

The Transition and Adjustment of First-Year Students with Specific Learning Disabilities: A Longitudinal Study

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Students with learning disabilities are one of the fastest growing student population attending colleges and universities. Students with learning disabilities in the pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade (PK–12) educational system are protected by the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990/Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004. Conversely, when students with learning disabilities transition to higher education they are no longer covered by these legislations. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 prohibit colleges and universities from discriminating against students with disabilities and mandate that accommodations be provided. The types and levels of accommodations and services offered in higher education, however, are not as extensive as those required to be provided in the PK–12 system. This article comes from a four-year study of the same group of 10 first-year students with dyslexia and/or reading problems. It chronicles their adjustments to the academic expectations of the college environment as they transitioned from high school to college. Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) provides the theoretical framework for the study. The study begins during the students' first year of college and concludes four years later when the students are seniors preparing to graduate. Questions in the study were asked of the students over a four-year period.

Each year increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities are enrolling in colleges and universities (Heiman & Precel, 2003; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990/Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 (Reed, 2005) are federal special education laws that protect students with learning disabilities while in the pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade (PK–12) system. College students with learning disabilities are not covered by this legislation. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990

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set expectations for colleges and universities to provide reasonable modifications and/or accommodations which enable qualified students to have access to the educational process (Thomas, 2002). Even though many students with learning disabilities are being prepared to do college level work, the college environment does not typically provide the level of support offered in PK-12 (Hadley, Twale, & Evans, 2003; Hadley, 2004; Hadley & Miller, 2005). In essence, students' transition from a PK-12 experience where the responsibility for their success may be perceived to lie with parents, teachers, school counselors, and principals, to a postsecondary setting where their success lies with them (Hadley, 2006). The purpose of this study is to examine over a four-year period how the same group of traditional-age, first-year students with specific learning disabilities access the college environment and persist through senior year.

Review of Literature

Definition of Learning Disabilities

Lovett and Lewandowski (2006) defined a learning disability as a discrepancy between the student's ability and his or her academic achievement or performance. The term is generic for a variety of specific subtypes including: dyslexia (reading disability), dyspraxia (speech disability), dysgraphia (writing disability), and dyscalculia (mathematics disability). Learning disabilities which are inherent to the student are presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction and may occur across the life span. Learning disabilities are considered neurological deficits that interfere with a student's ability to store, process, or produce information (McDermott, Goldberg, Watkins, Stanley, & Glutting, 2006). Hadley et al. (2003) found that due to learning disabilities, students with average to above average intelligence encountered difficulty in listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, and math.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical stance of this study is that transitioning from high school to college is challenging for many students (Tinto, 1993), but it may be more demanding for students with learning disabilities because of their previous educational experience (Hadley et al., 2003). Throughout their elementary and secondary school experience, it is the role of the school system to identify students with learning disabilities and provide them extensive individual accommodations such as special classes, adult tutors, and resource room instruction (Hadley et al., 2003). In their transition to the higher education system students with learning disabilities are expected to practice more responsible and independent behavior in terms of their learning disability (Hadley, 2006). According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, when

students with learning disability go off to college, the students are expected to self-identify to campus administrators, provide documentation of their disability and the accommodations needed, self-advocate to their instructors, and participate in the services that meet their needs. For this reason, it is important for the college-bound student with a learning disability to understand how their learning disability influences their learning and performance in their courses.

Chickering's (1969) vectors of student development provided the theoretical context for the study. Psychosocial theorist Chickering has written at length (Costello & English, 2001; Hamrick, Evans, & Schuh, 2002) about students' identity development and their transitioning from high school to college. Chickering theorized that students are presented with a series of challenges to their identity development because of the diverse situations in the college environment. He further hypothesized that maturation occurs as students attempt to address the various challenges. These issues appear in a sequence strongly influenced by biological and psychological maturational processes or by socio-cultural factors. The situations may not be resolved in the order of their presentation. The student's success in resolving each task can significantly affect the resolution of the succeeding tasks and the individual's rate and extent of psychosocial development.

