Employer perspectives on the integrated employment of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Dana Hanson-Baldauf, Ph.D.
Meredith Weiss, Ph. D.
Taylor Bunch

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Introduction

The research is clear: the employment of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) makes good business sense. Employers report several advantages, namely, the gain of dependable, productive, and loyal workers who enhance the work environment and contribute to the goals of the organization in both measurable and incalculable ways. Several studies point to strong public support for businesses that employ individuals with I/DD, as well. Despite compelling favor for the inclusion of workers with I/DD in today's labor market, the 2013 StateData National Report on Employment Services and Outcomes cited a 90% unemployment rate for this population of workers (Butterworth et al., 2013).

A review of the research literature reveals a chief reliance on quantitative measures to investigate employer attitudes regarding employees with I/DD. While recent studies show more favorable attitudes than years past, most largely exclude employer narratives and therefore provide limited insight on the conditions and support mechanisms that facilitate positive employment outcomes for workers with I/DD. The employer narrative is critical, offering hesitant employers guidance and strategies for diversifying their workforce. To address this gap in the research, the following report presents findings from a qualitative study exploring the perspectives of employers who successfully employ and retain workers with I/DD.

Background

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (2010) defines intellectual disability as a condition "characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior.[1] This disability originates before age 18." (pg. 1).[2] I/DD is commonly attributed to diagnoses including Fragile X, Down, Williams, and Prader-Willi syndromes, autism spectrum disorder, and cerebral palsy. That said, a presumption of intellectual limitations in all individuals with these diagnoses would be mistaken. Further, individuals who are identified as having intellectual limitations are highly heterogeneous,

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1 Intellectual functioning includes comprehension, processing speed, attention, memory, abstract thinking, transferability of knowledge and skills, understanding complex ideas, problem solving, planning, and reasoning (pp. 31-42). Adaptive behavior refers to skills necessary to function and adapt in everyday life.

2 The term *developmental disability* (DD) is regularly applied in conjunction and interchangeably with the term *intellectual disability* (ID). As a classification, DD serves as an umbrella term to describe impairment or irregularity in one or more body parts and systems, manifested before the age of two (National Institutes of Health, 2013).

possessing both common and exceptional abilities and challenges.

As a population, individuals with I/DD generally experience a lowered quality of life (Brown, Schalock, & Brown, 2009). Bullying and social isolation are common challenges reported by children and teens with I/DD (Blake, Lund, Zhou, Kwok, & Benz, 2012). In adulthood, persistent unemployment descends individuals with I/DD into lives of poverty[3] and most become highly dependent on governmental support for their daily living needs (Stancliffe & Lankin, 2007). High incidences of victimization (physical, emotional, sexual, and financial), increased health issues (physical and emotional), social isolation, and feelings of societal devaluation have all been well-documented in the research literature as experienced and reported by individuals with I/DD (Jahoda, Wilson, Stalker, & Cairney, 2010; Krahn, Fox, Campell, Ramon, Jesien, 2010; Gougeon, 2009; McGillivray & McCabe, 2007; Cooney, Jahoda, Gumley, & Knott, 2006; Beart, Hardy, & Buchan, 2005; Smiley, 2005).

When it comes to quality of life, gainful and integrated[4] employment is a game changer. Beyond a paycheck and increased financial security, having a job creates structure in one's day, fosters feelings of purpose and self-worth, and provides opportunity for social connection and friendships (Burge, Ouellett-Kuntz, and Lysaught, 2007; Schur, 2002). Lysaught, Cobigo, and Hamilton (2012) also report that employed individuals with I/DD are better able to access community resources, participate in leisure activities, and generally take greater responsibility in preserving their health and safety than unemployed individuals with I/DD.

Ju, Roberts, and Zhang (2013) conducted a comprehensive review of the research literature on employer attitudes toward workers with disabilities and found that employers are expressing an increased willingness to hire individuals with disabilities than in years past. Supported employment has been identified as a critical factor contributing to these changing attitudes. Federally funded under the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, supported employment refers to services and supports that enable individuals with disabilities greater work participation in competitive employment consistent with their "strengths, resources, priorities,

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3 It is estimated that individuals with I/DD live 20% below the poverty level (Stancliffe and Lankin 2007, p. 429).

4 The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (2013) defines integrated employment as "jobs are held by people with significant disabilities in typical workplace settings where the majority of persons employed are not persons with disabilities." This definition assumes that wages earned by an individual with I/DD are paid directly by the employer and commensurate with wages earned by employees engaged in similar work tasks.

concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice." Employers of workers with access to supported employment assistance report low employee absenteeism, reduced turnover rates, and as a result, reduced expenditures toward recruitment, screening, and training of new employees (PricewaterhouseCoopers, L. L. P., 2006; Morgan and Alexander, 2005; Nietupski, Hamre-Nietupski, VanderHart, and Fishback, 1996; Sitlington and Easterday, 1992). Other reported benefits include a more diverse workforce (Morgan and Alexander, 2005), work quality (Morgan and Alexander, 2005; Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, Francis, & Levy, 1993), positive coworker collaborations (Morgan and Alexander, 2005), enhanced work climate (Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, Francis, and Levy, 1993), improved public image (Burge, Ouellett-Kuntz, and Lysaught, 2007; Siperstein, Romano, Mohler, and Parker, 2006; Olson, Cioffi, Yovanoff, and Mank, 2001; Nietupski et al., 1996), and professional satisfaction (Nietupski, et al 1996; Blessing and Jamieson, 1999).

Several studies show strong public support for employers who hire workers with disabilities, as well. In a survey of 803 consumers, 92% favored organizations with inclusive employment practices and 87% indicated a preference toward companies who hire individuals with disabilities, specifically (Siperstein et al., 2006). A similar study polled 680 individuals and found that the majority of participants believed some type of integrated employment is best for most individuals with I/DD and that inclusive hiring practices would not negatively impact the organization's image (Burge, Ouellett-Kuntz, and Lysaght, 2007). Additionally, Cimera (2010a) reported that supported employees with I/DD are less burdensome on taxpayers than those placed in segregated sheltered employment workshops.[5] Analyzing data on 104,213 supported employees between 2002 and 2007, Cimera calculated that for every tax dollar spent to support employees with I/DD in integrated work settings, taxpayers gained $1.21. Despite Cimera's findings, Butterworth et al. (2013) report that individuals with I/DD continue to be tracked toward sheltered employment at greater rates than supported employment and taxes allocated to maintain sheltered work facilities continue to exceed those spent to support workers with disabilities in integrated work settings.

Barriers that can inhibit integrated employment opportunities for workers with I/DD have been well-researched (Kaye, Jans, & Jones, 2011; Waterhouse, Kimberley, Jonas, & Glover,

5 A sheltered workshop is a "a private non-profit or State or local government institution which provides individuals who have physical and/or mental impairments with services designed to prepare them for gainful work in the general economy." (Social Security Online, 2013)

2010; Domzal, Houtenville, & Sharma, 2008; Lengnick-Hall , Guant, & Kulkarni, 2008; Schur, Kruse, & Blanck, 2005; Unger 2002; Bricout & Bentley, 2000; Kregel & Unger, 1993). Common findings from these studies point to employer misperceptions, biases, and uncertainty about individuals with I/DD and concerns relating to support costs, impact on productivity, safety, liability, and public image. These studies, however, predominately surveyed employers with no previous experience employing workers with I/DD. Not surprisingly, an employer's past experience matters. Several studies show that employers who have previously employed workers with I/DD are more likely to continue to pull from this pool of workers (Morgan and Alexander, 2005; Blessing and Jamieson, 1999; Rimmerman, 1998; Nietupski et al, 1996; Kregel and Unger 1993; Storey and Lengyel, 1992; Sitlington and Easterday, 1992; Eiginbroad and Retish, 1988; Gruenhagen, 1982). Employer accounts of the conditions, supports, and strategies that facilitate positive employment outcomes are largely absent from the research literature. These voices demand greater attention in the research literature to diminish dominant and uninformed misrepresentation of workers with I/DD, promote the advantages of their inclusion in the labor market, and to guide and assuage hesitant employers' concerns.

Study Aim

This study investigated the perspectives and experiences of employers who employ individuals with I/DD with the following goals:

- to document some of the ways in which individuals with I/DD are employed, including job type, work schedules, and earned income;
- to identify influential factors that can contribute to the successful employment and retention of individuals with I/DD;
- to increase understanding of the ways in which the integrated employment of individuals with I/DD impact organizations.

Method

Study Design Rationale

Little attention has been paid to the integrated employment of individuals with I/DD in the research literature. Of the few studies, employer perspectives have been minimally explored and predominantly through survey methodology (Appendix A). While survey research offers several advantages (i.e. convenience, larger sample size, replicable) the quality of data collected is undoubtedly limited by parameters imposed by the restrictive nature of the data collection tool and the quantification of participant viewpoints. This study employed a phenomenological

approach to more fully capture and share the perspectives and experiences of employers who actively recruit and employ workers with I/DD.

Phenomenology refers to the study of human experience from the first-person perspective. Qualitative in nature, phenomenological research tends toward smaller sample sizes and relies on flexible data collection methods. Researchers are able to delve deeply into the selected topic to capture the common and unique essences of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals in common circumstances. In studies of this nature, the intent is particularization and explanation; semi-structured interviews are a commonly employed methodology. Through the use of probing questions, referred to as "bracketing," the researcher strives to dismantle generalities by capturing rich descriptive narratives and subjectivity is acknowledged. During the analysis phase, coders extract common descriptors from the separate narratives and document patterns and themes. Multiple reviewers ensure inter-coder reliability and the accurate representation of findings. In this type of research, validity is strengthened by disclosures of researcher positionality, transparency of process, use of direct quotations, peer debriefing, and participant confirmation of researcher representation.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited by two methods. First, leaders from the North Carolina Business Leadership Network (NCBLN)[6] were enlisted to distribute announcements and information about the study. An initial announcement was made at a quarterly NCBLN member meeting, followed by a recruitment letter distributed through the NCBLN email distribution listserv.[7] The researchers also used referrals from personal contacts in the field of transition services and supported employment to recruit potential employer participants.

Sample Selection

Study participants were selected through both convenience and maximum variation sampling[8] in order to capture a wide variety of job types and employment settings and to ensure ease of participant access for the purpose of conducting on-site interviews whenever possible.

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6 The Business Leadership Network is a national non-profit organization (with state affiliates) of business leaders who have made a commitment to integrated employment. Organizational activities include "career fairs, disability mentoring and internship programs, and training programs including disability business etiquette, accommodation, and other disability issues deemed significant to employers." For more information, see: http://www.usbln.org/index.html

7 Copies of the study recruitment email and survey recruitment email are available upon request.

One criterion was set for participation in the study: participants must be an employer, human resource manager, or direct supervisor of one or more employees with I/DD within the past year. Priority was placed on securing participants who had regular contact and in-depth familiarity with their employees with I/DD.

