



# The Empowerer

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PROJECT EMPOWERMENT

Issue 1D  
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Mark Richardson: New Project Empowerment Staff Member

Dr. Jenelle Pitt: Profile for a recent doctoral graduate, and new minority disability researcher

Latest Archived Webcast and Upcoming Webcast

Research to Action Note: "Three-factor model of multicultural counseling for consumers with disabilities."

## COMING SOON:

Webcasts in Spanish

**Editors:** Allen Lewis, Ph.D., CRC  
Aisha Shamburger, M.S., CRC

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Welcome to the fourth edition of THE EMPOWERER, the quarterly newsletter of Project Empowerment. Since our last publication in January, we have added a new staff member and current PhD student, Mark Richardson, to our Project Empowerment team. Mark brings a wealth of knowledge from having worked closely with our Co-Principal Investigator, Dr. Paul Wehman.

In our last edition of THE EMPOWERER, we profiled an undergraduate student, Brett Dodd, who is an up and coming researcher. In this issue, we profile, Dr. Jenelle Pitt. Dr. Pitt began working on the Project Empowerment grant as a doctoral student at Michigan State University and upon her graduation, is now an Assistant Professor at California State University - Fresno. She is now a full-fledged minority disability researcher.

This issue also includes the second Research to Action Note (RAN). This is a knowledge translation tool summarizing research findings in common, everyday language to facilitate direct application of the new knowledge generated to rehabilitation counseling practice. The featured RAN in this issue is the "Three-factor model of multicultural counseling for consumers with disabilities."

Finally, on January 23rd, we conducted our second Research Day with twenty-one undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty members in attendance representing our partner universities. Attendees had the opportunity to learn strategies of systematically reviewing literature and conducting quantitative research, along with obtaining exposure to ongoing Project Empowerment research. Research dissemination will be the topic of discussion at the next Research Day on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Sincerely,

Allen Lewis  
Chair, Department of Rehabilitation Counseling  
School of Allied Health Professions  
Virginia Commonwealth University

## Spotlight on Minority Disability Scholarship

### Upcoming Special Issue:

- Drs. Allen Lewis, PI and Juan Carlos Arango-Lasprilla, Co-PI of Project Empowerment, have been invited to be guest co-editors for a special issue of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR)* on "Multicultural challenges in employment of people with disabilities." This special issue will be printed in early 2010.

### Conference Presentations:

- Dr. Kelli Williams Gary presented "Ethical Issues related to Addressing Race/Ethnicity in Community Re-integration and Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes after Traumatic

(continued)

Brain Injury” on Friday, February 5, 2010 for the Department of Rehabilitation and Disability Studies at Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA.

- Dr. Allen Lewis presented “Strategies to Help Your TBI Program Embrace Cultural Competency Starting Tomorrow” on Friday, March 19, 2010 as the closing plenary session speaker for the Federal Traumatic Brain Injury State Program Directors’ Leadership Meeting of the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA)

## Update on Research Studies

**Study 1** -- This study will be a national survey examining experiences of Americans with disabilities from racial and ethnic minority groups to illuminate the current capacity of the rehabilitation and disability system, and to learn what research methods and dissemination practices are needed to advance the field in culturally competent research.

- A very rough initial draft of the national survey has been disseminated for the first round of feedback from targeted members of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education and Project Empowerment stakeholders.
- Drs. Kelli W. Gary and Paola Premuda-Conti along with Aisha Shamburger, doctoral student, are working on revising the initial draft of the national survey, which was critically reviewed at the Project Empowerment Think Tank/Research Consortium on August 7, 2009.
- Dr. Kelli W. Gary and Aisha Shamburger are currently working on a comprehensive literature review on the experiences of minorities with disabilities in the public rehabilitation and disability services system AND current research methods and dissemination practices used in the conduct of minority disability research.