Chickering's vectors are the following: developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relations, developing purpose, and establishing integrity. Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) wrote that developing competence is acquiring necessary skills for the new environment, that managing emotions is responding appropriately to difficult situations, that developing autonomy is disengaging from parents and previous support sources, establishing identity is the student's sense of gender issues, and that freeing interpersonal relations is accepting and responding to others. Successful resolution of the earlier stages leads to the establishment of identity. The final two vectors—developing purpose (including emerging vocational interests) and establishing integrity (examining how beliefs and values guide behavior)—generally emerge after identity formation.

A large number of students with learning disabilities attend institutions of higher education, and this student population's psychosocial development has not been studied through Chickering's (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) model (Costello & English, 2001; Hadley et al., 2003). Studying their transition through Chickering's design could assist university administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals in their support of these students as they access and progress through the higher education system.

Accordingly, through a series of focus groups and individual interview sessions, a group of the same 10 students with learning disabilities responded to the following research questions over a 4-year period: (1) What types of academic experiences challenge students with dyslexia or reading problems on a selective, residential college campus as they transition from PK-12 to higher education? (2) How do these traditional-aged, first-year students with dyslexia or reading problems adjust to specific expectations to complete academic assignments such as homework, term papers, and other writing assignments? (3) What services do

students with dyslexia or reading problems need to meet the academic requirements of the university environment? (4) How do students with dyslexia or reading problems perceive themselves as students? (5) How do students with dyslexia or reading problems relate to and interact with their professors and classmates? (6) How do students with dyslexia or reading problems formulate and prioritize career plans? (7) What beliefs and values influence the career plans and goals of students with dyslexia or reading problems?

Method

Population and procedures

This qualitative study was conducted on the campus of a private, selective, coeducational, four-year college in the Midwest. Qualitative research allows for the response to the researcher's open-ended techniques of inquiry (Freeman, 2005). It is especially appropriate in an effort to understand the meaning the students have constructed to make sense of their world (Schun, 2002). Feelings of marginality can occur as students take on new roles, especially when they are not sure of what to expect in their new environment (Tigue, 2003). Very little research exists that provides the point of view of students by the student themselves (Freeman, 2005). During the 4-year period the same students participated in focus groups and semi-structured individual interview sessions each academic year to discuss their academic experiences since transitioning from high school to college. The focus group sessions allowed for discussions about general perceptions and feelings (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996) regarding their transition. The semi-structured individual interviews provided a setting where students could share feelings that were different from others in the group (Krathwohl, 1998).

The total student enrollment at the institution was 10,315, and the first-year student enrollment was 2,106, of which 100 students with learning disabilities were identified when the study began. Dyslexia or reading-related issues were reported to be the nature of the learning problems for the vast majority of the students with learning disabilities. This predominance of reading issues is not unexpected and often occurs in college settings (Reiff, 1997). Dyslexia is often identified in childhood, but this condition can persist into adulthood (Hadley et al., 2003; Reiff, 1997). Twenty-six of the 100 students identified as having dyslexia or reading problems were selected because the students were responsible for extensive reading assignments that they must understand in order to be successful in their courses (Hadley et al., 2003). The researcher interviewed and chose the first 10 students who responded to the letter from the Director of the Office for Students with Disabilities to participate in the study, who met the criteria of entering this university directly from high school, and who possessed documentation defining their learning disability as dyslexia or reading-related issues. The students represented each of the four academic units on campus: arts and sciences, business, education, and engineering. The 10 student participants

included 8 females and 2 males who were chosen from a total population of the 26 (16 females and 10 males) first-year students with learning disabilities enrolled in the class. Seven of the 10 students participated in the study all 4 years. One of the students dropped out of the study at the end of the first year. Two of the students in the study left the university at the end of their first year.

Data Collection

Individual student artifacts, yearly focus group interviews, and yearly individual semi-structured interview sessions to ensure triangulation (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) were the means for collecting data. Triangulation requires data to be collected from multiple sources and through multiple methods (Newman & Benz, 1998).

Student artifacts. The student artifacts collected for the study included class schedules, copies of written assignments for their classes (which included grade and faculty comments), faculty comment sheets (forms professors used to give students feedback on writing assignments), class syllabi, tutoring reports, and a resume of student activities such as clubs and/or organizations to which they belonged.