Data Collection

Data collection methods consisted of semi-structured interviews and an online survey. A pilot study of the interview protocol and survey was conducted to assess the adequacy of questions and analysis procedures using pre-established codes; interview questions and codes were revised when deemed appropriate. Interviews were conducted at the participant's place of employment, with the exception of two phone interviews for out of state participants, and consisted of twelve open-ended questions.[9] Each interview lasted anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes. Seven of the sixteen interviews concluded with a tour of the work site, when volunteered by the participant. Fifteen of the sixteen interviews were audio recorded; one participant requested not to be recorded. Instead, this interview was directly transcribed by the two interviewers. Following this particular interview, transcription notes were compared between the two interviewers for accuracy. The remaining fifteen audio files were transcribed by a third party.

Following a review of the transcripts, the researchers identified gaps in the information and new questions emerged. An online survey was developed consisting of a combination of eleven open- and close-ended questions to gather additional information regarding participants' personal and professional histories with individuals with I/DD.[10] Participants were emailed a link to the survey, followed by two additional "gentle reminder" emails within a two week period. Participants were informed that their responses were anonymous, unless they chose to reveal themselves. Anonymity allowed for participants to disclose additional information they felt was relevant but may not have felt comfortable sharing during the face-to-face interview sessions. Nine of the sixteen participants completed the survey.

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8 Convenience sampling refers to the "selection of a sample of participants from a population based on how convenient and readily available that group of participants" (Salkind, 2010). Maximum variation sampling is defined as "Searching for cases or individuals who cover the spectrum of positions and perspectives in relation to the phenomenon one is studying" (Palys, 2008).

9 Interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

10 The online survey questions are available upon request.

Data Analysis

All interview transcripts were hand-coded by researchers and one outside coder using pre-established codes.[11] New codes were added as patterns and themes emerged. The coded transcripts were then compared to ensure consistency in code application as recommended by Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken (2010). When appropriate, similar codes were merged into one common code. Others were refined to reflect a more accurate representation or eliminated if found insufficient.

Survey responses were reviewed for purposes of theme confirmation and to allow for the emergence of new themes. Narrative data from the open-ended survey questions were coded in the same manner as the interview transcripts; however with themes already established, the survey narratives were coded by a single researcher. Newly identified themes were shared with peer researchers for confirmation.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of any research initiative relies on transparency. This includes the disclosure of researcher bias or positionality that may unduly influence the study design and outcomes. As such, it should be noted that the current study was conducted by researchers with scholarly, professional, and personal backgrounds that undoubtedly inform all aspects of the research process. Beyond their roles as researchers, their employment histories include positions as an academic business administrator, special educator, small business owner, supported employment service provider, and manager of a group home for residents with I/DD. Additionally, personal relationships and volunteerism have afforded all three researchers a close familiarity of everyday lives, joys, and challenges experienced by individuals with I/DD and their families. While not easily articulated, this tacit knowledge encompasses belief systems and values that, with certainty, influence the researchers' perceptions and understandings (Nonaka & Teese, 2001, pg. 319). While the researchers perceive their lived experiences as positive contributions informing the study, they also acknowledge the potential for bias and reader perceptions of study influence. For this reason, several steps were taken to ensure the integrity of the study and its findings. Beyond the disclosure of positionality and in accordance with recommended validation processes (Cresswell, 2003, pg. 196), a draft report was forwarded to participants to confirm fair representation (member checking) and a final review of the research

11 Codes are available upon request.

initiative, in its entirety, was conducted by an external auditor (peer debriefing).

Results and Discussion

The following section begins with brief descriptions of study participants and their organizations. General descriptors of current and past employees with I/DD are provided, as derived from participants' narratives and characterizations. Summaries and discussion of key findings are then presented, outlined by the three study aims:

RQ 1: How are individuals with I/DD employed?

RQ 2: What factors contribute to the successful employment of individuals with I/DD?

RQ 3: How do participants perceive the contributions of their employees with I/DD? In what ways do their contributions impact the organization?

Participants

Sixteen participants took part in the study: eight females and eight males. Representing thirteen organizations, these individuals held titles indicative of supervisory positions, including:

Business owner (2)
Food service manager (2)
Human resource director (2)
Manager (2)
Operations manager
Project manager
Restaurant manager
Store manager (2)
Supervisor
Team leader
Unit Supervisor

Organizations

Priority was placed on enlisting participants from diverse employment settings and who oversee a wide variety of work tasks. The thirteen employment sites included:

3 small businesses (<2500 employees)
3 mid-sized businesses (2500-10,000 employees)
2 large-sized/Fortune 500 businesses (>10,000 employees)
2 large not-for-profit organizations
2 government organizations
1 public institution of higher education

Grouped by organizational functions, employment sites can be generally categorized as:

construction/building material sales (1)
digital preservation (2)
grocery/retail (2)
healthcare/hospitality (1)
insurance (2)
research laboratories (1)
postal/shipping services (2)
printing/publishing services (1)
restaurant/food services (1)

Employees with I/DD

Across the thirteen organizations, a total of thirty-five individuals with I/DD were

identified as employees. Understandably, participants were hesitant to identify the specific types of disabilities experienced by their employees. Both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) impose legal ramifications for the disclosure of employee health and disability information without consent. As such, emphasis was placed on collecting anecdotal and descriptive reports. Participants were also given the opportunity to review a draft of the report and censor any information they felt could reveal the identity of their employees with I/DD.

When speaking about their employees with I/DD, participants tended to use descriptors with positive connotations paired with absolute or extreme qualifiers (i.e. "very," "extremely," "really," and "always"), characterizing employee dispositions, strengths and skills, and work ethic (Table 1).

Table 1: Positive descriptors shared by participants of their employees with I/DD

"asks questions"	"a go-to guy"	"outgoing"
"dependable"	"great attitude"	"polite"
"dedicated"	"happy"	"proactive"
"diligent"	"happy-go-lucky"	"productive"
"energetic"	"has a lot of initiative"	"proficient"
"productive"	"intelligent"	"punctual"
"focused"	"keeps me informed of problems"	"sharp with data entry"
"fresh attitude"	"keeper of birthdays"	"reliable"
"friendly"	"kind"	"self-sufficient"
"fun"	"knowledgeable"	"social"
"genius about numbers"	"meticulous"	"stays aware of issues"
"good at keeping track of his time"	"most pleasant"	"strong attention to detail"
"good worker"	"motivated to learn"	"strong memory"
"good at finding other people's errors"	"never has a bad day"	"ultimate nice guy"
	"no absences"	"unbeatable"

Participants also often used comparative language to identify notable differences between their employee(s) with and without I/DD:

> *They have been diligent and in many cases more responsible and more proactive than other employees. It's true. They want their jobs and they want to do a good job.*
>
> *They are extremely productive, comparatively to others.*
>
> *They're as productive if not more so than their counterparts.*
>
> *There's never any convincing them to do their job, like with some of the other employees.*
>
> *She is the most pleasant person to have around. Whereas you and I probably have a bad*

day every once in a while, she never has a bad day here. You don't have some of that crap to deal with that you have to deal with the rest of us.

He puts a stronger effort into making sure things are working out and letting somebody know when it's not.

They do their work and don't tend to engage in the same office politics as others. Different types of things like this, we just don't have to manage in them.

Of statements reflecting less favorable impressions, participants largely positioned their views in cost-benefit terms. Statements included:

She's slow but she's extremely meticulous.

He becomes fixated [on numbers]. You know, it's a part of his disability but also a part of his genius. He fits here. It's good for him to be here.

You know, considering their reliability and punctuality, this makes up for any difference in speed or accuracy. It's worth it to us.

I think if you looked strictly from an economic standpoint and [comparing] abilities, if there was a little bit of difference between two [prospective employees], I'd go with the one who was the superior value. You can't apply that argument here. My employee is the fabric of the shop. So I can make her employment make great sense. They [coworkers] would be way unhappier if I brought in somebody else. It would be considered a bad move on my part. We would get more back, possibly, but overall, it's worth it to have her here because of this fabric thing I mentioned.

Participant descriptors of challenging traits are listed in Table 2. Similar to positive characterizations, participants often paired negative descriptors with absolute and extreme qualifiers, but also often used circumstantial qualifiers including "sometimes," "some days," and "if/when…then."

Table 2: Negative descriptors shared by participants of their employees with I/DD

"agitated mood some days"	"doesn't like loud noises"	"needs time to process"
"anxious, freezes up but then recovers"	"doesn't make eye contact"	"reluctant to socialize"
"becomes distracted if…"	"some physical drawbacks"	"says things totally off the wall"
"can be verbally expressive if…"	"can fixate on…"	"self-absorbed"
"can get a little nervous when…"	"gets a little flustered if…"	"slow"
"can't read very well"	"gets confused when…"	"overly talkative"
"daydreams sometimes"	"overwhelmed with change or the unpredictable"	"has a speech impediment"
"difficulty interacting with people"	"little in terms of social graces"	"took a little while to remember"
"does not take change well"	"high-strung if has too much sugar"	"shy"
"doesn't like loud noises"	"low self- confidence"	"vocalizes" (verbal tics)
"doesn't make eye contact"	"misunderstands"	

Participants also regularly countered negative descriptors with explanations of effective accommodations or strategies used to alleviate or minimize the deleterious impact on employee work performance and/or coworkers (see RQ 2 Accommodations). Three participants reported verbally and/or physically aggressive behaviors from one employee within each of their separate organizations. Of these three employees, only one was terminated.

Summarizing his employee traits, one participant aptly shared a general sentiment expressed by the majority of participants. He stated, "Each employee is different. They are all individuals. They all have their special needs and they all have their special skills and contributions."

RQ 1: How are individuals with I/DD employed?

Job type and responsibilities.

Table 3 identifies the positions and responsibilities held by workers with I/DD as reported by study participants. While job types varied, a common characteristic found across all positions was the assignment of process-driven and repetitive work.

Table 3: What types of jobs do individuals with I/DD hold?

Job Type	Position	Responsibilities
Clerical and Fulfillment	copy clerk mailroom clerk	copying services (collating, binding, packet assembly) mail sorting (manual and machine) inter-office mail and document delivery document scanning data entry filing recycling equipment management outgoing mail preparation (folding inserts, stuffing envelopes, addressing, packaging) labeling/tagging products
Technical Services	microfilm technicians imaging technicians	document preparation digitizing/scanning documents reformatting items to microfilm data entry tagging metadata
Research	lab technicians	equipment preparation lab equipment sanitation custodial
Healthcare and Hospitality	linen support personnel room service attendant	linen delivery and pick-up inventory and stocking food delivery food tray return

	dishwasher	wash dishes remove trash
Food Service	Cook dishwasher busser server support	baking and cooking produce preparation prepping food dishwashing bussing tables refilling customer drinks cleaning
Grocery/Retail	stocker cashier assistant bagger cart attendant bakery assistant produce clerk	stocking and facing shelves bagging groceries cart attendants produce preparation food packaging

Supports and Accommodations.