## Capacity Building Forum

Mark Richardson, M.Ed., Ph.D. Candidate in Special Education joined the Project Empowerment staff in February. Mark has previously worked with Dr. Paul Wehman, Project Empowerment Co-Principal Investigator, on publications pertaining to best practices for student led and transitional individualized education plans (IEPs). Mark will assist with several capacity building efforts.

The capacity building component of this project is very important. It represents a way to engage in succession planning by identifying individuals who can be developed to be ready, passionate and interested in devoting careers to the study of racial and ethnic minorities with disabilities.

Our capacity building efforts are based primarily on collaboration with minority partner institutions (Virginia Union University, Virginia State University, and Norfolk State University) as well as interested minority students identified at other universities. One tool that we utilize to inform and involve the participants in the grant is quarterly Research Days. The objectives of these events are to provide an overview of the research process for the three main studies of Project Empowerment and to gain input, provide general knowledge pertaining to conducting scholarly research, and to engage participants as they begin to cultivate their own research interests.

On Saturday, January 23rd, the second Project Empowerment Research Day was held at Virginia Commonwealth University. Twenty-one individuals were in attendance for the half-day session. Topics included:

- An Overview of Project Empowerment,
- An Overview of Survey Research,
- Statistical Strategies Used in Project Empowerment Research Studies,
- Foundations of Quantitative Research: Key Elements,
- Conducting Quality Literature Reviews, and
- An Introduction to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Research.

Additional information about the day and the PowerPoint presentations can be downloaded from the Project Empowerment website at <http://www.vcu-projectempowerment.org/research/researchDays.cfm>.

Networking sessions at the conclusion of the Research Day provided undergraduate students the opportunity to present questions about the graduate school application process. Students and faculty were also afforded the opportunity to network and share research ideas. The next research day will be May 1, 2010 from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at Founders Hall of the VCU Siegel Center. The topic of discussion will be research dissemination. Registration information will be sent via e-mail in April.

Mark Richardson, doctoral student, is currently working on building interest in Project Empowerment among students and faculty at several Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). Effort and progress will continue on this objective through early 2010.



#### **Profile: Dr. Jenelle Pitt**

Dr. Jenelle S. Pitt was born in Toronto, Canada, and grew up in Los Angeles, California. She received her B.A. in Psychology from the University of California, Riverside and her M.A. in Rehabilitation Counseling from Michigan State University. She recently received her Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Counselor Education from Michigan State University and is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Master's Rehabilitation Counseling Program at California State University-Fresno.

Dr. Pitt has varied clinical experience that spans both the public and nonprofit rehabilitation sectors. She was employed as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for five years primarily working with transition age youth, and also functioned as a "change agent" in a large non-profit organization in which she was responsible for developing and implementing projects designed to increase outcomes such as morale, productivity, retention, and quality of work life for individuals with disabilities. Her primary research interests currently include cultural diversity and organizational behavior practices in VR.

As a recent doctoral graduate, Dr. Pitt feels that it is critical to be able to contribute to the field through empirical investigation. She comments that Project Empowerment afforded her the opportunity to collaborate with individuals who are committed to conducting culturally-grounded research that will make a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities from diverse backgrounds. Dr. Pitt also credits Project Empowerment with providing mentoring to help strengthen her research self-efficacy, which research suggests is a critical factor in overall scholarly involvement and productivity.

Based on my continued involvement with Project Empowerment and its goals of building capacity in the area of minority disability research, one of Dr. Pitt's future endeavors is to conduct research on a national level that explores the reciprocal effects of disability, race, and poverty and their impact on VR employment outcomes. She is also looking forward to mentoring and involving future researchers at the graduate level, as a way of building research self-efficacy among individuals who are both passionate and committed to like issues. Her intent is to honor the contribution Project Empowerment has made to her career by "paying it forward."

