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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Adults with dyslexia use photography and art to convey their world view**

Greenville, N.C. (September 28, 2010)—Children with dyslexia grow up to be adults with dyslexia. The challenges associated with dyslexia do not diminish with time but often become more complex in adulthood. Researchers at East Carolina University and the Dyslexia Research Institute used a unique process to help adults with dyslexia describe just how challenging their lives can be over and beyond their language-based difficulties.

Dyslexia is a language-based learning difference which affects people's abilities to read, spell, write and pronounce words. According to The International Dyslexia Association, dyslexia is the most common type of learning disability, with as much as 15-20 percent of the population having symptoms of dyslexia.

Blace A. Nalavany, Lena Williams Carawan, and Robyn A. Rennick conducted the first study to use the mediums of photography and art to help adults with dyslexia communicate their day-to-day challenges with life. Using their own photos and artwork to generate ideas, fifteen adults (mean age of 42) with dyslexia generated seventy-five statements to express what it is like to live with dyslexia. Thirty-nine participants then sorted and rated the statements into categories reflecting their own personal experiences. From this process, the researchers produced an innovative visual representation/concept map of the social and emotional experiences of adults with dyslexia.

The concept map revealed nine distinct yet related categories of experiences with dyslexia, including organizational skills for success; finding success; a good support system makes the difference; on being overwhelmed; emotional downside; why can't they see it?; pain, hurt, and embarrassment from past to present; fear of disclosure; and moving forward.

"While many of the participants in this study reflected histories of pain associated with living with dyslexia, there was an overall belief that the general public, educators, and mental health professionals

do not understand the deep emotional and social pain that occurs from dyslexia,” says Blace Nalavany. “Educators, employers, colleges, mental health professionals, policy makers, and researchers are all called upon to acknowledge the unique needs of adults with dyslexia. The study underscores that dyslexia is not something in your head, but is a day-to-day reality that is both real and powerful and does not go away.”

The authors published an earlier article on the use of photography, art, and concept mapping in research with adults with dyslexia in *Disability and Society* in May 2010. The current article may be found in *The Journal of Learning Disabilities* and online at <http://ldx.sagepub.com/content/early/recent>

The researchers are currently working on Phase II of their ongoing research and will focus on identifying the specific experiences that help or hinder adults with dyslexia in leading successful and satisfying lives. Data collection for Phase II is completed. Data are being analyzed and findings will be disseminated at the Learning Disabilities Association’s (LDA) 48<sup>th</sup> International Conference in Florida, USA, in February 2011 and through upcoming manuscripts.

The researchers have established a project website at [www.successwithdyslexia.com](http://www.successwithdyslexia.com)

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Blace A. Nalavany and Lena Williams Carawan are on the faculty of the School of Social Work in the College of Human Ecology at East Carolina University. The college educates professionals who enhance the well-being of people and communities. For more information on the ECU School of Social Work, visit [www.ecu.edu/che/socw](http://www.ecu.edu/che/socw)

Robyn A. Rennick is co-director of the Dyslexia Research Institute of Tallahassee, Florida. Since 1975, the goal of the Dyslexia Research Institute, Inc. has been to change the perception of learning differences, specifically in the area of dyslexia and attention deficit disorders (ADD). Visit <http://www.dyslexia-add.org/>.

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