Of the thirty-five employees, only two were employed without assistance from a supported employment agency. Participants identified a wide range of workplace accommodations provided their employees with I/DD including the customization of jobs, modifications of operational processes and practices, individualized job training, job coaching, assistive devices, visual supports, communication logs, and workspace restructuring and allocation. Explanations of these accommodations are provided in greater detail later in this report (Table 9).

Work schedules and earned income.

Table 4 provides a breakdown of work schedules and earned income reported by employers of their workers with I/DD.

Table 4: Work schedules and earned income

# of Employees	Work Schedule	Earned Income
11	40 hrs/wk	salary + full benefits
12	20-35 hrs/wk	hourly + partial benefits
12	<10 hrs/wk	hourly

Full-time workers and workers scheduled over 20 hours per week received full and apportioned (respectively) employer benefits generally including health insurance, profit sharing, vacation leave, sick leave, dental insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, and retirement assistance.

Participants gave several reasons, as outlined in Table 5, to explain the reduced work schedules and entry-level wages earned by over 70% of identified employees with I/DD.

Table 5: Employee work status explanations

Work Status Explanation	Supporting Quotes
Low work stamina:	*Some of our higher-functioning team members work six to eight hour days. We have fewer of them that work three hours a day because it's just all they can take on in a day.*
Resistance to change:	*We quit trying to see if we could move people maybe up or laterally, because they were just very comfortable with what they were doing. They want to stick with that and they didn't want to do anything new or different.*
Lack of support:	*So, if our employee could actually do the work without his coworker then we could probably get him three or four more hours a week.*
Limited available work:	*He would come and he'd say, "There's nothing for me to do." He wanted to sit here and get his hours, so he would take a little bit of work and then he'd just get distracted and start talking to people. So, you know, you've got to make sure you've got enough for them to do.*
Insufficient financial resources:	*We can't afford the labor. We just don't have the extra hours. You have to make a profit, you know?*
Organizational structure:	*All of our operations positions are permanent part-time, 30 hours a week, so for most purposes it's considered full-time work, but, yea, it's anywhere between 20, 30, and 35 hours or lower per week.*
Perceived restrictions and work disincentives	*They're getting some kind of disability through the state, and so they can only work part-time."* *My full-time pot washer actually lost assistance because he made too much money.* *He can't work over or he'll lose these benefits again. It's kind of silly, but at the same time you know, it is what it is. But, we'll work with it. He does a great job for us. He's been working here for eighteen years altogether.*

RQ1: Summary and discussion.

Findings from this study on the work status of workers with I/DD are highly consistent with previous research (Butterworth, et al., 2013; Boeltzig, Timmons, and Butterworth, 2008; Brown, Shriaga, and Kessler, 2006). With few exceptions, individuals with I/DD tend to be employed in entry-level positions, work less than forty hours per week with supported employment assistance, and earn hourly wages with partial or no benefits. As reported in several studies, individuals with I/DD have a strong desire to be competitively employed and, when employed, prefer to work increased hours and earn higher wages than their current employment situation (Ali, Schur, and Blanck, 2011; Certo, Luecking, Murphy, Brown, Courey and Belanger, 2008; Migliore, Mank, Grossi, and Rogan, 2007; Brown Shiraga, and Kessler, 2006). Unfortunately, as found in study, the fear of losing SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)

and SSI (Social Security Income) can inhibit many from accepting increased work schedules and pay (Certo et al., 2008, p. 93). One participant shared,

> *My employee made $26 over the amount one year and he lost all his benefits. It took his mom and dad months to get his benefits reinstated and now he can only work 20 hours a week.*

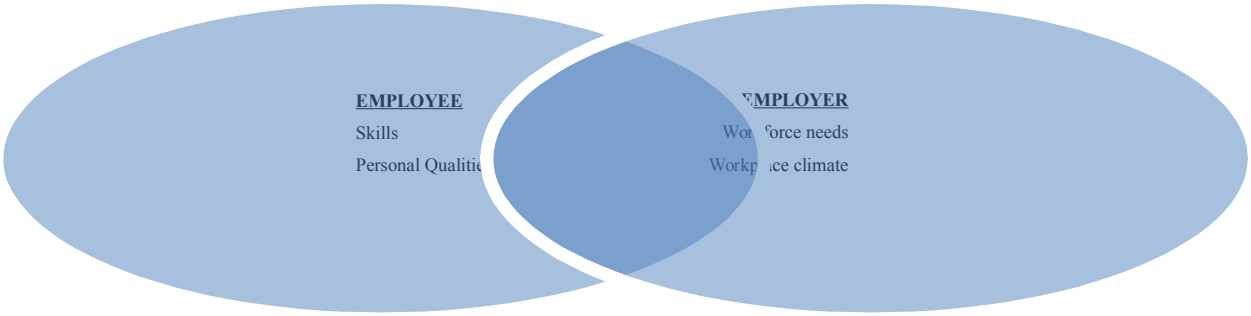
Given a turbulent economy and overwhelming barriers to paid employment, the stability of supplemental government support serves as a strong incentive for individuals with I/DD to remain underemployed. In recent years, the US Social Security Administration has worked to establish safeguards with intent to diminish these types of work disincentives (Thorton, Weathers, & Wittenburg, 2007; Green, Green, & Green, 2005). However, Certo et al. (2008) report that these provisions are often not well communicated (Certo et al., 2008, p. 93). As such, employers may benefit from a more informed understanding of the types of governmental programs that can support their interest in retaining and promoting strong employees with I/DD. A list of employer resources can be found in Appendix B.

RQ 2: What factors positively contribute to the successful employment of individuals with I/DD?

Good Fit.

"First and foremost," advised one employer, "it is about picking the right person for the right job. This has to be number one." Many participants referred to this process as finding a *good fit*, a phrase commonly used in the human resource field to describe the desired match between an employee's skills and personal qualities and an employer's workforce needs and the workplace climate (Error: Reference source not found).

Figure 1: Traditional model of "good fit"



Given the challenges (cognitive, social, and communication) experienced by many individuals with I/DD, several participants acknowledged that screening practices typically used to

determine the fit of potential employees are often unsuitable for job applicants with I/DD. Table 66 outlines strategies offered by participants during both the pre-employment phase and early stages of employment that enabled a better assessment of potential and new employees with I/DD.

Table 6: Employer strategies for determining "good fit" and supporting quotes

Pre-Employment Strategies	Supporting Quotes
Assessments of the physical and cognitive demands of the position and work environment	*If you know what the position needs, your risks go down substantially. This is how you mitigate your risks and how you make your employees successful.*
Job posting and interviews that provide explicit statements relating to the needs and demands of the position and work environment	*Whatever you are looking for, be specific.* *Be very specific when you screen applicants.*
Partnerships with supported employment agencies and consulting others familiar with the strengths and support needs of applicants	*We have the job coach in the interview. Without them I might not have hired my employee because I wouldn't have been aware of what they could do. It would be easy to miss. Interviews are challenging.*
Gathering information from informed family members of the potential employee	*It was good for me to be able to talk to his mom, just to get some background information.*
Setting clear expectations of work behaviors with applicants and the workgroup	*And, make sure that the other members of the team understand that this is a fully vetted team member. Make sure that they understand the employee has the same responsibilities and rights as everybody else.*

Early-Employment Strategies	Supporting Quotes
Offer extended probationary periods	*For most individuals that we hire, we give a three week probationary period, but with these guys…it probably took a week or two longer to get going.* *It was through time. I had to see what his capabilities were and then I could move him around and get him in the right spot.*
Invest time developing familiarity, rapport, and trust with new employee	*Really get to know the person. Don't overdo it in terms of talking to them too much about their personal life in the beginning, because they might not feel comfortable with that. You know, just kind of gradually try to build that rapport. Ask them little questions here and there. Divulge a little information about yourself. Nothing too personal but just let them know that it's kind of a back and forth. That they can trust you and come to you if they have questions.*
Take risks and challenge employees with I/DD with more difficult work tasks	*I had to push him out there, because I wanted to see if he could do it.* *Don't give them the dredges. Don't say, 'Oh, we'll just give you this little cutie stuff to do.' Give them something that challenges them.*
Maintain realistic expectations and trust	*I think one of the biggest things is you just have to sit back and you really have to give individuals a chance, as with anybody. You know? You can't expect somebody to just walk in a job, do the job 100% and go on.* *You have to have a little bit of trust in them. There are going to be hiccups and things, but you just have to let them go with it – like you*

would with any other employee.

Management style.

Participants identified attributes and qualities relating to their personal management style that they feel better enable their employees with I/DD to be successful at work (Table 7). Self-descriptors included calm, creative, flexible, informed, patient, reflective, empathetic, risk-taker, and values of diversity. Several characterized a strengths-based approach in their management style and spoke of personal efforts to structure positions and assign responsibilities based on strengths, capabilities, and interests of their individual employees. Many identified communication style as important, stating that their employees with I/DD were better able to take and follow instructions when language was direct, concrete, and specific.

Table 7: Employer attributes reported by participants and supporting quotes

Management Style	Supporting Quotes
Calm	*I personally think that it is important to have a supervisor who is a low-key kind of person-- not an anxious person. Not somebody that is going to react to the employee's reactions – I think that is key. It's really important that the supervisor try to develop calm…responding and not reacting and not letting flailing arms or loud voices be a trigger for him or herself.*
Creative	*You do just do whatever it takes...think outside the box…you know? If they need to look at pictures of kittens to calm themselves down, then print pictures of kittens.*
Flexible	*We had someone who could bake the best cake in the world. She couldn't read a recipe, but if you put all the ingredients out, she knew exactly what goes when and where. She can't physically read the recipe, but she got everything else. She now works at a grocery store and has been there for four years. They do the same thing for her – they measure everything out and put it down and she knows what to do. It's not a big deal, you know*
Informed	*Become informed. Get training. Do your research. Ask questions*
Patient	*I think an important component is to have a supervisor in place that is patient and willing to learn more about disabilities and willing to focus on the individual's strengths.* *[My employees] generally need extra time and patience when it comes to training. However, once they get it, THEY GOT IT. In some case they will perform their duties better than most and they will generally give 100% effort on everything they do.(written survey response)*
Reflective and empathetic	*To think of it in a different perspective and try to really understand and come from a very understanding and compassionate point of view. I think that's really key.* *You just really have to help other people that don't have an understanding when they express fear or are frightened or unsure about how the person is going to be. Just really reassure them that this is a good person. You just kind of walk people through it.*

Risk-taking	*I kind of had to push him out there cause I wanted to see if he could do it* *Well, my advice would be to see how they're doing in their area and if you feel they're not really happy, try them somewhere else.*
Values diversity	*We have a very diverse population and I mean that in a lot of different ways. We're a very inviting place to work and very employee-friendly. Diversity of any kind makes us who we are.* *We really focus on differences, respecting people's differences. This has an impact on our organization. How we want to make sure our workers have access to the same information, the same type of training. We've really put forth an effort to try to make sure that everyone in our organization understands the value of diversity.* *I think it [integrated employment] is a positive thing. It gives them a voice in life. It gives them an opportunity to be in society normally -- that's what they want. It also gives them a way of giving back to society - like anybody else.* *My fundamental belief is that people with intellectual disabilities should work in regular employment situations – not in workshops, not getting tax breaks, not funneled through to a middle-man system. If we can find situations like we've been able to here, where an individual has a regular full-time job with benefits, that's the most inclusive option…and that's the one we want to support.*
Strengths-focused	*As a manager, like with everyone, I try to find out what you do best. What makes you happy at work and that would be the thing that I would make sure you do the most of during your day. You still might have to do some of the uncomfortable stuff, but with the rest of it – you're just a more productive employee.* *What we'd like to do is work with people's abilities, and say, "Ok, what are you comfortable doing?" Some people are not as comfortable in front of the customers and prefer being behind the scenes.*
Direct	*The one thing I've learned is that it is hard to be broad with my employees. You have to be really specific.* *She responds well to those techniques [straight talk]. We might have to say 'That's enough. We're not talking about that anymore' or 'Settle down and get back to work.'*

Third-party support.

