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The relationship between employers' perceived organizational context and their impressions of the employability of job applicants with either a severe psychiatric or physical disability

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

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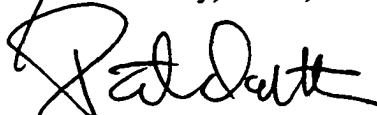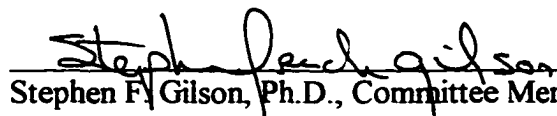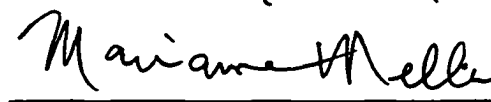
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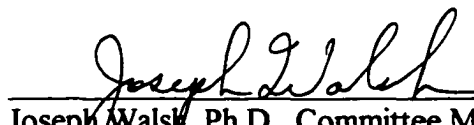
This is to certify that the dissertation prepared by Mr. John Constantine Bricout, entitled "The relationship between employers' perceived organizational context and their impressions of the employability of job applicants with a severe psychiatric or physical disability" has been approved by his committee as satisfactory completion of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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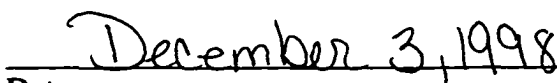I would like to begin by thanking my mentor and chair, Dr. Kia J. Bentley, who has for more than four years guided me through the maze of scholarly initiations, tribulations and celebrations. Much of whatever clarity I have been able to bring to the complex issues around employers' perceived organizational context and the evaluation of workers with a disability is due to her incisive comments and questions. She constantly reminded me of the virtues of both depth and brevity, and helped steer me through the difficult passages that such a course requires. Her personal dedication to quality, integrity and rigor continues to be a model for me as a scholar and an individual. Thank you Kia for your steadfast belief and your unfailing generosity.

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Dedication

My greatest debt of appreciation goes to my family, to whom I dedicate this dissertation. My wife, Diane, whom I wed mid-dissertation, has blessed me with unstinting support and encouragement, quietly and without fuss. She has inspired me to extend my intellectual reach, and, at the same time, to remain true to human needs. She has provided me with wings on which to soar, even during the stormiest days. In this endeavor, as in all others, she has been my true friend and companion.

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYERS' PERCEIVED ORGANIZATINAL CONTEXT AND THEIR IMPRESSIONS OF THE EMPLOYABILITY OF JOB APPLICANTS WITH EITHER A SEVERE PSYCHIATRIC OR PHYSICAL DISABILITY†

By John Constantine Bricout, M.S.W.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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This study investigated the relationship between favorable employability ratings of hypothetical job applicants with a severe disability and two aspects of employers' perceived organizational context: organizational climate and negotiation latitude, using a cross-sectional, correlational design. A survey including a hypothetical job applicant vignette in one of three conditions: non-disabled, severe physical disability (acquired brain injury), severe psychiatric disability (schizophrenia) was mailed out to a random sample of 1,000 employers selected from a national human resource membership list. Responses were received from 248 employers. The chief purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between employers' perceived organizational context and their impressions of job applicant employability. A secondary purpose was to explore the hierarchy of job applicant disability condition (non-disabled, acquired brain injury, schizophrenia) by employability rating. The concept of perceived organizational context

was operationalized using two related constructs: organizational climate and negotiation latitude. Organizational climate was measured using a proxy instrument, the 10-item Knowledge and Acceptance of the ADA Scale. Negotiation latitude was measured using the eight-item Information Exchange Scale. The concept of employability impressions was measured using the 22-item Employment Characteristics Scale. Data analyses were conducted using a variety of univariate and bivariate statistical procedures. Logistical regression was used as the single multivariate procedure.

The first study hypothesis predicted that the odds of obtaining a favorable employability impression for the hypothetical job applicant would increase when the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers'was favorable and employer negotiation latitude was high. This prediction was partially supported inasmuch as the odds of obtaining a favorable employability impression did increase slightly when the hiring climate was also favorable. Although the odds of obtaining a favorable employability impression also increased slightly when negotiation latitude was high, that relationship failed to achieve statistical significance. A possible explanation for the failure of high negotiation to obtain significance as a predictor in logit may lie in the lack of empirical evidence for the predicted role of risk-taking in the context of hiring, and calls for further refinement of the construct in that context.

The second study hypothesis was that non-disabled applicants would be viewed as most employable, followed by applicants with a physical disability and, ultimately, applicants with a psychiatric disability. This hypothesis also received partial support. As

predicted, non-disabled job applicants received mean employability ratings that were higher than applicants in either disabled condition, and this difference obtained statistical significance. However, contrary to predictions, applicants with a psychiatric disability received substantially the same employability ratings as applicants with a physical disability. This unexpected finding may be due to: (1) lack of employer familiarity with both severe disabilities in the workplace, (2) more positive views of psychiatric disabilities due to recent positive changes in societal views on mental illness, or (3) because the acquired brain injury was viewed in light of the cognitive deficits that sometimes accompany it, rendering the individual multiply disabled.

The implications of this study for social work practice include a new focus on employment interventions at the organizational level and relationship building between employers, consumers and practitioners to help create a favorable organizational context for the employment of workers with a disability. Implications for theory and research include a new focus on how hiring manager's evaluative and decision-making processes are influenced by the shared expectations of organizational members and leaders. Future studies may refine the concept of negotiation latitude in the hiring context and investigate the link between organizational context and the employment decision-making process.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

This study explores how employer characteristics and perceived organizational

setting are related to impressions of the employability of persons with severe physical and

psychiatric disabilities. The employment of persons with severe disabilities presents a

significant challenge to mental health and social service agencies that provide work

training, case management and support. By the latest estimate there are thought to be 54

million Americans with a disability (McNeil, 1997; NOD/Harris, 1998). It is estimated

that about ten percent of Americans between the ages of 21 and 64 have a severe

disability (McNeil, 1997; NOD/Harris, 1998). The percentage of all persons with

disabilities who are employed, full- or part-time is estimated at between 29 percent, while

the corresponding employment figure for non-disabled persons is 79 percent

(NOD/Harris, 1998). Only about ten percent of persons with severe disabilities of any

kind are integrated into the American work force (Baer, Martonyl, Simmons, Flexer &

Gobel, 1994; Black & Meyer, 1992). Moreover, many severely disabled persons who

manage to secure employment are underpaid and underemployed, despite the existence of

several pieces of federal legislation prohibiting discrimination against persons with

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disabilities in the workplace, and the wage-amerliorating effects of supported

employment programs (Baer, et al.,1994; Mergenhagen, 1997; NOD/Harris, 1998;

Wehman & Kregel, 1994). Persons with disabilities constitute the most financially

disadvantaged minority and are deprived of the many psychosocial benefits of

employment (Hahn, 1988; Kopels, 1995).

 Persons with disabilities have faced difficulties in seeking employment due to a

variety of factors of both "real" and perceived, which have disinclined employers to hire

them; most prominently, skill deficits, problematic work history, inappropriate behaviors

(Adelman & Vogel, 1993; Johnson, Greenwood & Schriner, 1988), and poor job-

employee "fits" or job matches (Akabas, 1994; Gates, Akabas & Oran-Sabia, 1998).

Sometimes these factors will be reflected objectively in the disabled worker's experience

as she or he is provided inadequate job training, preparation and/or support (Roessler &

Rumrill,1995; Wolffe, Roessler & Schriner, 1992). At other times they reflect an

employer's subjective expectations, based on perceived context, experience, belief or

prejudice (Bordieri & Drehmer, 1988; Burnham & Housely, 1992; Diska & Rogers,

1996; Lewis & Allee, 1992; Millington, Rosenthal & Lott, 1997). Other factors identified

in the literature include: changing technological demands and opportunities in the

workplace for which disabled workers are inadequately prepared (Birch, Fengler, Gosine,

Schroeder, Schroeder & Johnson, 1996; Mather, 1994; Scadden, 1986), employer

concerns about accommodation costs (Burnham & Housely, 1992; Michaels, Nappo,

Barret, Risucci & Harles, 1992; Roessler & Sumner, 1997), overburdened federal

regulatory agencies handling anti-discrimination cases (Walters & Baker, 1995) and employer biases in the form of negative reactions, perceptions, attitudes, expectations and beliefs (Millington, Szymanski, & Hanley-Maxwell, 1994; Pettijohn, 1990).

Negative employer biases have been identified as the most problematic factor affecting the employment of persons with disabilities, as well as the factor most resistant to change (Drehmer & Bordieri, 1985, Millington, et al., 1994; Mithaug, 1978). More precisely, employer attitudes and perceptions related to this negative bias have been identified as the most stubborn barrier to the employment of persons with disabilities (Christman & Branson, 1990; Nordstrom, Huffaker, & Williams, 1998). Such attitudes and perceptions may hamper not only the employment of disabled workers, but also their career advancement (Bordieri, Drehmer, & Taylor, 1997). Negative perceptions of disabled worker abilities have led some employers to "match" such workers to dead-end skills and jobs while viewing the job changing necessary for career advancement as negative (Mather, 1994; Pumpian, 1997).

The current study builds on previous research around the relationship of employer characteristics and attitudes to judgments around the employability of persons with disabilities (e.g., Anderson & Antonak, 1992; Byrd, Byrd, & Emener, 1977; Ehrhart, 1994). More specifically, this study builds on those studies that introduced the organizational context as a factor in employer perceptions of disabled workers (e.g., Gerhardt, 1997; Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman & Levy, 1992; Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, Francis, & Levy, 1993; Kregel & Tomiyasu, 1994). This study enlarges the notion of

organizational context beyond structural and categorical attributes of companies. such as

size, disability policies and industry, to include the shared meanings held by

organizational members on what behaviors are valued and rewarded. Shared

organizational expectations, intentions and ultimately, practices are shaped by these

values and rewards (Habeck, Leahy, Hunt, Chan & Welch, 1991; Marchington,

Wilkinson, Ackers & Goodman, 1994; Reichers & Schneider, 1990). These shared

expectations are also related to shared attitudes about important organizational concerns,

such as who shall be employed on what basis (Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Threlkeld & De

Jong, 1982)

These shared meanings, attitudes and practices constitute one aspect of the

perceived organizational context, the organizational climate (Denison, 1996; Wimbush &

Shepherd, 1994). In this study, the employer's relationship with her or his boss were also

considered to be another dimension of perceived organizational context (Kozlowksi &

Doherty, 1989). The focus of organizational context in this study thus shifts away from

the relatively static characteristics of organizational structures, investigated in previous

studies on the employability of disabled workers. The new focus is on perceptions of

employers as organizational members. These perceptions are presumed to be shaped by a

dynamic process of mutual shaping as employers interact with the work environment,

other organizational members, and with their bosses (Keller & Dansereau, 1995).

This study was built conceptually, in part, on a theoretical piece by Wilgosh

(1990), who argued that the meanings workers in an organization share about what

practices are rewarded and valued might be related to how well workers with disability "fit" in. These shared meanings and practices, termed "organizational climate", will be discussed in more detail later. In this study, the focus is on the employer's perceptions of the "fit" of a severely disabled job applicant with respect to an administrative assistant job. Those perceptions of "fit" are presumed to be influenced by organizationally shared meanings of valued and rewarded practices (Christiansen, Villanova & Mikulay, 1997). It is assumed that the organizational context is also shaped by the employer's boss (or "leader"), whose relationship with the employer generates expectations of the employer. Those expectations influence the employer's perceptions of "how we do business around here," and by implication, provide a new context for evaluating prospective employees (Katz, 1987).

The "employer" in this study is understood to be a hiring manager, who himself or herself reports to an organizational leader, or "boss". The employer's boss is assumed to have a role in shaping the perceptions of many persons in the organization, and to be reciprocally influenced by them. However, the influence of the boss is assumed to be most directly felt and reciprocated by the organizational member whom he or she supervises directly, in a relational exchange characterized by mutual expectations. This special dyadic exchange is called the "leader-member exchange," or LMX, about which more will be said later. The quality and nature of the employer (member) - boss (leader) relationship can vary around many dimensions, but the most important dimension for the purpose of this study is the extent to which the employer feels trusted by the leader and

high negotiation latitude to make independent decisions. The extent to which the employer feels trusted by his or her boss impacts the degree to which he or she experiences perceived control, or "negotiation latitude", which also will be discussed in some detail later on. It is anticipated that the quality of the employer's relationship with his or her boss and the shared "organizational climate" for hiring disabled workers will together shape his or her impressions of the disabled job applicant's employability. On the basis of this supposition it is expected that trusted employers in a climate favorable to hiring disabled workers will have the most favorable impressions of the job applicant's employability. Before presenting the conceptual basis for such predictions clear definitions must provided for some terms fundamental to the thesis of this study. Those key terms are discussed below.

Key Terms

There are a number of terms basic to the arguments made in this thesis that must now be defined, namely: employer, organization, employability, disability, and attitude. Each term has a role in providing a context for the major variables of this study. The study variables are described in the second chapter (on conceptual frameworks) and operationalized in the third chapter (on research methodology). The first term to be defined is also the chief subject of this study, the employer.

Employer

Following the conventions of researchers who have investigated employer perceptions and attitudes influencing hiring decisions, "employer" is defined in terms of a

manager who directly hires and/or supervises individuals for the type of position under consideration (e.g., Akabas, 1994; Bills, 1990; Kregel & Unger, 1993; Schriner. Greenwood & Johnson, 1989). "Hiring manager" is often used as a synonym for employer (e.g., Raza & Carpenter, 1987; Wilgosh & Mueller, 1989). In the context of this study, the employer is a hiring manager who reports to a supervisor and therefore is not the titular head of the organization. It is in that context that an employer is also defined in terms of being an organizational "member", who reports to a "leader" or boss. Thus, the employer in this study is both manager and member, and his or her supervisor is both leader and boss. Employers operate as members in an environment broadly referred to as the "organization", the next term to be defined.

<u>Organization</u>

The term organization is sometimes referred to interchangeably with company, firm or agency: the fiscal and legal entity that pays both boss and employer (Levy, et al., 1992; Starbuck & Mezias, 1996). The emphasis in this definition is on the structural and functional aspects of the organization. There is, however, an added dimension to the "organizational" context relevant to this study. Organization can also be thought of in terms of the processes that are the shared, or the experiences, routines and practices that are common to persons working within a company. Those processes include organizational member interactions with organizational policies, practices, procedures and personnel. Such interactions help shape the way work is actually carried out in the organization. More specifically, they help determine which ways of conducting business

are valued and rewarded through shared expectations called the organizational climate. The employer's boss has a prominent role in determining the rewards and expectations most immediately effecting the employer through a relationship termed the leader-member exchange. Together, organizational climate and the leader-member exchange help shape the employer's impressions of disabled job applicants. It is to organizational climate that the discussion now turns.

Organizational Climate

Organizational climate is a concept that attempts to link individual and aggregated perceptions of shared features of organizational life to the practices, policies and procedures that are observed at the organizational level (Moran & Volkwein, 1992; Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Schneider, Wheeler & Cox, 1992). As such it is a cross-level phenomenon, which makes it important to either decide upon a focal unit of analysis, or to use a statistical procedure to establish the unit of analysis (Levine, 1996; Mossholder & Bedeian, 1983; Richards, 1996). In this study, the individual respondent (employer) is selected as the focal unit of analysis on the grounds that whatever its constituent components, organizational climate is directly perceived by individual members of the organization (James, Joyce & Slocum, 1988; Verbeke, Volgering & Hessels, 1998). Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, the link to organizational level phenomena is inferred, but never directly tested, because employers' perceptions of climate (sometimes called psychological climate) and perceived relationship with the boss are the lenses through which the larger "organizational" context is understood. The

employer's perceived relationship with his or her boss is defined in terms of a social exchange between leader (boss) and member (employer), discussed next.

Leader-Member Exchange

The influence of leaders in shaping the climate of an organization has both theoretical and empirical support (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Schriesheim, Neider, Scandura & Tepper, 1992) The most influential leader in the experience of climate for any worker is likely to be his or her boss, with whom that worker has a unique relationship (Wayne, Linden, & Sparrowe,1994). The leader-member exchange is a concept that defines the relationship of employer ("member") and boss ("leader") in terms of a social exchange of reciprocal rewards (Schriesheim, et al.,1992). In this reciprocal exchange the boss takes a predominant role, dispensing rewards to the member in exchange for loyalty and responsiveness to the leader's demands and normative expectations (Linden, et al.,1993). Perceived interpersonal similarity (along gender and race lines, for example) and liking will also generate more rewards from leader to member (Linden, et al., 1993). For the purposes of this study, the most important rewards of boss to employer are related to gaining the boss' trust. Securing the trust of his or her boss heightens the employers sense of freedom and perceived control (Linden, Wayne & Stilwell, 1993). The employer who perceives himself or herself to be entrusted by the boss is said to have greater negotiating latitude, the term to be discussed next.

Negotiating Latitude. Negotiation latitude is an aspect of the leader-member exchange, reflecting the quality and nature of the exchange, and the development of

unique roles (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; McClane, 1991). The concept of negotiating

latitude is meant to capture the tendency of organizational leaders to treat their

subordinates (members) differentially in terms of trust, affection and accorded freedom

(Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Keller & Dansereau, 1995). Members who are accorded

relatively little trust, affection and freedom are deemed "out-group" members. Members

who are accorded more trust, affection and freedom are deemed "in-group" members.

Negotiation latitude is a measure of the degree to which members enjoy "in-group" status

along with increased freedom both to pursue their own wishes, and to develop their own

role (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Keller & Dansereau, 1995; McClane, 1991). In the

context of this study, the degree of negotiation latitude enjoyed by employers (members)

differentiates the organization as well as the individual. Given that high negotiation

latitude has been empirically associated with consensus views of climate (Kozlowski &

Doherty, 1988), it is presumed in this study that employers with high negotiation latitude

tend to reflect the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers in their perspectives.

By contrast, those employers with low negotiation latitude tend not reflect the

organizational climate in their perspectives. For this reason, and others to be related later,

high negotiation latitude is the particular focus of this study.

Table 1 About Here

Having briefly considered organization-related terms, it is time to consider the

Table 1

The Predicted Relationship of Negotiation Latitude Level to Employer Organizational Climate Perceptions

Level of Negotiation Latitude	Tendencies in Organizational Climate Perceptions
High	Consensus Climate Perceptions
Low	Divergent Climate Perceptions

employability perceptions of employers.

Employability

Employability is concerned with how probable it seems that a job candidate or prospective worker will secure paid employment (Moriarity, Walls & McLaughlin, 1988). Employers evaluate characteristics of the job applicant or prospective employee and rate them, or rank them in some way against an ideal prototype they have in mind (Bills, 1990; Byrd, et al., 1977; Moriarity, et al., 1988). In this study, "employability" refers to the employers' impressions of important job-related characteristics of the disabled job applicants described in vignettes. Each employer received one of three vignettes describing a hypothetical job applicant. The vignettes were used to manipulate the disability "condition" of the job applicant in terms of either severe physical disability, severe psychiatric disability, or no disability. Each vignette was composed of two parts that work together to present a coherent picture of the job applicant. A cover letter was also provided in order to present a favorable introduction to the applicant's skills and interests, both of which are further detailed in an accompanying employment application form (see Appendix B). It was anticipated that the employer's positive and negative expectations around the severe disabilities described in the vignettes would influence the perceived employability of the "severe disability condition" applicants. The employer's expectations were presumed to be shaped by the employer's perceived organizational context: the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers and the employer's negotiation latitude. The discussion turns next to a brief consideration of precisely what

constitutes a severe disability.

Disability

Before considering "severe disability", a broader context for "disability" in general must be offered. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (P.L.101-336) has provided the most widely accepted definition of "disability," and the one that is used for this study. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) stipulates that an individual may be considered to have a disability if she or he meets one or more of the following three criteria:

- The individual being substantially limited in one or more major life activities (such as work) due to a physical or mental impairment.

- Possessing a record of such impairment.

- Regarded by others as having such an impairment (42 U.S.C.,12102(2)).

This rather broad legislative definition has resulted in the inclusion of a wide range of disabilities from substance abuse to HIV infection to obesity in addition to more "traditional" impairments such as physical, psychiatric, mental, neurological, sensory and learning impairments (Walters & Baker, 1995).

It is important to note that there are many authors, and others in the disability community who propose that the term "disability" is a cultural or social construct, related to impairment but nonetheless distinct (see Bury, 1996; Oliver, 1996, Shakespeare, 1996, Zola, 1994). In this alternative view, both modern North American culture, and Western society contain an inherent bias toward self-sufficiency, and a corollary bias against

infirmity and dependence. From this perspective, "disability" is a social construction

created and sustained by social, cultural and political forces oppressive to disabled

persons (Oliver, 1996).

According to Hahn (1988) and Fowler & Wadsworth (1991), cultural biases

combined with aesthetic prejudices lead society to marginalize persons with disabilities,

and render "disability" a deprecatory and devaluing term. The designation of "disability"

thus activates discriminatory behavior. Non-disabled society's imposition of stigma and

stereotype upon individual impairments and differences leads to the isolation, segregation

and economic deprivation of disabled persons (Barnes & Mercer, 1996).

In this study, however, the ADA definition was used, while recognizing that

societal "definitions" of disabled persons as deficient or defective have contributed to the

economic deprivation of persons with disabilities, and to substantial limitations on their

participation in major life activities. The language used to describe individuals or

employees with a disability in this study reflects some of the concerns about the social,

economic, and political ramifications of the "disability" label. This text uses person-first

and disability-first language interchangeably. Person-first language (e.g. "persons with a

disability") is used in the professional literature to underscore the individuality and

humanity of all persons, thus counteracting the social stigma around the disability label

(e.g., Sample, 1996). Disability-first language (e.g., "disabled persons") is used in the

disability studies literature to underscore the unique social, political and cultural identity

shared by persons in the disability community, and hence reinforces the identity of a self-

defined and self-defining community (e.g., Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1996). Because of the

unique strengths recommending each usage, both are employed in this text. Persons

considered to have the most serious, or severe disabilities seem to face the most severe

bias and discrimination (Byrd, et al.,1977; Parent, Kregel & Johnson, 1997; Schalock &

Genung, 1993).

Severe Disability. The term "severe" disability has been relegated to a relatively

small group of persons. Pedhauzer-Schmelkin & Burkell (1989) defined persons with

severe disabilities as those individuals given the labels psychotic, autistic, moderately and

severely retarded and multiply handicapped. The emphasis in their definition is upon

severe functional limitations related to the disability condition; regardless of whether that

condition be cognitive, mental, physical, neurological or sensory in nature. It is the

severity of the functional impairment that renders a disability "severe" in this view. This

concept of severe disability was adopted by Levy, et al. (1992) and Levy, et al. (1993) in

their studies of employer attitudes towards persons with disabilities. The Pedhauzer-

Schmelkin and Burkell (1989) definition is used for this study of employers as well. The

hypothetical job applicant in this study with schizophrenia meets the Pedhauzer-

Schmelkin & Burkell criterion of "psychotic" symptomology for a psychiatric disability

to be considered severe. Similarly, the multiple disability of the hypothetical job

applicant with an acquired brain injury (physical and cognitive) meets their "multiple

handicap" criterion. Although an acquired brain injury is both physical and cognitive in

nature, the "presentation" of this disability to employers in this study is primarily

physical (physical mobility accommodations are highlighted).

A recent study of 196 workers with an acquired, or traumatic brain injury found that the preponderance of job site difficulties were attributable to cognitive consequences of the acquired brain injury. The most frequent concern of employer and service provider was with the effective job performance of individuals with a traumatic brain injury (Hirsh, Duckworth, Hendricks & Dowler, 1996). Effective job performance is also a concern for employees having a diagnosis of schizophrenia, but the complexity and variability of the illness makes it difficult to generalize about workplace outcomes (Meyerson, 1995). One task of this study was to depict job applicants whose attributes, skills and work history plausibly fall within the range anticipated for persons with these types of severe disabilities. In this study employers were provided with vignettes in which each job applicant presented evidence of severe impairments deemed realistic by a panel of expert judges. The role of the expert judges was to assure that the employment outcomes and work histories of the severely disabled workers described in this study fell within the range of real workers with schizophrenia or acquired brain injury. One of the reasons for which it was important to accurately portray a worker with severe disabilities is because employer attitudes toward workers with disabilities seem to vary with the perceived severity of the disability (Wilgosh & Skaret, 1987). The discussion turns next to a consideration of attitudes, because historically the literature on employer perceptions of disabled workers was predominately focused on employer attitudes, and those studies laid down the foundations for more recent investigations into related topics

such as employer expectations, motivations, attributions, and impressions.

