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978-0-521-65840-9 - Specific Learning Disabilities and Difficulties in Children and Adolescents:
Psychological Assessment and Evaluation

Edited by Alan S. Kaufman and Nadeen L. Kaufman

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Specific learning disabilities and difficulties in children and adolescents

Psychological assessment and evaluation

The assessment of specific learning disabilities and disorders (SLD) has long been controversial. Definitions, diagnosis, and treatments have been vigorously debated for decades, with the use of IQ tests attracting particular controversy. However, in recent times there have been many other new assessment tools devised for measuring intelligence and neuropsychological functioning, extending well beyond the scope of Wechsler's scales. In this cutting-edge survey, an international team of leaders in the field examines the available methods. Many of the contributors are themselves the developers of the most recent assessment tests.

The authors of each chapter evaluate the diversity of clinical applications of these new instruments in SLD, and their important implications for educational intervention. The historical context and the underlying neuropsychological and cognitive theory are also expertly examined. This book will be essential reading for any practitioner or trainee dealing with specific learning issues in young people.

Alan and Nadeen Kaufman are based at the Yale University School of Medicine and together have developed and published eight tests of intelligence, achievement, and neuropsychological functioning, including the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (K-BIT), the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (K-TEA), and the Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test (KAIT). They are world-renowned authorities in the area of neuropsychological and cognitive assessment for specific learning disabilities and disorders.

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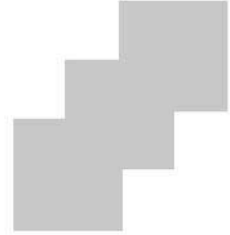
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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia
 Ruiz do Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2001

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Dante MT 11/14pt System Poltype® [vN]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Specific learning disabilities and difficulties in children and adolescents/edited by Alan S. Kaufman
 and Nadeen L. Kaufman.

p. cm. – (Cambridge child and adolescent psychiatry)

Includes index.

ISBN 0 521 65840 3 (pb)

1. Learning disabilities – Treatment. 2. Learning disabled children. I. Kaufman, Alan S., 1944–
 II. Kaufman, Nadeen L. III. Cambridge child and adolescent psychiatry series

RJ506.L4 S644 2001

618.92'85889–dc21 00-064187

ISBN 0 521 65840 3 paperback

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To Blanche Kaufman,
OUR MOTHER

She loved us, and she listened.
Hear our love and gratitude,
For we are lonely without you.

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Preface

This book, *Specific learning disabilities and difficulties in children and adolescents: Psychological assessment and evaluation*, is devoted to the topic of *specific learning disabilities*, with a focus on their assessment. The terms ‘learning disabilities’ (LD) and ‘specific learning disabilities’ (SLD) are used interchangeably throughout the book. When a chapter author uses the term learning disabilities, it should always be interpreted as specific learning disabilities.

The field of learning disabilities assessment has long been controversial, and remains so as the twenty-first century begins. Controversies have raged over definitions, interventions, and instruments. Recent articles in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* (by leaders in the field such as Linda Siegel, Keith Stanovich, and Frank Vellutino) have called for the elimination of the IQ–achievement discrepancy from the definition of specific learning disabilities, and some leaders are demanding the elimination of IQ tests from the psychoeducational assessment process. To some extent, these arguments are based on the continued use of Wechsler’s scales for the diagnosis of specific learning disabilities. We deal with these controversies in the concluding chapter of this book. However, one of the reasons that we wanted to write this book in the first place was because of the many alternatives to the Wechsler scales that became available during the last two decades of the previous millennium.

There is now much more to intellectual assessment than Wechsler scales. This fact is probably obvious in the UK, where the British Ability Scales (BAS) and now its revision, the BAS II, have been commonly used (as have Wechsler scales) for evaluations of specific learning disabilities. The fact may be less obvious in the USA, where Wechsler scales (then the WISC and WAIS) surpassed the Stanford–Binet (then Form L-M) and established their supreme reign during the 1960s. The ascendance of the Wechsler scales at the time coincided, but not by coincidence, with the burgeoning field of learning disabilities, whose leaders demanded multi-score profiles instead of global IQs. The reign continued through the ‘R’ tests (WISC–R and WAIS–R) in the 1970s

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and 1980s and is still going strong with the third generation of tests (WISC–III and WAIS–III). However, it may be time for clinicians to re-evaluate or, at least, explore the diversity of options that are now available for specific learning disabilities evaluations. Many of these tests are theory based, with Luria’s neuropsychological theory and Horn’s fluid–crystallized theory of intelligence each forming the foundation of several new tests. In contrast, Wechsler scales, like the Binet before them, were developed from pragmatic, decidedly non-theoretical, frameworks.