Supported employment professionals, including vocational rehabilitation specialists and transition specialists, were most frequently identified as critical sources of support. Table 88 provides a timeline of accessed supported employment services as reported by participants.

Table 8: Supported employment services and supports

Support Employment Services and Provisions:	Supporting Quotes
Pre-employment phase: • developed a familiarity with employers and their organizations • assessed the organization's workforce needs • identified suitable candidates for open positions	*The job coach shadowed the other employees so she could gain a perspective with regard to culture of team…the company. That was a key piece to success.* *They [supported employment agency] will contact me and say "I think we have somebody for you." Or I can call them and they'll say,*

• helped to facilitate applicant screening processes • negotiated the creation of new positions based on employer needs	*"Yeah, we can fill that position, we'll give you a call." They're obviously very anxious and willing to fill any voids we may have.* *They (the supported employment agency) found us, I think they knew going in that we would be a good fit for their clients - both personality-wise and ability-wise. The work is right up their alley.*
Probationary phase: • facilitated new employee transition • secured access to reliable transportation • conducted task analyses and developed individual work plans for new employees • helped to secure appropriate accommodations and supports • provided job training and development of workplace social skills	*In the initial weeks or months, they were available…making time to be on-site to talk with the manager, to talk with the employee, to understand whether accommodations are needed. The job coach was key to making it all work, but also in giving the managers confidence that they would have the support needed. We were then able to go ahead and take the leap to, to take a risk and hire someone with an intellectual disability because we felt like we had the support.*
Daily: • provided job coaching support • nurtured the development of natural supports in the workplace	*They make sure the employees are on time, come to work dressed properly, are checking their emails, using appropriate language…they just make sure they stay on the right path every day.*
Intermittent (weekly/bi-weekly/monthly): • served as a mentor to employee and employer • provided information and training to employer and staff on relevant disability-support topics	*The job coach comes in every other week and they (job coach and employee) talk about what's happened in the last week…and the job coach will counsel her.*
As needed: • provided support and advice as issues or questions emerged • provided additional training as employees were assigned new responsibilities	*If we change anything -- it can be very subtle or insignificant -- but it's huge for our employees. The job coach will come in and teach the new process --whether it's "turn left instead of right".* *Anytime, anytime we have issues, I just pick a phone up and he [supported employment staff] is here within a day.*

Several participants also identified family support as important to the success of their employees. One participant commented, "It was good for me to be able to talk to his mom, just to get some background information." Other participants spoke of family members helping with transportation, reinforcing work expectations at home, and providing timely information on issues outside the work environment than might temporarily influence an employee's work performance.

Supportive work climate.

"It takes a very accommodating and nurturing climate." This sentiment was repeatedly emphasized by participants, and many described periods of uncertainty and adjustment upon the employment of a new employee with I/DD. Accounts of coworker gossip, teasing, and inappropriate humor at the expense of the new employee were reported by some participants. "It's important to immediately address anything inappropriate – to make sure good boundaries are set," advised one participant. Another employer simply stated, "Sometimes, you just have to walk people through it." Many reported actions taken to encourage a sense of community and positive feelings among coworkers. Descriptions of efforts included increasing opportunities for employees to collaborate on projects, creating social time during the workday by catering lunches and celebrating special life events (birthdays, engagements, and work anniversaries), and organizing annual picnics and other outside social events with employee family members. Participants offered the following comments on notable changes observed:

> *They [coworkers] appreciate him. He is now just accepted as part of the family. Nobody treats him any different.*
>
> *We've found it's great for us. You know, everybody here, they love all the guys. They get to know them and have become very, very protective of them.*
>
> *In beginning, they had an expectation that he would be different and I think that has surprised them and now it has dissipated. After working with the employee and seeing how meaningless the label is in terms of his ability to do the job, it has improved their outlook on what individuals [with I/DD] can do.*

Workplace Accommodations.

Table 9 outlines categories of workplace accommodations reported by participants, followed by descriptions of each category and supporting photos and quotes.

Table 9: Accommodations reported by participants

Participant Reported Accommodations	Examples
Visual Supports: Instructional methods and materials that enable employees to complete work tasks, follow routines, and acquire/advance work-related skill competencies.	schedules, checklists, photos, signage, color coding
Communication and Work Logs: Mechanisms that enable employees to track their work, document progress, and record questions to share with employers, job coaches, or other employment mentors.	notebooks / binders
Assistive Devices: Tools that allow individuals to experience greater productivity and work autonomy.	timers and online calendar systems noise minimizing headphones repurposed tools (example: pizza wheel for

	slicing fruit instead of a paring knife) online employee photo directory
Procedural Changes: Changes or modifications in organizational or worksite specific practices	modified interview processes extended probationary periods job customization or restructuring flexible work schedules
Physical Space: The allocation or assignment of space.	assigned employee workstations private areas to decompress

Visual supports.

Visual supports are tools that enable or enhance one's understanding of language (printed or verbal), environment, processes, routines, norms, and expectations with information conveyed through the photos, pictures, symbols, objects, labels, calendars, or words (Roa & Gagie, 2006). For example, the photo in Figure 2 was taken in the kitchen at a participant's place of employment showing color-coded instructions for recycling materials and clearing food trays.

Figure 2: Color-coded instructions for recycling and clearing food trays

- Broken glass
- Aluminum foil
- Drink cans
- Water bottles

Please place these items in the recycle bin.

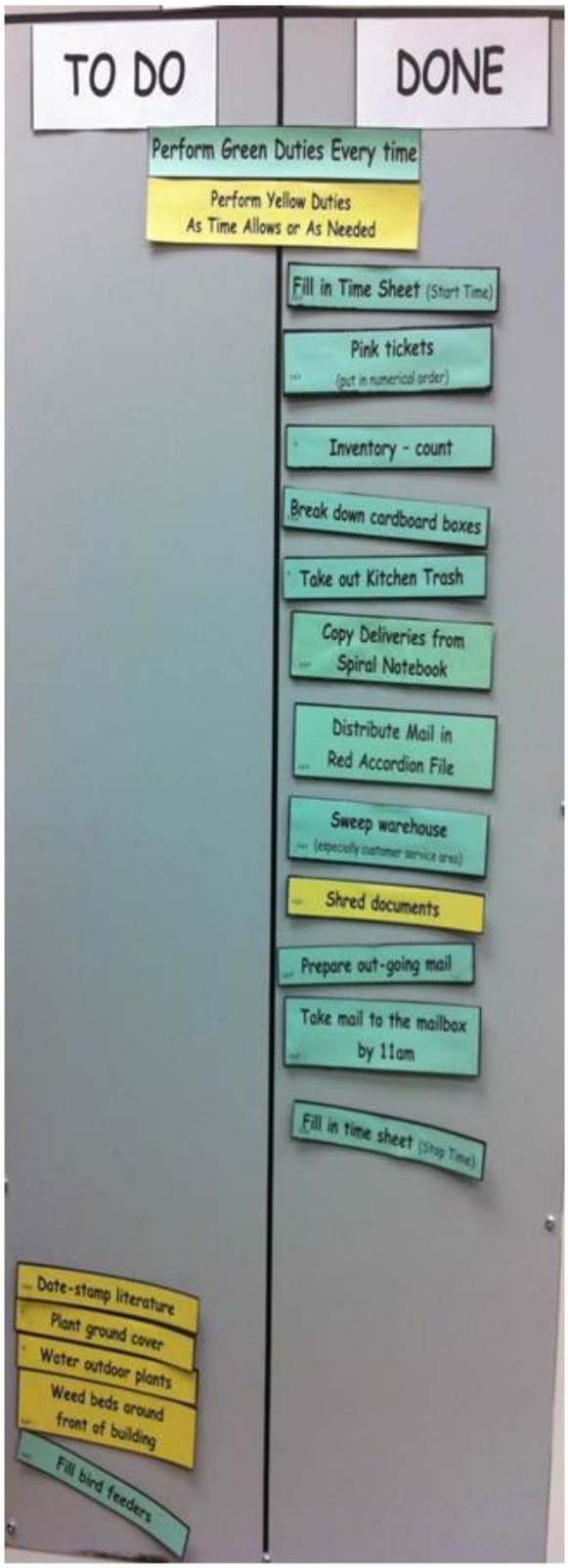
LEFT HAND TRASH

RIGHT HAND SILVERWARE

Schedules and checklists were two of the most common types of visual supports identified in this study, used to specify processes, work tasks, and activities for employees who have difficulty with transitions or experience anxiety relating to unexpected events or unfamiliar situations. With daily routines, expectations, and work tasks made explicit, these tools create a sense of predictability in the work day and enable employees to anticipate and adapt to change. Feelings of anxiety subside and employees are able to work with more focus and independence. One participant commented, "I think this is part of our job, that our employees know what to expect every single day and that nothing is out of place for them. It minimizes any type of controversy and confusion. It's all straightforward." Figure 3 shows a wall schedule displayed at one worksite. The participant explained,

First, we identified tasks and made a master list of those tasks. I designed a board that's magnetic, and our office manager made up tags with one task per tag. The board is divided in half, and everything that needs to be done is on one side of the board. Then, when they finish the task they move the tag to the other side of the board. We have color-coded, too - the tasks that need to be done every time you come, versus some things you could do if you have extra time. It helps them to prioritize which tasks to start first. The first one is "filling in your timesheet" and so on until they're done.