<u>Attitudes</u>

Attitudes describe the general evaluations and intentions people hold about others,

objects and issues (Petty, 1994). Attitudes constitute a learned predisposition to act in a

consistent fashion towards a referent object, person or issue (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Attitudes

are contextual and situational (Eiser, 1994). For example, the same individual may have a

different attitude toward the same object in a different situation. For instance, non-disabled

individuals have been found to vary their attitudes toward disabled persons depending on how

intimate or "demanding" of interaction the situation is perceived to be (Karnlowicz, Sparrowe &

Shrinkfield, 1994; Kowalski & Rizzo, 1996; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Tefft, Segall & Trute,

1987). Favorable attitudes of non-disabled persons toward disabled persons tend to become less

favorable in the context of increased intimacy (Aubry, Tefft & Currie, 1995; Fitchen, Goodrick,

Amsel & McKenzie, 1991; Grand, Bernier & Strohmer, 1982). The same individual may also

have a different attitude toward that object in a different context. For example, favorable

attitudes toward hiring disabled workers in the context of low-skill job openings may become

less favorable in the changed context of high-skill job openings (Kim, 1996).

Attitudes are a function of the evaluative responses that the individual has to beliefs of

about the object (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Ajzen and Fishbein present evidence to show that in

addition to the positive or negative evaluation of each attribute the strength of the belief about

that attribute is also important. Hence, the strength of the belief that an employer has about the

persons with severe disabilities are suitable for paid employment will interact with the

employer's overall evaluation (positive or negative). Employers' generalized evaluation of the "suitability" of severely disabled persons for paid employment, along with their beliefs about how severely disabled persons function in work roles constitute their attitude toward employing severely disabled workers. Attitude questionnaires attempt to index or scale an individual's response to statements about a referent object in a way that reflects the strength and direction of the respondent's underlying attitude (Antonak & Livnch, 1995; Sparks, Shepherd & Frewer. 1995).

It is important to note that in the employment example (above), attitude is a generalized response to persons with disabilities, or what Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) call a "summated evaluative response" or "overall attitude". Attitudes by themselves may not be very good predictors of behavior (Duxbury & Haines, 1991; Hedeker, Flay, & Petraitis, 1996). For an attitude to correlate highly with actual behaviors the referent must be as specific as possible, that is, this person with disabilities suitability for this job (Eiser, 1994). In the current study, employers considered a specific job applicant and position as described in vignettes. This was done in order to provide the employer with an actual referent for evaluation. However, the evaluation rendered by employers in this study was based not on attitudes, which are measured independently of the vignette, but on impressions of employability. Respondents to attitude questionnaires on socially sensitive issues, such as disability and employment, may introduce a systematic bias into their responses, distorting their true attitudes. The bias that is introduced when disavowing socially undesirable traits and falsely adopting socially approved responses is known as the social desirability bias, and it is a factor to be considered in responses to attitude

surveys on disability issues (Antonak & Livnch, 1992). One way to help compensate for the

possibility of social desirability bias in reported attitudes is to ask the employer to give her

impressions of the employability of hypothetical workers, in addition his or her attitudes toward

the employment of persons with disabilities in general. This was the approach taken by Gibson,

Zerbe, and Franken (1991) focusing on aging workers, and Christman and Slaten (1991) focusing

on workers with a disability. In this study, employers were asked first to indicate their attitude

toward the ADA, then after considering the vignette to rate their impressions of employability-

related characteristics of the applicant in an effort to elicit employer perceptions more free of a

social desirability bias.

The underlying negative biases of employers have had a negative influence on

employment-related attitudes and fueled discriminatory actions resulting in unnecessary

social, emotional and economic hardships for persons with disabilities. These hardships, and the

attempts made so far to address them are delineated in the next section, the statement of the

problem.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

The Value of Work

Work, defined as regular paid employment, is very important to the psychological, social

and economic well being of all persons (Auster, 1996; Locke & Latham, 1990). The importance

of work becomes conspicuously obvious in its absence. Loss of paid employment has been

associated with psychological difficulties including depression, increased domestic violence, loss

of self-esteem, decreased perceptions of well-being, decreased sense of self-efficacy; economic

difficulties stemming from loss of steady income; psychosocial difficulties such as acute feelings

of loneliness, stemming from increased social isolation and physical ill health (Auster, 1996;

Locke & Latham, 1990; Marchioro & Bartels, 1994). By contrast, having employment is

associated with global life satisfaction, standard of living (Orlin, 1995), self-confidence, self-

esteem, and familial status (Kregel & Unger, 1993).

Having a job is not, of course an unalloyed "good"; coping with the inherent stresses of

work necessitates a social support system, both at the workplace and outside (Crank, Regoli,

Hewitt & Culbertson, 1995). Nonetheless, work provides an important and unique set of benefits

to many persons, and groups; the latter of whom witness their political influence rise with their

economic investment in jobs, as money and politics enjoy a reciprocal relationship (Auster,

1996; Christiansen, et al., 1996). Sadly, all groups do not have equal access to paid employment,

due to employment discrimination on the basis of negatively perceived group characteristics.

Employment Barriers

Job Discrimination. Unfortunately for persons with disabilities, opportunities for paid

work have been far fewer than for any other group (Kopels, 1995; Solomon, 1993). The cause of

this dearth of opportunities has been attributed, in part, to employment discrimination (Foucher,

Madgin & Ouellette, 1993; Schall, 1998). Most of the available data on the employment picture

for persons with disabilities are about the 54 million Americans who collectively meet the

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) criteria. There is conflicting and fragmentary

information on the plight of those suffering with severe disabilities, due in part to differing

criteria for the "severely disabled" category by those conducting employment survey research.

Hence, the discussion will focus on the discrimination faced by the larger group of persons with

disabilities, with the caveat that the employment picture for persons with severe disabilities is

most likely worse (see McNeil, 1997; Mergenhagen, 1997; N.O.D./Harris, 1998).

Despite federal legislation and enforcement mechanisms designed to prohibit

discrimination on the basis of disability, persons with disabilities face sustained

discrimination in obtaining paid employment (Stone & Colella, 1996; Walters & Baker,

1995). At least 14 million Americans of working age have a disability (Kim, 1996;

Bruyere, Brown & Mank, 1997) of whom only about one third are employed (Kim,

1996). For persons with severe disabilities the employment rate is perhaps only ten

percent (Baer, et al., 1995; West & Parent, 1995). Estimates of the percentage of persons

with disabilities overall who are unemployed range from about 50 percent (Kregel &

Unger, 1993) to 64 (Kim, 1996), or even 70 percent (Wehman, Revell, & Kregel, 1997).

It has been suggested that among those fortunate enough to be employed a good

proportion may be underemployed, or working well below their capabilities (Kregel &

Unger, 1993).

Perhaps as a direct consequence of being marginalized in the job market, persons

with disabilities often have spotty or inadequate work histories and underdeveloped job

skills, further hampering their efforts to obtain and keep employment (Van Deventer,

1992). Negative expectations on the part of some employers who believe that persons

with disabilities may be unsuited for some jobs due to skill deficits and other limitations

exacerbate this barrier to employment despite evidence that workers with disabilities are

competent and reliable (Mithaug, 1977; Pettijohn, 1990; Schalock & Genung, 1993).

Given these factors it is not perhaps surprising to discover that the wages earned by

persons with disabilities are substandard.

Wages earned by persons with a disability working full-time were only about 83

percent of those by non-disabled workers in 1987 (Kim, 1996). In the 1990s low wages

and a lack of career choices still typified the employment outcomes of persons with a

disability (Wehman & Kregel, 1994). Unemployment and underemployment take their

toll on the quality of life of persons with a disability (Kregel & Unger, 1993). The source

of such employment discrimination appears to lie, at least in part, in the reactions,

attitudes and expectations of employers. Employer attitudes that are a barrier to

employment are discussed next.

Problematic Employer Attitudes. In studies of employer attitudes about hiring persons

with disabilities conflicting evidence has been found with some studies noting widespread

negative attitudes (Johnson, et al., 1988; Mithaug, 1977; Wilgosh & Skaret, 1987) and other

finding largely positive attitudes (Christman & Slaten, 1991; Kravetz, Katz & Albez, 1994;

Levy, et al., 1993; Satcher & Dooley-Dickey, 1992). The negative attitudes about person with

disabilities have been associated with an unwillingness to hire such persons (Foucher, et al.,

1993; Wilgosh & Mueller, 1989). It is not known at what level negative attitudes become

associated with negative (discriminatory) behavior (Christman & Slaten, 1991). In other words,

the threshold of negative attitude and hiring discrimination remains unknown (Wilgosh &

Mueller, 1989). It is not clear that a positive attitude toward persons with disabilities is related to

hiring such individuals, however. Wilgosh and Mueller (1989) found that employer who refused

placements of persons with disabilities tended to have more negative attitudes than those who

accepted placements for persons with disabilities. However, Marchioro and Bartels (1994) found

no significant differences in the number of disabled worker job offers or competence ratings

between interviewers with positive or negative attitudes toward disabled persons. In summary,

there is variability in employer attitudes toward disabled workers, with some studies finding

negative attitudes and others positive attitudes. Significantly, attitudes of either polarity appear

to have only a weak association with employers' hiring and evaluation of disabled workers. This

suggests that although employer attitudes may have a bearing on the employment discrimination

faced by disabled workers the question may be miscast when reduced to a simple issue of

determining the degree to which employer attitudes toward disabled workers are positive.

In fact, there is some question about what precisely a "positive" or favorable attitude

toward the employment of persons with disabilities means in terms of actual employment.

Positive attitudes that mask hidden biases, such as underlying negative appraisals of the

potentials of persons with disabilities and a desire to be tolerant, beneficent and open-minded are

discussed by a number of authors (e.g., Christman & Slaten, 1991, Kravetz, et al., 1994; Levy, et

al., 1992). In the context of this study, a favorable attitude toward the employability of persons

with a severe disability is viewed with some skepticism. Attitudes may not be a reliable measure

of employer perceptions of hypothetical job applicants (Gerhardt, 1997). This is why the

employer's impressions of the employment potential of hypothetical job candidates were

investigated in this study, rather than the employer's overall attitudes, following the example set

by Christman and Slaten (1991) in their investigation.

To the degree that disabilities garner negative attitudes, however, there has been some consistent variation in the type of physical disability associated with more negative attitudes. Namely, psychiatric disabilities have been found to attract the last favorable attitudes, and physical disabilities eliciting the most favorable with mental disabilities and neurological disabilities falling in-between (Fuqua, Rathbun & Gade, 1984; Grand, et al., 1982). Similarly, psychiatric disabilities appear to evoke the greatest stigma and negative bias among employers (Cook & Rosenberg, 1994; Danley, Rogers, Mac Donald-Wilson, & Anthony, 1994). Persons with psychiatric disabilities also suffer from the lowest employment closure rates of all disability groups served by vocational rehabilitation (West & Parent, 1995). More severe disabilities also can elicit more negative attitudes and perceptions than less severe disabilities (Black & Meyer, 1992; Pedhauzer-Schmelkin & Berkell, 1989; Schalock & Genung, 1993).

In order to maximize variation in employer perceptions employers in this study will assess hypothetical severely disabled job applicants from each of the two "extremes" of evaluation: physical and psychiatric disabilities. Moreover, as previously noted, in this study employer attitude was not selected to be the dependent variable, due to the uncertainty around how to interpret positive and/or negative attitudes in terms of perceived disabled worker hiring potential. Instead, the dependent variable in this study was employers' impressions of job applicant employability. Meanwhile, a measure originally intended to measure attitudes toward the hiring of disabled workers was altered to serve as a proxy measure of organizational climate for hiring disabled workers. In an attempt to counteract negative employer biases, federal

legislation has been enacted that prohibits employment discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Attempted Remedies

Legislative Acts. Several pieces of federal legislation have been written in the past 25 years in an attempt to redress both societal barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities and employment discrimination (Bruyere, 1993; Berkowitz, 1994). Three federal laws form the legal bulwark against employment discrimination for persons with disabilities: the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 (P.L. 93-112), The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Title I (PL 101-336) and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992 (P.L. 102-569).

Of these the ADA is the centerpiece, with the broadest repercussions for employment discrimination. It is also explicitly the inheritor of the civil rights language in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits race-based employment discrimination (Berkowitz, 1994). The anti-employment discrimination language of Title VI was adopted first by Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which focuses on public or government-sponsored employment, then by the ADA, which has expanded the scope of the anti-employment discrimination law to include most employers (Bruyere, 1993; Boller & Massengill, 1992). The ADA is intended to ensure equal treatment under the law for all persons with a disability, regardless of age, race, gender or disabling condition (Bishop & Jones, 1993). Title I of the ADA is aimed at prohibiting employment discrimination for all qualified individuals with a disability as long as hiring

that individual would not either jeopardize the safety of other workers or require a workplace accommodation that would place an undue hardship on the employer (Solomon, 1993). The employment discrimination prohibition found in Title I of the ADA is built around a core of civil rights-inspired notions borrowed from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is the Title I (ADA) predecessor legislation and is limited to government and government contract employers.

Despite the existence since 1973 of the Rehabilitation Act, disabled federal workers were recently reported to have a poorer hiring, grade level assignment and promotion record than other individuals with the same ethnic and racial background (Lewis & Allee, 1992; Kim, 1996). Although more persons with a disability are now being employed by the federal government, advancement above clerical grades remains problematical (Kim, 1996). Significantly, racial minority status, age and gender have a bearing on the hiring and mobility of disabled employees, suggesting a double discrimination for minority, female and older persons with a disability (Lewis & Allee, 1992; Blanck, 1994).

Since the enactment of the ADA the percentage of small businesses that have hired the disabled has slipped six percent from 54 to 48 percent and the percentage employed in large businesses has not increased much (Kim, 1996). Significantly, persons with a mental illness have suffered the greatest employment discrimination of any group of disabled persons (Solomon, 1993).

It seems clear from stagnant employment rates for persons with disabilities that legislation alone is not yet sufficient to compel non-discriminatory hiring for persons with a disability (Kim, 1996; Walters & Baker, 1995). A recent study of the effects of the ADA on the employment of persons with a disability concluded that the impact of the ADA appears to have been blunted by "prevalent" and persistent employment discrimination (Schall, 1998). However, federal legislation and funds have also been directed toward a program specifically designed to secure and sustain employment for persons with a severe disability, supported employment programs, which are discussed next.

Supported Employment. Supported employment refers to work-related services provided by a human services program, agency or employer to aid disabled persons in obtaining and maintaining paid employment (Tice, 1994). Supported employment programs offer a comprehensive program of services for workers with significant disabilities, including job development, screening, selection, training, coaching and ongoing support (Tice, 1994). Supported employment targets jobs located in "competitive" or "integrative" workplaces where non-disabled employees also work. There are numerous "models" of supported employment, but one model has emerged predominant; the individual placement model with job coach (Wehman, Revell & Kregel, 1997). This model involves job coaches in the placement and training of individual workers in integrative workplaces with non-disabled co-workers.

Supported employment programs grew out of a piece of federal legislation, namely, the 1986 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act (P.L. 99-506) (Shafer, Banks & Hill, 1988; Shafer,

Hill, Seyfarth & Wehman, 1987; Wehman, et al., 1997)). Federal encouragement for supported

employment has also come from provisions of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992,

which included time-limited research moneys (now expired) and an emphasis on serving persons

with the most severe disabilities (P.L. 102-569).

Supported employment began rather modestly with 10,000 participants nationally in 1986

(Parent, et al., 1997). The number of workers in supported employment nearly doubled in size

from 1989 to 1992, reaching some 74,000 consumers and substantially increased the post-

placement incomes of participants (Revell, Wehman, Kregel, West, & Rayfield, 1994). By the

year 1995 there were nearly 140,00 participants in supported employment programs around the

country (Wehman, et al., 1997). Yet, supported employment faces challenges to its growth in

the persistence of lower-paying, non-career oriented sheltered work programs, and in the

reluctance of employers, policy-makers and human service professionals to expand supported

employment opportunities (Wehman & Kregel, 1994).

Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, supported employment has not been able to

serve a significant portion of those whom it has been designed and mandated to serve, persons

with the most severe disabilities (Kregel & Unger, 1993). In fact, persons with severe

disabilities have been estimated to comprise only about ten percent of persons placed through

supported employment programs (Baer, et al.,1994). Clearly, as promising as supported

employment is, it cannot singly redress the employment discrimination faced by persons with

severe disabilities, just as legal remedies such as the ADA and the Rehabilitation Acts cannot. A

different and more direct approach that could be used in concert with legislation and employment

programs such as those sketched above might seek to better understand the underpinnings of employer discrimination .

This study seeks to broaden the scope of contemporary inquiries into employer attitudes and perceptions of persons with severe disabilities by putting the employer squarely in an organizational context. This constitutes a departure from previous studies which conceived of the employer as an independent evaluator in a relatively static, structured organizational environment.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

There are three aspects of this study that render it significant. First, this study expands the conceptual basis for understanding employer attitudes and perceptions to include the dynamic interactive context in which the employer's bases for forming evaluations, impression and courses of action are developed. Organizational influences on the employer as employment evaluator and decision maker are re-conceptualized to include interactive as well as structural attributes of the organization. Second, this study explores heretofore untested theory-based statements about the relationships between high negotiation latitude employers perceptions of disability hiring climate and impressions of the employability of severely disabled workers. Third, the predicted relationship of favorable organizational climate and high negotiation latitude to employer's evaluations of severely disabled workers suggests a new focus to job development, placement and career planning for social workers, consumers, employers and other interested parties. A more detailed review of each of the study's three major points of significance follows.

Expanding the Conceptual Framework

The significance of this study arises first from the application of several related concepts, perceived organizational climate and leader(boss)-member (employer) exchange. These concepts relate employer decision-making and evaluations to dynamic elements of perceived organizational context, such as shared expectations of organizational demands concerning hiring. This in turn makes it possible to consider the impact some influences that are transpersonal (e.g., that cut across individuals) have on the evaluations and impressions employers have of persons with disabilities. Theory and research on interviewer decision-making and personnel selection suggest that the organizational context, both social and situational, impacts employer hiring decisions (Drummond, 1994; Howard & Ferris, 1996; Guthrie & Olian, 1991; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Larwood, 1995; Nacoste & Hummels, 1994). This theory and research has yet to be applied to the employer's hiring context for persons with disabilities. The manner in which employer perceptions of organizational context are thought to be related to impressions of the employability of persons with severe disabilities is addressed below in the discussion on empirical relationships tested.

Testing New Empirical Relationships

On the basis of conceptual arguments to be elaborated in the next chapter, the following seven suppositions are made:

- The employability impressions of high negotiation latitude employers are shaped in part by the organizational climate for hiring persons with disabilities.

- High negotiation latitude employers in particular reflect the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers.

- High negotiation latitude employers tend to be more risk-taking, flexible, innovative and less risk-aversive than low negotiation latitude employers, and therefore less likely to evaluate a prospective worker with a disability negatively due to the perceived demands for workplace adaptation and the "risks" of hiring such a worker.

- In a favorable organizational climate for hiring disabled workers, high negotiation latitude employers tend to have more favorable impressions of disabled job applicants because the positive influence of climate is amplified by their greater propensity for risk-taking, innovation and flexibility.

- Job applicants with a severe disability elicit more negative evaluations than job applicants without a disability.

- The evaluations of the two severely disabled applicants are similar to each other and significantly lower than the evaluations of the non-disabled applicant.

- The evaluations of employers who are not high negotiation latitude cannot be predicted, chiefly because their attitudes on the ADA are not assumed to reflect the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers, and so do not permit the relationship of perceived organizational climate to employability impressions to be explored.

It should be noted that specific predictions for employers' impressions of the employability of the non-disabled "control condition" job applicant are not made because they lie beyond the scope of this study. The arguments proposed in this study focus on disabled workers, who are also the primary concern of this research.

The seven suppositions posited above form the basis for the hypotheses which are articulated at the end of chapter two. Also in chapter two, the rationale for each of these suppositions is fleshed out in greater detail. The net effect of these suppositions is to suggest a new perspective on the way employers may form their impressions of severely disabled job applicants. In the next section the possible implications of such a new perspective for social work practice aimed at finding meaningful employment for disabled persons is discussed.

Adding Leader and Perceived Climate as Change Foci

The notion that a combination of organizational and individual factors affect discriminatory hiring practices is not, by itself, new. In the general area of "diversity" hiring Kossek and Zonia (1993) investigated the factors related to a "diversity" climate that promotes the employment of a diverse workforce. In the domain of gender-biased personnel selection Perry, Davis-Blake, & Kulik (1994) examined the joint effect of organization and individual-level factors on employment decisions. The roles of gender and organization practices in producing discriminatory assessments of women job applicants was explored in a study by Foschi, Lai and Siegerson (1994). What is unique about the present study is that the referent group being discriminated against is individuals with disabilities and the focal unit of perceptions is the employer in the context of a highly influential, highly-localized relationship with her or his supervisor, rather than against the background of a larger organizational context. The practical implication of these differences is to bring dynamic features of the perceptual organizational context to disability-focused employment research and practice, and to suggest that the leader-

employer relationship might help explicate employer perceptions. Efforts at decreasing

employer discrimination and increasing favorable impressions and attitudes of workers with

disabilities might then find a new focus in the behaviors and perceptions of the organizational

leaders who shape and influence employer perceptions.

Job interviewer's and manager's perceptions of job-employee fit have been identified as

critical elements in both the hiring and job success of all workers, disabled and non-disabled

alike (Akabas, 1994; Bretz, Rynes & Gerhardt, 1993; Chatman, 1989; Farley & Hinman, 1988;

Howard & Ferris, 1996; Perry, Davis-Blake & Kulik, 1994; Schalock & Jensen, 1986; Sheets &

Bushardt, 1994; Starbuck & Mezias, 1996). In this study the factors influencing job "fit" are

extended beyond the characteristics of the job, worker and company usually considered.

Employer's evaluations and decisions are understood in a context of perceived organizational

membership, employer negotiation latitude and the climate for hiring disabled workers. The

domain of job "fit" to be considered by social workers and consumer in selecting an employing

organization is thus expanded to consider factors like organizational climate, whose influence

extends beyond job acquisition to job maintenance, promotion and career progression (Wilgosh,

1990). The concepts explored in this study may increase the possibility of making a more

accurate, incisive and durable "match" of value to consumer, practitioner and employing

organization. A future goal in this vein might be to develop brief disability climate and employer

negotiation latitude assessment tools for practitioners that would enable social workers and

consumers to select employing organizations on the basis of their "career progression potential",

as well as their potential as a job "placement" site.

However, it is important to note that this study was of an exploratory nature and thus does not include the causal tests that would be necessary for these notions to be understood in terms of actual mechanisms for influencing employer discrimination. Instead, it simply raises these notions for empirical analysis, discussion, consideration and future research.

Summary

Persons with a severe disability are confronted with major barriers in their search for employment, which is an important psychological and social good. In fact, as a group persons with a disability suffer from the lowest income and education level of any minority. Attempts to open up the job market to persons with a disability through anti-discrimination legislation and supported employment have enjoyed only a limited success. Certain barriers to employment appear to stubbornly resist attempts at change, most notably, the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of employers on the abilities and potential of workers with disabilities.

Many employers hold negative beliefs, attitudes and perceptions even in the fact of contrary evidence. Moreover, even some of the favorable beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of employers constitute a barrier to employment because they relegate persons with disabilities to a dependent status and frame their employment not as good business sense but as good will, and perhaps a luxury to be forgone in today's competitive market. Changing beliefs, attitudes and perceptions is difficult to do, and many efforts to date have fallen short. A better understanding of the organizational context in which beliefs, attitudes and perceptions more favorable to the employment of

persons with disabilities are formed may provide social workers and consumers with a new avenue for positive change. Perceived organizational context may be one such avenue. Rather than focusing social work change efforts solely on employers. in whom biases unfavorable to the hiring of disabled workers are traditionally assumed to be "located", the change effort could be expanded to include several contextual "locations" of such bias; in particular to the employer's boss and the organizational climate. The shared presence of negative disability hiring bias in several "locations" is, of course. a reminder that problematic biases are context-dependent and the result of transactions between persons and their environments. Social work interventions aimed at altering the course of these "dynamic" biases will necessarily be aimed at as many critical levels of context as possible.