Focus groups. Focus groups provided a forum for students to discuss general information (Vaughn et al., 1996) about their transition from high school to college. First year through senior year, the students met in a focus group format to discuss their transition and gain an understanding of the issues gleaned important from four of Chickering's (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) vectors of student development: developing competence, developing autonomy, freeing interpersonal relations, and developing purpose. During the discussion in the vector of developing competence, students shared their perceptions and feelings about the academic skills they needed to acquire for the college environment. Developing autonomy involved a discussion that included the relationships and services students had to separate themselves from as they transitioned from high school to college. Issues around interacting with others in their classes, working on group assignments, and communicating with professors were the topics of discussion for the vector of freeing interpersonal relations. In the discussion of developing purpose students shared their thoughts about their career interests and goals. Focus group interviews were two hours long and were audio-taped.

Semi-structured interviews. Individual interviews were a setting for students to offer opinions and feelings that were different from those of the group (Krathwohl, 1998). Students responded to questions developed from Chickering's (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) vectors of managing emotions, establishing identity, and establishing integrity. For the discussion of managing emotions, students shared their thoughts and feelings about how they responded to the academic challenges regarding this transition from high school to college. Establishing identity involved discussion related to gender issues, and during the discussion of establishing integrity students shared how their beliefs and values shaped their career plans and goals. The semi-structured individual interviews were

one hour long and were audio-taped.

The inductive analysis of going through the transcripts and giving meaning to words, phrases, and scenarios that continually emerged from responses (Patton, 2002) was used for interpreting the data. The researcher selectively attached meaningful tags to words, phrases, events, and situations which were potentially important to the study's findings (Krathwohl, 1998). The coding scheme required that the researcher go through the transcripts and color code each meaningful word, phrase, and scenario with a different color highlighter. Those highlighted themes were then transferred to note cards where the researcher attached meaning to those themes (Creswell, 1994). The researcher then theorized how the answers to the research questions did or did not fit with Chickering's (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) vectors of developing competence, managing emotions, developing autonomy, establishing identity, freeing interpersonal relations, developing purpose, and establishing integrity.

Results

1. What types of academic experiences challenge students with dyslexia or reading problems on a selective, residential college campus as they transition from PK-12 to higher education?

The themes that emerged for the question about developing competence were that the students were challenged by their level of independence; by having free, unstructured time; by higher expectations of academic performance; and by loss of adult supervision since transitioning from high school to college. Students expressed a feeling of being overwhelmed by the realities in their new environment, and they struggled to acquire the necessary skills to handle all that is now expected of them. They shared concerns that parents could not oversee their progress and intervene with professors as they had with teachers in high school. In discussing this point, one of the female arts and sciences majors said, "If you want to get help you have to do it yourself." As the students discuss managing their schedules, the same student added that her parents had always checked to see if she had homework assignments. According to her, "Having all this freedom is hard." Attempting to meet the demands of college by elevating their academic performance was a concern for all of the students.

2. How do these traditional-aged, first-year students with dyslexia or reading problems adjust to specific expectations to complete academic assignments such as homework, term papers, and other writing assignments?

The themes that surfaced for the question related to managing emotions included the following: coping with academic expectations while adjusting to the college environment; learning to stay afloat in their classes; needing detailed feedback from their professors; desiring to assimilate discreetly into campus life; recognizing accommodations as key to their academic performance; and occasionally using their learning disability as an excuse, consequently feeling guilty. In discussing their transition from high school to college, most of the

students shared that the move was a major adjustment, particularly in terms of their academics. They constantly expressed concern about the amount and rigor of assignments and sought ways to stay current in their classes. Several of the students shared that in high school, homework assignments helped them prepare for tests. When explaining her need for homework assignments, one of the female business majors says, "Because I do poorly on tests ... I need homework to help me." She added, "I don't know, I just wish we had more homework assignments." The students described homework as a means to gauge how they were progressing in their classes and as topic of conversation when meeting with professors. Most of the students voiced concern about keeping their learning disability private. They reported, however, that the process for receiving certain accommodations, particularly lecture notes for classes challenged their privacy. Those students in the study reliant upon notes for their classes expressed feelings that ranged from anger to frustration because they viewed the options for note taking as inadequate.