### **Training, Dissemination, and Knowledge Translation Corner**

Project Empowerment will deploy 14 strategies for training and dissemination. Each is designed to promote minority disability knowledge system-wide. Together, they constitute a multi-pronged approach to ensure broad reach and maximum system penetration of knowledge generated by Project Empowerment. The strategies are:

- newsletter,
- listserv,
- website ([www.vcu-projectempowerment.org](http://www.vcu-projectempowerment.org)),
- minority disability research training module in Blackboard (under construction),
- grant writing training module in Blackboard (under construction),
- webcasts on minority disability topics,
- fact sheets on minority disability topics (under construction),
- conference presentations,
- published manuscripts,
- planned state of the science conference,
- planned handbook of minority disability research best practice,

- Research to Action Notes,
  - Facebook, and
  - Research Days.
- Research to Action Notes (RANs) are a “user friendly” summary of the bottom-line “lessons learned” from Project Empowerment research that will apply to rehabilitation practice. The following RAN is based on the journal article: Lewis, A. N. (2006). Three-factor model of multicultural counseling for consumers with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 24*(3), 151-159. It is also a book chapter, Lewis, A.N. & Shamburger, A. (2009). A three-dimensional model for multicultural rehabilitation counseling. In Balcazar, F. & Suarez-Balcazar, Y. Taylor-Ritzler, T. Keys, C. *Race, culture and disability: Rehabilitation science and practice* (pp. 229-253). Boston, MA: Jones and Bartlett.
    - The three-factor or three-dimensional model is an interview tool for counselors to use in getting to know a new client in terms of that client’s cultural identity, current stage of development, and view of optimum adjustment to disability as well as how much the client will be an active participant in working toward adjustment.
    - The purpose of such a tool is to have a pre-fabricated approach for exploring who the client is in these three areas. Each tool is created uniquely by its user based on how the user understands these three areas and the context (i.e., setting and population of persons with disabilities) that one works in.
    - The benefit of such a tool is that when a counselor has devoted the time towards developing one that fits her/his unique clinical interview style, personal understanding in the three areas, and planned use of the tool in a specific context; it almost guarantees that the three areas will be routinely and systematically explored with each new client, thereby enhancing the chance for a positive working alliance between the client and consumer.
    - There are six steps involved in developing a three-factor or dimensional model as follows:
      1. decide how broadly or narrowly to apply the model (i.e., determine how many populations of persons with disabilities it will be applied to and the setting[s] in which it will be used),
      2. consider the three factors (i.e., areas) separately and determine a theoretical framework on which to base each area,
      3. sketch the model,
      4. test the model for conceptual integrity (determine if it makes sense logically),
      5. test the model for applied integrity (test it on one or several clients), and
      6. revise the model as needed at regular intervals based on usage.
        - Sketching the model is a critical activity so that the counselor will have a visual representation on a single sheet of paper that she/he can commit to memory. It is important to note that sketching the model may not be as meaningful for counselors with visual impairments.
  - Since various Project Empowerment initiatives are being developed to reach Latino disability researchers, Dr. Juan Carlos Arango-Lasprilla, Co-Principal Investigator of Project Empowerment, is developing upcoming webcasts that will be featured in Spanish.
  - State of Science Conference: Date to be announced.
  - The latest archived webcast is “Cultural Competency in Rehabilitation.” This webcast covers (1) the definition of cultural competency, (2) teaching cultural competency in rehabilitation, (3) cultural competency

in rehabilitation service provision, (4) cultural competency in rehabilitation research, and (5) cultural competency and knowledge translation in rehabilitation. Panelists included Dr. Allen Lewis from VCU; Dr. Jenelle Pitt from California State University-Fresno; Dr. Keith Wilson from Pennsylvania State University; Dr. Philip Rumrill from Kent State University; Dr. Reginald Alston from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; Dr. Pamela Lewis from VCU; and Attorney Andrew Imparato from the American Association of People with Disabilities.