The first step in understanding the relationship of perceived organizational context to hiring managers' evaluations of disabled worker employment potential is to conduct a critical review of what the existing literature has shown about the influence of perceived organizational context on individual attitudes, beliefs and perceptions. This is the work of the second chapter which follows.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Employer Beliefs and Attitudes Salient

to Hiring Persons with Disabilities

Employer Hiring Preferences

Hiring Process. The process of hiring an individual for employment is composed

of several distinct steps: initial screening, interviewing and selection (Jablin & Miller,

1990; Macan & Dipboye, 1994; Macan & Hayes, 1995). In this study employers were

asked to evaluate one of three hypothetical job applicants (physically disabled, mentally

disabled or non-disabled) for an administrative assistant position, a task meant to

resemble parts of the hiring process. A hypothetical job applicant was "introduced" to

employers participating in this study through a cover letter and completed job application.

Both cover letter and job application were vignettes created for this study, about which

more will be said in chapter three. The job applicant's disability were disclosed in the

vignettes. In this study the employers' perceptions of the job applicants' employability

were assessed. These employability perceptions consist of the impressions of the

hypothetical job applicant employers form after having reviewed the vignettes. This

process of impression formation is much like the initial screening process in an

employment situation (Christman & Slaten, 1991). Because the employers in this study

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are asked to rate key employment-related characteristics of the job applicant in this study, it is argued that insofar as articulating the "merits" of a job candidate is part of the selection process, rating the applicant's employability goes beyond the initial screening step. At the same time, a number of features normally found in a personnel selection process are lacking in this study, such as non-verbal cues, comparison to other applicants, economic conditions, and job availability (Macan & Hayes, 1995; Wright and Multon, 1995). Existing knowledge about the factors typically influencing employers in the personnel selection process are summarized and critiqued below.

Hiring Considerations. The research literature on the personnel selection process suggests that employers share beliefs on the importance of productivity and cost-effectiveness in the selection of new employees (Fuqua, Rathbun & Gade, 1984; Kenny, 1991). Employers will tend to preferentially select workers on the basis of expected worker productivity and hiring cost-effectiveness (the "return" on the hire against its cost). In other words, employers tend to focus on the value anticipated from the worker's labor above the cost of hiring, training and supervision (Bordieri, Drehmer, & Taricone, 1990; Mather, 1994). Employer assessment of what employee characteristics are related to worker productivity and hiring cost-effectiveness will however, vary with respect to several factors: (a) characteristics of the job in question, (b) characteristics of the company, (c) company norms, (d) characteristics of the interviewer (employer), (e) characteristics of the industry (e.g., competitors) and (f) characteristics of the available labor pool (Gibson, Zerbe, & Franken, 1991; Graves & Karren, 1992; Heilman &

Stopeck, 1985; Howard & Ferris, 1996; Lee & Newman, 1993). For prospective

employees with a severe disability both the contextual nature of "productivity" and "cost-

containment" and the value placed on each have important consequences.

To the extent that perceived worker productivity and hiring cost are contextual,

workers with a severe disability face variable odds of meeting employer criteria

depending upon the job market, employer, job, company and industry (Hagner,

Butterworth, & Keith, 1995). Perhaps because of negative employer beliefs about the

productivity and cost of employees with disabilities, and negative employer attitudes

toward severe disabilities, workers with a severe disability may be more negatively

evaluated than other workers (Black & Meyer, 1992). These problematical beliefs and

attitudes toward workers with severe disabilities is discussed later on. Before moving to

those topics, however, it is necessary to consider the corollary to the employer's belief

that worker productivity and cost-containment are paramount issues in assessing the

employability of job candidates: that it is preferable to avoid hiring a potentially costly or

unproductive employee, than to overlook a potentially beneficial employee. In other

words, the tendency of employers is to attempt to screen out candidates, rather than to

pull them in (Drummond, 1994). This tendency has been discussed in terms of

employers preferring to make a type I error (falsely rejecting the applicant) to a type II

error (failing to reject the applicant) (Bills, 1990). An employers' tendency to seek to

avoid error has also been discussed in terms of "risk-" or "loss-aversion", a well-

documented behavior on the part of employers engaged in the personnel selection process (Highhouse, 1996; Highhouse & Yuce, 1996).

The importance of employers "risk aversion" to this study lies in the negative beliefs and attitudes many employers appear to hold about persons with disabilities. If, as the evidence suggests, employers believe persons with disabilities to have characteristics that are costly and hamper productivity, then it seems reasonable to suppose that employers will seek to screen out job candidates with disabilities, perhaps by devaluing or depreciating the qualities that a job candidate with disabilities would bring to bear. This might have the effect of depressing the employer's impressions of the employability of persons with severe disabilities, unless other factors, such as positive personal experience, countervail. The evidence suggesting negative employer beliefs and attitudes, as well as countervailing factors are the subject of the next section on employer beliefs and attitudes.

Employer Perceptions: Beliefs, Attitudes, Stereotypes and Expectations

Negative Role Status and Stereotypes. Employers seem to share certain beliefs and attitudes toward persons with disabilities with the general public (Christman & Slaten, 1991). Those beliefs and attitudes do not put persons with a disability on an equal status with non-disabled persons; rather they relegate persons with a disability to a kind of second-rate status on the basis of presumed deficits stemming from the disability. When the behavior and personality traits of persons with disabilities are attributed to their disability, the disability is said to assume a "master status" role. In other words, the

disability defines a "master status" role as "a typical disabled person"; a role which informs every action or aspect of the individual from the biased perspective of the non-disabled observer (Foschi, Sigerson & Lembesis, 1995). For instance, a person with mental retardation might be presumed "slow to feel" because of her impaired speed of cognitive processing. Similarly, when a social group, such as persons with disabilities, becomes strongly associated with a particular role, social role theory suggests that individuals are stereotyped in that role (Kite, 1996). For persons with disabilities this often means being ascribed the "sick" role or "client" role; the role of one who needs services and cannot contribute productively to society. In other words, being unfairly cast in the negative role of a non-productive, dependent person living off the largesse of others.

Stereotypes are based upon biased and often erroneous beliefs about members of a group (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994). In the context of this study, negative and stereotyped role expectations of persons with disabilities might create assumptions that would bias the employer's view of a disabled worker. One such stereotype of persons with disabilities is that they have a higher rate of absenteeism than non-disabled workers (Mithaug, 1979). The consequence of that stereotype is that a single late arrival by a worker with disabilities may be perceived as far more problematic than the same behavior by a non-disabled worker. On the other hand, by ascribing a dependent role to persons with disabilities, an employer may actually have a positive bias toward a disabled worker who meets the norms of presumably less "dependent" non-disabled workers (Katz,

Kravetz & Karlinsky, 1986). This positive bias distinguishing otherwise "standard" performance as "exceptional" when performed by a disabled person has been called "positive anormalization" (Kravetz, et al.,1994). It is anticipated in this study that employers may hold some stereotyped beliefs which could distort the impressions of employability of the hypothetical workers with disabilities.

The vignettes in this study portrayed a worker who has left previous employers to seek positions that better meet her goals. It is possible to imagine employers attaching a negative stereotype of "job hopper", or a positive one of ambition (beyond the preconceived "disabled norm"). In either case, the employer's evaluations was most likely either deflated or inflated in response to a distorting belief about the normative roles of disabled workers. The influence of negative stereotypes ought to have been less for employers who are high negotiation latitude in a climate favorable to the hiring of persons with disabilities, although stereotypes will not be directly assessed. A different, more consistent pattern of positive evaluations is anticipated from an high negotiation latitude employer in a disability favorable climate than would be produced in the face of "positive anormalization," although this difference might be more difficult to recognize.

As a caveat, it should be noted that employers actually tend to focus more on attributes and aptitudes relevant to job performance, rather than an overall characterization of the individual (Michaels & Risucci, 1993), but they still appear to make some overall evaluations of persons with disabilities based on the presumption of a

personality defined by disability (Fitchen, et al., 1991). The beliefs that undergird a

negative stereotype of persons with a disability for employers are discussed next.

Negative Beliefs and Attitudes. A number of authors have reported that

employers hold negative beliefs about and attitudes toward the habits, skills, aptitudes

and character of workers with disabilities. As compared to other workers, workers with

disabilities are believed to suffer from increased absenteeism, decreased productivity,

inflexibility to change, inappropriate social behaviors. These beliefs are maintained

despite evidence that workers with disabilities are in fact as productive, punctual and

reliable workers as are non-disabled workers (Kregel & Tomiyasu, 1994). Negative

employer attitudes are based upon these strongly held beliefs.

One consequence of the employer's negative beliefs is the concern on the part of

at least some employers that the accommodations, training and ongoing services (such as

medications or job coaching) required by workers with disabilities will make their

employment more costly and problematic than that of non-disabled workers. These

employment cost concerns tend to be held by employers with shorter experience with

workers with disabilities, or those having had negative experiences with one or more

disabled employees. Similarly, in their study Kregel and Unger (1994) found that a

significant minority of employers receiving supported employment services were

concerned about the costs and continued viability of worker support services, despite

their overall satisfaction with supported employment. Even more significant concerns

linked to negative beliefs and attitudes can be anticipated on the part of employers who are not well-supported and well-satisfied by supported employment or like programs.

Employability-Related Attitudes. In this study, the employer's attitudes toward the employability of persons with disabilities in general will not be examined directly. However, an attitude that is strongly related to overall employability was measured: the employer's acceptance and knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Several studies have established a robust relationship between overall attitude toward workers with a disability and attitude toward the ADA. This finding is relevant to the current study, in which employers evaluated the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers in the light of items referring to the organization's stance toward the ADA. A positive relationship between organizational climate and impressions of employability would be consistent with this finding as well.

In the Kregel and Tomiyasu (1994) study 171 employers were interviewed for their knowledge of and attitudes toward the ADA, as well as overall attitudes on workers with disabilities. Most respondents were quite favorable to the ADA and workers with disabilities. The favorable attitudes toward the ADA are also consistent with generally favorable attitudes of many employers reported by a number of investigators, which some other investigators attribute to social desirability biases on the part of respondents. The Kregel and Tomiyasu ADA attitude survey has the added strength, however, of showing that the employers were well-informed about the ADA, and so presumably responding to substantive issues and not simply to a desire to appear enlightened or socially

responsible. At any rate, Kregel and Tomiyasu found a strong correlation between

attitudes toward disabled workers and attitudes toward the ADA. This relationship is

important to the current study because a measure of employer knowledge and acceptance

of the ADA was used to as a proxy measure of organizational climate for hiring disabled

workers. That measure of employer knowledge and acceptance of the ADA is discussed

next.

Respondents in a similar study by Walters and Baker (1995) were asked to

indicate their knowledge of the ADA in a fixed response self-report measure. In that

study 100 employers and recruiters were surveyed for their attitudes on and knowledge of

the ADA, as well as on their overall attitudes on persons with disabilities. Most

respondents had attitudes that were moderately favorable to the ADA, and attitudes a bit

more favorable than that to persons with disabilities generally. Perhaps the more

favorable attitude toward disabled persons generally might be attributed to a greater

tolerance for disabled persons in a general context than for disabled persons in the

workplace with whom they might be expected to establish interdependent relationships.

Such an explanation would be consistent with the observation that tolerance of disabled

persons tends to decline in the context of specific situations (Anderson & Antonack,

1992; Karnilowicz, Sparrow, & Shrinkfield, 1994; Miller, 1997). Note that neither the

Kregel and Tomiyasu (1994) nor the Walters and Baker (1995) study inquired into

attitudes on persons with severe disabilities. There is however, no reason to suspect that

the positive relationship between ADA and general attitudes would disappear or lose

statistical significance simply because a severe disability is specified. Thus, the Walters and Baker measure can be legitimately viewed as an indicator of attitudes toward disabled workers, and ultimately of the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers. More will be said about this later, for the moment the discussion will turn to the hidden biases that underlie employer attitudes toward disabled workers.

Hidden Biases. One consequence of negative employer evaluations or beliefs is that workers with disabilities who are shown to perform on a par with non-disabled workers are thought to be unusually persevering, or otherwise of exceptional character. This reinforces the negatively biased perceptions of the "average" (e.g., substandard) disabled worker vis-à-vis the "average" (e.g., standard) non-disabled co-worker. This belief of the high-functioning worker with disability as "exceptional" appears to fuel a paradoxically favorable attitude toward workers with a disability. Extraordinary personalities are attributed to persons with a disability who are capable and productive, skewing the employer's attitudes of such persons more favorably than the employer's attitudes toward a comparably productive and capable non-disabled worker. This genre of "favorable" attitude is in fact, as Kravetz, and associates (1994) point out, a disguise for negative beliefs about the "average" presumably less-than-capable person with a disability.

Actually, the discussion of an "average" worker with a disability is a bit misleading because employers seem to make distinctions within the category of "disability", expressing different beliefs depending on the type and severity of disability.

In fact, employers seem to have a sort of "hierarchy" of disability concerns. whose nature and degree of negativity varies with disability type and severity.

Disability-Specific Attitudes. Many studies have explored the differences in employer beliefs and attitudes about workers with disabilities that are related to the type and severity of disability (Minskoff, Sautter, Hoffman & Hawks,1987; Pettijohn. 1990; Rimmerman, Botuck & Levy, 1995; Shafer, et al., 1987). Significant differences have been found in employer beliefs and attitudes depending upon factors such as visibility of disability, cause (or attribution) of disability, and disability condition (type and severity) (Berry & Jones, 1991; Bordieri & Drehmer, 1988 Thom, Hershenson, Romney,1994). For the purpose of this study, only the last factor, disability condition is of interest. It has been noted, briefly above that an apparent "hierarchy" of favorableness in beliefs and attitudes toward persons with disabilities has emerged from the research literature. Studies comparing different sets of disabilities, such as physical and neurological, mental and physical, learning and emotional, physical and psychiatric have found disability type specific attitudes and beliefs. In other words, employers and other non-disabled persons had different attitudes and beliefs about workers of different "disability types" (e.g., workers with a psychiatric disability or a physical disability). It is worth noting that the disability-type, and not the particulars of the individual that determines the relationship of beliefs and attitudes, further suggesting that employers are responding to a stereotype based on assumptions of a "master status role" as defined by the perceived disability. Race, or more precisely, perceived racial group "identity" is a compounding factor in

attitudes toward disabled workers. A disabled worker who is also a member of a racial minority may face two negative "master status roles" in the perceptions of workers who are non-disabled majority group members, leading to still more negative attitudes and discrimination (Gerstein & Valutis, 1991; Kim, 1996; Lewis & Allee, 1992).

Certain patterns emerge from the literature that are of importance to this study. The first pattern of importance is the consistent finding that more positive attitudes are held toward persons with physical disabilities than toward those with any other disability (Fuqua, Rathburn & Gade, 1984; Grand, et al., 1982; Stone & Colella, 1995). This finding seems to hold even for persons with a severe physical disability, although having a more severe disability does elicit a somewhat more negative attitude (Fuqua, et al., 1984; Grand, et al., 1982). The least favorable attitudes toward persons with disabilities have been found for persons with a psychiatric disability; a finding which significantly, is mirrored in the employment rate of persons with a mental illness; the poorest for any disability group (Danley, Rogers, Mac Donald-Wilson & Anthony, 1994; Diska & Rogers, 1996; Egnew, 1995; Rimmerman, et al., 1995; Xie, Dain, Becker, & Drake, 1997) . In the case of persons with a psychiatric disability, more severe symptoms (or symptomatic behavior) affecting work performance have been linked to less favorable attitudes (Danley et al., 1994; Diska & Rogers, 1996).

It is because physical and psychiatric disabilities seem to elicit the greatest range of attitudes from most to least favorable, that those disabilities were chosen for this study. Severe disabilities were chosen to elicit the greatest range of responses relative to each

disability type. The decision to contrast distinct disability types and to portray a severely disabling condition was made, in part to address the apparent favorable response bias found in so many other studies, in which persons with disabilities were perceived more favorably than other workers. The social desirability response bias seems to be at issue, because the employment of persons with disabilities is at such a low rate despite the equal or better performances of persons with disabilities when compared to non-disabled workers (Kim, 1996) . It was expected that the use of highly contrasting disability types and severe disabling conditions in the hypothetical job applicants would somewhat restrain the inflationary effect of social desirability biases on employer impressions and attitudes toward disabled workers. A non-disabled worker vignette was used to provide a comparison group for the influence of worker disability in the job applicant vignettes.

Disability-Specific Beliefs and Expectations. The employers' beliefs and attitudes by disability type and severity are based upon the presumed characteristics of each group. These presumed characteristics are accompanied by expectations. For individuals with physical disabilities, presumptions are made about limitations of reach, physical strength, stamina, and coordination (Schriner, et al., 1989). Negative expectations may also be held about the individual's work habits. Employers will likely hold somewhat lower expectations of the capabilities of workers with a physical disability in these realms in the absence of contrary data on an individual (Schriner, et al., 1989).

Similarly, for individuals with psychiatric disabilities, presumptions are made by employers about the likelihood of aberrant behaviors, poor interpersonal skills,

concentration deficits and poor reaction to stress or change (Egnew, 1995; Rimmerman,

et al, 1995). These expectations may help explain in part the less favorable attitudes

employers' hold toward psychiatric disabilities than any other disability type. This may

be because of the chronic and "invisible" nature of the perceived deficits (Danley, et al.,

1994).

First, the interpersonal consequences of the anticipated psychiatric deficits may be

viewed as potentially more disruptive to the workplace than anticipated physical deficits

that impact more immediately on a single task. Support for this notion is found in the

less favorable attitude ratings for persons with severe psychiatric disabilities (Diska &

Rogers, 1996). Second, the anticipated accommodations needed for a worker with a

psychiatric disability may be of a kind that employers do not wish to provide. For

instance, accommodations for a worker with a psychiatric disability may involve

increased personal involvement on the part of the supervisor. Increased personal

involvement with a disabled worker is something that the study of Minskoff and others

found supervisors were not willing to do (Minskoff et al., 1987). This is despite the fact

that supervisors appear willing to spend more time on training an individual with

disabilities, a benefit persons with physical disabilities might require (Minskoff, et al.,

1987). Hence differential (lower) expectations and perceptions of persons with severe

psychiatric disabilities are to be anticipated.

Negative expectations may result in an employer perceiving a restricted range of

jobs deemed suitable for a worker with a either a severe physical or psychiatric disability;

with some jobs being ruled out due to a perceived mismatch between worker and job. Certain aspects of the stereotyped expectations of workers with disabilities held by employers may be regarded as "job-relevant" and others not, depending upon the nature and type of job, much as Gibson and others found in their study of age-related stereotypes and perceived work-related attributes (Gibson, et al., 1991). Stereotyped expectations of job performance related to group membership and perceived "appropriateness" to certain jobs is applied to disabled workers by Miller (1997), who suggests that a "disability-typed" job might be deemed a "good fit" for disabled workers by non-disabled persons. This notion of employers categorically restricting the job possibilities of disabled workers in response to apriori notions of "disability appropriate" job matches is given further support by Mather (1994). Mather produced case examples of visually impaired workers yoked to technology focused on a single procedure or product. These technologies disallowed the multi-tasking performance necessary for career advancement, and thus, while seeming to provide jobs for visually impaired workers in fact locked them into dead-end jobs (Mather, 1994). Workers with disabilities are typically viewed as having limited capability for multi-tasking, or task flexibility (Kenny, 1995), so perhaps "matching" visually impaired workers with a single-task technology achieved a good "fit" from the employer's perspective, despite the pernicious effect on the disabled worker's career prospects.

It appears, however, that the perceived mismatch is not simply the product of an employer comparing specific expectations of worker and job. More global perceptions

about worker and job fit also come into play. Employers may have a prototype or "ideal" worker in mind when evaluating the employability of job candidates (Graves & Karen, 1992). Persons with severe physical or psychiatric disabilities may then suffer in the estimation of employers for perceived distance from the "ideal" as much as from any expected deficits. The existence of global perceptions of job candidates with disabilities may also help explain the findings of Gouvier and others that persons with visible disabilities were viewed less favorably than those whose disabilities were not visible, independent of their performance abilities (Gouvier, Steiner, Jackson, Schlater & Rain, 1991). In a similar vein, Christman and Branson (1990) found that by bringing their attire into closer alignment with the "ideal", female job applicants with a physical disability were more favorably evaluated. In this study, the expectations of employers and their related perceptions are understood in the context of individual-level influences such as the attitudes, stereotypes and beliefs just discussed, and meso-level organizational influences such as organizational climate, about which more will be said later. Before leaving the discussion of attitudes it is important to consider factors related to more favorable evaluations of workers with disabilities.

Employer and Organizational Characteristic-Related Attitudes. There are several factors which have been demonstrated to have a significant positive relationship with favorableness of employer perceptions, particularly, attitudes, albeit somewhat inconsistently across studies. Those factors are employer education level, prior contact with persons with disabilities, and organizational size. The extent of prior contact with

persons with a disability was found to have a positive effect on attitude toward persons

with a disability in a number of studies (Foucher, et al., 1993; Kregel & Tomiyasu, 1994;

Levy et al., 1993). Other studies reported mixed findings on the relationship of prior

contact and attitudes (see Levy, et al., 1992 for a review), or found no significant

relationship (Walters & Baker, 1995). Perhaps one explanation for the variation in

findings may lie in the fact that each study operationalized "prior contact" or "prior

experience" differently, and in no case was a systematic study of what might constitute

significant experience or contact made. In any event, prior experience does appear to be

an important variable to consider in this study, in part because the percentage of

respondents with prior experience with persons with a disability may, as Levy, et al.

(1993) suggest provide information on how the respondents differ from the general

employer population. When the authors of that study found approximately sixty percent

of their respondents had previous experience with workers with disabilities they

concluded, not unreasonably, that the respondents were employers with a particular

interest in employment for persons with disabilities. In other words, prior contact may be

a rough measure of interest in the employment of persons with disabilities, as well as an

indicator of experience that could mitigate stereotypical thinking, beliefs and attitudes

that negatively distort impressions of employability.

Education level, in contrast to extent of prior contact, was easily and consistently

operationalized across studies in terms of years of formal education and/or highest degree

obtained. Although many studies found a positive correlation between years of education

and attitude toward persons with disabilities (Gouvier. et al., 1991; Foucher et al., 1993; Levy, et al., 1993), others did not find a significant difference between employers by education level (Levy, et al., 1992) or found a blip in the general positive trend as Walters and Baker (1995) did when they discovered that post-master's level employers had a slightly more favorable attitude than doctoral level employers. Levy et al. (1993) explain their positive correlation between education level and attitudes in terms of a cohort effect, with younger respondents also proving to be better educated. In this study, education level was explored as a possible factor related to impressions of employability, with attention given to the further possibility of a cohort effect.

Inconsistent findings are also the case for organizational size and industry. The finding of some studies that employers in larger enterprises have more favorable attitudes toward persons with disabilities (Levy et al., 1992; Levy et al, 1993) are not replicated in other studies (Kregel & Tomiyasu, 1994). The divergence of these findings may be attributed to the different compositions of the organizational samples. When compared to the Levy et al., 1992 study, the Kregel and Tomiyasu (1994) study for instance, included a proportionately smaller (14 percent vs. 41 percent) of manufacturing/industrial companies. It has also been argued that companies in different sectors of the economy may systematically differ in their perspectives on hiring persons with disabilities (Foucher, et al., 1993). In fact, the Levy et al. (1992) national Fortune 500 study found differences between industrial and service organizations on the attitudes mediated by prior experience with persons with disabilities. Significantly, in a study of New York

state employers the next year, Levy et al.(1993), failed to find a relationship between industrial sector and attitudes, but did find a difference between governmental and non-governmental organizations. In contrast, Kregel and Tomiyasu (1994) found no relationship between type of industry and employer attitude. The divergence of findings on issues of organizational structure (size, product and purpose -- e.g., public, private, non-profit) suggests that there may be a larger context for employers' attitudes toward and perceptions of persons with disabilities beyond individual characteristics. In other words, employers' perceptions of the employability of persons with disabilities may be related systematically to some aspect or aspects of the organizational context.

