
Introduction

This special issue of *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal* focuses on issues that challenge adults with learning disabilities. In five out of the six articles, the researchers turned to the adults themselves to provide input either in face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, questionnaires, or e-mail communication. In the first of these articles, Leonore Ganschow and her colleagues surveyed university graduates with learning disabilities regarding the foreign language (FL) requirement. All of the participants in this study had been granted a course substitution for the FL requirement after failing or almost failing a FL course. They were asked to reflect on their FL learning experience and based on their input the authors made recommendations to administrators, FL instructors and tutors, and students with learning disabilities.

Two articles addressed how the challenge of having a learning disability may differ in males and females, or cause profile differences in males and females. In the article by Beth Ferri and her colleagues, adult women described their experience of living with a learning disability. One of the unique features of this study is that it was conducted via e-mail. The participants in this study reported that their lives were characterized by striving for perfection, accompanied by feelings of panic, anxiety, and exhaustion. In the second article that addressed gender issues, Noel Gregg and her colleagues conducted in-depth analyses using extensive psychometric data on adult male and female college students with learning disabilities divided into three ability groups. The authors report two important findings. First, most of the measures were found to correlate with general cognitive ability. Second, in contrast to other studies on school-identified high school students with learning disabilities, gender differences in this group of college students were found only on short-term memory and visual processing abilities. The authors describe the implications of these findings for identification and intervention.

A second major theme was addressed in two contrasting articles, namely, outcomes for adults with learning disabilities including educational attainment, employment history, occupational attainment, living patterns, and quality of life issues. In the first article, Yuan and Reisman conducted a follow-up study of participants in a non-degree granting transition program based on a college campus. The participants had severe learning disabilities and were in the low average range of cognitive abilities. The authors reported some very positive outcomes with slightly more than two-thirds of the participants living independently and more than 80% employed. Identified also, however, was a continuing need for financial and emotional support from parents.

In the second follow-up study, Vogel and Adelman reported on a follow-up study of adults with and without learning disabilities 8-15 years after exiting from a competitive college. The authors reported that there were no significant differences between the adults with or without learning disabilities on educational attainment, annual salaries, and

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employment history. Three-fourths of the adults reported that their learning disability affected them on the job in some aspect of language functioning. The authors also reported on disclosure issues and patterns and knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and their implications for counseling.

In the final article in this issue, Rosalie Fink reported on interviews with a group of highly successful adults with reading disabilities to determine how they learned to read. In the process, Fink identified gender differences in learning to read that carry important instructional implications and described how teachers can engage students in reading by allowing them to follow their special interests without perpetuating gender stereotypes.

We hope that this brief overview has whetted readers' appetites to delve deeply into these articles and to extend the insights reported here through their own research.

Susan A. Vogel
Guest Editor