- The next webcast will be held on Wednesday, April 14, 2010 from 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. EST. The topic is "Perceptions of Psychiatric Services Held by African American Males: Implications for Service Providers and Researchers" and will be a roundtable discussion from a panel of clinical and research experts on mental health services rendered to African American males in various healthcare settings. The featured presenters are: Mark Richardson, M.Ed., Ph.D. Candidate; Kelli Williams Gary, Ph.D., MPH, OTR/L; and Aisha Shamburger, M.S., CRC, Ph.D. Student. All three presenters are from Virginia Commonwealth University.

This webcast will cover the following topics: (1) The prevalence and incidence of psychiatric disabilities among racial and ethnic minority groups. (2) The prevalence and incidence of psychiatric disabilities among African American men and women. (3) The perception of psychiatric services among adolescents age (13-18). (4) The perception of psychiatric services among young adults age (19-25). (5) The perception of psychiatric services among veterans. (6) The perception of psychiatric services among the geriatric population. (7) Implications for service providers and researchers.

**Project Empowerment Team: Key Stakeholders**

**National Institute of Disability Rehabilitation Research  
Project Officer Delores Watkins, M.S.**

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|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Partnerships</b> .....   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Kent State University</li> <li>■ Norfolk State University</li> <li>■ Penn State University</li> <li>■ The American Association of People with Disabilities</li> <li>■ Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services</li> <li>■ University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign</li> <li>■ Virginia State University</li> <li>■ Virginia Union University</li> </ul>  |   |  |
| <b>Lead Project Personnel</b> .....   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Allen Lewis, Ph.D., principal investigator</li> <li>■ Juan Carlos Aranga-Lasprilla, Ph.D., co-principal investigator</li> <li>■ Paul Wehman, Ph.D., co-principal investigator</li> <li>■ Jessica Ketchum, Ph.D., biostatistician</li> </ul>   |   |  |
| <b>Project Staff</b> .....  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mike Barcus, M.S., project coordinator</li> <li>■ Teri Blankenship, M.S., dissemination coordinator</li> <li>■ Keith Caleb, B.A., fiscal staff</li> <li>■ Douglas Erickson, M.S., coordinator of information technology</li> <li>■ Kelli Gary, Ph.D., post doctoral fellow</li> <li>■ Pamela Lewis, Ph.D., post doctoral fellow</li> <li>■ Brian McMahon, Ph.D., research associate</li> <li>■ Paola Premuda-Conti, Ph.D., research associate</li> <li>■ Jeanne Roberts, coordinator of publication services</li> <li>■ Mark Richardson, M.Ed., Ph.D. Candidate, graduate assistant</li> <li>■ Aisha Shamburger, M.S., doctoral student / graduate assistant</li> <li>■ Tricia Zeh, M.S., fiscal administrator</li> </ul> |   |  |
| <b>Consultants</b> .....  | <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reginald Alston, Ph.D.</li> <li>■ Philip Rumrill, Ph.D.</li> </ul> </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Andrew Imparato, J.D.</li> <li>■ Keith Wilson, Ph.D.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reginald Alston, Ph.D.</li> <li>■ Philip Rumrill, Ph.D.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Andrew Imparato, J.D.</li> <li>■ Keith Wilson, Ph.D.</li> </ul>                               |
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| <b>Advisory Board</b> .....   | <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cheryl Al-Mateen, M.D.</li> <li>■ Jihad Aziz, Ph.D.</li> <li>■ Faye Belgrave, Ph.D.</li> <li>■ Sheryl Garland, M.P.A.</li> </ul> </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Michael Pyles, Ph.D.</li> <li>■ James Rothrock, M.S.</li> <li>■ Shawn Utsey, Ph.D.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cheryl Al-Mateen, M.D.</li> <li>■ Jihad Aziz, Ph.D.</li> <li>■ Faye Belgrave, Ph.D.</li> <li>■ Sheryl Garland, M.P.A.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Michael Pyles, Ph.D.</li> <li>■ James Rothrock, M.S.</li> <li>■ Shawn Utsey, Ph.D.</li> </ul> |
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