The inconsistent findings of previous studies on organizational size and type are intriguing in this light. Given the contextual nature of attitudes and perceptions, and their social "roots", it seems logical to expect that organizational context would influence impressions of employability on the part of hiring managers who are, after all, organizational members, operating in a context-defined role, and socialized in an organizational environment that shapes attitudes and impressions. Indeed, there are findings supporting just that notion: that organizational members are influenced in both their perceptions of events, and in their actions by the organizational context. The studies containing these findings will be discussed later.

The Conceptual gap: Transpersonal Factors Impacting Perceptions. Given that a link between organizational characteristics and employer attitudes was only found inconsistently, despite sound reasons to expect a consistent relationship may speak to the

absence of a theoretical explanation or context for the linkages anticipated by Levy and

others (Levy, et al.,1992). The organizational variables considered by Levy and other

previous investigators were macro-level structural variables and lacked any theoretical or

practical linkage to the employer, beyond the observation that the employer worked in

that environment. Perhaps the lack of success of these structural variables as attitude

predictors may have been due to a mispecified model, because from a theoretical

perspective there is no reason to expect the kind of direct structure-person connection

implicit in that working model. In fact, from an organizational theory perspective, there

is reason to suppose that several factors might mediate the effect of structure on person

perceptions; factors which if ignored will likely dilute the relationship of organizational

environment and employer perceptions beyond detection. These factors operate at a level

between the organizational structure and the individual employer, and so can be

considered meso-level factors. Three interrelated concepts, leader-member relationship

exchange, negotiation latitude and organizational climate, are introduced as plausible

mediating factors for exploratory investigation in this study. These meso-level factors are

also transpersonal factors. Transpersonal factors refer to those factors beyond the

individual level that nonetheless influence individual perception and behavior

(e.g.,Griffin & Mathieu, 1997). Such transpersonal factors may provide the necessary

theoretical linkages between actors and organization.

     In the context of this study, organizational climate and the leader-member

exchange are three related transpersonal factors that together created a perceived

organizational context for the employer. The organizational characteristics examined in

previous studies were relatively static (e.g., company size and type), and thus contrast

with the more dynamic transpersonal factors that were explored in this study (e.g..

climate and the leader-member exchange) as the basis for perceived organizational

context.

Perceived Organizational Context. Organizational climate is discussed in terms of

the psychological or cognitive representations of organizational climate made by

individual employers when engaged in the role of hiring manager. In this study. climate

is explored in the specific context of the perceived organizational climate for hiring

disabled workers. Negotiation latitude is understood in terms of the larger theoretical

concept known as the leader-member exchange (LMX) from which it is derived.

Negotiation latitude refers to the quality of the leader-member relationship with respect to

the perceived control allotted to the member by his or her boss. For the purposes of this

study, perceived organizational climate, the leader-member exchange and negotiation

latitude will together constitute the perceived organizational context of the employer.

Because negotiation latitude is an aspect of leader-member exchange, negotiation latitude

implicitly links leader-member exchange to perceived organizational context.

Figure 1 About Here

Figure 1

Transpersonal Factors Shaping Employers' Perceived Organizational Context
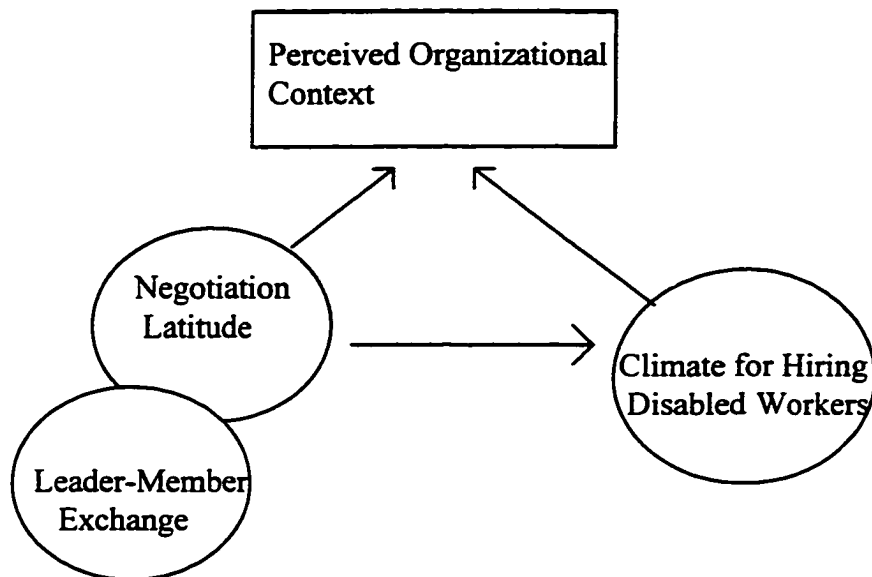
In this study the employer's perceived organizational context is at issue, rather than an "objective" third-party evaluation. This argument is made on the grounds that the employer's perceptions of his or her organizational context, rather than the "facts" will likely shape the impression formation process by which the employer evaluates disabled worker employability. At the same time, it is important to note that employers build their perceptions upon organizational "facts"; a point that becomes particularly salient in the discussion of organizational climate. Organizational climate is shaped by policies, practice, procedures and other "facts" of life at a given organization. For the moment it will suffice to note that perceived organizational context is not divorced from "objective" structures and other "facts", but neither can it be accurately represented in terms of those "facts" alone as previous investigators have attempted to do.

Organizational Climate

There is a broad consensus in the research and theoretical literature on organizational climate that it is a concept that links individual perceptions of organizational life to organizational structures, policies and practices. (Moran & Volkwein, 1992; Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Schneider, Wheeler & Cox, 1992). Organizational climate describes the way in which members of an organization make collective sense of "how we do things around here." Individuals develop shared meanings and expectations about "how things get done" in the organization as they are socialized into the practices, policies, procedures, rewards and sanctions. Those shared

meanings, while fairly stable, are subject to change as any one, or combination of the

climate parameters are changed: leaders, co-workers, practices, or policies. Leaders

influence climate by articulating and transmitting values and expectations (Butcher,

1994). Co-worker characteristics, such as sex, age and/or race also influence climate,

either amplifying or moderating organizational expectations depending upon the situation

(Kossek & Zonia, 1991; Yoder & Aniakudo, 1996). Organizational practices and policies

directly shape member perceptions of climate (Schneider, 1990). Organizational climate

has a reciprocal influence on those factors in turn, with implications for the composition

of leadership and co-worker cohorts, as well as for organizational policies and practices.

Organizational climate can also reflect the specific behavioral or contextual focus of the

actors, such as climate for customer service (Schneider, 1990), diversity (Kossek &

Zonia, 1995) or transfer of learning (Holton, Bates, Seyler, & Carvalho, 1997). In this

study the context-specific focus is on hiring, as in the organizational climate for hiring

disabled workers.

Figure 2 About Here

The notion of "how we do things around here" gets to the heart of organizational

climate which is ultimately about visible practices, policies and procedures in

contradistinction to organizational culture which is usually thought of in terms of

underlying (and therefore, tacit) norms, assumptions and beliefs that

Figure 2

Elements Shaping Perceived Organizational Climate

Company Practices

Company Policies

Employer Perceptions
of Organizational Climate
(Including Climate For
Hiring Disabled Workers)

Co-Worker
Characteristics
(e.g., Age,
Gender, Race)

Relationship
with
Supervisor
(LMX and
NL)
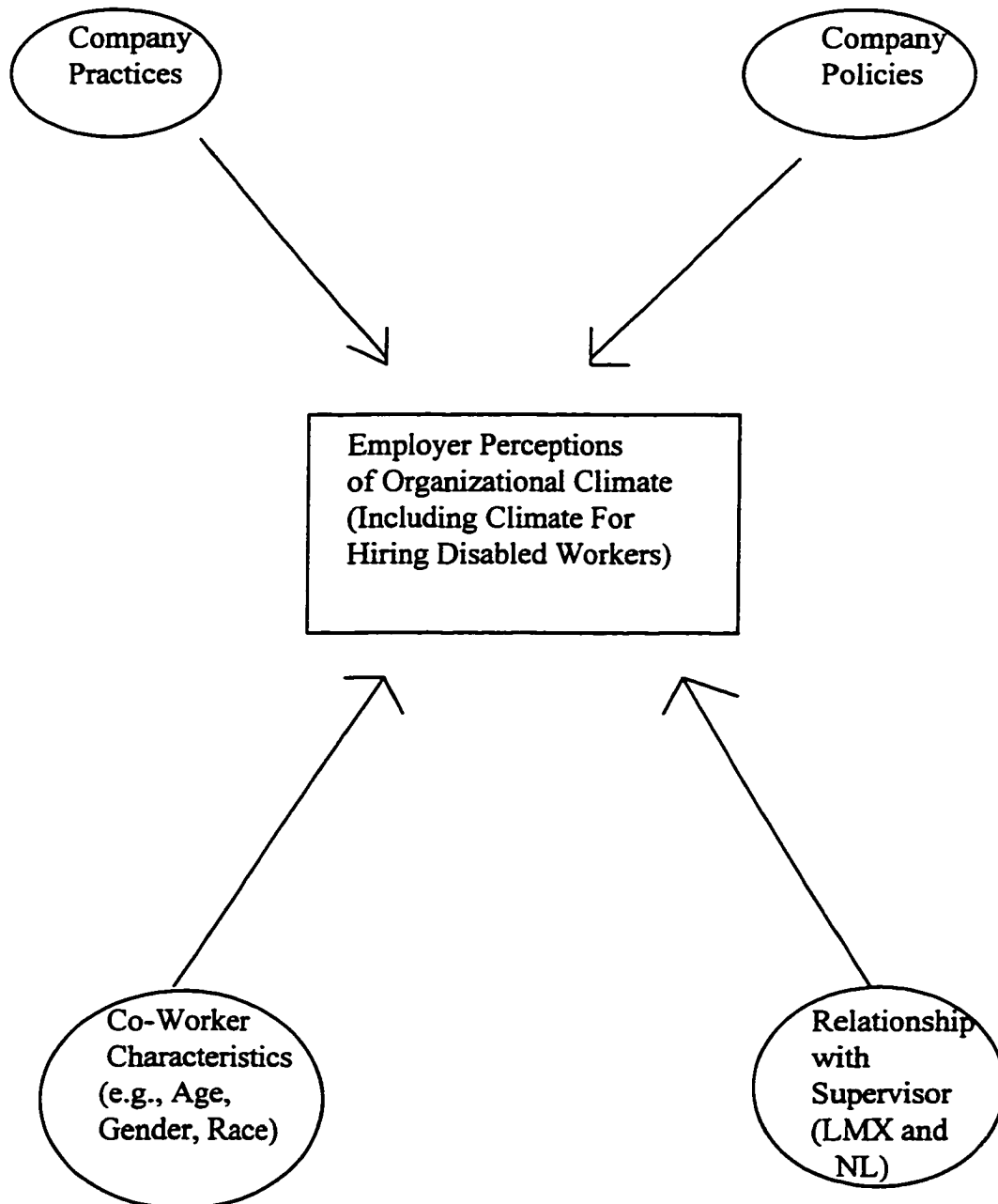
guide behavior in an organization (Cooke & Rousseau. 1988; Cooke & Szumal. 1993; O'Barr & Conley, 1992; Rousse & Fleising, 1995; Schriber, & Gutek. 1987). The link between organizational climate and culture is sometimes described in terms of climate being a manifestation of culture (Moran & Volkwein, 1992). In other words, the explicit expectations, practices and procedures of organizational climate are a concrete manifestation of the implicit beliefs, norms and shared assumptions of culture (Reichers & Schneider, 1990). Perhaps the most straightforward description of organizational climate is in terms of a shared psychological phenomenon among organizational members that sets their expectations about what it should be like to work in that organization (Ott, 1989).

In other words, in their interactions with each other and the practices, policies and procedures of the organization, members develop and set expectations about what it should be like to work in that organization. Although the climate arises out of interactions with the members and aspects of their environment it comes to reflect expectations about organizational demands, rather than individual or even aggregated member demands. In their discussion of the psychological aspects of organizational climate Koys and DeCotiis (1991) argue that climate mediates how the perceived organizational demands cue and mold behavior. The import of organizational climate in this study lies in its ability to explain how organization membership might shape the behaviors of individuals to conform to shared expectations of what organization demands make necessary (what "should be"). Hence, the actions of employers as organizational members can be

understood to vary according to organizational demands under some circumstances, independent of their personal predilections. In other words, the employer's evaluation of a disabled job applicant might under some circumstances (to be discussed later) reflect shared organizational expectations.

Most authors seem to agree that organizational climate is a description of the shared values of members and the policies, procedures and practices with which they interact. There is also a consensus that within an organization there may be a number of smaller, functional climates existing within the larger umbrella of organizational climate. In other words, "how we do things around here" speaks to what is rewarded, valued and practiced and varies both with where and what is being done.

Within a broad organizational climate for instance, there might be a climate for support, a climate for racism, an ethical climate, and a climate for diversity hiring (Jeanquart-Baron & Sekaran, 1996; Kossek & Zonia 1993; Wimbush & Shepard, 1994). In their study of climate for service, Schneider et al. (1992), found that while general organizational climate was a good predictor for sensitivity to customer needs, climate specifically for service was a still better predictor of customer service. This finding echoes that of other investigators who found specific or "functional" climates better predictors of outcomes than overall organizational climate (Schneider, 1990).

In the current study, a proxy measure of one such "functional/specific" climate, the climate for hiring persons with disabilities, was created. The climate proxy variable resulting is referred to as "organizational climate for hiring disabled workers." Because

an established measure for assessing the climate for hiring persons with disabilities does

not exist, and creating a valid and reliable measure lies outside the scope of this study, a

disability-hiring related scale was used as a proxy measure. More will be said about the

use of that measure later, the discussion now returns to the critical review of the

organizational climate literature.

The consensus in the literature about what constitutes organizational climate

breaks down over the relative importance of member (e.g., employee) perceptions

compared to the interactions and structures that complete the picture of organization.

There are those who limit the concept of organizational climate to the shared perceptions

of organizational members, through whom structures and practices are interpreted and

enacted (James, et al., 1988). Other authors believe that this individual-level "climate"

ought to be called "psychological" climate, because it is measured by aggregating

individual perceptions, independent of other factors such as descriptions of policies,

practices and procedures (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991). Some authors believe that there are

aspects of organizational climate that exist independently of the perceptions of the

members such as the organization's symbols, structures and sanctions (Glick, 1985;

Glick, 1988; Moran & Volkwein, 1992). Although members interact with these aspects

of the organization they can change independently of member perceptions (Glick, 1985;

Glick, 1988). In essence, authors on organizational climate have clearly divided into two

camps: the psychological or individual-level climate investigators (James, Joyce &

Slocum, 1988; Koys & DeCotiis, 1991; Verbeke, et al., 1998) and the macro- or meso-

level investigators who include "objective" descriptions of structures and practices that are not passed through the interpretive filters of individual perceivers or organization members (Glick, 1988; Moran & Volkwein, 1992).

In this study, organizational climate will refer to the individual-level, so-called "psychological" climate, because it was measured in terms of respondents' self-report on a questionnaire asking them to rate their agreement with statements about what accommodations should be required of employers. No descriptive data was gathered on company policies or procedures relating to the hiring of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, there was only one respondent for each organization, so it was impossible to cross-reference the respondent's perspectives with that of other organization members to arrive at an aggregate picture. In order to ascertain if the employer's perspective is indeed reflective of the organizational climate two steps were taken. First, the employers in this study were asked if their perspectives on disability accommodations reflect those of their peers in the organization. Second, the employer's level of negotiation latitude that arises from the leader-member exchange was measured. Negotiation Latitude is a variable that has been empirically linked to perceptions of organizational climate. More will be said about this in the section on the leader-member exchange. The discussion now turns to the literature on organizational climate and disabilities more specifically.

Organizational Climate and Disabled Workers. Wilgosh (1990) has been the only author in the published literature so far to apply the organizational climate construct conceptually to the employment of disabled workers. In a theoretical piece, she proposes

that a "good" worker-organization "match" or "fit" is characterized by shared values, goals and mutual aid that lead to job success. She frames job success as a collaborative effort between co-workers, supervisors and the disabled worker. Two important aspects of such collaborative efforts are social and instrumental support related to performing job tasks. For workers with mental disabilities in particular, Wilgosh notes, there may be job skill-related deficiencies as well as social skill related deficits. She contends that organizational climate is a construct that provides a suitable framework for thinking about how a worker with disabilities might "fit in" to an organization as a collaborative enterprise, inasmuch as organizational climate presumes that the workers who select in, and remain have values and behaviors that are congruent with the shared values and norms of the organization. She reasons that an organizational climate that values persons with a (mental) disability would offer supportive co-workers tendering both social and instrumental support. She argues that with the inclusion of ever more workers with disabilities into this supportive climate, the favorable attitudes of co-workers toward workers with disabilities would become still more positive. She supposes that these attitudes would in turn influence the organizational climate, making it still more supportive of persons with disabilities.

Wilgosh's opinions mirror the theoretical literature on several points, although the relevant empirical literature does not always bear them out. First, there appears to be a consensus among writers in the field about her assertion that a good job fit for persons with disabilities depends upon the collaborative efforts of co-workers (Christman &

Slaten, 1991; Fuqua, et al., 1984). Second, her notion that a disability-valuing organizational climate might enhance job success for persons with disabilities is congruent with Akabas' (1985) assertion that settings where workers are valued will also likely be good workplaces for workers with disabilities, due to the overall value placed on employee contributions and satisfaction in those organizations. Jeanquart-Barone and Sekaran (1996) came to a conclusion similar to Akabas about organizational settings conducive to decreasing employment discrimination. After reviewing their findings of organizational context factors linked to institutional racism, they suggested that an organizational climate that supports the effective performance of all employees may be an important factor in reducing institutional racism (Jeanquart-Barone & Sekaran,1996).

Further support for Wilgosh's notion linking certain organizational climates to more favorable conditions for workers belonging to groups facing employment discrimination is found in Kossek and Zonia's (1991) study on diversity climate in a university setting. The authors examined organization members' perceptions of the allocation of resources deemed important to the success of "racio-ethnic" minorities and workers with disabilities. They found that in diversity-valuing climates more attention was paid to the need for such resources. In other words, members in diversity-valuing climates were "looking out" for the needs of disabled workers as well as racial and ethnic minorities.

In the current study it was presumed that a favorable organizational climate for the hiring of persons with disabilities promotes more positive impressions of the

employability of persons with severe disabilities by employers. These more positive

impressions are an expression of what the organization values – hiring workers with a

disability. The supposition of this study was that a disability hiring-favorable climate

promotes both a general value of persons with disabilities and promotes the evaluation of

the work-related attributes of a candidate with severe disabilities as congruent with "how

we do things around here." In other words, the climate removes the stigma of certain

perceived disability-related deficits as "unproductive" or "costly", and reframes them as

either barriers that can be creatively overcome, or as barriers of less importance because

of an organizational value system that places a greater premium on creating an open

environment for hiring disabled persons than on concerns about accommodation costs.

Changing Organizational Climate

Wilgosh's prediction that a disability- valuing organization climate would become

more disability-favorable with the inclusion of more persons with disabilities stands on

somewhat more shaky theoretical and empirical ground. Although several authors have

noted important connections between attitude and climate, and further stipulated a

reciprocal relationship between the two (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Glick, 1988;

Moran & Volkwein, 1995), climate is not simply a manifestation of individual attitude.

This is in part because climate is shared meaning (Verbeke, et al., 1998). Changing

individual attitudes alone may not be enough to skew organizational climate. Changing

the personnel who hold the attitudes, and particularly adding personnel who probably

have favorable attitudes toward persons with disabilities (because they have a disability)

may, however, influence climate because more than just attitudes are being changed: the very persons enacting the shared meanings are changing.

Kossek and Zonia (1991) found that changing group characteristics by introducing a greater ratio of women into a work group seemed to be related to more favorable organizational climate for diversity, presumably because women, as a low-status group, value, or do not devalue low-status attributes such as belonging to a racioethnic minority or having a disability. However, the findings of Walters and Baker (1995) on employer and recruiter attitudes toward individuals with disabilities introduce some doubt. They failed to find a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of employer/recruiters who had a disability from those who did not. Perhaps simply belonging to a group does not predict attitude or contribution to shared meaning across all roles and situations.

The effects of group membership and group characteristics may be contextual, depending upon factors such as member roles, member status, group cohesion, and external environment. In any event, for the purposes of this study, the group membership characteristics of employers (such as race, gender, age and disability status) were explored in its relationship to employability impressions, while noting that previous research has found little evidence of an association between any of those variables and employer perceptions of disabled workers.

Employer's Place in Organizational Climate

In the current study it is presumed that employers are subjected to the same forces of socialization and selection that lead to the formation of shared meanings and values,

much as other managers have been (see Crank, et al., 1995; Guthrie & Olian, 1991).

Employers are also presumed to share some of the same experiences that shape

organization member perceptions, such as encountering policy and procedural

constraints, interacting with other members, and conforming to both formal and informal

organizational practices. Organizational climate varies depending upon the individual's

location (physical, social and hierarchical) in the organization (Mossholder & Bedouin,

1983; Schriesheim, et al., 1992). It seems important then to locate the employer in a

more defined space than the "organization" as a whole. "Locating" members by reference

to their bosses makes sense because the boss is often viewed as embodying the

organizational perspective and mandate, and because her or his sanctions, become the

most tangible guideposts for "how we do things around here." (Keller & Dansereau,

1995; Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989).

<div align="center">Leadership Influences</div>

Leader-Member Exchanges

Researchers of organizational climate have noted that leaders play an important

role in developing and mediating climate for organization members (Keller & Dansereau,

1995; Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). Researchers in the field also note that leaders

sometimes vary their styles across subordinates (Wayne, Linden & Sparrowe, 1994). In

any event, several organizational climate researchers have suggested that the immediate

boss of an organizational member might be their most direct link to organizational

climate (Butcher, 1994; Griffin & Mathieu, 1997; Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). The

concept of leader-member exchange (LMX) attempts to capture the mutual shaping of

behavior and expectations that takes place between a leader and subordinate who are

engaged in a dyadic relationship (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Wayne, et al., 1994). The

leader-member exchange is a concept that refers to the relationship that develops between

a leader (heretofore the, "boss") and a member (heretofore the, "employer") soon after the

two begin working together (Wayne, et al, 1994). This relationship is defined in terms of

a "exchange" of behaviors between the boss and employer (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989;

Wayne, et al., 1994). The exact nature of the exchange is unique to each boss-employer

dyad, so while the exchange has certain predictable attributes the exact sequence of steps

will vary from exchange (relationship) to exchange (Keller & Dansereau, 1995;

Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). This exchange is a voluntary social exchange of resources

and rewards between boss and employer (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). Reciprocal

transfers of behaviors characterizes such "exchanges". These behaviors may be either

"positive" or "negative" in nature, with the notion that values of equivalent valence are

exchanged; in other words "negative" behaviors are reciprocated for negative and positive

for positive.

Additional factors other than strict reciprocity will also influence the exchange.

First, the boss is in control of the most important rewards and costs; including the

independence allowed the employer in his or her role as hiring manager (McClane, 1991).

The boss is the pivotal figure in the exchange most of the time (Wayne, et al, 1994).

Second, the boss' perceived similarity and liking for the employer will influence the

nature of the exchange (Keller & Dansereau, 1995). In the case of perceived similarity

and liking, the boss will initiate a more positive exchange than in the case when they are

absent (Keller & Dansereau, 1995). The reward of perhaps highest value held by the boss

is that of conferring trust upon the employer (Keller & Dansereau, 1995; Schriesheim, et

al., 1992). Once the employer has gained the boss' trust, she or he is able to secure the

degree of independence and autonomy of decision and action (termed "negotiation

latitude"). Paradoxically, the employer who achieves this level of trust is the one whose

values and priorities most closely resemble those of the boss, so autonomy brings with it

an assumption of loyalty and shared goals (Keller & Dansereau, 1995; Schriesheim, et al.,

1992). Subordinates who enjoy a high level of "negotiation latitude" are allowed greater

freedom to develop their work roles more autonomously (McClane, 1991).

High Negotiation Latitude Employer Exchanges

In separate studies, Keller and Dansereau (1995) and Kozlowski and Doherty

(1989) explored the leader-member exchanges in which the employer is particularly

entrusted by the boss; exchanges typified by trust, communication, member discretion,

and, for the employer, perceived control. The employer's perceived control can be

understood in terms of "negotiation latitude" or the perceived range of the employer to

negotiate with the boss for her or his own plans. A more in-depth review of the articles on

negotiation latitude follows.