3. What services do students with dyslexia or reading problems need to meet the academic requirements of the university environment?

Themes for the question related to developing autonomy were that students desired that accommodations and services be offered in the same manner in which they received them in high school; having faculty who understood issues related to students with learning disabilities; accessing cooperative learning resources included in the structure of the class so they (students) were not working in isolation; and maintain privacy related to managing class requirements. Of the services on campus for students with learning disabilities, the system for seeking tutorial help and proctoring for tests were two of the major concerns for these students. In comparing their high school and college experiences, several of the students shared that while in high school they had adults with degrees in education or English to tutor them individually. They struggled with the college system which requires them to go to an "open lab and work with upperclass students" for their writing needs. They were critical of the system for test proctoring because they were required to go to the campus testing center where the labs are monitored by a secretary or an administrator. The male business student and one of the female arts and sciences students shared that their physics professors did not want them using the campus testing center for test proctoring because of the professors' concerns about who monitored the sessions. Both students said that their professors insist that they take their tests in the department office in case they had questions regarding the test content.

4. How do students with dyslexia or reading problems perceive themselves as students?

Themes emerging for the question related to establishing identity revealed that students viewed themselves as hard workers; were unable to predict how they would perform in their classes; were treated differently because of their learning disability rather than their gender; struggled with symptoms of their learning disability more in certain classes than others; and were positively

motivated by their learning disability. As a group, the students reported that they were working as hard as juniors as they did as first-year students. The students expressed that as juniors, although their classes were as hard and as demanding, they were more comfortable with the academic expectations because they knew what to expect. In explaining how she was involved in more activities even though her course load was more demanding, one of the female business majors proudly said, "I am in harder classes and I am involved in more things so it is more of a time management thing." Perceiving themselves through the lens of their learning disability continued to be standard behavior for the students. At times, the students talked about their learning disability as if it was a non-issue, but at other times they described their learning disability as a continuing problem.

5. How do students with dyslexia or reading problems relate to and interact with their professors and classmates?

Themes that students shared related to the question about freeing interpersonal relationships indicated that they needed to feel confident in their understanding of course material before speaking up in classes; needed ongoing communication with professors to understand and complete academic assignments; viewed e-mailing as a useful form of communication with professors and others in their class, but not as a teaching tool; and did not prefer assignments that required group work and group grades. The students continued to struggle with issues of confidence and self-assuredness because of their learning disability. Most of the students talked about needing time to determine their comfort level with their professors and fellow classmates.

Their "comfort level" determined their willingness to participate in class discussions or ask questions. In explaining how important it was for him to "get a feel for his professor" before participating in class, the male engineering student said, "After a couple days in class you can see how the teacher reacts to questions." Several of the students shared that oftentimes when the professor asked a question in class, they (students) knew the answer, but were not confident enough to give it. The female education major said she usually waited to hear what others said because she is an introvert. One of the female business students revealed that during the first few classes early in the semester she would not participate. But as the semester progressed, she sometimes became comfortable enough to turn to one of her classmates to "whisper the answer" and ask her classmate if the answer was right. If the classmate said it was correct, according to the female business major, "I would raise my hand and give the answer."

6. How do students with dyslexia or reading problems formulate and prioritize career plans?

Data on the research question related to developing purpose revealed that students prioritized and planned for their career future by deciding on employment rather than graduate school as the option for them; by giving very little thought to how the workplace would be different than the college setting; by not having a plan in place to contend with possible obstacles in the workplace; by giving very

little thought to the challenges they might face without the availability of accommodations/services in the workplace; by not solidifying career goals; and by remaining optimistic about their career future. All of the students shared that transitioning to the workplace was their preference over attending graduate school as they moved closer to graduation. Students disclosed that they perceive the workplace to be less demanding of their intellectual capabilities. And students seemed to believe that there would be less chance for their learning disability to surface in a job setting rather than graduate school.