Figure 3: Wall schedule of work tasks



TO DO DONE

Perform Green Duties Every Time
Perform Yellow Duties
As Times Allow or As Needed

Fill in Time Sheet (Start Time)

Pink tickets
(put in numerical order)

Inventory – count

Break down cardboard boxes

Take out Kitchen Trash

Copy Deliveries from Spiral Notebook

Distribute mail in Red Accordion File

Sweep warehouse (especially in customer service area)

Shred documents

Prepare out-going mail

Take mail to the mailbox by 11 am

Fill in time sheet (Stop Time)

Date – stamp literature

Plant ground cover

Water outdoor plants

Weed beds around front of building

Fill bird feeders

For employees with impulse control issues and other behavior-related challenges, participants reported that visual supports are commonly used to reminder employees of appropriate behaviors, options, and consequences, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Visual support for coping with workplace stress

How to Relax at Work

If [name] is VERY UPSET, he needs to go to the RELAXING PLACE.

The RELAXING PLACE will help him keep his job.

A There is a small penalty for going to the RELAXING PLACE.

If [name] becomes VERY UPSET but does not go to the RELAXING PLACE [name] will lose his job.

OR

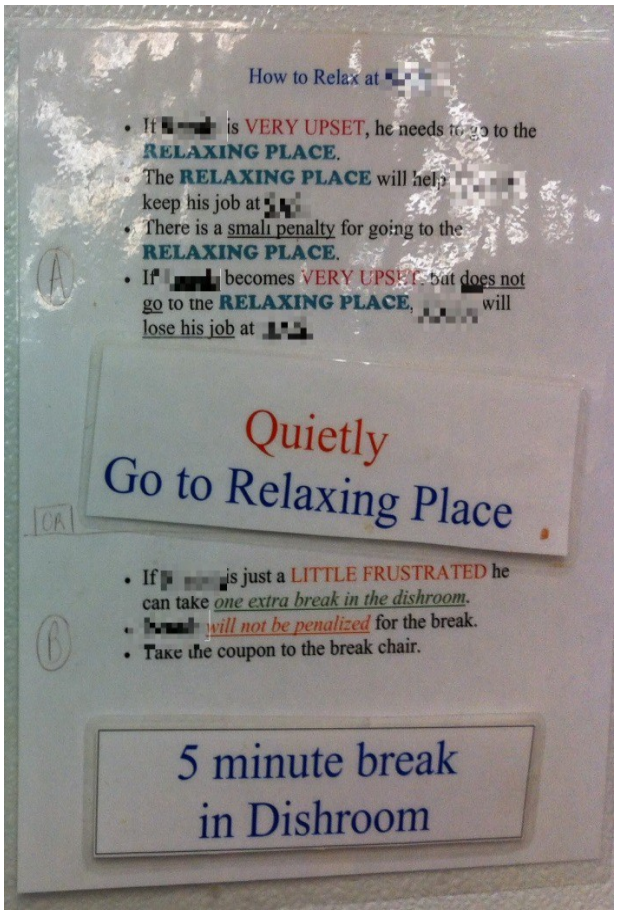
Quietly Go to Relaxing Place

B If [name] is JUST A LITTLE FRUSTRATED he can take *one extra break in the dish room.*

[name] *will not be penalized* for the break.

Take the coupon to the break chair.

5 minute break in Dishroom.



Another participant described using a handwritten sign with an employee who can become easily frustrated. She explained,

> *In the beginning I would say, "Are you ok?" This only heightened his aggravation – the verbal interaction. Over time I learned - through our supported employment partner - to use a sign instead. The sign says "I can see that you're upset. When you're calm and if you want to talk, please feel free to come see me." It's just a visual cue. I don't say anything. He reads it and if he wants to come and talk, he will. If he doesn't, that's okay too. If he's in his office, I give him his space. If he is in the hallway and it's something really upsetting, he'll come to my office. I'll put up the cue card and ask him to go back to his office for five minutes to relax, take some deep breaths, and then he can come back in five minutes if he's calm…I think definitely the sign has helped.*

The same employer also provides photo cards to help alleviate stress. She stated,

> *When he is feeling aggravated, he is to think of something that makes him happy. What*

makes him the very happiest are kittens. So, I printed off some pictures of kittens for him to keep in his desk. Now when he's feeling aggravated, I'll just say, "Hey, why don't you get out your pictures?

Communication and work logs.

Several participants noted the use of communication logs by their employees who require minimal support. Employees might record questions or document concerns to be shared later with a job coach during weekly or monthly check-in mentoring sessions. As one participant explained, "They (the employee and job coach) have a journal that they keep and every other week they talk about what's happened in the last week, good or bad."

Employee work logs were also identified by a few participants as helpful to employees with memory issues for recording and storing notes or tracking progress on work assignments.

He has a log that he uses every day. It helps him to understand and know what he needs to do each day. So when he comes in, he knows, "Ok, this is what I need to do. This is what I need to double-check. I need to make sure I'm doing it this way and it lists the steps.

Assistive devices.

Participants also shared of several simple and everyday devices used to support their employees with I/DD. For instance, one employer reported purchasing a small kitchen timer for an employee who enjoys taking walks during breaks but often gets lost in thought and loses track of time. Another participant set up an online calendar system to send reminders to employees who can become engrossed in their work and forget to take breaks. Headphones are provided for employees who become easily distracted. "They really seem to help. The employee can listen to music and zone in to what they're doing without the distraction," noted an employer. The same employer created an online photo directory with employee names and departments to help shy employees become familiar with their coworkers. He stated, "It just helped the employee learn names – to be able to put a face with the name. I think everyone, actually, appreciated that."

Procedural changes.

Changes in standard organizational processes and practices were also reported by participants and included allowing supported employment staff to accompany job applicants with I/DD on job interviews, extended probationary periods, customization or restructuring of jobs, and flexible schedules.

Physical space.

Whether an office, cubical, or hallway, having access to a designated personal area was noted as especially helpful to employees with I/DD who experience anxiety. Allocating private spaces provided employees with time and space to cope with occasional feelings of stress or frustration. Two participants shared the following comments:

If my employee gets anxious, we have a place where he can go. It's taped off and away from the public. He goes down there and stands and screams for a few minutes, then he comes back and he's ready to go.

If it's in his, the confines of his office it is his business. It's his personal, private area where he's going to work through things in his own way. I try to relay to him that we still can hear him and maybe we can work on that in time. I just try to keep that on the radar, but if he stays in there and doesn't bring it out here, it's not something I need to get involved with. I let him have that space to work it out and he usually always works it out on his own.

RQ 2: Summary and discussion of findings.

Five broad categories emerged from review of participant statements on factors that positively contribute to the success of their employees with I/DD: (1) a good fit between the employee (skills and qualities) and the employer (workforce needs and organizational culture), (2) management style, (3) third-party support, (4) work climate, and (5) workplace accommodations. As highlighted in Table 10, these findings broadly align with reports from similar research initiatives and combined with participant narratives, provide a more nuanced understanding of conditions and mechanisms that can facilitate positive employment outcomes for employees with I/DD.

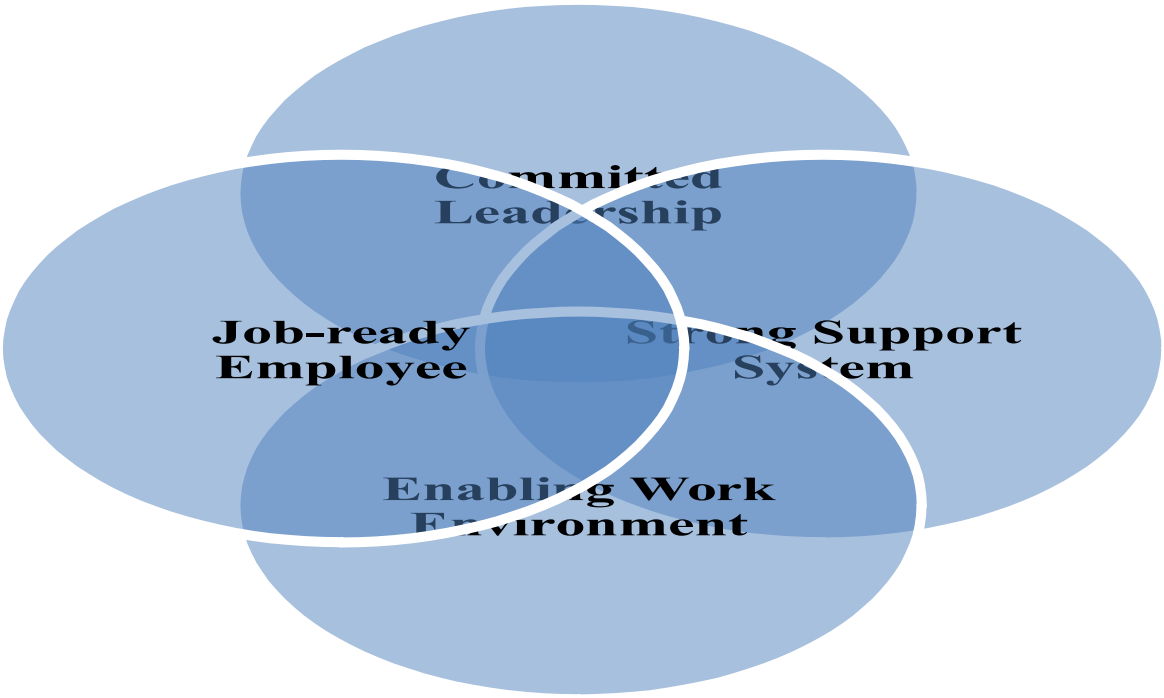
Table 10: Employer reported factors that positively influence employment outcomes for workers with I/DD

Good fit: Parmenter, 2011; Gilbride, Stensrud, Vandergood, & Golden, 2003; Greenan, Wu, & Black, 2000; Gruenhagen, 1982
Management style: Parmenter, 2011; Waterhouse, Kimberley, Jonas, & Glover, 2010; Butterworth, Hagner, Helm, Whelley, 2000; Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993;
Third-party support: Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Parmenter, 2011; Waterhouse, Kimberley, Jonas, & Glover, 2010; Hernandez, McDonald, Divilbiss, Horin, Velcoff, & Donoso, 2008; Gilbride, Stensrud, Vandergood, & Golden, 2003; Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993; Kregel & Unger, 1993
Work climate: Parmenter, 2011; Hernandez, McDonald, Divilbiss, Horin, Velcoff, & Donoso, 2008; Gilbride, Stensrud, Vandergood, & Golden, 2003; Butterworth, Hagner, Helm, Whelley, 2000; Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993;
Workplace accommodations: Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Hartnett, Stuart, Thurman, Loy, & Batiste, 2011; Parmenter, 2011; Waterhouse, Kimberley, Jonas, & Glover, 2010; Hernandez, McDonald, Divilbiss, Horin, Velcoff, & Donoso, 2008; Olson, Cioffi, Yovanoff, & Mank, 2001; Butterworth, Hagner, Helm, Whelley,

2000; Gilbride, Strensrud, Ehlers, Evans, & Peterson, 2000

In light of the collective research, we propose a return to the concept of *good fit* and suggest that the successful workplace inclusion (i.e. *good fit*) of employees with I/DD relies upon a multifaceted and symbiotic relationship made up of four interdependent variables: the commitment of an employer, individual readiness for employment, a strong support network, and an enabling work environment. Error: Reference source not found displays a recommended model of *good fit* for the integrated employment of individuals with I/DD followed by a description of comprising variables.