In the Kozlowski and Doherty (1989) study 16 supervisors and their subordinates

(N=165) from three plants owned by a Fortune 500 manufacturing company were given

self-report questionnaires to measure the organizational climate. Subordinates were given

an additional self-report measure called the "Information Exchange Scale" (IES) to assess

their negotiation latitude. The IES operationalized negotiation latitude in terms of being

in the boss' "in-group" or "out-group." The IES was found to correlate highly with other

measures of negotiation latitude. Subordinates who were confided with their boss and

who enjoyed their boss' confidence were deemed to benefit from a freer exchange of

information, and by extension, greater freedom to initiate action, and greater negotiation

latitude. Subordinates who did not enjoy as free an exchange with their boss were

deemed to have a lower negotiation latitude. The purpose of the study was to empirically

link negotiation latitude and in-group membership with climate perceptions. In fact,

Kozlowski and Doherty's findings largely support their hypotheses that (1) High

negotiation latitude would be associated with climate perceptions, that (2) High

negotiation latitude individuals would have a greater consensus on climate perceptions

and that (3) In-group climate perceptions were more similar to the climate perceptions of

their bosses than those of the out-group. These findings are congruent with the

predictions made from theory about the convergence of interest and perception among

persons enjoying close communications and mutual trust with the leaders who help shape

organizational climate (Keller & Dansereau, 1995). The findings are especially important

to the current study because they support the presumption that trusted, in-group (high

negotiation latitude) employers will reflect the organizational climate in their evaluations

and evaluative criteria.

Keller and Dansereau (1995) surveyed 92 "members" of varying job titles,

including managers, professionals and hourly workers, at a Midwestern computer

company. These surveys were followed by complementary surveys to the supervisors of

the 92 "member" participants, resulting in 92 matched, superior-subordinate pair reports.

The investigators found that superiors (leaders) and subordinates (members) agreed about

satisfaction, support and performance as reflected in the high correlation of corresponding

perceptions between member and leader.

The attributes of high negotiation latitude organizational member described by

Keller and Dansereau are congruent with the presumptions of this study. They postulated

that a high negotiation latitude member would be more willing to take risks and to be

flexible in his or her approach to work than a member who is not high negotiation latitude

(Keller & Dansereau, 1995). In this study was anticipated that a high NL employer

would be somewhat freer to take risks than other employers, because she or he as the

boss' confidence. A high negotiation latitude employer is less risk-aversive in attitude

than an employer who has low negotiation latitude. Keller and Dansereau's profile of the

high negotiation latitude member also lends credibility to the presumption made in this

study that high negotiation latitude employers are more flexible in their approach to

evaluating job candidates. This is because high negotiation latitude employers are

theoretically governed more by a concern for organizational effectiveness, than by the

concern that they not make a mistake, as is more typically the case for managers

(Highhouse, 1996). It was necessary to craft logical arguments for these points because

there does not yet exist an empirical literature on the relationship of high negotiation latitude, or even organizational climate, to impressions of employability of disabled workers. However, thanks to empirical research in related areas, it is possible to bolster the arguments further, albeit without direct tests in the disability employment literature. It is to those related articles that the discussion now turns.

Member Perceptions, Behavior and Organizational Climate

The relationship between organizational context and the behaviors and perceptions of organizational members has been investigated in the research literature on both human services and for-profit organizations. Such research is lacking in the research literature on the employment of persons with disabilities, so comparisons will have to be made, and results extrapolated. Fortunately, the research that has been done is highly applicable, touching upon subjects such as role-related attitudes, organization practices and individual perceptions, staffing decisions and evaluations. The authors of these studies did not consider impressions of employability as such, but rather evaluative or decision-making processes that parallel the processes leading to the formation of impressions about a job candidate's employability. The impressions of employability made by employers are, after all, a component of the decision-making process in employee selection, and directly reflect aspects of the evaluation of the job candidate. A brief review of two studies will serve to illustrate how organizational context can be related to the evaluations made by individuals within an organization of others.

Related Studies on Organizational Context

Context and Staffing Decisions

The discussion and review begins with a study that explored the relationship of organizational and environmental contexts to the personnel selection process followed by human resource managers. Guthrie and Olian (1991) investigated how the selection process by which human resource managers hire general managers to function as work unit CEOs is related to the context of the employing organization and its environment. Structured telephone surveys together with written questionnaires were used to assess forty (40) general manager selection decisions of human resource management offices. The purpose of their study was to explore possible organizational and environmental contexts of executive personnel selection. The authors conceptualized the human resource management decision makers as "gatekeepers." The notion that the employment/organizational "gatekeepers" and their personnel selection process were influenced by contextual factors is what makes Guthrie and Olian's work pertinent to the current study, although the contextual focus in the current study is on the employer's perceptions of organization only.

Guthrie and Olian found that human resource managers were influenced in their staffing decisions by organizational context and industrial environment. Human resource managers were expected to hire general managers who seem best suited to cope with the industrial environment given the contingencies provided by organizational strategy, performance, size and stability. In other words, staffing decisions were guided by an

attempt to "match" suitable candidates with the organization and industrial environment as well as the job.

The most important contribution of Guthrie and Olian's findings and theoretical framework for the current study lies in the association between staffing decisions by "gatekeepers" and organizational context. However, in Guthrie and Olian's study the evaluative process of the human resource "gatekeepers" is formulated in terms of "contingency" decisions based upon an assessment of the candidate in terms of his or her ability to cope with the current state of environment and organization. In this study employers were not assumed to be operating outside of the contingencies on which they base their decisions. Although Guthrie and Olian noted that organizational members "enact and interpret" organizational context, they failed to explicitly consider a logical consequence of this observation. Human resource managers are also organization members who participate in, as well as evaluate, organizational context.

Following this train of logic it is reasonable to suppose that the selection process of employment "gatekeepers" might be directly influenced by organizational context. The influence of perceived organizational context on "gatekeeper" evaluations of candidates for organizational resources is explored in Prager and Schnit's (1985) study of institutions in Israel. Prager and Schnit studied the relationship of organizational environment (defined in terms of social service agency "ideology") to elder care option decisions made by social workers.

Context and Decision Making

In an exploratory study, Prager and Schnit (1985) used structured interviews with social workers at two public welfare agencies in Israel in an exploratory study of the relationship between organizational context and worker care option decisions. Using social learning theory as an explanatory framework, Prager and Schnit reasoned that organizational membership ought to have a homogenizing effect on member behaviors and perceptions through modeling and reciprocal influence. They further proposed that forces of socialization, selection and sanction ought to combine to create like-minded groups, supported by shared norms and/or values. The net effect of these factors, they argued, would be a "universalizing" tendency in organizations. That is to say members would adopt uniform behaviors and perceptions. They conjectured that worker actions are more accurately understood as the product of organizational membership, than as the result of personal or professional values. More specifically, they expected to find social work decisions about elder patient care to more nearly reflect the decisions of their fellow organization members than those of other organizations, or their own personal or professional biases.

In designing their study, the investigators began with the assumption that the "ideology" of the agency executive would shape the organizational context. They anticipated that distinct agency executive "ideologies" would differentiate organizational context. Thus, an executive with a "democratic" ideology would shape the organizational context in such a way that "democratic" practices of thought and behavior would prevail

among organization members, and in fact typify the actions of members. On the basis of these assumptions, the authors selected two public welfare agencies in Israel which they believed to have distinctly polarized ideologies around worker participation in decision making. Prager and Schnit made their assessment without benefit of expert judges or any other source of validation.

Prager and Schnit designated one agency "A" and the other "B". They claimed that agency "A" was characterized by a "participatory ideology", in which workers were expected and encouraged to be actively involved in decisions about the disposition of their cases. The agency designated "B" was said to be diametrically opposed in its ideology, actively discouraging worker participation in decision making. The investigators then conducted structured interviews with workers about the files on clients over 65 years of age for two years prior. The result was 68 interviews (47 type "A"; 21 type "B"). Prager and Schnit discerned consistent organization membership-related biases in the disposition of these cases. The elder care options decided by the "A" organization members were characterized by "problem-solving"; those of the "B" organization members were characterized by "people processing" in the terminology of the authors. In other words, "A" workers appear to have made more particularistic decisions, and paid more attention to individual client needs and potentials than "B" workers. "A" workers also reported having been able to be decisive, whereas "B" workers reported having been unsure of how to proceed.

Prager and Schnit's finding that a participatory decision-making context was related to more differentiated and discriminating use of institutional care options is relevant to the current study in several ways. First, a participatory decision-making context resembles the "high negotiation latitude" context of the high negotiation latitude employer, especially if the "high negotiation latitude" employer participates in a climate favorable to the hiring of persons with disabilities. Based upon the findings of Prager and Schnit it was anticipated that "high negotiation latitude" employer may be more likely to view the job candidate with severe disabilities more favorably than other employers. This was based on the notion that she or he would be more alert to the possibilities of customizing work to match the candidates particular abilities. In other words, high negotiation latitude employers should make more differentiated judgments; much like the members in a democratic/participative ideology organization which affords employees more control. Second, Prager and Shnit's finding of a more decisive "participatory" context worker is congruent with the presumption in this study that the "high negotiation latitude" employer are less risk-aversive, and more risk-taking than other low NL employers and thus more likely to "risk" any possible losses attributable to hiring a worker with severe disabilities. Third, their finding that the "participatory" context workers differentiated between clients suggests that "high negotiation latitude" employers are more inclined to see the particular attributes of particular workers with disabilities, and be therefore, less susceptible to "seeing" only, or largely stereotyped qualities. In sum, the Prager and Schnit exploratory study offers suggestive evidence supporting some of the major suppositions of this study

about the relationship of various organizational contexts with impressions of employability. In particular, the Prager and Schnit study hints that organizational climate and leadership will influence the perceptions of members (in this case, hiring managers).

Context and Employment Perceptions

In an experimental study building on previous research linking organizational climate to employee behavior and discriminatory behavior by managers, Katz (1987) examined the relationship between organizational climate and gender-biased employment perceptions. Katz enlisted one hundred sixty-one male students (graduate and undergraduate) to participate in an experiment in which "organizational climate" and hypothetical job applicant sex were manipulated to allow comparisons in employment-related decisions. Katz sought first to examine the mediating influence of different organizational climates ("egalitarian" or "pro-male") on employment-related decisions for a hypothetical job applicant. He also sought to examine the interaction of climate type with participant "need for approval" on employment-related decisions. Katz manipulated "organizational climate" by varying the tone and content of hypothetical company documents introducing the research participants (in the role of new managers) to the company structure, values, rewards and expectations through an organizational chart, a company paper news article and a welcoming memo from the vice-president. In the "discriminatory climate" condition, these documents contained a "pro-male" bias in language and content, while in the "non-discriminatory climate condition" the documents described an "egalitarian" environment and value system.

Participants were given hypothetical company documents representing organizational climate in one of two conditions (discriminatory or non-discriminatory). They were also given a job description for an entry-level management position, and one of two versions of a completed application form that was identical in all respects but the applicants name which was either male or female. An instrument was also given to measure the participant's need for approval. Finally, participants were asked to evaluate the hypothetical job applicants on four rating scales: A scale for hiring suitability, a scale for salary recommendations, a scale for perceived organizational "fit", and finally, a scale for anticipated organizational tenure.

Katz found that in the "discriminatory climate" condition males were rated more favorably than females in terms of hiring decisions, salary recommendations, "fit" and tenure, as predicted. Need for approval failed to be a significant predictor of employment-related outcomes in interaction with climate and applicant sex. Although the investigator claimed that his findings were all the more "persuasive" because the experimental condition could not reproduce the influence exerted by normative group pressures in real-life situations, his dismissal of experimental demand characteristics as an alternative explanation is unconvincing, particularly in the light of an unexpected finding. Katz found that females in the non-discriminatory climate condition were evaluated as having a better fit than both males in the non-discriminatory condition and females in the discriminatory condition. He notes that the non-discriminatory climate was described in terms of skills generally associated with females (such as listening).

This implies that the demand characteristics of the experiment were indeed operative and strong, inducing participants to "match" their evaluations with the climate descriptions. While organizational climate is multidimensional and interactional, the organizational climate conditions created by Katz can too easily be reduced to "pro-male" or "pro-female" polarities, and are admittedly non-interactional. In other words, Katz makes a convincing case for the relationship between the climates as described and employment-related evaluations, but fails to plausibly link those "climates" to their real-world analogues, or perhaps more fundamentally , to link the evaluations of his research participants to the influence of an "organizational climate".

By contrast, in the current study, organizational climate was operationalized as a multidimensional construct, including considerations of recruitment, accommodations, discrimination, support and hiring in the context of the expectations actually guiding hiring practices at the participant's company. The organizational climate measured in the current study was based upon employers perceptions of what the company expects hiring practices "should" be like, implying normative expectations arising from, and reinforced by accepted hiring practices.

Although, under the circumstances, Katz's findings linking organizational climate to employment-related decisions must be viewed with some caution, his arguments in finding a relationship between organizational climate and the behaviors of hiring managers, anticipate some of the arguments made in this study. Moreover, Katz articulates the role of organizational climate in mediating employment-related decisions

depending upon the nature of the climate and the nature of the job applicant.

Specifically, he suggests that a discriminatory climate will lead to more negative

evaluations of a job applicant who is a member of a discriminated group than that same

job applicant would receive in a non-discriminatory climate. Katz's presumption of a

differential effect of climate on employment-related evaluations informed the conceptual

foundation of the current study. The specific variables and hypotheses of this study can

now be reviewed.

Study Variables and Hypotheses

Variables

The major variables in this study are reflective of the employer's perceptions and

are defined by the scores on self-reports. There are four chief independent variables and

one dependent variable in this study, described below.

Table 2 About Here

Independent variables. The four independent variables in this study were

negotiation latitude, organizational climate, non-disabled condition and severe

disability condition (psychiatric or physical). No absolute values exist for a high degree

of negotiation latitude; rather degree of negotiation latitude is determined relative to the

scores found in the sample of respondents. Organizational climate for hiring disabled

workers is the first independent variable. Negotiation latitude is the second independent

Table 2

Study Measures and Variables

Operationalization of Concept	Variable	Variable Type
Knowledge and Acceptance of the ADA Scale (KAA)	Organization Climate for Hiring Disabled Workers	Continuous
Information Exchange Scale (IES)	Negotiation Latitude	Dichotomous*
Employment Characteristics Scale (IES)	Impressions of Job Applicant Employability	Continuous
Vignette Description of Applicant Disability: Single Parent (non-disabled), Acquired Brain Injury or Schizophrenia	Disability Condition	Categorical**

Note. *Negotiation latitude is dichotomous because theory only postulates two levels of negotiation latitude: high and low. **There are three disability conditions: non-disabled, severe physical disability and severe psychiatric disability.

variable. Organizational disability hiring climate (climate) is measured by the degree to which respondents have knowledge and acceptance of the ADA Scale. The KAA score was used as a proxy measure for the organizational favorableness of climate to hire disabled workers. The third independent variable, disability condition (non-disabled, severe physical disability or severe psychiatric disability) was manipulated by vignettes composed of a cover letter and completed job application form for each hypothetical job applicant.

Dependent Variable. The employers' impressions of the disabled workers' level of employability were indicated by their evaluation of the work-related attributes of the job applicants described in the vignettes. This was achieved by using the Employment Characteristics Scale, which explicitly measures key work-related attributes of importance to employers evaluating job applicants. Employer impressions of hypothetical job applicant employability constitute the single dependent variable.

Proposed Research Hypotheses and Rationale

Two central hypotheses were explored in this study. These hypotheses specify how organizational context (disability hiring climate and employer negotiation latitude) is expected to be related to level of employability impression.

Hypothesis 1

Employers who give hypothetical job applicants a favorable employability rating will tend to have a high negotiation latitude and a favorable climate for hiring disabled workers.

There are several arguments for this hypothesis: (1) A more favorable

organization climate for hiring workers with a disability ought to positively influence

hiring manager's employment evaluations of disabled workers and others needing

accommodations, such as the single parent in the non-disabled condition. (2) To the

extent that hiring a worker needing an accommodation (especially a disabled worker)

might constitute a risk, high negotiation latitude employers may be more willing to

assume that risk than other managers because they enjoy the boss' trust. (3) High

negotiation latitude managers may be more flexible and innovative in their thinking about

how disabled workers, or others needing accommodations might "fit in" and make a

contribution, and therefore be more likely to see the employment potential of such

workers. (4) High negotiation latitude employers tend to hold the consensus view of

organizational climate, and if the consensus climate is favorable to hiring workers with a

disability, their evaluations ought to reflect a positive bias. (5) Finally, due to the close

association of high negotiation latitude employers with their boss, who actively shapes

and reinforces organizational climate, the positive influences of a favorable hiring climate

on employer perceptions ought to be amplified still further.

The hypothesis encompasses both non-disabled and disabled condition applicants

alike, noting that the applicants in the non-disabled condition also require an

accommodation, and may therefore be viewed more skeptically than prospective workers

needing no accommodations. It is anticipated that female single parents would benefit

from an organizational climate favorable to hiring disabled workers on the grounds that

such a climate would also be supportive of hiring diversity. This supposition is implicitly

supported by Kossek and Zonia's (1993) study of diversity climate (for employment),

which included disabled persons along with women and minorities.

Hypothesis 2

Applicants in the non-disabled condition will have the highest average

employability impressions, followed by applicants in the physically disabled condition,

and then those in the mentally disabled condition.

It is anticipated that hypothetical job applicants in the comparison non-disabled

condition will have distinctly higher mean employability scores than those in the two

disabled conditions because of negative employer expectations. One reason for assuming

this is that the employers' sometimes develop negative expectations about disabled

workers that are attributable to preconceptions of disabled workers as somehow less

productive, or costly to train and supervise.

Alternately employers may develop negative expectations of disabled workers due to

preconceptions about the cost, difficulty and uncertainty inherent to the provision and use

of accommodations the disabled worker may require. It is expected that the mean

employability impression for job applicants with a psychiatric disability will be lower

than that for those with a physical disability because of employers' tendency to view

physical disabilities most favorably and psychiatric disabilities least favorably as reported

in numerous studies.

Because the focus of this study and the research question is on risk-taking, flexible and innovative manager, the responses of employers who have low negotiation latitude will not be considered and no predictions will be made about their employability impressions as a group.

Summary

The hypotheses above set out the expected relationships between various perceived organizational contexts and the high negotiation latitude employer's impressions of the employability of persons with severe disabilities. These anticipated relationships were based upon arguments derived from the theoretical and empirical literature. Because empirical studies placing employer's impressions of the employability of workers with severe disabilities in a perceived organizational context are lacking, this study was exploratory. In order to make this new framework relating employer impressions to perceived organizational context more robust, standardized instruments were used. Furthermore, a research design and procedure were employed that were intended to address potential sources of systematic bias and confounds. The discussion turns next to the third (methodology) chapter in which these design elements, together with a data analysis plan, are formulated.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Research Design

In the previous chapters it was established that employers' perceptions of disabilities might introduce an important bias into their hiring decisions about disabled workers. This bias was given additional significance by the fact that despite both anti-discrimination legislation and supported work programs, the employment rate of persons with disabilities remains alarmingly low and that joblessness is associated with economic, social, psychological, emotional and even physical deprivations. It was further observed that for persons with severe disabilities, the odds of finding employment are negligible. The limited efficacy of existing approaches to removing barriers to the employment of disabled persons was linked in part to an incomplete conceptual understanding in both the professional and research literature on the employer bias barrier. Using the available empirical and theoretical literature, arguments were advanced to expand the current conceptual framework to link hiring manager's employment-related impressions of disabled workers to the perceived organizational context of the employer. In the absence of empirical studies to test out this association, an exploratory, correlational survey research study was conducted using a hypothetical job applicant vignette.

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The primary purpose of this study was to assess the relationship of high negotiation latitude and a favorable organizational climate for hiring disabled workers to employers' impressions of the employability of severely disabled job applicants. Secondarily, this study sought to compare employers' impressions of the employability of non-disabled job applicants with those of applicants with a severe (physical or psychiatric) disability. A cross-sectional correlational design and a mail survey methodology was used in this study. The survey was composed of a letter of introduction and three standardized instruments, together with demographic questions, a cover letter and completed job application form.

A random sample of 1,000 persons was drawn from the national membership list of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), whose membership in the United States totals approximately 60,000 human resource professionals. The United States SHRM member list includes all fifty (50) states, Guam, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. In order to target members who are most likely to directly hire, train and supervise disabled workers, a rule was imposed to select only the desired elements of the sampling frame before the random sample was drawn (Singleton, Straits & Straits, 1993). The process by which the sampling frame was created is discussed in the next section.

Sampling Frame

The rule for selecting elements (SHRM members) for the sampling frame was based upon considerations of the main criterion for participation in the study. The main

criterion for participation was that respondents be "hiring managers" directly involved in the hiring and supervision of entry-level personnel such as the hypothetical job applicants for administrative assistant positions in this study. Members of the list whose professional roles were other than "hiring managers" were categorically excluded. This exclusion of members not falling in the category of "hiring manager" was achieved by sorting out the following job title descriptors from the membership list: "president", "vice president", "academic", "consultant" or "administrative". The following job title categories were retained: "director", "manager", "assistant director", "assistant manager" or "supervisor". Together, the retained job titles comprised 68 percent of the sample by job title, or 38,130 SHRM members.

Table 3 About Here

The excluded job titles belong to individuals whose roles and responsibilities were significantly different from those of a "hiring manager". Most critically, persons in the excluded roles were less likely to be involved in the hiring of job candidates like those portrayed in this investigation. Company presidents and other individuals who are probably removed from the experiences, practices and perspectives of a hiring manager, were excluded from the sampling frame to avoid role-based distortions of the employability impressions. The next section addresses the issues around sample size.

Table 3

Disposition of Job Titles In Study Sampling Frame

Included In Sampling Frame		Excluded From Sampling Frame	
Job Titles	N	Job Titles	N
Director	14,546	President	2,193
Assistant Director	548	Vice President	7,373
Manager	19,932	Academic	3,410
Assistant Manager	414	Consultant	2,050
Supervisor	2,690	Administrative	2,726
Total Included	38,130	Total Excluded	17,752

Sample Size

As mentioned previously, a random sampling technique was used to identify

participants for this study. The sample size for this study could not be

determined with mathematical formula using either sampling error or a power analysis to

solve for sampling size. The chief stumbling block to using sampling error was the

absence of data on which to base variance estimates (Singleton, et al., 1993). With

respect to conducting a power analysis, the principle obstacle was the absence of data

upon which to estimate effect size, or the degree to which the phenomenon is thought to

be present in the population (Cohen, 1992). The absence of data in both these instances

was due to the dearth of prior research into organizational climate for disability and

employer negotiation latitude as investigated in this exploratory study. Hence, sampling

error could not be calculated and a power analysis could not be performed.

Instead, an alternative strategy was used. It is a strategy that takes into

consideration several factors in determining sample size: the number of analyses of

subgroups, and conventions for the minimum number of cases for each subgroup

comparison to be analyzed, and practical issues, such as cost and use of resources

(Mangione, 1991; Singleton, et al., 1993). Also of critical importance to this strategy was

the "precision," or degree of variability in the sample estimate (Mangione, 1991;

Singleton, et al., 1993). These are the considerations that will be considered in

determining the desired sample size for this study. Although each consideration will be

discussed separately, it will quickly become evident that they were, in fact,

interdependent. Moreover, discussion of desired sample size must include brief mention

of the data collection procedures designed to obtain the desired sample size.

First, with respect to sample size requirements for the purposes of data analysis,

the guidelines provided by practicing social researchers were followed. A standard

sociobehavioral researcher's rule of thumb is to have at least thirty cases per subgroup

comparison or "breakdown" (Singleton, et al, 1993). In this study there were four

independent variables (non-disabled condition, disabled condition, climate, and

negotiation latitude). There were three levels of disability condition (non-disabled,

physical and psychiatric disability), one level of hiring climate (continuous variable), two

levels of employability (favorable/unfavorable), and two of negotiation latitude

(high/low), making a total of eight cells, or a sampling requirement of 240 respondents.

This "statistical" requirement for data analysis translates into a response rate of about 24

percent. Although such a low response rate jeopardizes the "precision," or degree of

variability in the sample size, and threatens the generalizability of the sample-based

findings to the operationalized population of the sampling frame, it is unfortunately, not

atypical of surveys of this nature. Surveys that ask non-disabled individuals to evaluate

disabled persons for employment often obtain quite low response rates; often in the range

of 15 to 30 percent (Hayes, Citera, Brady and Jenkins 1995).