The male engineering student seemed concerned when he said that his job-related interests were leading him into an area that would require “a lot of writing and group work sorts of things.” His plan, however, was to try to develop an agreement with his co-workers that would allow each worker to focus on their individual areas of strength. He referred to such an agreement as “team work.” Several of the students discussed some of the work experiences that they had so far such as internships, co-op positions, and student teaching assignments. They described those experiences as positive and seemed to feel that since they enjoyed what they were doing and had success at it, their learning disability did not surface. Several of the students confessed that they did not plan to reveal to anyone in the workplace that they had a learning disability. On the other hand, one of the female business majors and the male engineering student disagreed with that stance. Referring to his plan to share that he has a learning disability, the male engineering student said, “I flip numbers around and if they don’t know anything is up, they are going to think, ‘What is wrong with him?’ as opposed to just dyslexia.”

7. What beliefs and values influence the career plans and goals of students with dyslexia or reading problems?

Findings related to the question about establishing integrity indicated that students continued to invest a great deal of time in their classes; that they struggled to relate to their disability’s influence on their career goals; that they believed hard work was an important characteristic to carry into the work place; and that they felt their learning disability was something they would have to contend with as they planned and prepared for their career future. Students continued to report hard work as guiding their behavior as they prepared to shift to the world of employment. Several of them shared that they watched their parents work hard and that this value had been passed on to them. The female education major shared with the group the importance of being a teacher and influencing other students’ lives. She revealed that she hoped she could be a good teacher because having a learning disability had taught her that “the learning and teaching relationship between student and teacher is fragile.”

Discussion

1. What types of academic experiences challenge students with dyslexia or reading problems on a selective, residential college campus as they transition from PK–12 to higher education?

Developing competence is demonstrated by the student's ability to acquire the necessary skills to be productive in the college environment. While in high school, parents and teachers did most of the advocating for the students' accommodations and services and made sure that the students completed their assignments. Additionally, students found their teachers to be more accessible to them than were college professors. Students described an environment where there was quite a bit of one-on-one and direct interaction with their teachers. They struggled with the new expectations of independence presented to them since transitioning to higher education. Although this new level of responsibility seemed to add much stress to their lives, Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) suggested that this is a necessary adjustment in the student's development. He emphasized the thought that as students seek to acquire the necessary academic and cognitive skills to be successful in college, they must become less dependent on the perspectives of the teacher and more comfortable in engaging with course material from their own frame of reference.

2. How do these traditional-aged, first-year students with dyslexia or reading problems adjust to specific expectations to complete academic assignments such as homework, term papers, and other writing assignments?

Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) theorized that with each new semester or quarter, students must face the anxieties of new instructors, new subjects, and new challenges. Managing emotions is the growth stage that monitors how students handle or shift out of feelings of anger, fear, and frustration. Chickering further submitted that mastery implies students' use of self-discipline to practice new skills. But the problem with some emotions is that they seem to surface unexpectedly and can undo all of the student's hard work and planning. In high school, students in this study had very little responsibility for tasks related to the concerns reported for this vector. Because of the support of parents, teachers, and other support systems, students' had very little practice in good management of their academic issues. This, according to Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993), could conceivably explain why, for example, several of the students chose on occasion to use their learning disability as an excuse.

3. What services do students with dyslexia or reading problems need to meet the academic requirements of the university environment?

Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) stressed that during the vector of developing autonomy the student tries to achieve the level of independence necessary for the college environment. He clarified that while autonomy means both separation and individuation in the development of identity, separation involves a physical distancing, but individuation means becoming one's own person and taking more responsibility for self-support. Perhaps students in the study desired a greater level of support services because they were still trying to develop the necessary skill level for the college environment. While in high school they experienced an environment that offered them more immediate support and feedback in terms of their academic progress

(Hadley et al., 2003). According to Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993), this is a typical struggle as students move along the path of self-sufficiency. He added that as students learn to rely more on their own ability they may gain a confidence level that will allow them to become less reliant on the services they used in high school.