In conceiving this book, we wanted to put on display the many new methods developed for the neuropsychological, intellectual, and language assessment of children, adolescents, and adults, with the chapter authors endeavoring to relate the tests to the diagnosis and treatment of individuals with specific learning disabilities. A number of chapters are written by authors who know the specific instruments intimately, namely the authors of the tests themselves. Among the new breed of tests, this dual role of test/ chapter author was true for the Woodcock–Johnson Tests of Cognitive Ability–Revised (WJ–R) and WJ III (Nancy Mather and Richard Woodcock, Chapter 3), the Cognitive Ability Scales (CAS) (Jack Naglieri, Chapter 5), the British Ability Scales II (BAS II) and Differential Ability Scales (DAS) (Colin Elliott, Chapter 6), the NEPSY (Marit Korkman, Sally Kemp, and Ursula Kirk, Chapter 11), and comprehensive measures of memory and learning (WRAML and TOMAL) (Erin Bigler and Wayne Adams, Chapter 12). We did not go right to the horse’s mouth for the Kaufman tests, because we knew that the horses would have their say in the final, integrative chapter (Chapter 13), but the psychologist we selected to write Chapter 4 on the K-ABC and KAIT, Elizabeth Lichtenberger, was clinically supervised and trained by Nadeen and has collaborated with Alan on several texts.

In addition to the chapters on new measures, there are three chapters that feature more established instruments, but that focus just as much on a specific *style* of assessment as on the tests themselves. These chapters, too, are written directly by the professionals who developed the featured tests and, even more importantly, innovated a particular style of assessment – dynamic assessment (Reuven Feuerstein and Raphael Feuerstein, Chapter 7), clinical–educational language assessment (Elisabeth Wiig, Chapter 8), and neuropsychological assessment (Ralph Reitan and Deborah Wolfson, Chapter 10).

The best way to understand where a field is headed in the future is to have a solid grounding on where it has been. The field of specific learning disabilities has had a colorful history and can trace its roots to both neurology and education. We believed that it was important to offer both of these historical

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perspectives, and enlisted experts who have witnessed the growth of the field of specific learning disabilities from its inception and have been dynamically involved with the directions specific learning disabilities and their assessment have taken during their evolution. Representing the educational viewpoint is Margaret Jo Shepherd (Chapter 1), with Otfried Spreen (Chapter 9) supplying the neurological perspective.

This book might have been organized in a number of ways, particularly because of the complexity of both of the fields we have merged, specific learning disabilities and assessment. Whereas education and neurology can appear worlds apart, they are intertwined for specific learning disabilities assessment, and it is difficult to separate them; indeed, it is not possible to write about the application of an instrument for specific learning disabilities assessment without blending biological bases and presumed brain dysfunction with academic deficits and educational intervention. We have chosen to organize the book in four parts. The first and last parts are relatively short, the middle two parts more extensive. We begin with history and tradition in Part I, encompassing Shepherd's education-oriented and practical-focused History lessons (Chapter 1) and Gary Groth-Marnat's treatment of Wechsler scales (Chapter 2). Part II presents alternative *cognitive* approaches to specific learning disabilities assessment and remediation, meaning alternatives to Wechsler scales, and includes a variety of new instruments in Chapters 3 to 6, as well as the Feuersteins' dynamic assessment approach in Chapter 7, and Wiig's clinical-educational approach to language assessment in Chapter 8. Part III features *neuropsychological* approaches to specific learning disabilities assessment and remediation, encompassing the historical foundations in Chapters 9, the old, established Halstead-Reitan in Chapter 10, the new NEPSY in Chapter 11, and tests specifically geared to memory and learning in Chapter 12. Part IV, composed solely of our concluding chapter, integrates the topics covered in the book, addressing contemporary controversies and illustrating how the scales and subtests discussed throughout the book can be hand-picked and reorganized to measure a diversity of key areas that are routinely assessed during specific learning disabilities evaluations, for example attention, reasoning, and motor coordination.

Because this book was edited by American authors, published by a British company, and targeted for a world-wide audience, we wanted to achieve an international flavor. Toward that end we have assembled an international cast that includes a number of American chapter authors as well as authors from Great Britain (Colin Elliott, currently living in the USA), Finland (Marit Korkman), Israel (Reuven and Raphael Feuerstein), Germany (Otfried Spreen,

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currently living in Canada), and Australia (American-born Gary Groth-Marnat).

We believe that this book will be of extreme value to anyone interested in learning disabilities or assessment. It is intended for graduate students and upper-level undergraduate students in education, special education, and psychology (e.g., school, clinical, educational, and counseling psychology; neuropsychology; psychometrics), and for practicing, academic, and research-oriented professionals in each of these disciplines. Neurologists, medical students, and others with a medical orientation should also find the topics informative and valuable.

Alan S. Kaufman and Nadeen L. Kaufman

Acknowledgments

We are extremely grateful to a number of people for their direct or indirect contributions to this book: to Dr James C. Kaufman, for his generous, swift, invaluable research and editorial assistance – not just with this book, but with all of our research, test development, and writing projects – and for his unflagging love, support, and friendship; to Dr Margaret Jo Shepherd, for serving as our mentor for more than a quarter of a century in the fields of learning disabilities and clinical inference, and for a close friendship that developed while collaborating on this book; to Dr Peter Melchers, of Cologne, Germany, and to Jan and Rya Alm, of Uppsala, Sweden, who have enriched us with their knowledge of the international scope of dyslexia and clinical assessment, and who have demonstrated that deep friendships can easily transcend oceans and cultures; and to Kathy Howell and Shauna Cooper, who gave generously of their time and effort to facilitate the final preparation of this manuscript.