One of the practical concerns related to sampling and response rate was around

follow-up reminders. Speaking theoretically, Mangione (1991) suggests a four-phase

(initial plus three follow-up) mailing to obtain a 75 percent response rate in the following

percentile increments (40, 20, 10, 5). However, the empirical results of one of the most

successful large disability employer survey (Levy, et al., 1992) suggest that the returns

may be more skewed toward the initial responses in this field of inquiry. The first two

mailings were reported together by Levy, et al as 24 percent of possible responses,

followed by increments of two percent and four percent respectively. In contradistinction

to Mangione' s anticipated increment of 50 percent additional responses for each

subsequent mailing, the gains between mailings three and four obtained by Levy, et al.

were only 9 percent and 13 percent respectively. The experience of Levy, et al., suggests

a sharper decline in incremental gains than predicted by Mangione. Given the both the

financial cost of subsequent mailings, and the delay entailed (a 14-day interval is

suggested by Mangione), a three-phase mailing was conducted to maximize sample size

and conservation of resources. Potential study participants were mailed the survey,

followed by two reminder cards at 2 week intervals unless they returned the survey.

In addition to having a three-phase mailing with follow-up reminders several

additional steps were taken to help obtain the highest response rate and sample size

possible (see Appendices A-C for materials). First, participants were assured of

anonymity. A separate self-addressed and stamped post card was included with the

survey packet on which participants could write their name and address in order to

receive a summary of study results while maintaining anonymity on their survey. Second,

an engaging letter of introduction was drafted. This letter described the study as a

doctoral dissertation on a topic of interest to professionals in the field. Third, a one-dollar

bill was included with the survey. The letter of introduction noted " A dollar bill has also

been enclosed with this survey: Please enjoy a cup of coffee or soft drink on me while

reviewing this survey." The one dollar bill was not contingent on participation, and thus

was more of an offering than a reward or compensation. This avoided the implication

that 15 minutes of the participants time was worth only $1, and at the same time allowed

the investigator to show some appreciation for the reader's efforts. Fourth, self-addressed

stamped envelopes were included with visually appealing and easily understood survey

packet materials. These were provided for the participant's convenience in completing

and returning the survey. All these procedures and materials will be discussed in greater

detail next in the data collection section.

Data Collection Procedures

Participants were mailed a packet of materials including a letter of introduction, a

response postcard, a demographics survey section, three standardized instruments a

completed job application form and cover letter. The job application and cover letter was

for either a job applicant with a severe physical disability, a job applicant with a severe

psychiatric disability, or a non-disabled job applicant. The job applicant' s disability

condition was varied systematically during the mailing, such that the first person on the

mailing list received an employment application for a person with an acquired brain

injury, the second person an application for a person with schizophrenia applicant, the

third person an application for a single parent (non-disabled) and so forth, in that fashion.

The distribution of job applicant types to the mailing list (sampling frame) was as follows: (1) Severe physical disability, 333 addressees (2) Severe psychiatric disability, 333 addressees (3) Non-disabled, 334 addresses. It was anticipated that few of the packets would be returned as undeliverable because the membership list is updated yearly.

The survey packet mailed to each respondent began with a letter of introduction. The letter explained the general purpose of the study and the requirements for participation. A returned questionnaire was understood to denote consent. Participants were assured of anonymity in their responses. If they chose to request a summary of study results a stamped and self-addressed postcard was provided to be mailed separately. The response postcard was also used to remove the participant's name from follow-up reminder card mailings. No identifier of any sort was attached to the survey materials, nor were any requested of participants. The completed surveys were kept confidential and stored in a secure place. The participants were asked to complete several standardized measures, read a hypothetical job applicant vignette of two parts, then complete a third standardized measure followed by demographic questions. All of these materials were to be placed in the self-addressed stamped envelope. A separate self-addressed response card was also included.

Participants were first asked to complete a modified version of the Knowledge and Acceptance of the ADA (KAA) scale followed by the Information Exchange Scale (IES). Participants were then asked to read a hypothetical job applicant vignette. The

vignette was composed of a cover letter and completed job application. Upon reading the

vignette respondents were asked to rate employability-related attributes of the job

applicant using the Employment Characteristics Scale (ECS). Participants were requested

to use the vignettes as if they were engaging in an actual pre-employment evaluation

process. Next, participants were asked to complete the demographics section. A total of

52 questions were posed, for an elapsed time of between 15 and 20 minutes, including

time to read the vignettes.

It should be noted that this particular combination of measures and vignettes were

deployed for the first time in this study. Before commencing a detailed description of the

attributes of each survey packet component it will be important to establish the overall

survey feasibility by reporting the results of an informal preliminary trial. The rationale

for using previously untested vignettes and their suitability for stimulating employer

impressions will be discussed afterwards.

<div align="center">Measures</div>

In part to assess the clarity, comprehensibility, and timing of the survey packet,

five participant volunteers were recruited for a pilot test trial. These participants held

supervisory positions in human resources, supported employment, and medical or mental

health agencies. Each volunteer was asked to review the survey materials and make notes

on the clarity of materials, directions, items and procedures. In addition, each volunteer

was asked to respond to the survey questions. The investigator noted volunteer times for

item completion. Volunteer feedback was used to make adjustments in formatting, item

wording and directions. The volunteers indicated that the job applicant vignettes

(employment application and cover letter) were adequately detailed and realistic enough

to permit responses to all the employable characteristics items. In fact, the volunteers'

scores showed adequate variation for comparison and did not cluster in the central

response range. Completing the actual reading and survey items took each volunteer

between 20 and 30 minutes. It was anticipated that study participants would require less

time because they would not be asked to provide feedback on the materials themselves.

The volunteers were also asked to help validate the vignettes. More about these

procedures will be discussed in the section on vignettes. Having briefly discussed

volunteer feedback on the overall survey packet it is now appropriate to consider the

component measures and vignettes.

Knowledge and Acceptance of the ADA scale

This is a ten-item subscale of the Acceptance of Individuals Scale (AID) created

by Walters and Baker (1995). The Knowledge and Acceptance of the ADA (KAA)

subscale explores respondents' knowledge and probable acceptance of the Americans

with Disabilities Act (ADA) in terms of statements about how employers ought to

accommodate workers with disabilities (See Appendix C). In the context of this study it

was also a proxy measure of organizational climate for hiring disabled workers. The

modifications made to render it a proxy measure of hiring climate are discussed late. The

KAA asks respondents to indicate their degree of agreement with the statements about

employer accommodations using a five point Likert-type scale with "1" indicating

"strongly disagree" and " 5" indicating "strongly agree". Scores are summed with higher

scores indicating greater employer acceptance and knowledge of the ADA. The authors

do not provide a cutting score, nor any fixed values, or range of values for distinguishing

"high" from "low" scores.

To help establish face and content validity the instrument's authors used a review

panel of five expert judges. They later revised and subsequently field-tested the subscale

with an unspecified number of Disability Support Services Staff (Walters & Baker,

1995). The authors report an inter-item correlation of .70 for the scale items (Walters &

Baker, 1995). The subscale is a self-report measure administered first in the survey

packet and took the participant volunteers about five minutes to complete.

The KAA scale is particularly relevant to this study because it asks what

accommodations employers "should be" required to make for workers with disabilities,

getting at shared expectations. The authors of the KAA interpreted employers' responses

to statements about what "should be" required of businesses as a measure of personal

knowledge and acceptance of the ADA. However, this intention was not clear to the

volunteers who pre-tested the KAA for this study.

One of the volunteer respondents (a human resource professional) was confused

about the " should be" statements found in the KAA, and asked whether these "shoulds"

were meant to reflect personal belief, or a widely-held ethical standard. This question is

consistent with the finding of organizational culture researcher Hofstede (1991). He

found that survey participants responded differently to questions about their beliefs on what "should" take place in a given situation; depending on whether they thought an ideologically "desirable" response was sought, or a personal preference and "desire." Hofstede went on to differentiate widely-held societal norms of an ideological nature from aggregated individual norms that reflect personal preferences and desires. For the purposes of this study it was important that the KAA questions not tap into societal beliefs, because such "ideological" beliefs would introduce a social desirability bias into the responses. It was clearly necessary to stipulate to participants how "should" was to be interpreted. For the purposes of this study the "should" had to be interpreted in terms of the shared expectations of the organization around hiring disabled workers – in other words, in terms of hiring climate. In order to clearly ground the items in the expectations arising from the hiring climate the following directions were given for the KAA: "Please answer the following questions about what employers 'should' do in terms of the expectations that guide hiring practices at your company." This statement provided the additional merit of removing personal responsibility for the employers' responses to each item, thereby decreasing the likelihood a socially desirable response, in manner of Fisher's (1993) indirect questioning method.

Additional Question/Consensus Climate

An additional question, (question 11) not part of the KAA, nor scored with it, but complementary to the measure, asks participants if they believe that the opinions they have just voiced "are the same as those generally held by other hiring managers in (their)

company". It is asked immediately after the KAA (questions 1-10). This question was posed as a double check on the reframing of the KAA as an organizational climate measure. To the extent that the KAA had been interpreted as asking questions about organizational climate, participants should agree strongly with question 11. For this reason question 11 is termed the consensus organizational climate question.

The next measure in the survey packet sequence was the Information Exchange Scale, which " located" the participant in either the bosses' "in-group" or "out-group" ; in other words as having high or low negotiation latitude.

Information Exchange Scale

This is an eight-item scale created by Kozlowski and Doherty (1989) as a direct measure of in-group, out-group membership and the underlying construct of member negotiation latitude (NL) in the leader-member exchange (LMX). The eight-item IES scale is composed of the items retained by the investigators after a data reduction process from a 13-item prototype. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the eight-item IES was .84. Meanwhile, a correlation of .73 ($p < .01$) was reported with a convergent LMX measure supporting construct validity (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). Construct validity was further supported by giving both members and their supervisors an organizational climate measure to complete. The authors found that the climate scores of in-group (high NL) members were significantly more similar to their supervisors' along a key dimension than those of out-group (low NL) members Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989).

Responses to the IES fall along a seven point Likert-type scale from

"1,"indicating "Very much so" to "7," indicating " Not at all". Items are summed for an

overall score that corresponds to level of negotiation latitude. Lower scores indicate

higher levels of negotiation latitude. On the grounds that negotiation latitude is an

organizational process variable the authors do not establish either absolute values or even

a range of values to discriminate "high" from "low" levels of negotiation latitude.

Instead, they perform a median split of respondents' scores. Several items are reverse-

scored to forestall response set bias. For the IES, social desirability is less of a threat to

internal validity than for the KAA. This is due to the fact that the measure asks the

respondent to evaluate a boss-subordinate relationship that is cloaked in the respondent's

anonymity. The IES is administered as a self-report pencil and paper test. It took

volunteers about three minutes to complete. The IES was third in the survey packet, just

preceding the hypothetical job applicant vignettes.

The IES was particularly appropriate for this study because it targets that aspect of

the leaders-member exchange dyadic relationship that has been positively related to

climate perceptions in empirical studies (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). The instrument' s

authors found that respondents with low scores (high negotiation latitude respondents)

were more likely to hold consensus views on the organizational climate, in addition to

being viewed as having high negotiation latitude by their boss (Kozlowski & Doherty,

1989). Consequently, it was expected that high negotiation latitude respondents will be

more likely to reflect the perceived organizational climate for hiring disabled workers.

which in turn will be related to the impressions of employability.

Employment Characteristics Scale

The third and final standardized instrument used in this study was the 22-item

Employment Characteristics Scale (ECS). The ECS was used to measure hiring

managers' impressions of the employability of the hypothetical job applicant and served

as this study's dependent measure. Employability (the likelihood of gaining paid

employment) is based, in part, upon an employer's perception of the work-related

attributes of a prospective employee. In their review of the literature, Christman and

Slaten (1991) found that certain attributes are deemed important by employers in

evaluating the employability of job applicants. The 22-item ECS instrument was created

by Christman and Slaten (1991) to reflect precisely those characteristics or attributes that

employers consider important for job applicants. The ECS permits the

respondent/employer to rate the degree to which a job candidate possesses those attributes

important to job success.

A reliability (Cronbach Alpha) coefficient of .93 is reported for the 22 items

(Christman & Slaten, 1991). No validity data are reported. The authors report that their

version of the ECS was created from adjectives used in previous studies on

employability-related impression formation. Four categories of worker attributes, each

constituting an independent factor, were extracted from the 22 attributes: Personality,

Power, Competence, and Professionalism. The ECS contains 22 employment-related

attributes rated on a nine-point scale from "1", "least characteristic of the applicant". to

"9", "most characteristic of the applicant". The instrument is self-administered and a

pencil and paper test. It took the volunteers in this study about five minutes to complete.

Mean scores for each respondent will be computed, with higher scores indicating more

favorable impressions of the job applicant' s employability.

The ECS was especially relevant to this study because it measures employee

characteristics that employers in previous studies have found important in evaluating the

employability of a job applicant. The hiring managers in this study rate each job

applicant depicted in the vignette in terms of this employability indicator.

Demographic Characteristics

In order to gather information of potential interest on personal characteristics of

the employer and structural characteristics of the company a 13-item demographics

section was created (See Appendix C). In addition to basic questions on participants such

as job title, age, sex, race/ethnicity, and disability status, (questions 42,46,47,48,49) other

questions were posed that are relevant to the formation of employer perceptions about

disabled worker employability.

Because education level and experience with persons with disabilities have fairly

consistently been associated with variations in attitude, questions were posed to assess

both those variables (Questions 45,50,51, 51a, 51b). Education level is operationalized as

the highest degree achieved. Experience with persons with a disability was

operationalized as a two-dimensional concept following the practice of similar studies

(see Levy, et al., 1992; Walters & Baker, 1995). Personal experience was one dimension. and professional experience was the other dimension. The first dimension, personal experience, is explored (question 50) in terms of the respondent's close relationships with disabled people. The influence of close personal relationships with disabled persons on employer perceptions of disabled workers has been widely perceived as important in the research literature (Gouvier, et al., 1991; Michaels & Risucci, 1993). The second dimension, professional experience is captured (question 51) in terms of supervisory experience with disabled employees. For those respondents who indicate that they do indeed have supervisory experience, two follow-up questions are posed (51a, 51b) that assess the impact of that experience in terms of perceptions of disabled employee performance and future recommendations for hiring. These questions are adapted from an items developed by Walters and Baker (1995) who, along with a number of other authors, stress the relevance of past supervisory experience to current perceptions of disabled workers (Kregel & Unger, 1994; Foucher, et al., 1993)

Information was also be sought through questions about structural features of organizations, such as industry type (question 43) and number of employees (question 44). Both of these have been identified in the research literature as potentially important company features related to employer perceptions of disabled workers (Kregel & Tomiyasu, 1994; Levy, et al., 1993).

The final question of the demographic section (question 52) served to engage the respondent directly with an open-ended question about their thoughts and experience of

completing the survey. Previous research has shown that study participants who are asked to attend to how the study relates to their lives and experience are more likely to respond (Langer, 1997). The demographics section took an average of five minutes for the volunteers to complete. Among other things, the open-ended question provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on the study's degree of realism and relevance. The degree of verisimilitude and adequacy of the disabled worker vignettes is critical to the employers' impression-formation process. It is to a description of the critical two-part vignettes to which the study now turns.

Vignettes

In the context of social science research, a vignette is a deliberately constructed brief depiction of a person or situation that directs the attention and impressions of the reader or observer (Alexander & Becker, 1978; Finch, 1987; Lanza & Carfio, 1995). Vignettes may be prepared in any number of forms: oral, written, visual, or a combination thereof (Finch, 1987). Vignettes are given as a "stimulus" of sorts before the researcher poses questions of a normative or evaluative nature (Alexander & Becker, 1978). Vignettes provide a " structured indirect framework" for information that provides all participants with the same information (Burstin, Doughtie, and Raphaeli, 1980). Participants project their beliefs and biases onto a single, uniform stimulus that contains the same salient points for decision making and evaluation (Finch, 1987; Burstin, et al., 1980). In order to determine the influence of these salient points on participants' reactions the text of the vignette is manipulated by the investigator (Alexander & Becker,

1978; Finch, 1987; Lanza & Carfio, 1995). In other words, constituted by the vignette (as

an independent variable) is varied by changing salient points of the depiction. Lastly,

vignettes are meant to resemble real life situations and persons as closely as possible

(Alexander & Becker, 1978; Finch, 1987; Lanza & Carfio, 1995).

The strengths and weaknesses of vignettes stem from the very characteristics

listed above. Because the vignette is an "indirect" or "projective" technique, it is able to

tap into values, beliefs and perceptions that participants would otherwise be unable or

unwilling to articulate (Finch, 1987; Burstin, et al., 1980). This is a strength of special

relevance to this study because participants evaluate and respond to disability-related

information of great social and professional sensitivity. On the other hand, because

vignettes paint a picture that is more than the sum of all the elements, it is problematic to

claim apriori that all participants are exposed to exactly the same stimulus. In order to be

effective a vignette must be perceived as a uniform stimulus by all participants. The

vignette's salient points must also be uniformly understood by participants. This

uniformity of perception cannot be taken as a given, it must be tested. The testing of such

perceptions is often referred to as a "manipulation check", or a procedure by which

persons other than the investigator evaluate the effect of an experimental "manipulation".

In the case of vignettes, such "manipulation checks" focus on the salient points of the

vignette that are varied by the investigator to produce the desired uniform effect (e.g.,

independent variable). In the current study, vignettes were used to manipulate the

disability condition into either non-disabled or severely disabled conditions.

Slight alterations of the cover letter and application form were used to differentiate the disability condition. In addition, a different female and ethnically indistinct name was given to the job applicant in each condition: (a) Nancy A. Powell (non-disabled), (b) Anne C. Austin (acquired brain injury), and (c) Dorothy P. Gable (schizophrenia). The cover letters differed in one sentence near the conclusion, which introduced the special needs of each applicant: (a) daycare for the non-disabled applicant. (b) medications for the applicant with schizophrenia and (c) a wheel chair for the applicant with an acquired brain injury. The applicants' disability condition was also distinguished at two points in the application form: in the "Personal History" section entitled "Limitations on Hours" and in one of the "Employment History" sections entitled "Reasons for Leaving". The conditions are distinguished in the "Limitations on Hours" section by different scheduling needs attributed to the effects of: (a) day care availability (non-disabled), (b) wheelchair accessible transportation (acquired brain injury), or (c) predictable periods of high work stress (schizophrenia). In the section on "Reasons for Leaving" the conditions are distinguished by different needs: (a) day care needs as a single parent (non-disabled), (b) acquired brain injury and confinement to a wheelchair, (c) diagnosis of schizophrenia and medication needs.

Table 4 About Here

Manipulation check. The volunteer judges described earlier in this text performed

Table 4

Vignette Disability Condition Descriptors.

Vignette Component (Location)	Disability Condition	Descriptive Statement
Cover Letter (Last Paragraph)	Non-Disabled	"Although I rely on daycare for my child...."
	Acquired Brain Injury	"Although I use a wheel chair due to my medical condition...."
	Schizophrenia	"Although I take daily medications due to my medical condition...."
Employment Application (Limitations on Hours)	Non-disabled	"Work hours must be scheduled when daycare is available."
	Acquired Brain Injury	"Work hours must be scheduled when van or wheelchair-accessible buses are available."
	Schizophrenia	"Overtime work hours must be scheduled in advance during predictable periods of high work stress."
Employment Application (Reasons for Leaving)	Non-Disabled	"Given my day care needs as a single parent, the company...."
	Acquired Brain Injury	"Given my acquired brain injury, and confinement to a wheelchair, the company...."
	Schizophrenia	"Given my diagnosis of schizophrenia and medication needs, the company...."

a manipulation check on the salient points of both vignettes: the cover letter and the application form. The five expert judges were unanimous in agreement (100 percent) about the clarity and adequacy of the manipulations. There was also a 100 percent agreement among judges on appropriateness of the disability manipulation components, which consisted of a descriptive statement in the cover letter, and descriptive statements in the "limitations of work hours" and "reason for leaving job" sections of the employment application. They also agreed unanimously that applicants' job losses described in the employment application form were attributable to actions on the part of their employers, and not due to a failure to perform primary job responsibilities. Finally, the judges were in 100 percent agreement about the realism of the portrayal of the intended disability condition: physical-, psychiatric- and non-disabled. Reading the vignette took the judges seven minutes on average. In order to help validate the influence of manipulating the disability condition for the study as a whole, non-disabled vignettes served as a comparison group for the applicants with severe disabilities. Distinctly different employability ratings were predicted for applicants in the non-disabled (comparison group) and disabled (experimental group) conditions.

<u>Risk to Participants</u>

Risks to participants in this study were minimal. Participation was voluntary and participants were free to refuse to answer any or all questions posed by the survey. Any harm that might have come to employers or their organization due to the identification of specific responses to sensitive issues (such as relationship to the boss, or views of

disabled workers) was avoided due to the procedures that assure an anonymous reply. In addition, participants were provided with the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of both the investigator and the dissertation chair for any questions they may have. Finally, the results of this study were reported in aggregated form.

Having detailed the methodological steps that were taken to help control for threats to internal validity and sampling error, it is now time to turn to the data analysis plan for exploring the predicted relationships and hypotheses.

Statistical Methods Used in Data Analysis

A three-phase statistical analysis was used for the proposed data analysis plan: univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistics were employed. The first phase involved a univariate analysis of the survey data for the purpose of inspecting and cleaning the data. The univariate analysis also provided a description of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, in addition to providing the overall values for each measure and the mean score of employability impressions for each disability condition (physical-, psychiatric- and non-disabled).

In the second, bivariate phase of analyses, a one-way ANOVA procedure was conducted to test the differences between the mean employability scores of each disability condition in accordance with hypothesis 2, followed by a planned comparison using the Bonferroni test. The effect of key employer and organizational characteristics on employability ratings was also explored using one way ANOVAs. Also in the bivariate phase, Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were computed for

several variables presumed to have positive associations: hiring climate, consensus climate, negotiation latitude and employability. Employers' recommendations for hiring disabled workers and satisfaction with disabled workers previously hired were also expected to have a positive relationship.

The third phase of data analysis involved a multivariate analysis using a logistical regression model to determine the odds in favor of obtaining a more favorable employability impression given a favorable hiring climate and high negotiation latitude (hypothesis 1).

Summary

In order to address threats to external validity the sampling frame, survey design and data collection procedure were designed to maximize participation by a representative sample of hiring managers. The substantial threat to validity posed by anticipated social desirability bias was addressed chiefly by the choice of standardized instruments, and by assuring participants anonymity. In addition, the organizational climate measure was headed with directions that framed the items as indirect questions, militating against a social desirability response bias in that instrument. The face and content validity of the vignettes was evaluated by a small panel of expert judges who achieved consensus on the validity of each vignette. As an additional validity check, one third of the sampling frame received a non-disabled vignette, permitting comparisons with the results to the two disabled applicant vignettes. Finally, the timing of the entire survey packet, critical to concerns about completion and response rates, was tested by the expert judges. It is now appropriate to review the survey results.

Chapter IV

Results

The study findings are presented in five sections. The first section focuses on the

univariate descriptive analysis of the study participants' background and demographic

characteristics. An analysis of the study measures, including instrument reliability, along

with measures of central tendency and dispersion are the focus of the second section. The

third section includes a bivariate analysis of the second study hypothesis. The fourth

section contains exploratory bivariate analyses of selected employer and organizational

characteristics. In the fifth section, a multivariate analysis of the first study hypothesis is

conducted using a logistical regression model. Data analyses were conducted using the

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 7.5.1 for Windows, 1997).

Univariate Descriptive Analysis of Participants' Background and Characteristics

In this section response rate, characteristics of participants, their experience with

disabled persons, and work environment are described. A total of 302 surveys were

returned, of which 248 were completed surveys. The remaining 54 surveys were returned

uncompleted. The breakdown of returned but uncompleted surveys is found on Table 5.

Table 5 About Here

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Table 5

Respondents' Stated Rationale for Returned Surveys.

Stated Rationale	N	%*
No Explanation	24	44.44
Declined to Participate	10	18.52
Staffing or Time Restrictions	8	14.81
Undeliverable	5	9.26
Change of Personnel	4	7.41
Against Company Policy	2	3.70
Addressee Deceased	1	1.85

Note. * Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding errors.

