field. In the epidemiological studies we have conducted, we continue to show that drinking among women is higher among women with more education and more disposable income and not necessarily among those with low SES, which is in direct contrast to perceptions in society.

**Biggest Challenge**
The implementation of interventions studies is much harder than one thinks. Every research study has unique challenges in recruitment of a large enough sample size to show an intervention effect. This was particularly the case in the intervention for youth and young adults with FASD where we
spent a year and half just trying to find the sample. In addition, working with community-based
social service agencies requires a great deal of communication and relationship-building.

**Greatest Satisfaction**

Working in the field of FASD is very rewarding to me both professionally and personally. Young
children and adolescents with FASD along with their caregivers need a lot of services and I get to
work with families, providers and academic colleagues which gives me a wonderful broad
perspective on this birth disorder. In addition, I am very passionate in helping women understand
the impact of drinking alcohol during pregnancy and especially during the preconception period.