

The Capacity Builder

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Center for Capacity Building on Minorities with Disabilities Research
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Dear Colleagues,

We are proud to share with you the second newsletter of the Center for Capacity Building on Minorities with Disabilities Research. We want to take this opportunity to update you on our research and training activities and highlight the work of two of our research collaborators.

Our Center, funded by National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), aims to build the capacity of state vocational rehabilitation agencies (VR) and community based-organizations (CBOs like Centers for Independent Living and/or other agencies serving minorities with disabilities) to document the impact of their programs and develop more culturally competent services. In addition, we are devoted to improving the capacity of researchers to include individuals with disabilities from underrepresented groups in their research, outreach and dissemination efforts. Our work involves a national network of collaborators who are conducting a variety of research, evaluation, and training projects to fulfill our mission.

In this newsletter we highlight the work of two of our research collaborators, Dr. Brigida Hernandez and Dr. Glenn Fujiura. Dr. Hernandez and her colleagues are assessing the cultural appropriateness of psychological tests used in VR. Dr. Fujiura and his colleagues are investigating the meaning of race and disability in research. We have also included information about our recent and upcoming accomplishments. We invite you to read more about their work in this issue of our newsletter and to visit our website where you can find additional information about our various projects and activities: <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/empower>.

It is our hope that we can explore ways to collaborate to improve the inclusion of minorities with disabilities in our communities. Please feel free to contact us if you are interested in any of our research or training. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you.

Sincerely,

Fabricio E. Balcazar, Ph.D.
Director & Associate Professor

Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar, Ph.D.
Associate Director & Associate Professor

Accomplishments!

- Fabricio Balcazar was invited to speak at the 11th Annual Diversity Summit at the University of Colorado, on "Race, poverty and disability: Living with and Overcoming Multiple Marginalizations" in February 2006.
- Fabricio Balcazar, Celestine Willis and Chris Keys were invited to speak at the NARRTC conference in Washington, DC on "What is Cultural Competence and how can we achieve it?" in April 2006.
- Fabricio Balcazar was invited to become a member of the Statewide Advisory Council for the Illinois Department of Human Services.
- Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar will become the Head of the Department of Occupational Therapy in the College of Applied Health Sciences at UIC on May 16, 2006.
- Glenn Fujiura received the 2006 ARC of Illinois Leadership Award to honor his work and the positive impact he has made on the lives of people with developmental disabilities.

The Psychological Assessment Study: Examining the Cultural Appropriateness of Psychological Tests when Assessing Vocational Rehabilitation

Principal Investigator:

Brigida Hernandez, PhD

Graduate Research Assistants:

Elizabeth Horin, MA, Andrea Saul, & Oscar Donoso

Institutional Affiliation:

DePaul University

For many individuals with a disability, the evaluation phase of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) process involves the administration of tests that aim to assess intelligence, achievement skills, personality, vocational aptitude, and vocational interests. Results from such an evaluation are often vital to determining rehabilitation needs and goals. If properly used, these tests may provide valuable information to psychologists, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and clients (Rubin & Roessler, 2001).

Although diagnostic testing is a critical component of the vocational rehabilitation process, the use of standardized tests with individuals who have disabilities has been questioned (Rogan & Hagner, 1990). Specifically, Menchetti and Rusch (1988) argue that the predictive validity of tests is poor because of their focus on individual attributes and failure to consider the influence of the work environment on these attributes. Menchetti and Rusch also note that some tests are culturally biased, which would further affect the validity of results for ethnic minority individuals. Given that many diagnostic instruments are standardized with members of the mainstream population, it is not culturally appropriate to assume that tests are valid and reliable when used with people of diverse backgrounds (Frisby, 1998; Gray-Little & Kaplan, 1998).

The first goal of our five-year project was to review current literature concerning the psychological assessment of ethnic minorities when making disability determination and providing vocational rehabilitation services. To date, we have identified, reviewed, and summarized a total of 120 journal articles and 11 book chapters that pertain to psychological testing and members of ethnic minority groups (specifically, African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans). As a result of this review, we have identified several trends.

First, most empirical studies related to ethnic minorities and psychological testing have focused on the domains of intelligence and personality. Less attention has been paid to the areas of achievement, vocational aptitude, and vocational interests. Second, there is a lack of ethnic representation during the standardization of published tests, and the disability community is even less represented. Third, empirical studies that have examined the appropriateness of published norms for members of ethnically diverse groups indicate that there is a potential for over-pathologizing. Fourth, the adequacy of translations and adaptations of published tests varies widely, with some tests demonstrating better adequacy than other tests. Lastly, there are a number of cultural considerations that need to be kept in mind when testing ethnic minorities (including heterogeneity of cultural groups, impact of acculturation, and cultural expectations during the testing process).