Figure 5: Integrated employment model of "good fit"



Committed Leadership.

Despite hectic work schedules and without offer of compensation or public acknowledgement, participants in this study volunteered their time, perspective, and advice in support of this investigation. Their commitment to the inclusion and success of their workers with I/DD is unarguable, and moreover, a quality hallmarked in supporting research as one of the most influential factors contributing to positive employment outcomes for workers with I/DD (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Parmenter, 2011; Waterhouse, et al., 2010; Gilbride, et al., 2003;

Olson, et al., 2001). In some cases, participants suggested that their efforts require time, consideration, and resources beyond energies and supports provided their typical employees; however many participants also noted that their efforts were simply different and no more or less taxing.

Jasper and Waldhart (2012) emphasize the importance of visibility in terms of the employer's commitment to diversity within the workplace and similarly, Waterhouse et al. (2010) point specifically to the "ethical" and "practical" values conveyed and understood within the workplace as contributing to improved employee attitudes, positive coworker relationships, the dissipation of disability-related stigma and stereotypes, and the strengthening of trust between and among management and staff at all levels (p. 7). Ten key attributes can be gleaned from this study and the supporting research, characterizing the commitment of employers who successfully recruit, employ, and retain workers with I/DD: (1) Committed employers value diversity in the workplace and act with intention to establish policies, practices, and workplace accommodations that positively enable the inclusion and contributions of their employees with I/DD (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Hartnett, et al., 2011; Parmenter, 2011; Gilbride, et al. 2003; Olson, et al., 2001). (2) They seek information and training opportunities for themselves and their employees to ensure an informed, accommodating, and accepting work climate (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Hartnett, 2011; Waterhouse, et al., 2010; Greenan, Wu, & Gilbert, 2002; Olson, et al., 2001; Gilbride, et al., 2000; Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993). (3) They look beyond labels of disability and invest time getting to know their employees with I/DD as individuals, understanding that all employees, with or without I/DD, have strengths, challenges, and support needs (Butterworth, et al., 2000). (4) They display a strengths-based philosophy in their management approach, building individual and organizational capacity by tapping into their employee strengths, motivations, and work interests to assign responsibilities and work tasks (Butterworth, et al., 2000). (5) They display flexibility, creativity, calm, and patience and (6) invest the necessary time, energies, and accommodations for individuals to be successful and to grow professionally (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Hernandez, et al., 2008; Gilbride, et al. 2003; Olson, et al., 2001). (7) They consult and collaborate with supported employment professionals and family members of their employees with I/DD, understanding these individuals are critical informers and partners (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Parmenter, 2011; Hartnett, et al., 2011; Waterhouse, et al., 2010; Hernandez, et al., 2008; Gilbride, et al., 2003; Greenan, Wu, & Black,

2002; Olson, et al., 2001; Gilbride, et al., 2000; Butterworth, et al., 2000; Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993). (8) They strive to reinforce their workgroups by creating social opportunities for their employees with and without I/DD to engage within and outside of the workday, thereby encouraging the emergence of natural supports in the work environment and fostering a more congenial and supportive work climate (Parmenter, 2011; Hernandez, et al., 2008; Olson, et al., 2001; Butterworth, et al., 2000; Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993). Two additional attributes were noted of several participants in this study yet minimally recognized in the supporting research. That is, (9) Committed employers set high standards for their employees with and without I/DD and establish clear expectations for workplace behavior. Unprofessional behavior or behaviors that create an unsafe work environment are not tolerated. (10) They recognize that charity by employment serves no one, and they understand the implicit dignity of *real* work, encompassing feelings of self-sufficiency, worth, purpose, respect, and acceptance.

Table 11: Attributes of committed leadership

Committed employers:
1. Value diversity in the workplace and act with intention to establish policies, practices, and workplace accommodations that positively enable the inclusion and contributions of their employees with I/DD.
2. Seek information and training opportunities for themselves and their employees to ensure an informed, accommodating, and accepting work climate.
3. Look beyond labels of disability and invest time getting to know their employees as individuals. They understand that all employees, with or without I/DD, have strengths, challenges, and support needs.
4. Exhibit a strengths-base management style and prioritize both individual and organizational capacity-building.
5. Display flexibility, creativity, calm, and patience in support of their employees with I/DD.
6. Invest the necessary time, energies, and accommodations for their employees with I/DD to be successful and to grow professionally.
7. Consult and collaborate with supported employment professionals and family members of employees with I/DD.
8. Encourage the emergence of natural supports within the work environment.
9. Uphold high standards and establish clear expectations for workplace behavior.
10. Understand the implicit dignity of *real* work, encompassing feelings of self-sufficiency, worth, purpose, respect, and acceptance.

Job-ready Employees.

Job readiness refers to an individual's employment potential as determined by personal and interpersonal attributes and competencies. Examples include positive attitude, honesty, accountability, reliability, and ability to follow directions. Often described as *soft skills,* these and similar qualities have been recognized as strongly desired employee traits for high performing organizations (Glenn, 2008; Perreault, 2004; Wilhelm, 2004; Sutton, 2000). Niemiec, Lavin, and Owens (2009) argue, however, that too often "unenlightened" employers reject quality job applicants who possess strong soft skills or unique strengths yet lack specific technical qualifications. Advocating for a national business dialogue about employees with disabilities as economic assets, Niemiec, Lavin, and Owens implore employers to reconsider what it means to be qualified, emphasizing job customization as a means to capitalize on the strengths and skills of these underutilized workers, stating,

> *There are many thoughts of satisfied employers in the United States who have practical experience as well as expertise in hiring and integrating workers with disabilities. Many can speak about their employees who have disabilities with direct authority and knowledge about their business contributions. In America, we do not need a charitable marketing campaign. We need a national business dialogue about employees with disabilities as economic assets. This not only means hiring qualified job applicants but also hiring quality workers who can perform essential job tasks customized to fit their identified strengths.*

Qualities reported by participants in this study of their employees with I/DD (Error: Reference source not found) have been similarly documented in previous studies[12] and offer hesitant employers an initial gauge from which to begin assessing the job readiness of potential and new employees with I/DD. Identified qualities include: adaptability, competency, dedication, dependability, high attendance, positive interpersonal skills, positive outlook, punctuality, sociability, work performance consistency, and work quality. Participants in this study emphasized the value of extended probationary periods and partnerships with supported employment professionals during these early deliberations. Table 12 provides a range of attributes and soft skill sets for employers to consider.

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12 National Governors Association, 2013; Hartnett et al., 2011; Hernandez, McDonald, Divilbis, Horin, Velcoff, & Donoso, 2008; Chi & Qu, 2008; Morgan and Alexander, 2005; Olson, Cioffi, Yovanoff, & Mank, 2001; Unger and Kregel, 2000; Nietupski, Hamre-Nietupski, VanderHart, and Fishback, 1996; Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, Francis, & Levy, 1993.

Table 12: Job readiness attributes and skills

Attributes	Skills
Is the applicant/new employee: • adaptable? • conscientious? • courteous? • dependable? • honest? • flexible? • motivated? • hard working? • punctual? • self-determined? • willing to learn? • responsible • reliable? • eligible for supported employment services? Does the individual have: • a positive attitude? • social awareness? • safety awareness? • a strong work ethic? • family support? • reliable transportation?	Can the individual follow a schedule? Can the individual follow directions and rules? How effectively and appropriately can the individual manage stress and frustration? Can the individual advocate for himself / herself? Can the individual stay on task for extended periods of time? Can the individual self-monitor and self-direct his/her workload and quality of work? Does the individual have basic reading and writing skills? How does the individual respond to safety issues? Does the individual demonstrate good hygiene? Does the individual have positive social skills?

Strong Support System.

The integrated employment of workers with I/DD is most successful when employers and employees have access to high quality and reliable support and when this support is centered on increasing both the employee's work autonomy and social inclusion within the work setting (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Parmenter, 2011; Hartnett, et al., 2011; Waterhouse, et al., 2010; Hernandez, et al., 2008; Gilbride, et al., 2003; Greenan, Wu, & Black, 2002; Olson, et al., 2001; Gilbride, et al., 2000; Butterworth, et al., 2000; Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993). As shown in Table 133, participants in this study identified three primary sources of supports: Supported

employment services, family members of employees with I/DD, and coworkers within the work environment.

Table 13: Employee/Employer support system

Supported Employment Professionals	Family Support	Natural Supports
• applicant recruitment / screening assistance • consultation for the customization of employment - job creation / restructuring - environmental / work task analyses • job training /coaching • accommodations - assessment of need - accommodation provision • mentorship (employer and employee) • troubleshooting	• transportation • paperwork assistance • reinforcement of work expectations • employee-related information	• social support • mentorship • modeling appropriate work behavior • skills training

Supported employment professionals.

Supported employment professionals have been predominately cited in the research as contributing to positive employment outcomes for individuals with I/DD and highly lauded by participants in this study for offering a wide range of services and supports. Without cost to the employer, these professionals can offer applicant recruitment and screening assistance, job structuring, employee training, job coaching, workplace accommodations, troubleshooting, and mentorship. "Without these guys, it just wouldn't work. It wouldn't work at all," stated one participant. Another commented, "They're extremely dependable and good to talk to. You just can't ask for anything more."

Natural supports.

Participants in this study emphasized the importance of teamwork and relied on coworkers to provide support to their coworkers with I/DD. One participant stated, "What I've found is that everybody has to be involved. It just can't be me." Several studies highlight the importance of natural supports and the benefits of building social capital for employees with I/DD in the workplace (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Parmenter, 2011; Hartnett, et al., 2011; Waterhouse, et al., 2010; Hernandez, et al., 2008; Gilbride, et al., 2003; Greenan, Wu, & Black, 2002; Olson, et al., 2001; Gilbride, et al., 2000; Butterworth, et al., 2000; Fabian, Edelman, &

Leedy, 1993). Natural supports are supportive relationships within the workplace; social capital refers to the advantages gained by these types of relationships. Coworkers who willingly help teach or model new skills and appropriate work behaviors, mentor the employee, or simply extend friendship all help build social capital (Schalock, Verdugo, Bonham, Fantova, & Van Loon, 2008; Trainor, 2008). Positive outcomes of these of workplace relationships include increased employee work participation and engagement, improved job retention rates, and reduced support costs for employers and taxpayers (Cimera, 2010a; Cimera, 2010b; Potts, 2005; Novak, Rogan, Mank, and DilLeo, 2003). Many participants in this study commented on similar outcomes, particularly relating to unexpected friendships, positive shifts in the work climate, and enhanced work satisfaction. One employer described a change of attitudes observed of his employees stating "It's a different kind of happiness. People are so proud to be a part of this and you feel proud for them."