4. How do students with dyslexia or reading problems perceive themselves as students?

Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) found that establishing identity involves students' growing awareness of their competencies, emotions and values, and confidence in self. He summarized identity as the student's self-acceptance and self-esteem based on their level of success along the vectors of competence, emotions, autonomy, and relationships. According to the students in the study, their learning disability is a big part of their identity; it seems to shape their thinking in many ways and is something they have learned to live with. Chickering offered that healthy progression along this vector comes with the student's acceptance of self despite his/her limitations and their willingness to address limitations within reason. Several of the students' sense of pride in their work ethic, despite their struggle with their learning disability, is a positive perspective as an example of seeking to master identity.

5. How do students with dyslexia or reading problems relate and interact with their professors and classmates?

Freeing interpersonal relations challenge the student to be more tolerant of others and the differences they bring to the college culture (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Students in the study often held back in their relationships both with their professors and fellow classmates. They reported holding back because they believed they would be treated differently as a result of having a learning disability. Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) discovered that as students seek development in this vector, they must move away from labeling themselves as students with a learning disability. Coming to view self as contributing students of the larger population should be a goal as they transition into the university culture.

6. How do students with dyslexia or reading problems formulate and prioritize career plans?

Developing purpose involves the student's ability to assess career interests and options—in essence, composing their lives (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering surmises that while working through this vector, students learn to align action with purpose, to constantly work toward their goals, and to persevere despite obstacles or setbacks. It appeared that the students in this study were delayed in this phase of their development. They reported not giving much thought to what awaited them beyond graduation from college and seemed uncomfortable with thinking ahead to that stage of their development. Although most of the students had participated in internships or some work experience

related to their majors, only a couple made use of important resources such as career counselors, career exploration courses and workshops, or discussed future plans with their professors.

7. What beliefs and values influence the career plans and goals of students with dyslexia or reading problems?

Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) wrote that developing integrity is the connection between the student's behavior and values. He added that this vector closely relates to establishing identity and developing purpose. Chickering assumes that the relationships that students engage in during the challenge of establishing identity, exhibits a strong influence on the student's maturation. This is because relationships provide the context for broadening perspectives on right and wrong, for dealing with moral conflicts, and for making difficult choices about what is true and what is best. Students in the study shared ethical beliefs related to their values that ranged from a commitment to always working hard in their classes to concerns about continuing to take medication for their learning disability.

Implications for Practice

The most successful college students with learning disabilities are those who are committed and focused on pursuing a college education. Transforming college students with learning disabilities from reliance on external authority to make their decisions, to individuals ready to take ownership and responsibility for their lives is a developmental task (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Once admitted by the university and on the college campus, the student with a learning disability should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities to discuss their learning disability and needed accommodations. Students should be encouraged to work with a counselor or advisor to set realistic course goals. It is important for the student to keep in mind that accommodations available to them in the PK-12 system will not likely be available at the college level. Students with learning disabilities should be reminded that in the college environment they will be expected to be knowledgeable about their disability and comfortable advocating for themselves. Finally, students who are having difficulty and are feeling overwhelmed should seek help immediately. It is critical that students understand that their professors are their first source of information and that link with campus supports early is an important strategy for being successful.

Conclusion

As this study concluded, the students were in the spring semester of their senior year. All of the students in the study were due to graduate and were seeking self-employment at the time of this study. Although they seemed determined and confident as they contemplated their future, all seemed less-assured when

discussing continuing in an academic environment. They seemed to think that their learning disability would impact their lives less in a job setting rather than to continue in an academic setting such as graduate school. The students were committed to the reality of working hard as a means to contend with their learning disability. They seemed to glamorize the workplace and did not raise any possible negative issues related to employment such as receiving ineffective supervision, and/or receiving low salaries. Limited research exists related to the employment experience and successes of students with learning disability graduates from colleges and universities. The transition from educational institutions to employment is one of the most significant transitions for individuals with learning disabilities. The researcher sees value in interviewing the students after one year of employment to assess their transition into the work environment. Further research could possibly examine the students' willingness to self-disclose their learning disability, explore the relationships the students develop with their supervisors and co-workers in their work setting, and investigate how the student's development or lack of development is influencing his/her self-efficacy.

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