During this past year, we have also developed a survey that will be completed by 150 VR personnel who administer psychological tests to individuals with disabilities seeking VR services in Illinois, Texas, California, Florida, and New York to examine the most commonly used standardized tests, surveys, and procedures. We will also assess the multicultural competence of participants and examine modifications made when testing clients who are ethnically diverse and disabled. This survey will be completed online and/or by telephone.



Pictured from left to right are Oscar Donoso, Brigida Hernandez, and Elizabeth Horin.

Future plans

2006-2007: Conduct workshops in the five aforementioned states to present findings from our literature review (Year 1) and survey results (Year 2). These workshops will be with individuals who completed the survey from Year 2 and interested others with the goal of improving the assessment process for ethnic minority clients seeking VR services.

2007-2008: Develop and disseminate a practitioners' guide to strengthen the delivery of culturally-competent services among VR personnel who are responsible for psychological testing.

2008-2009: Disseminate project findings.

Project update continued on page 4

Epistemology of Race and Disability Research

Principal Investigator: Glenn T. Fujiura, PhD
Graduate Research Assistants: Carlos Drazen, MA
Institutional Affiliation: University of Illinois at Chicago

“Epistemology” refers to the origin of knowledge or knowing. The central premise of this project is that consideration of the assumptions, rationales, and functions of research is as fundamental as the methodology or findings. Our analysis of the literature originated from a sense that disability scholars have yet to engage in a systematic dialogue over the meaning of race and ethnicity in our research. In effect, have we really reflected on our constructions of race in the research questions we ask about disability? This is a familiar thread in epistemological discussion -- that the research enterprise is composed of many different logics and languages, and inquiry is represented by multiple ways of knowing. The intent is to enhance awareness among researchers, particularly new and emerging researchers, of the broad tapestry of research within being conducted in the field.

Employing a concept mapping approach (Trochim, 1989), we evaluated published articles incorporating the themes of race and disability in the fields of rehabilitation, education, history, cultural studies, public health, medicine, among others. Concept mapping is a general approach to the generation and organization of a topic or construct rather than a specific set of techniques (Trochim, 2001); in the current project we engaged in an iterative series of structured evaluations of studies. Each review involved developing a label describing how the author(s) conceptualized the nexus of race and disability in the study research question. In many cases, discussion was required to reach consensus on the label (our thanks to Shilpaa Anand for serving as a third reader on many of the articles). Labels were revised where necessary when subsequent reviews revealed new perspectives, and preliminary pictorial representations, or “maps,” were drawn identifying each of the labels and their hypothesized interrelationships. A final map was arrived at relatively quickly and subsequent reviews were employed to “challenge” the adequacy of the map as a classification tool.



Glenn Fujiura

Each study was evaluated on the basis of this question: "How do the investigators construct the nexus of race and disability in their research question?" In effect, research questions represent our "raw data." To date, we have derived a four-fold scheme within which race and disability is studied: (1) phenomenology of experience; (2) competence of persons or systems, (3) equity, or (4) culture. Within each of these broad themes, questions cluster around a larger number of lines of research. Phenomenological studies fall into one of three lines of research that looked at self-identity or the disability experience as mediated by cultural consciousness. Competence studies focus on behaviors, attitudes as they related to access, and encompass research focused on either individuals or systems. Constructing research in terms of equity is the dominant framework in all disciplines: prediction research, diagnosis and assessment, population studies, and numerous studies of group mediators such as poverty, culture, racism, empowerment, and geography. The smallest body of work is represented in the study of culture where questions are contextualized through the lens of racial or ethnic or disability culture.



Carlos Drazen

Given the complexity and breadth of the topic, our observation of “theoretical pluralism” (Hooker, 1987) is hardly surprising; the topic is being studied (if not embraced) across a range of disciplines and traditions of inquiry. Breadth however, invites fragmentation. Our perspectives on race and disability are represented piecemeal across discipline, topic, and focus. While the analysis and synthesis remains a work in progress, we hope to complete the paper this summer with a more fully developed summary of themes, including the role of discipline in dictating the forms of knowledge. Our goal is for this and subsequent papers on research to provide broad frameworks that can assist guide researchers entering the field of study.

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Upcoming Events!

- ❖ Celestine Willis and Fabricio Balcazar were invited to present on cultural competence on June 14, 2006 and Celestine Willis, Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar and Reginald Alston were invited to present on race and disability on June 16, 2006 at the Society for Disability Studies National Conference in Washington DC.
- ❖ Celestine Willis will present on a panel at the NAMI's Eliminating Disparities: Multicultural Strategic Summit on June 28, 2006 in Washington DC.

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