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Introduction to Volume 17, Issue 1: General

In this first issue of 2011, nine original research articles (six research papers, three brief reports) and four media reviews (of a common piece of work) are featured, representing a variety of topic areas in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Research Articles

Jeffrey McKillop and Patricia Minnes examine occupational satisfaction, strain, as well as the intention to quit among direct support staff. In particular, they focus on the employment variables that could predict intention to quit using a sample of 96 direct support staff. They found that those who expressed lower job satisfaction also had higher intention to leave their employment. Further, they note that lower job satisfaction was itself influenced by occupational strain, work group dysfunction, and the number of years of education. Based on their findings, the authors suggest that reducing employment strain and increasing cohesion in the team may benefit support staff, the agencies that employ them, and ultimately, the persons they support.

Holly Seniuk, Ashley Greenwald, W. Larry Williams, and Marianne Jackson explore whether, and where, a conditional position discrimination (i.e., discrimination in which the presence or absence of a stimulus is associated with a location) could fit into the existing six-level hierarchy of the Assessment of Basic Learning Abilities (or ABLA). The results indicate that persons unable to perform a conditional position discrimination continued to be unable to do so even after as many as 840 trials, while those who could perform the task could do so within 12 trials. Both findings are consistent with previous ABLA research. However, this should not be taken to mean that those who have difficulty learning the task can never learn it; further work that uses alternative teaching approaches is needed.

Jessica Schroeder, Jonathan Weiss, and James Bebko describe a review and pilot study of Childhood Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) profiles among children and adolescents with Asperger syndrome. They highlight past findings related to the presence of psychiatric co-morbidities in individuals with Asperger syndrome that extend beyond the core features of the syndrome, and examine the behavioural profiles of children and adolescents aged 6 to 18 years. The authors report that those with Asperger syndrome scored higher on all CBCL scales compared to the normative group. They discuss the importance of their findings to clinical practice and future research.

Dany Lussier-Desrochers, Carmen Dionne, and Arline Laforest discuss the importance of information and communication technology for children with intellectual disabilities in pre-school settings. In particular, they highlight the potential impact of this type of technology on various areas of development.

Robert King and Cindy Desaulniers, in an extension of their previous work, describe the clinical presentation of persons with autism spectrum disorders exposed to repeated trauma. In particular, they discuss the evidence base for practice in the treatment of complex post-traumatic stress disorder among persons with neurotypical disorders, and summarize suggestions for modifications to cognitive behaviour therapy for use in such cases.

Finally, in their paper, Lee MacPherson, Christine Sousa, Kendra Thomson, Toby Martin, Garry Martin, and C.T. Yu assess whether the pass or fail performance of persons on the Assessment of Basic Learning Abilities, or ABLA, could predict learning of four-choice discrimination tasks. They also examine whether those predictions were as accurate as those made by direct-care staff familiar with the individual. Their results support the predictive ability of both the ABLA and staff.

Brief Reports

Naveen Hassan and Adrienne Perry examine the diagnostic and developmental profiles of 105 children with a diagnosis of pervasive development disorder—not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS). They differentiate four subgroups based on the reason for the PDD-NOS diagnosis; namely: fewer than six criteria, fewer than two social criteria, no repetitive behaviours, and other reasons. However, they found that the four subgroups did not differ with respect to any developmental or diagnostic variables considered, suggesting that persons with a PDD-NOS diagnosis are in fact a very heterogeneous group.

Regina Carroll, John Rapp, Tasha Rieck, and Brooke Siewert study the effect of noncontingent reinforcement with alternative oral stimulation in the treatment of rumination in a young boy with autism. The results demonstrate that

post-meal rumination was decreased when he had noncontingent access to a toy to chew on, and that this toy continued to compete with rumination after eight months of interview. The authors discuss the importance of their findings in terms of functionally matched stimulation and motivating operations.

Jennifer Lyons, Catherine Cappadocia, and Jonathan Weiss examine the social characteristics of students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in different classroom settings. Contrasting the social characteristics of students with ASD educated in full inclusion and non full inclusion classrooms, their study results indicate that higher social competence may be related to placement in full inclusion classrooms. In addition, a relationship appears to exist between ASD severity and social competence and the quality of friendships, whereas age and problem behaviour appears to influence the quantity of friendships outside of the school environment. The authors note, however, that their study also indicates the critical need for more research into these relationships.

Media Reviews

In this issue, we present four different perspectives of the same film. *Tying Your Own Shoes* is a National Film Board of Canada production, directed by award-winning filmmaker Shira Avni and released in 2009. The film presents the art and insights of four adults with Down syndrome and is intended to challenge common and troubling misconceptions about people with Down syndrome. In this issue we have contributions from the film's director, Shira Avni; from one of the artists featured in the film, Petra Tolley; from Petra's father, Chris Tolley; and from Adele Iannantuono—the parent of a young son with Down syndrome. Engaging with the film from their particular vantage points, each brings her/his own unique perspective to our understanding of the importance of this film.