Family support.

As reported in the current study, family involvement can also be an important source of support for employers (Holwerda,van der Klink, de Boer, Groothoff, & Brouwer, 2013; Donelly, Hillman, Stancliffe, Knox, Whitaker, & Parmenter, 2010; Dixon & Reddacliff, 2001). Many adults with I/DD are unable to drive and rely on family members to provide transportation to and from work. Additionally parents and other informed relatives can offer employers insight into an employee's work strengths, motivations, and challenges, provide advice and moral support, reinforce positive work habits and behaviors at home, report any situations outside the work environment that might negatively impact an employee's work performance, and assist with necessary paperwork or documentation.

Professional support organizations.

Although professional affiliations were not identified by participants in the current study and have been minimally recognized in the related literature, these support organizations can also offer employers valuable support (Van Lieshout, 2001). The Business Leadership Network is one example. Led by and comprised of experienced employers, this organization offers national and affiliate platforms for other employers to exchange information and support one another on all matters relating to the employment of individuals with disabilities. A list of additional support organizations and online resources can be found in Appendix B.

Enabling work environments.

Enabling work environments provide the conditions necessary to facilitate the inclusion and positive contributions of workers with I/DD. Within these organizations and work spaces, emphasis is placed on the minimization of cognitive, social, and physical barriers that inhibit opportunities for individuals with I/DD to obtain employment, participate in work activities, positively engage with coworkers, grow professionally, and gain similar benefits afforded to individuals without I/DD. In this study, flexibility was a defining characteristic of observed and reported work environments allowing employers to reconsider positions, schedules, responsibilities, processes, and work spaces. Access was also a clear priority within these environments and included physical and cognitive access to work activities, information, technical systems, work spaces, social opportunities, professional development, and career advancement. Table 14 presents similar and additional findings in the research literature.

Table 14: Enabling work environment conditions

Accommodations (general) (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Parmenter, 2011; Hartnett, et al., 2011; Hernandez, et al., 2008; Greenan, Wu, & Black, 2002; Olson, et al., 2001; Butterworth, et al., 2000; Gilbride, et al., 2000; Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993)*
Assistive equipment (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Hartnett, et al., 2011; Greenan, Wu, & Black, 2002; Gilbride, et al., 2000)*
Centralized accommodation fund (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012)
Disability / Transition program internships (Jasper & Waldhart, et al., 2012; Hernandez, et al., 2008)*
Disability awareness and training (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Hartnett, 2011; Waterhouse, et al., 2010; Greenan, Wu, & Gilbert, 2002; Olson, et al., 2001; Gilbride, et al., 2000)*
Diversity-targeted practices and policies (general) (Hartnett, et al., 2011; Parmenter, 2011)*
Emphasis on congenial work culture (Parmenter, 2011)*
Explicit and rigorous hiring guidelines (Gilbride, et al., 2003)
Flexible work schedules (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012; Parmenter, 2011; Hartnett, et al. 2011; Olson, et al., 2001; Butterworth, et al., 2000; Gilbride, et al., 2000)*
Formal inclusion and diversity plans(Erickson, von Schrader, Bruyère, VanLooy, 2013; Jasper & Waldhart, 2012).
Job creation and/or customization ((Jasper & Waldhart, 2012;Hartnett, et al., 2011; Waterhouse, et al., 2010; Greenan, Wu, & Black, 2002; Butterworth, et al., 2000)*
Professional development and opportunities for career advancement (Hernandez, et al., 2008)*
Social opportunities (Butterworth, et al., 2000)*
Targeted recruitment (Jasper & Waldhart, 2012)*
Visual supports for positive reinforcement (Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993)*
Workspace modification and allocation (Hartnett, et al., 2011; Greenan, Wu, & Black, 2002; Gilbride, et al., 2000; Fabian, Edelman, & Leedy, 1993)*
*denotes enabling conditions observed and reported in this study

RQ 3: How do employers perceive the contributions of their employees with I/DD? In what ways do their contributions impact the organization?

The following headings, statements, and supporting quotes reflect the most frequently expressed participant perceptions of their employees with I/DD.

Employees with I/DD bring unique and exceptional strengths and skills to the workplace.

Participants commonly highlighted the unique or exceptional strengths and skills of their employees with I/DD. As earlier noted in table 1 of positive descriptors, comments generally included admiration of intelligence, memory, disposition, manners, and work stamina.

He's very knowledgeable about everything…He's our go-to guy. He knows it all.

Her biggest strength is her politeness. Everybody just tends to admire that about her.

She is the one who is going to find other people's errors. Her attention to detail is terrific.

Individuals with I/DD can bring so much to the work unit and organization. The strengths that they bring to the table are on par with individuals without a disability, namely strong organizational skills, productivity, strong work ethic, and a desire to be contributing member of the team. I would highly recommend to any organization to consider these applicants as they would any other.

Employees with I/DD are highly dependable.

Participants described their employees with I/DD as highly dependable, demonstrating positive work habits relating to punctuality, low absenteeism, and consistent work performance.

He is someone I can always depend on to be here. I don't generally have to worry about if he's going to be here or not. He's going to be here.

Absences are requested well in advance. His breaks are taken at the same time and never exceeded. He is very good at keeping track of his time.

Employees with I/DD are hardworking and productive.

When asked about productivity, participants described their employees as hardworking and in a few cases, exceeding expectations. One participant described his lab technicians with I/DD as "unbeatable" and "performing at 120%" compared to their coworkers. Another supervising manager commented on her employee's ability to complete six and a half hours of work within a three hour period: "He comes in, he's focused. He knows

what his job is and he protects his job." A hospital food service manager shared the following anecdote about an employee whose job involves delivering meal trays to patients' rooms:

Whenever she was delivering trays, she was doing anywhere between 120 to 130 trays every day. She was beating everybody. It was truly amazing. We asked to put a pedometer on her one day, just to track the distance she walked each day - because in interviews, I used to tell candidates that they might clock three or four miles a day, just so they understood that they're going to do a lot of walking if they took this job. When I put the pedometer on her, and she ended up clocking eight and a half, almost nine miles that day. It just kind of blew my mind.

Employees with I/DD are conscientious and responsible.

Many participants described their employees with I/DD as conscientious and responsible, stating,

When we have any problems or issues, they're generally very quick – most of the time faster than others -- to come to me and let me know that a particular thing has happened. They want to make sure, "Did I deal with this the right way?" "Should I deal with it this way the next time?"

*One of the guys the other day was ten minutes late to work and he was really **stressing about it**. I told him, "Don't worry about it. You're fine. You're here on time all the time." And, he was like, "I just feel really guilty."*

She came in and said "My cab driver was 15 minutes late and I kept telling him I can't be later for work!" It's very important for her to be where she's supposed to be."

Although some reported that their employees require onsite job coaching support, others are able to self-manage.

I've had employees in this store who have had a coach 100% of the time; but I' have had others get to a point where the job coach can give them a little more freedom to do things. We just kind of ease into it…I think the employees like it too. I think they feel a certain pride in being able to go back there and get a cart and know what they need to do.

He's a very self-sufficient worker and he likes to give updates. He is very good at planning his own work and creating his own time tables – extremely good at that. He knows when he starts. He knows approximately when he's going to finish, and approximately how many he's going to get done in that time period. He can give you an estimate, if you ever ask for it.

Employees with I/DD enhance the work climate and positively influence coworkers.

One of the benefits observed and expressed by all participants was a positive change in the work climate following the addition of team members with I/DD.

He does his work, he's fun and happy. He provides us a different outlook about what being employed is about.

Morale in general is raised when he is here. He's just such an energetic, fun person and everybody loves to interact with him…Everyone knows when he is not here. If he's on vacation or something, they know that we're missing a key, key element of the store.

Participants also spoke of their employees' positive influence on coworkers and of new friendships developed between coworkers. One participant noted "a real bonding relationship between the person with the intellectual disability and the staff" and described this as a "very nice energy to watch."

Employees with I/DD contribute to a stable workforce.

Over half of the participants reported a high retention rate of their employees with I/DD, citing lengths of service ranging from six up to twenty-eight years of service. One employer stated:

The typical food service turnover rate is about 120% which means if you go to McDonald's once a month, you're going to see a new staff every time you go in there. Our turnover is less than 2% and that's usually due to retirement or somebody moving into a bigger and better job. We do have an occasional firing, but retiring is usually our biggest thing, so our turnover rate is extremely low.

Employees with I/DD positively enhance an organization's public image.

Participants in organizations directly serving the public were most likely to report a positive response to their employees with I/DD. One employer stated simply, "Well, it certainly doesn't hurt!" Two other participants shared the following comments:

I think it definitely improves our overall image in how people perceive us - that we are willing to give people opportunities because they need it. Well, we all need help sometimes.

Through the years, numerous times I can tell you, I've been called up to the floor by a patient, letting me know how well they thought the employee was doing, thanking me for taking the time to give the employee an opportunity to work here. Half of the time, the patient has a relative or somebody that they know and we'll get into a conversation. It really makes me feel good. It really does.

Employers who employ individuals with I/DD promote the value of diversity within and outside of their organization and positively influence others to do the same.

Several participants described their role as a groundbreaker within and outside of their organizations and were engaged as consultants on inclusive employment practices. One manager recalled, "Another department also wanted to hire new employees and he called

trying to find more information because of some of the things we're doing here. They've got somebody [with an I/DD] up there now employed."

Employers tend to experience a sense of personal fulfillment, growth, and pride in their employment of individuals with I/DD.

Many of the participants spoke of personal fulfillment, pride, and growth experienced through the inclusion and support of their employee. Participants shared,

> *I didn't know if I could do it. I didn't know if I had the skills. I was determined to learn more. It has been really helpful in terms of communication and how to communicate with everybody. I think it's very helpful. He definitely has added to my supervisory experience. Without a doubt.*
>
> *I think when all is said and done this will be what I will look back on as something I'm proudest of in my thirty odd years of working here.*

RQ 3: Summary and discussion of findings.

These findings contribute to the growing body of evidence that individuals with I/DD can and do bring value to today's labor market in diverse and meaningful ways, particularly when employed with appropriate and personalized supports and accommodations. Participant reflections on the influence and contributions of their employees with I/DD align with previous employer reports in similar studies (Table 15).