Only five surveys were undeliverable (0.05% of total surveys mailed) suggesting a highly

accurate mailing list. One potential respondent was reported deceased, which together

with the five undeliverable surveys reduces the effective sampling frame to 994

prospective respondents. The 248 completed returns thus constitutes a 24.9 percent

response rate. Although this response rate is quite modest it nonetheless falls within the

range of response rates obtained for mail surveys dealing with the topics of disability and

employer perceptions. In their study contrasting disabled and non-disabled individual

perceptions of staffing selection techniques, Hayes, and associates (1995), noted that for

disability-related surveys, typical return rates range from 15 to 30 percent and typically

do not exceed 50 percent (Hayes, et al., 1995). Those authors obtained an overall

response rate of 23.8 percent for their own disability-related survey. A review of the

response rates for studies examining employer perceptions of disabled workers appears to

support the range offered by Hayes and colleagues. Beginning at the high end of

response rates for mail surveys cited in this study, Kossek and Zonia (1993) obtained a 51

percent response rate, followed in descending order by Gerhardt (1997), at 32 percent,

Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman and Levy (1992), at 30 percent, Millington, Szymanski &

Hanley-Maxwell (1994), at 29.6, Lee and Newman (1993) at 27 percent, Roessler and

Sumner, at 21 percent, Ehrhart (1994) at 12.3 percent, and finally, Levy, Jessop,

Rimmerman, Francis and Levy (1993) at 6.2 percent. In their review of previous

literature on employer perceptions of worker with a disability, Diska and Rogers (1996)

were able to identify only one mail survey with a very high response rate; a 1971 survey

conducted by Hartlage and Roland which obtained a 79 percent response rate.

Characteristics of the study participants are described next in Table 6.

Table 6 About Here

A total of 248 employers participated in the study. One hundred seventy-five

(70.6%) were female, and seventy-two (29.0) were male, while one participant failed to

indicate his or her gender (0.04%). The disproportionate percentage of female

respondents is explained in part by the composition of the sampling frame. The

investigator used the name and prefix of the addressee to determine the presumed sex of

each sampling frame element (employer). Six hundred twenty-three (62.3%) of the

prospective respondents were likely to be female, three hundred forty-two (34.2%) were

male, and thirty-five (3.5%) were of indeterminate sex. These results of the researcher's

categorization were checked by an independent rater who reviewed 200 names on the

sampling frame and obtained 98 percent agreement with the investigator's classification

by sex. Hence, women constituted a slightly larger percentage of survey respondents

than would be expected by chance based upon the sampling frame: 70.6 percent vs. 62.3

percent, or an 8.3 greater participation. By contrast, men constituted a smaller percentage

of survey respondents than would be expected based upon the sampling frame: 29 percent

vs. 34.2 percent, or a 5.2 percent lesser participation. These differences do not take into

Table 6

Study Participant Characteristics and Background.

Variable	Category	N	Item %
Sex			
	Male	72	29.1
	Female	175	70.9
Race			
	Caucasian	215	87.4
	African-American	18	7.3
	Asian-American	4	1.6
	Multi-Racial	3	1.2
	Hispanic	2	.8
	Native American	2	.8
	Other Race	2	.8
Condition			
	Disabled	14	5.6
	Non-Disabled	234	94.4
Education*			
	High School Diploma	10	4.1
	G.E.D.	5	2.0
	Associate's Degree	21	8.5
	Bachelor's Degree	126	51.2
	Master's Degree	79	32.1
	Doctoral Degree (includes J.D.)	5	2.0
Title			
	Director	93	37.5
	Manager	90	36.3
	Assistant Director	11	4.4
	Supervisor	11	4.4
	HR Manager	11	4.4
	Vice President	7	2.8
	HR Specialist	7	2.8
	Assistant Manager	5	2.0
	Regional Manager	4	1.6
	Other (Single Cases)	9	3.6

Note. * Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding errors.

account the margin or error in each participant list – only .04 percent sex unknown for the survey, but 3.5 percent sex unknown for the sampling frame. These unknown elements could either widen or narrow the gender participation gap. To the extent that there is a small gender participation gap, the slightly greater participation rate of females in this study may be attributable to the greater tendency of women to participate in mail surveys as documented elsewhere in the literature (see Green, 1996, for a review). Most critically though, the male and female mean employability ratings for job applicants differ very little, with the female mean 131.10 and the male mean 127.76. The difference between these two means was not statistically significantly ($F=1.825$, $p=.178$) suggesting that the effect of sex did not systematically bias the study results.

The age range of participants was from 20 to 66 years old, with a mean age of 42.5 years old. Caucasians comprised 215 (87.4 %) respondents. African-Americans made up the next largest racial group at 18 (7.3%) respondents, followed by Asian-Americans (1.6%), Multiracial (1.2%) and a four-way tie between Hispanic, Native American, Other Race, and Race Unspecified, each with two (0.8%) respondents. All participants in the survey had obtained a high-school degree or its equivalent (G.E.D.) and the vast majority had a college education. Of the 246 participants who indicated their education achievements, 8.5 percent had an Associate's degree, 51.2 percent a Bachelor's degree, 32.1 percent a Master's degree, and 2 percent had a doctoral degree. The two most common self-reported job titles of respondents were "director" (37.5%) and "manager" (36.3%). In a three-way tie for third place, "assistant director", "supervisor"

and "human resources manager" were represented by 4.4 percent of the respondents each. Tied for fourth place were "vice president" and "human resource specialist" at 2.8 percent each, followed by "assistant manager" (2.0%) and "regional manager" (1.6%) in fifth and sixth place respectively. Other titles unique to individual respondents constituted the remaining 3.6 percent of job titles reported. Those titles were other non-managerial titles, such as "administrative assistant", "consultant" or "assistant." It is noteworthy that titles falling outside the selected "hiring manager" titles prescribed in the sampling frame nonetheless appeared among the participants. A review of the mailing list by the author reconfirmed that the sampling frame did not explicitly contain titles such as "vice president" "human resource specialist" or the other non-managerial titles. Nonetheless, a total of 23 participants or 9.3 percent of participants had a vice president, specialist or other non-managerial job title. This anomaly is attributed to two factors: (1) the respondent was sometimes not the same as the addressee (e.g., either the manager's subordinate or supervisor replied), or (2) the addressee had taken on a new job title. Because most of the unanticipated job titles suggest hiring and supervisory experience they were not removed from the sample. Moreover, due to the fact that the percentage of participants falling outside the study parameters for "hiring manager" was very small their inclusion was not deemed prejudicial to the results.

Table 7 About Here

Table 7

<u>Study Participant Prior Experience with Disabled Persons</u>

Item	N	Item %
Participant has Close Friend or Family Member with a Disability		
Yes	136	54.8
No	112	45.2
Supervised Employee with a Disability		
Yes	125	50.4
No	123	49.6
Satisfied with Disabled Employee Performance		
Very Satisfied	33	28.2
Generally Satisfied	51	43.6
Satisfied	24	20.5
Generally Unsatisfied	8	6.8
Very Unsatisfied	1	0.9
Participant would Recommend Hiring Disabled Workers		
Very Likely	51	43.2
Generally Likely	46	39.0
Likely	21	17.8
Generally Unlikely	0	0.0
Very Unlikely	0	0.0

Although only 5.6 percent of participants had a disability, a slight majority of all

participants had direct experience with persons having a disability. Nearly fifty-five

percent (54.8%) of participants indicated that they had a close friend or relative with a

disability and just over fifty percent (50.4%) indicated that they had supervised an

employee with a disability. Of those having had supervisory experience with a disabled

worker, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they were "satisfied to very

satisfied" with the worker's performance. Only 6.8 percent indicated they had been

"generally unsatisfied", and less than one percent declared themselves "very unsatisfied",

while 20.5 percent were "satisfied", 43.6 percent "generally satisfied" and 28.2 percent

"very satisfied". When asked to indicate how likely they were to recommend hiring

disabled workers, these respondents replied strongly in favor of making such a

recommendation, with no one opting for the "generally unlikely" or "very unlikely" to

recommend choice options. In fact, the largest concentration (43.2%) of respondents

opted for the "very likely" to recommend category, followed by "generally likely" (39%)

and "likely" (17.8%), suggesting that the respondents chose to be somewhat more

generous in their recommendations than indicated by their reported supervisory

experience. Participants' work environments are described next in Table 8.

Table 8 About Here

Table 8

Study Participant Work Environment Characteristics

Variable	N	Item %

Type of Business*

Manufacturing	64	25.8
Service	42	16.9
Health Care	28	11.3
Education	15	6.0
Food Industry	11	4.4
Financial	8	3.2
Local Government	7	2.8
Non-Profit (NGO)	7	2.8
Retail	7	2.8
Media	7	2.8
Sales/Marketing	6	2.4
Telecommunications	6	2.4
Transportation	5	2.0
Wholesale	5	2.0
Consulting	4	1.6
Entertainment	4	1.6
Utility/Energy	4	1.6
State Government	3	1.2
Insurance	2	0.8
Legal	2	0.8
Engineering/Construction	2	0.8
Other (Single Cases)	9	3.6

Note. * Percentages do not total 100 due to rounding errors.

The greatest concentration of participants by industry type was found in the manufacturing sector (25.8 %). Service industries (16.9 %), health care (11.3 %) education (6.0%), food industry (4.4%) and financial (3.2%) followed. Local government, non-profit, retail and media trailed in a four-way tie (2.8 % each). Sales/marketing and telecommunications were tied for the next place (2.4% each). Wholesale and consulting followed, tied at 2 percent. Consulting, entertainment and utility/energy were tied for the next place (1.6 % each), trailed slightly by state government (1.2 %). Insurance, legal and engineering/construction followed in a three way tie (0.8 % each). Participants' organizations ranged in size from 10 to 750,000 employees when part-time and full-time employees were combined. There were 79 small organizations (10-249 employees), 80 medium-sized organizations (250-1,199 employees) and 77 large organizations (1,200-750,000 employees). Only 27 participants responded to the open-ended question that solicited their thoughts on the survey. Most of the respondents used this question (N=20) to query or congratulate the researcher. A small minority of respondents (N=6) used the question to decry problems related to various aspects of the ADA. Three respondents stated that the ADA was not required at their firms, because their hiring practices were already equitable. Finally, one respondent used the question to praise the ADA. Unfortunately, the low response rate, combined with the limited and idiosyncratic nature of the responses, ruled out a meaningful quantitative analysis.

Analysis of Measures

Reliability of the Instruments

In order to assess inter-item reliability Cronbach's *alpha* was calculated for the

full scale of each instrument: the Knowledge and Acceptance of the ADA Scale, or KAA

(measure of organizational climate for hiring disabled workers), the Information

Exchange Scale, or IES (negotiation latitude measure) and the Employment

Characteristics Scale, or ECS (employability measure). The Cronbach's *alpha* calculated

for each instrument was compared to the Cronbach's *alpha* established by previous

studies. Each of the instruments has only one "established" Cronbach's *alpha*, because

each has had only one previously reported inter-item reliability coefficient. The KAA

has an established Cronbach's $\propto$ of .70 and a comparable Cronbach's $\propto$ of .72 in this

study. Cronbach *alphas* of .70 or higher represent "acceptable" levels of inter-item

reliability according to Nunnally (1978). Substantially higher Cronbach's *alpha* were

reported for the other two instruments. The IES had an established Cronbach's $\propto$ of .84,

and a comparable Cronbach's $\propto$ of .85 in this study. Meanwhile, the ECS had a

Cronbach's $\propto$ of .93 in both this study and the previous study.

Instrumentation: Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion

Knowledge and Acceptance of the ADA Scale (KAA)

As noted in Chapter 3, the KAA is a ten-item scale originally intended to assess

respondents' knowledge and acceptance of the ADA. It asks respondents to indicate their

degree of agreement with statements about employers' obligations to take actions

promoting the employment of disabled workers (Walters & Baker. 1995). It was altered

to serve as a proxy measure of the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers with

the addition of a sentence to the directions requesting that the participant: "answer the

following questions about what employers 'should' do in terms of the expectations that

guide hiring practices at your company." This wording was consistent with descriptions

of organizational climate as shared expectations that guide behavior (see Schneider.

1990). A 5-point Likert scale was used with the following response options: 1 for

"Strongly Disagree", 2 for "Disagree", 3 for "Neutral", 4 for "Agree", 5 for "Strongly

Agree". Scores on the KAA can range from 10 to 50 with a higher score indicating a

more favorable organizational climate for hiring disabled workers. A KAA score was

computed for all 248 participants. In this sample KAA scores ranged from a low of 17 to

a high of 50, with a mean of 38.05 and a standard deviation of 5.29 points The median

score is 38 and the modal score 36. In order to make organizational climate a

dichotomous variable, in keeping with the conceptual model, a median split was

performed to create two groups of organizational climate scores: high (favorable), and

low (unfavorable) for use in testing hypothesis one. The conceptual model distinguished

high (favorable) from low (unfavorable) employability ratings in terms of predictions

about employer's impressions of the hypothetical job applicants that required a clear

division between "favorable" and "unfavorable" impressions. Scores of 38 and above

were considered to indicate a "favorable" organizational climate for hiring disabled

workers, with scores of 37 and below indicating an "unfavorable" climate. There were

113 cases falling in the category of "favorable" climate for hiring disabled workers and

135 cases falling in the "unfavorable" climate category. The distribution of KAA scores

was negatively skewed. These results, and those of the other instruments can be found on

Table 9.

Table 9 About Here

As noted previously, the KAA is used as a proxy measure for assessing the organizational

climate for hiring disabled workers. In order to help assess the extent to which the KAA

scores accurately reflect the shared expectations guiding company hiring practices,

participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed that their KAA

responses are the same as those generally held by other hiring managers in their

company. A 5-point Likert scale was used as follows: 1 for "Strongly Disagree", 2 for

"Disagree, 3 for "Neutral", 4 for "Agree", 5 for "Strongly Agree". Significantly, 71

percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, with only

24.2 percent indicating neutrality and a mere 4.8 percent either disagreeing or strongly

disagreeing. These findings suggest that the organizational climate captured by the KAA

may in fact reflect a "consensus" climate. It has been previously noted that high

negotiation latitude managers are more likely to reflect the "consensus" organizational

climate (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). Therefore, it stands to reason that the

organizational climate scores of high negotiation latitude (NL) employers ought to be

Table 9

Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion for Study Measures

Measure	N	Mean	Median	Range	S.D.	Skewness	α
KAA	248	38.05	38.00	17-50	5.29	-	.72
IES	248	20.26	19.00	8-51	7.80	+	.85
ECS	248	130.00	129.00	74-183	17.62	N	.93

Note. KAA= Knowledge and Acceptance of the ADA Scale. IES = Information Exchange Scale. ECS= Employment Characteristics Scale.
- = distribution negatively skewed + = distribution positively skewed
N = distribution approximates the normal curve

particularly representative of the consensus organizational climate. When the organizational climate scores of high NL employers (N=133) were selected out for separate analysis, the mean score was found to be 37.69, very close to the mean score for all employers (N=248) of 38.05. This lends support to the proxy instrument as a measure of organizational climate. Further support is found when the organizational scores of employers who indicated that their KAA responses were the same as those of other hiring managers in the company (N=176) were selected out for separate analysis. Recall that to the extent that the KAA reflected views of other hiring managers in the company it also represented a "consensus" view of climate. The mean climate scores for this group was 38.26, very close to that of the full employer group (38.05) and close to that of the high NL group (37.69).

Information Exchange Scale (IES)

The IES is an eight-item scale for measuring negotiation latitude which reflects the quality of the respondent's relationship with his or her boss as noted in Chapter 3. The IES asks respondents to indicate their degree of agreement with statements regarding the trust and confidence afforded them by their supervisor (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). Participants chose their response from a 7-point Likert scale as follows: 1 for "Very Much Agree", 2 for "Generally Agree", 3 for "Agree Somewhat", 4 for "Neutral", 5 for "Disagree Somewhat", 6 for "Generally Disagree", 7 for "Very Much Disagree." Possible scores on the IES range from 8 to 56. The fifth item is reverse scored because it refers to out-group status, whereas all the rest refer to aspects of in-group status with the

supervisor. A higher IES score indicates lower negotiation latitude. An IES score was calculated for all 248 participants. The IES scores ranged from 8 to 51, spanning nearly the entire range of possible scores. The highest IES score was 8, and the lowest, 51. The mean IES score was 20.26, the standard deviation 7.80. The median and mode scores were 19 and 18 respectively. For the purposes of creating a dichotomous variable as indicated by the conceptual model, a median split was performed to create high and low negotiation latitude groups for testing hypothesis one. A median split divided the variable into two groups of roughly similar size: with 129 (.52) in the high NL category and 119 (.48) in the low NL group. The median split was the procedure used by the instrument authors for dividing negotiation latitude into high and low categories.

According to the conceptual model, employers with a high negotiation latitude were predicted to have distinct employability impressions from employers with a low negotiation latitude, thus warranting the creation of a dichotomous variable. Respondents with an IES score of 18 or lower comprised the high negotiation latitude group. There were 129 participants in the high negotiation latitude group. The low negotiation latitude group was comprised of the 119 participants with an IES score of 19 or higher. The distribution of IES scores was positively skewed.

Employment Characteristics Scale (ECS)

As noted in Chapter 3, the ECS is a 22-item scale listing employee attributes that employers find important when evaluating the employability of job applicants (Christman & Slaten, 1991). Participants indicate how characteristic they believe a trait to be of the

job applicant using a 9-point Likert scale as follows: 1 for "Most Uncharacteristic", 2 for

"Very Uncharacteristic ", 3 for "Quite Uncharacteristic", 4 for "Somewhat

Uncharacteristic", 5 for "Neutral/Neither Characteristic nor Uncharacteristic", 6 for

"Somewhat Characteristic", 7 for "Quite Characteristic", 8 for "Very Characteristic", 9

for "Most Characteristic". An ECS score was computed for all 248 participants. Possible

ECS scores range from 22 to 198. In the sample, ECS scores ranged from a low of 74 to

a high of 183. The mean was 130 and the standard deviation 17.62. The mode was 119

and the median 129. A median split was performed to create a favorable employability

rating group for respondents with high scores, and an unfavorable employability rating

group for respondents with low scores. The favorable employability rating group was

composed of the 121 respondents with a score of 129 or more. The unfavorable

employability rating group was composed of the 127 respondents with a score of 128.0 or

less. The distribution of scores for the ECS approximated the normal curve.

<center>Bivariate Analysis</center>

<center>Hypothesis 2: The relationship of applicant disability condition to</center>

<center>mean employability scores</center>

A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine the effect of applicant disability

condition on employability ratings, illustrated in Table 10.

<center>Table 10 About Here</center>

Table 10

One-Way ANOVAs of the Differences Between Mean Applicant Employability Ratings by Disability Condition

Applicant Condition	N	Mean	S.D	df	F-value	Significance Level
Non-Disabled	74	139.59	17.04	2, 245	17.37	.000*
Physical Disability	88	125.95	17.54	2, 245		
Psychiatric Disability	86	126.15	15.04	2, 245		

Note. * p≤.001

Specifically, hypothesis 2 predicted that non-disabled applicants would obtain a significantly more favorable employability rating than applicants in the two disability conditions and that applicants with a physical disability would be more favorably rated than those with a psychiatric disability. The first part of this prediction, about the primacy of the non-disabled ratings, is supported by the data. The mean ECS score for non-disabled job applicants is 139.59, whereas for applicants with a psychiatric disability it is only 126.15, and for applicants with a physical disability only 125.95. This clearly shows the non-disabled applicants with a substantially more favorable employability rating than applicants in either disability condition. Moreover, the differences between the employability rating means for the three applicant conditions achieved statistical significance ($F=17.37$, $p<.001$).

In order to test for significant differences between the employability ratings of applicant groups a planned comparison among means was conducted using the Bonferroni test statistics. The results showed a highly significant difference between the non-disabled applicants and those with a physical disability ($p=.000$), as well as between the non-disabled applicants and those with a psychiatric disability ($p=.000$). The employability ratings of the two non-disabled conditions were essentially indistinguishable ($p=1.00$). This finding supports the prediction that the non-disabled applicants would receive significantly higher employability ratings than applicants with a severe disability. However, the second prediction made in hypothesis two was not supported. Contrary to predictions, applicants with a physical disability were not rated as

more employable on average, than applicants with a psychiatric disability. Applicants in both severe disability conditions were rated substantially the same despite a negligible employability rating advantage for applicants with a psychiatric disability ($\underline{M}$ =126.15) over the applicants with a physical disability ($\underline{M}$ = 125.95).

Exploratory Data Analyses

Employer and Organizational Characteristics

One-way Analysis of Variance

In order to explore possible relationships between key employer and organizational characteristics and employability ratings one-way analyses of variance were conducted comparing employability ratings by participants' prior experience with disabled persons, education level, sex, racial category, disability status, organizational size and type.

Table 11 About Here

In the current study, employers' prior relationship with disabled persons was recorded along two dimensions: work experience and personal experience. Work experience with a disabled person was operationalized in terms of whether or not the employer had supervised a disabled employee. The difference in the mean employability ratings of employers with such supervisory experience ($\underline{M}$= 129.44) and those without experience supervising disabled employees ($\underline{M}$=130.09) was substantially

Table 11

One-Way ANOVAs of the Differences Between the Mean Employability Ratings of Selected Employer and Organizational Characteristics.

Characteristic	N	M	SD	F-value	Significance Level
Sex	247	130.13	18.27	1.830	.178
Male	88	127.76	18.27		
Female	86	130.13	17.35		
Disability Status	248	130.01	17.62	.062	.812
Disabled	14	129.00	20.12		
Non-Disabled	234	130.16	17.51		
Close Relationship With a Disabled Person	248	130.09	17.62	.570	.451
Has Close	136	130.86	17.45		
Has Not Close	112	129.16	17.86		
Supervision of Disabled Employee	248	130.09	17.62	.345	.558
Has Supervised	125	129.44	18.96		
Not Supervised	123	130.09	16.21		
Racial Group of Participant	246	130.22	17.63	1.303	.255
Non-Minority	215	130.70	17.13		
Minority	31	126.84	20.75		
Organizational Size	236	129.97	17.99	.077	.926
Small	77	129.31	16.79		
Medium	80	130.35	20.53		
Large	79	130.23	16.53		
Organizational Type	246	130.09	17.62	.356	.998
Education Level (Highest Degree)	246	130.05	17.64	.992	.431
High School	10	132.40	13.39		
GED	5	117.80	20.95		
Associate's	21	129.95	19.00		
Bachelor's	126	131.13	17.77		
Master's	79	128.97	17.35		
Law (J.D.)	2	149.50	16.26		
Doctorate	3	125.67	17.47		

the same and did not achieve statistical significance (F=.345, p =.558). Personal

experience with disabled persons was operationalized in terms of having a close

relationship. The difference in the mean employability ratings of employers with a close

relationship (M=130.86) and without such a relationship (M=129.16), was again

substantially the same and did not achieve statistical significance (F = .570, p= .451)

much as in the case of supervisory experience. Therefore, in this study, it appears that

prior experience with disabled persons had little effect on employability ratings.

The mean employability levels associated with different levels of education varied

somewhat more than the means of the preceding variables, but the differences nonetheless

failed to achieve significance overall (F = .992, p=.431). The mean employability ratings

moved up and down in an uneven fashion with level of education: High school

(M=132.40), GED (M=117.80), Associate's (M=129.95), Bachelor's (M=131.13),

Master's (M=128.97), J.D. (M=149.50), Doctorate (M=125.67). It is very difficult to

discern a trend in these scores. Moreover, most participants are in either the Bachelors

(51.2%) or Master's (32.1%) categories, with only a small percentage of participants

representing the higher and lower ends of the education spectrum.

In like fashion, the mean employability ratings by sex, racial category and

disability status were not substantially different, nor did they achieve statistical

significance. To begin with, the difference between male (M=127.76) and female

(M=130.13) employability ratings was statistically non-significant (F=1.83, p=.178).