Table 15: Employer perceptions of employee contributions and influence and the supporting research

Employees with I/DD bring unique and exceptional strengths and skills: National Governors Association, 2013
Employees with I/DD are highly dependable (punctuality, attendance, work performance consistency): Hernandez, McDonald, Divilbis, Horin, Velcoff, & Donoso, 2008; Morgan and Alexander, 2005; Unger and Kregel, 2000; Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, Francis, & Levy, 1993
Employees with I/DD are hardworking and productive: National Governors Association, 2013; Hernandez et al. 2008; Morgan and Alexander, 2005; Olson, Cioffi, Yovanoff, & Mank, 2001; Nietupski et al., 1996; Levy et al., 1993
Employees with I/DD are conscientious and responsible: Hernandez et al. 2008; Nietupski, Hamre-Nietupski, VanderHart, and Fishback, 1996
Employees with I/DD enhance work climate and positively influence coworkers: Hartnet et al., 2011; Morgan and Alexander, 2005; Levy, et al., 1993
Employees with I/DD contribute to a stable workforce: Hartnett et al., 2011; Hernandez et al., 2008; Morgan and Alexander, 2005
Employers who employ individuals with I/DD promote values of diversity within and outside of their organization and positively influence others to do the same: Hernandez, et al., 2008; Morgan and Alexander, 2005; Olson et al., 2001
Employees with I/DD positively enhance an organization's image: Hartnett, et al., 2011; Hernandez et al. 2008; Olson et al., 2001; Nietupski, et al., 1996
Employers tend to experience a sense of personal fulfillment, growth, and pride in their employment of individuals with I/DD:

Nietupski et al.,1996

Collectively, these findings contradict many of the concerns expressed by inexperienced employers in past survey research. Reported concerns included employee support costs, reduced productivity, and negative impact on work climate and public image. While participants identified challenges and concerns with little hesitation, discussions were largely framed within narratives of acclimation (for the employee, employer, and coworkers), accommodation, and collaboration.

Implications

This study explored the experiences and perspectives of employers who hire and support workers with I/DD to identify how individuals with I/DD are employed, the conditions that influence their employment, and the impact of their inclusion on the employing organization. An integrated employment model of "good fit" is proposed outlining four critical and interdependent variables to promote the successful employment and retention of workers with I/DD, namely: the commitment of an employer, individual readiness for employment, a strong support network, and an enabling work environment.

Employers should consider the following key takeaways:

- Individuals with I/DD have strengths and unique talents that can and do benefit employers and the workplace in meaningful ways;
- Employers often describe the supported inclusion of workers with I/DD as having a positive influence on work climate, coworker relations, productivity and personal and professional satisfaction;
- The employment of workers with I/DD requires a commitment by employers that may or may not demand time, consideration, and resources beyond or simply different than the energies and resources extended to the typical employee;
- Employers do not have to go it alone. Although not well-communicated to employers, most individuals with I/DD are eligible for work assistance through their local Vocational Rehabilitation offices. Supported employment professionals can provide both employees and their employers tailored and targeted expertise that can optimize employee productivity and enhance quality of contributions;
- Resources and accommodations in support of integrated employees are typically reported as necessary yet cost-neutral by employers and often benefit typical coworkers;
- Encouraging and reinforcing mutually positive and supportive relationships between workers with and without I/DD can encourage the emergence of natural

supports and reduce burden on taxpayers by limiting the need for external and sometimes unnecessary external support providers;

- Family members and other significant relations of workers with I/DD can be important informers and partners to promote positive employment outcomes by providing insights into the employee's work strengths, motivations, and challenges, offering strong moral support, instilling a strong employee work ethic, and assuring reliable transportation to and from work;
- Employer specific resources and supports are readily available online and through professional mentorship organizations. As employers gain experience, confidence, and benefit from employing and supporting workers with I/DD, they might consider a philosophy of *paying it forward* - raising greater awareness and sharing positive experience, mentoring, and inciting action among hesitant or reluctant colleagues;
- Employers can and should take part in preparing the up and coming workforce by serving as mentors and offering young adults with I/DD opportunities to gain real work experience through partnering with high school and post-secondary transition programs.

Given the pervasive underemployment and exclusion of individuals with I/DD in the workforce, promotion of employer perspectives is particularly critical. For researchers, the future study and amplification of employer perspectives can be a powerful impetus for creating a more equitable and diverse labor market, significantly changing the employment status and thus, life quality of individuals with I/DD. Future studies might include eliciting and sharing the experiences and perspectives of both employees with I/DD and their coworkers to gain a more nuanced understanding of the different variables at play in supported employment work environments.

This study had several strengths. As a qualitative study, researchers were able to capture rich participant narratives through the use of semi-structured interviews. As noted, previous studies have been largely quantitative. Given the one way nature of data collection typically employed in quantitative studies, the quality of data collected is undoubtedly limited by parameters imposed by the closed questions. While some surveys offer open text options, participant responses can only be taken at face value. In-person interviews, like those conducted for this study, can yield a deeper understanding of the participant's experience and perspective elicited through facial expressions, intonation, body language, and silence. A second strength of this study relates to the sample population which was comprised of employers who employ and retain workers with I/DD. Much of the available research on employer attitudes identifies

speculative and negative assumptions of employers who lack experience employing workers with I/DD. Real-life employer success stories can offer hesitant employers a more accurate representation of employees with I/DD in the workplace, the advantages of their inclusion, and the types of accommodations and strategies that support their success. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the self-selection of study participants, and small samples size, findings may not represent the broad population of employers and their employees with I/DD; however, generalization was not the intent of this particular study.

Conclusion

In 2008, the United Nations General Assembly convened and issued the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities supporting the promotion, protection, and assurance of human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals with disabilities. "Non-discrimination in the workplace and employment practices" is outlined in this document as one of several socio-political conditions necessary for high quality of life. Unquestionably, the denial of employment opportunities for individuals with I/DD in today's workforce is discriminatory, ill-informed, and life-minimizing. This population of able and willing workers has a strong desire for competitive employment and an inalienable right to inclusion. This study positively contributes to the growing body of research fully supporting the integration and support of employees with I/DD in today's workforce and offers greater insight into the conditions and support mechanisms that facilitate their inclusion: employer commitment, job-ready employees, a strong support network, and an enabling work environment. Pfeffer and Sutton (2006), eminent experts on effective leadership, describe these efforts as "establishing the conditions and preconditions" for success stating,

> *Leaders often have the most positive impact when they help build systems where actions of a few powerful and magnificently skilled people matter least. Perhaps the best way to view leadership is as the task of architecting organizational systems, teams, and cultures – as establishing the conditions and preconditions for others to succeed (p. 200).*

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Appendices

Appendix A: Studies on employer perspectives of employees with I/DD

Authors	Methodology	Participants	Disability Type
Butterworth, J., Hagner, D., Helm, D. T., & Whelley, T. A. (2000)	Interviews Observations	8 employers + 8 employees w/ I/DD	I/DD
Fabian, E. S., Edelman, A., & Leedy, M. (1993)	Interviews Observations	15 employers + coworkers and employees w/ disabilities	I/DD, psychiatric, sensory
Gilbride, D., Stensrud, R., Vandergoot, D., & Golden, K. (2003)	Interviews Focus groups	9 employer interviews 5 focus groups w/ 6-10 employers	I/DD, psychiatric, physical, substance abuse, Aids, other
Gilbride, D. D., Stensrud, R., Ehlers, C., Evans, E., & Peterson, C. (2000)	Survey	200 employers	I/DD, auditory, physical, psychiatric, emotional, visual, other
Graffam, J., Shinkfield, A., Smith, K., & Polzin, U. (2002)	Survey	642 employers	Disabilities including I/DD
Greenan, J. P., Wu, M., & Black, E. L. (2002)	Survey	250 employers	I/DD, physical, visual, auditory, other
Gruenhagen, K. A. (1982).	Survey	24 employers	I/DD
Hartnett, H. P., Stuart, H., Thurman, H., Loy, B., & Batiste, L. C. (2011)	Survey	387 employers	Disabilities including I/DD
Hernandez, B., McDonald, K., Divilbiss, M., Horin, E., Velcoff, J., & Donoso, O. (2008)	Focus groups	21 employers	Disabilities including I/DD
Kregel, J., & Unger, D. (1993)	Interviews	46 employers	Disabilities including I/DD
Jasper, C. & Waldhart, P (2012)	Survey	3,797 employers	Disabilities including I/DD
Levy, J. M., Jessop, D. J., Rimmerman, A., Francis, F., & Levy, P. (1993)	Survey	418 employers	Severe disabilities including I/DD
Morgan, R., & Alexander, M. (2005)	Survey	534 employers	I/DD
Nietupski, J., Hamre-Nietupski, S., VanderHart, N., & Fishback, K. (1996)	Survey	98 employers	I/DD
Olson, D., Cioffi, A., Yovanoff, P., & Mank, D. (2001)	Survey	126 employers	I/DD
Tuckerman, P., Smith, R., & Borland, J. (1999)	Survey	189 employers	I/DD

Appendix B: Employer resources

Association of People Supporting Employment First (ASPE) **http://www.apse.org/**	APSE is a national organization focused on integrated employment and career advancement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. ASPE HR Connect: http://www.apse.org/business/
Building an Inclusive Workforce **http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/20100727.pdf**	A Four-Step Reference Guide to Recruiting, Hiring, & Retaining Employees with Disabilities. Topics include

	understanding the business case, creating an inclusion culture, recruiting and hiring, retaining and advancing employees
Business Leadership Network (BLN) **http://www.usbln.org/**	Employer-led organization that helps employers drive performance by leveraging disability inclusion in the workplace, supply chain, and marketplace. BLN Affiliate Directory: http://www.usbln.org/affiliates.html
EARN: Employer Assistance and Resource Network **http://askearn.org/**	EARN supports employers in recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing qualified individuals with disabilities. Services include: technical assistance, individualized consultation, customized training, webinars and events, employee recruitment assistance, employer resources
eFedLink **https://efedlink.org**	eFedLink is designed to support all federal managers and human resources personnel, to support the hiring and advancement of persons with disabilities in the federal government.
Integrated Employment Toolkit **http://www.dol.gov/odep/ietoolkit/**	The Toolkit offers a collection of resources, reports, papers, policies, fact sheets, case studies, and discussion guides for employers, employees with disabilities, and their families, supported employment professionals, policymakers, and researchers. Resources for Employers: http://www.dol.gov/odep/ietoolkit/employers.htm
Job Accommodation Network (JAN) **http://askjan.org**	JAN provides information and technical assistance on workplace accommodations to support the employment and retention of individuals with disabilities. For Employers: http://askjan.org/empl/index.htm Accommodation Ideas for Intellectual or Cognitive Impairment: http://askjan.org/media/ment.htm
Questions and Answers about Persons with Intellectual Disabilities in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) **http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/intellectual_disabilities.html**	This document explains how ADA applies to job applicants and employees with disabilities. Topics include: disability disclosure, reasonable accommodations, safety issues, discrimination and harassment