Differences between the employability ratings by racial group (racial minority M =

130.70; non-minority $\underline{M}$=126.84) were also statistically non-significant (F=1.303,

p=.255). Finally differences in the employability ratings by disability status

(operationalized as whether or not the employer has a disability) failed to achieve

statistical significance (F=.06, p=.812). Moreover, the ratings were substantially the

same for disabled employers ($\underline{M}$=129.00) and non-disabled employers ($\underline{M}$=130.16). It is

notable that with the exception of education level, which was occasioned by marked

fluctuations, the mean employability rating for participants in whatever group was very

close to the "average" score of 130.09 (Range 109.00) the mean employability rating of

job applicants in all disability conditions. This suggests that variations in most employer,

and all organizational characteristics had little effect on employability ratings.

Similarly, the mean employability scores by organizational size were substantially

the same, and failed to rise to the level of statistical significance (F=.077, p=.926). The

employability rating means were respectively 129.31 for small-, 130.35 for medium-, and

130.23 for large organizations. In concert with organizational size, type of organization

also failed to differentiate mean employability ratings at the level of statistical

significance (F=.356, p=.998). It should be noted that in this study the Standard

Industrial Classification (SIC) of organizations was not used and many participants gave

their own description of the industry in which their company falls, so strict comparability

with studies grouping industries under the SIC is not possible (e.g., Millington, et al.

1997).

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations

Before proceeding to test hypothesis one, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated for the major study variables. The highest positive correlation between any two study variables was obtained for hiring recommendations and satisfaction with worker performance. A correlation coefficient of $r=.619$ was obtained. This correlation was also statistically significant ($p \leq .001$). Organizational climate for hiring disabled workers is moderately associated with employability ratings ($r=.198$, $p \leq .001$) in a positive direction. Hiring climate is also moderately associated with consensus climate views (captured by question 11) in a positive direction ($r=.162$, $p \leq .05$). These relationships were anticipated and are consistent with the study hypotheses. More surprising were the correlations between negotiation latitude and the other key variables. A very slight, but negative association was discovered between negotiation latitude and employability ($r=-.095$). A still smaller negative relationship was found between negotiation latitude and hiring climate ($r=-.028$). A somewhat larger negative association was found between negotiation latitude and consensus climate views ($r=-.119$). If on the rationale that high negotiation latitude employers are the focus of this study only high NL scores are selected the correlations are little changed. The correlation between high NL and employability is truly negligible and yet negative ($r=-.008$). The correlation between high NL and organizational climate is still very small and negative ($r=-.062$). Finally, the correlation between high NL and a consensus view of the organizational climate is again tiny and negative ($r=-.026$). Given that climate and negotiation latitude are related

concepts these finding are puzzling, especially as they are reinforced by the high

negotiation latitude participants. The same is true for the correlations between negotiation

latitude and employability.

Clearly, the correlations have introduced both light and ambiguity to some of the

expected relationships around the study hypothesis 1. Organizational climate does appear

to be positively related to employability impressions. By contrast, though, negotiation

latitude appears to have a slight negative relationship. Correlations cannot, however,

treat employability ratings as a dichotomous variable; a crucial distinction that speaks to

the heart of the research question: How is perceived organizational context related to a

favorable employability rating. In this study, it is the favorable employability ratings in

particular that are of interest; unfavorable employability are not. Favorable employability

ratings are the desired result of a perceived organizational context. In order to explore the

relationship of a favorable employability rating to climate and negotiation latitude a

logistical regression model must be used. The logistical regression model and analysis

are reviewed next.

Multivariate Analysis

Hypothesis 1: The odds in favor of job applicants obtaining a favorable employability rating when the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers is favorable and employer negotiation latitude is high.

Logistical Regression

As noted briefly, above, logistical regression is a procedure for modeling, or representing, the relationship between a bi-level dependent variable and several independent variables (Dattalo, 1994; Unrau & Coleman, 1998). Employability ratings are treated as a probability value in the logistical regression. The probability of obtaining a favorable. rather than unfavorable employability rating when hiring climate is favorable and negotiation latitude is high is assessed in the logistical regression model. There are several compelling reasons for adopting this model. beginning with the conceptual "fit". The relationship of employability ratings to perceived organizational context was expressed in terms of the odds of obtaining a favorable employability rating of job applicants given a more favorable hiring climate and a high negotiation latitude. This is because only one employability rating is of interest, a favorable one. A favorable employability rating is the desired outcome, and an unfavorable employability rating is not: logistical regression makes it possible to transform that binary dependent variable into a continuous variable ranging from $-\infty$ to $+\infty$ by means of the logistic transformation (Dattalo. 1994). In addition. the independent variables representing perceived organizational context are a mixture of continuous (climate) and dichotomous (negotiation latitude) variables, which makes them poor candidates for discriminant function analysis – another possible avenue – because of the violation of multivariate normality in the mixture of independent variables (Sharma, 1996). Logistical regression is robust against violations of multivariate normality (Dattalo, 1994; Sharma, 1996).

A logistical regression was performed to assess the odds favoring a favorable

employability rating of hypothetical job applicants when there is a favorable climate and

high negotiation latitude. "Odds" in this context are actually a shorthand for the log of

the odds that a favorable employability rating is associated with a one unit change in

either hiring climate or high negotiation latitude. Otherwise stated, the odds refer to the

factor by which the probability of having a favorable employability rating will change as

a function of (1) a one unit change in hiring climate, or (2) a high negotiation latitude

label. The units of measurement in the model for the study variables are as follows: (a)

High negotiation latitude = 1 and low negotiation latitude = 0, (b) Favorable

employability ratings = 1 and unfavorable employability ratings =0, (c) One point

increment in mean organizational climate scores. The logistical regression was

performed using the SPSS forward stepwise regression (Norusis, 1990). The results are

shown in Table 12, below.

Table 12 About Here

The employability rating logit model's accuracy rate of prediction was a modest

58.87 percent, indicating that the model quite often failed to accurately predict a

favorable employability rating. The logistical regression model aims at parsimony: to

contain neither too few, nor too many, variables (Dattalo, 1994). In this study the model

Table 12

Odds of Obtaining a Favorable Employability Rating When Organizational Climate is Favorable and Negotiation Latitude is High.

Variable	Estimated Coefficient (β)	Estimated Standard Error	Odds
Organizational Climate	.0838*	.0264	1.0874
Negotiation Latitude†	.5064°	.2623	1.6593

Note. * p=.0015 ° p=.0535. † Negotiation Latitude was coded '1' for 'High', '0' for 'Low'.

serves to differentiate employers who give favorable employability ratings from those who give unfavorable ones.

Goodness-of -fit refers to the probability of arriving at the sample results using the variables found in this model (Dattalo, 1994). Goodness-of fit is one measure of model parsimony. The goodness of fit was .8751 as determined by the Hosmer and Lemshow goodness-of-fit test. An "optimal" fit should fall in the .50 - .85 range, in order to avoid the perils of either "under-fitting," in which too few variables, or the wrong variables are used in the model, or "over-fitting," in which too many variables are used (Dattalo, 1994). A fit in the .87 range, while slightly over-fitted, is still very close to the acceptable range (Dattalo, 1994). The logistical regression model in the current study can thus be considered to be adequately parsimonious and useful. The findings of this study suggest that organizational climate for hiring disabled workers is a significant predictor of favorable employability ratings in logit. This means that employers in a more favorable organizational climate are very slightly (by a factor of 1.0874) more likely to give favorable employability ratings than employers in less favorable climates, and this relationship is significant at the .01 level (odds = .0874, p=.0015). Thus, the more favorable the climate for hiring disabled workers is, the more likely a hypothetical job applicant is to be rated favorably. Unfortunately, statistical significance was not achieved for the high negotiation latitude predictor in logit. Although employers with high negotiation latitude are also very slightly (by a factor of 1.6593) more likely to give favorable employability ratings than employers with a low negotiation latitude, it fails to

achieve statistical significance at the .05 level (p=.0535). Hence, hypothesis 1 was partially supported, with one of the two predictor variables in the logit model achieving statistical significance.

Summary

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were partially supported by the data. Hypothesis 1 was supported to the extent that a more favorable organizational climate for hiring disabled workers was a statistically significant predictor of a favorable employability rating in the logistical regression analysis. The odds of obtaining a favorable employability rating for job applicants requiring workplace accommodations appeared to be greater when the employer was in an organizational climate that is more favorable toward hiring disabled workers. Hypothesis 2 was supported to the extent that non-disabled job applicants were rated substantially more employable than job applicants in either of the two severely disabled conditions (acquired brain injury or schizophrenia). This difference was also statistically significant and suggested that disabled workers were perceived as notably less employable than non-disabled workers who otherwise have the same goals, education, work history and skills.

Hypothesis 1 was not supported to the extent that high negotiation latitude failed to obtain statistical significance in the logistical regression model. The logistical regression model for Hypothesis 1 stated that the odds in favor of obtaining a higher employability rating would be predicated upon both a favorable organizational climate and high negotiation latitude. Hypothesis 2 was not supported to the extent that job

applicants with a psychiatric disability received substantially the same employability ratings as those with a physical disability. Hypothesis 2 stated, in part, that the non-disabled applicants would be given the highest employability ratings, with mean ratings significantly higher than those for the disability condition applicants, followed by applicants with a physical disability, and then applicants with a psychiatric disability. The fact that partial support was received for both hypotheses has implications for the study's contribution to knowledge and practice which will be discussed later on.

With respect to the exploratory data analyses, employer characteristics (e.g., sex, racial group, disability status, prior experience, and education) and organizational characteristics (e.g., organizational size and organizational type) failed to yield significant differences in employability ratings. The correlations between study variables were for the most part very small and not statistically significant. Negotiation latitude had a very small negative correlation to employability ratings and a tiny negative correlation to organizational climate. However, the relationship between organizational climate and employability was statistically significant, if still quite modest.

In the next chapter, the significant findings of this study will be placed in the context of previous research and considered for their contribution to the understanding of organizational context and employers' impressions of disabled job applicants. Additionally, the possible causes of the study's unexpected findings, in which the study hypotheses were not supported, will be discussed along with the study limitations. Finally, the implications of this study for practice and for research will be discussed.

CHAPTER V

Discussion: Integration of Results

The relationship between the employers' perceived organizational context and their impressions of the employability of hypothetical job applicants with a severe disability was investigated in this doctoral research project. Two hundred forty-eight participants completed a survey packet that included a measure of organizational climate for hiring disabled workers, a measure of negotiation latitude, and demographic questions focusing on the employer, as well as a cover letter, job application form and employability rating scale, focusing on a hypothetical job applicant in one of three conditions (non-disabled, psychiatric disability, physical disability). In this chapter a synopsis of the dissertation and a discussion of study findings will be presented. The synopsis of the dissertation will review the first four chapters of the dissertation in light of the study context, purpose, significance, design and methodology. The discussion of study findings will first review both the expected and unexpected results in light of previous studies in three areas: (1) organizational climate (2) negotiation latitude (3) the perceived employability of individuals with a severe disability. The discussion will then turn to a consideration of study limitations followed by study contributions to social work research, practice and knowledge building.

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Synopsis of the Dissertation

In Chapter One the relevance of this study to the employment barriers faced by persons with disabilities was explained. Employment discrimination faced by persons with a disability and some of its negative consequences were discussed. The employability perceptions of disabled persons held by hiring managers were identified as potentially a key barrier to employment. A link between employers' perceived organizational context and their employability impressions was proposed based on previous research. Key study terms were operationalized including: employer, organization, organizational climate, leader-member exchange, negotiation latitude, employability, disability, and attitude.

The chief purpose of this study was to explore the relationship of the employers' perceived organizational context along two dimensions: organizational climate for hiring disabled workers and employer negotiation latitude, to their impressions of the employability of hypothetical job applicants with a severe disability. The secondary purpose of this study was to ascertain the degree to which hiring managers viewed the employability of applicants with a disability as distinct from, and less employable than non-disabled applicants. This study is significant because the employability impressions of hiring managers are placed in the context of influences arising from their membership in an organization, as compared to previous studies which had explored the relationship of employability evaluations to either individual attitudes, expectations or beliefs, and/or

structural aspects of the organization, such as company size, industry type or disability-related policies.

In Chapter Two the literature on employer hiring preferences and perceptions was critically reviewed in detail. Several tentative conclusions for empirical investigation were drawn from the critical review. First, it was noted that individual employer attitudes, expectations and beliefs about disabled workers do not speak to the crucial element of worker-organization "fit", which can only emerge from a consideration of organizational factors. Previous investigations had limited considerations of organizational factors to structural aspects such as disability-related policies, company size, and industry type, and had failed to consider the behavior-shaping expectations that arise from leader-member relationships (exchanges), and organizational climate with implications for perceptions of worker-organization "fit". Second, it was noted that non-disabled employers' evaluations of disabled workers, when compared to non-disabled workers yielded inconsistent results across studies. Individuals with disabilities were rated more favorably than their non-disabled counterparts in some studies, and less favorably rated in others. However, there was evidence to suggest that a social desirability bias may have inflated the more favorable employability ratings, hence a more accurate reading of employability ratings should show non-disabled job applicants evaluated more favorably than those with a disability. A fairly consistent "hierarchy" of employability ratings by disability type was also detected, with physical disabilities being most favorably viewed, and psychiatric disabilities being least favorably viewed. This study has added new organizational

context-related dimensions to the investigation of hiring managers' employability

impressions of job applicants with a disability and re-examined the relationship of

disability condition to employability ratings.

In Chapter Three the study design was described, along with the methodology and

rationale. A cross-sectional mail survey design was employed in this study. The

membership list of a national human resource association was used as the sampling frame

for this study, with a portion of the membership excluded in order to target persons who

could be considered "hiring managers". A random selection of 1,000 members who fit

the hiring manager selection criteria was drawn. A survey including three standardized

instruments, a letter of introduction, cover letter, vignette and demographic questions was

mailed to all 1,000 randomly selected association members. The Knowledge and

Acceptance of the ADA scale by Walters and Baker (1995) was used as a proxy measure

of organizational climate for hiring disabled workers. It was slightly altered by the

addition of new directions encouraging responses in light of organizational expectations

of hiring managers, but the items were left undisturbed. The Information Exchange Scale

developed by Kozlowski & Doherty (1989) was used to measure negotiation latitude.

Employability impressions were measured using the Employment Characteristics Scale

developed by Christman and Slaten (1991). A $1.00 was enclosed with the survey to

thank the recipients for their time. A reminder card was mailed two weeks after the

survey was sent out, followed by a second reminder card two weeks later. Data analyses

were conducted at the univariate, bivariate and multivariate levels with appropriate

statistical procedures using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 7.5.1 for Windows, 1997).

In Chapter Four a univariate descriptive analysis of participants' background and characteristics was conducted followed by an analysis of instrument reliability and the instruments' measures of central tendency and dispersion. A bivariate analysis of the second study hypothesis was subsequently conducted to compare the differences in mean employability ratings for the three disability conditions. One-way ANOVAs comparing the effects of different levels of key employer and organizational characteristics on employability ratings were conducted as part of an exploratory analysis. Subsequently, Pearson product moment correlations were computed for climate, negotiation latitude and employability ratings. Finally, a multivariate analysis of the first study hypothesis was conducted to test the relative odds of obtaining a favorable employability rating when organizational climate is favorable and negotiation latitude is high (Hypothesis 1).

Major Study Findings

The major study findings are discussed next in terms of their implications for understanding employer impressions of the employability of persons with a disability. First, the possible ramifications of both the expected and unexpected findings on the relationship between perceived organizational context and employability impressions are discussed. Following this, the implications of both the expected and unexpected findings on the relationship between different disability conditions are discussed.

The Relationship Between Key Employer or Organizational Characteristics and Employability Ratings

Exploratory bivariate analyses were conducted of variables that have been associated with employability ratings of disabled workers in past investigations. As noted in chapter 2, some previous studies have found an association between several employer characteristics and their evaluations of disabled workers. An association was found between employer's evaluations of disabled workers and (1) their degree of prior experience with disabled persons, and (2) their level of education (e.g., Levy, et al., 1992). An association has also been found between two organizational characteristics and employers' evaluations: (1) organizational size and (2) industry type (e.g., Levy, et al., 1992). These findings were not consistent across studies, however (e.g., Kregel & Tomiyasu, 1994), and were not part of this study's hypotheses. Nonetheless, items pertaining to these employer and organizational characteristics were included in the study survey, and the responses were analyzed using one-way ANOVAs to compare differences in mean employability scores.

In this study, both the employer and organizational characteristics uniformly failed to have a significant effect on employability ratings. Indeed, with the exception of education level, which was associated with a fairly broad variability of employability ratings (from 117.80 for GED graduates to 149.50 for JD graduates) the mean employability ratings were very close to the mean for applicants in all conditions ($\underline{M}$=130.093, SD 17.6). Despite the variability of employability ratings between

education levels, a discernible pattern does not emerge. For example, high school (M=132.40) and GED (M=117.80) graduates, who have the same level of education nonetheless differ greatly in their mean employability ratings. The mean score of high school graduates (M=132.40) edges out those of most college-educated individuals (Associates, M= 129.75; Bachelor's M= 131.13; Master's, M = 128.97; Doctoral, M = 125.67) and are surpassed only by lawyers (JD, M=149.50). Overall, the differences between groups fail to achieve statistical significance. Were the GED and JD scores removed a slight negative trend in post-graduate education scores might be noted, but in that event the differences between high and low scores (High School, M= 132.40; Doctoral, M=125.67) would not be great and hover around the overall education mean of 130.05. Therefore, the results from this study tend to corroborate previous investigations that have failed to find a relationship between those characteristics and employer evaluations of disabled workers.

Previous studies have also explored the association between sex, disability status, racial group and employers' evaluations of disabled workers. Other investigators largely failed to find a relationship between these variables and employer evaluations (see Foucher, et al., 1993), but because these items were included in the demographic section of this study the responses were also analyzed using one-way ANOVAs to compare group differences in mean employability scores. The results of this study lent support to the findings of previous studies that failed to find a relationship between sex, disability status, racial group and employer's evaluations of disabled workers because the

employability rating differences between groups on each of these variables was not statistically significant.

The conceptual model used in this study suggested implicit positive relationships between key study variables. Each of these was explored using a Pearson product moment correlation. The first implicit positive relationship was between employers' readiness to recommend disabled workers for hire, and their personal supervisory experience with disabled workers. As anticipated, a robust positive relationship was found between hiring recommendations and satisfaction with worker performance. The next implicit positive relationships was between organizational climate and employability rating. A small but positive and statistically significant correlation (r=.198, p≤ .001) between the two variables tended to bear this out. The second implicit positive relationship was between hiring climate and consensus climate. This also received some support from the correlation between the two variables which was also small but positive and statistically significant (r=.162, p≤ .05).

However, the implicit positive relationship between negotiation latitude and organizational climate, which are related concepts, was not found (r=-.028), inexplicably amplified when high negotiation latitude scores only were selected (r=-.062). The relationship between high negotiation latitude and climate ought to have been more positive than the overall relationship of negotiation latitude to climate. Previous research had specifically linked high negotiation latitude with a consensus view of climate (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989), but in this study negotiation latitude had a small negative

relationship with consensus climate (r=-.119), rendered a bit weaker, but still negative when high negotiation latitude scores only were selected (r=-.026). This unexpected negative relationship was echoed in the results of the logistical regression model, in which negotiation latitude failed to be a statistically significant predictor of favorable employability ratings in the logit. It was also echoed in the negative association between negotiation latitude and employability (r=-.095), and the near absence of relationship between high negotiation latitude and employability (r=-.008). A possible explanation for the unexpected relationship between negotiation latitude and employability is offered in the discussion of hypothesis one results. below.

The Relationship Between Favorable Employability Ratings and Perceived Organizational Context

This chief purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between two aspects of employers' perceived organizational context (the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers and high negotiation latitude) and their impressions of the employability of job applicants with a severe disability. It was predicted that the likelihood of obtaining a favorable employability rating would be related to having a favorable climate and a high negotiation latitude. A logistical regression model was used to test this prediction.

Organizational climate for hiring disabled workers (exponentiated (β) of 1.0874, p =.0015) was the only independent variable of the two tested in hypothesis 1 that predicted a favorable employability rating in the logit. This means that employers in a

more favorable climate for hiring disabled workers were slightly more likely to have a favorable impression of job applicant employability in general than employers in a less favorable climate. One implication of this finding is that shared expectations about how disabled workers should be treated seems to have repercussions for the employers' impression formation process and for subsequent evaluations of job applicant employability.

Previous research tends to support the interpretation of a link between organizational climate, employer behaviors and employment outcomes for job applicants. For instance, organizational climate has been linked to discriminatory personnel selection practices (e.g., Katz, 1987). Katz (1987) found that in a discriminatory organizational climate women were evaluated as being a poorer "fit" with the organization than men, and were less likely to be considered for hiring. On the other side of the employment divide, for workers already in place, person-climate "fit" was found to have important implications for work satisfaction, self-assessment and trust in management in a study of workplace political climate by Christiansen and associates (1997). Both supervisors and peers were found to participate in creating and sustaining a hostile organizational climate associated with discriminatory behavior against female African-American firefighters in a study by Yoder and Aniakudo (1996). By contrast, a supportive organizational climate was found to have a role in moderating discriminatory behavior against African-Americans in a study by Jeanquart-Barone and Sekaran (1996). Non-disabled job applicants were also included in the hypothesis 1 because they also required an

accommodation (as single parents). The fact that the non-disabled applicants needed an

accommodation sustains the logic of an apparent association between an

"accommodating" climate and favorable employability impressions of individuals

requiring a workplace accommodations.

High negotiation latitude was not a significant predictor of a favorable

employability rating (exponentiated (β) of 1.6593, p =.0535) as hypothesized prior to data

collection. Although it is not possible to ascertain precisely why the relationship between

high negotiation latitude and favorable employability ratings failed to achieve statistical

significance in light of theoretical support, at least one plausible explanation is possible.

The conceptual framework upon which the expectation that a high NL score would lead

to a more favorable employability rating may need further refinement in the context of

the personnel selection process, especially as regards job applicants with a disability.

Despite the fact that negotiation latitude has been associated with flexibility (Shriesheim,

et al., 1992; McClane, 1991), innovation and risk-taking (Keller & Dansereau, 1995;

Basu & Green. 1997; Scott & Bruce, 1998), there is no empirical basis for predicting

what "flexibility", "innovation" or "risk-taking" might mean in the context of employers'

hiring evaluation and decision-making processes. It was argued in previous chapters that

the co-occurrence of a favorable organizational climate for hiring disabled workers and

high negotiation latitude might encourage "pro-disability" flexibility, innovation and risk-

taking. However, it is conceivable that under some circumstances, environmental factors

such as market forces and technological change might capture the attention of employers

and broaden the perceptual and decision-making context beyond exclusively

organizational climate concerns.

Environmental conditions might reframe the hiring context such that employing

individuals with a disability would seem unduly risky and beyond even innovative

solutions, a favorable climate for hiring disabled workers notwithstanding. There is

ample research documenting situations in which extra-organizational concerns such as

market competition, economic conditions and regulatory concerns override organizational

norms in directing the behaviors of employers and other organizational decision makers

(e.g.. Bruyere. 1993; Griffin & Mathieu, 1997; Prager & Schnit, 1985; Simons & Ingram,

1997). The demographics of the labor force. including employees of the organization,

have also been included in these extra-organizational or environmental factors

influencing organizational norms (Martin, 1992).

The model of factors influencing organizational climate described in Chapter 2

may therefore be expanded by adding other extra-organizational factors to the co-worker

influences. Having added this additional dimension to organizational climate, there is a

possibility that extra-organizational concerns such as the ADA regulatory environment,

competitive pressures for high productivity or decreasing market share could have re-

framed the evaluation process for some high NL employers to the point that prospective

workers represent an unacceptable risk. Until there is an empirical basis for

understanding how hiring risks associated with hiring disabled workers are interpreted

and prioritized by employers in different environmental contexts it may not be possible to

predict apriori whether a calculated risk-taking strategy would favor a positive or a negative evaluation of disabled job applicants. Indeed, for the concept of risk-taking to be useful in the context of understanding a hiring evaluation process, the way in which hiring risks are calculated must be examined empirically. One factor that enters into employers' hiring evaluation considerations is their preconceptions of the work-related traits associated with different disability labels. The discussion turns next to an analysis of study findings on the relationship of disability condition to employer impressions of employability.

The Relationship of Disability Condition to Employability Ratings

The second aim of this study was to explore the relationship of disability condition to employability ratings. Specifically, it was predicted first that non-disabled job applicants would have a more favorable employability rating than the severely disabled job applicants. A one-way ANOVA found a statistically significant difference between the means of the three disability conditions (F=17.37, p ≤.001), with the non-disabled applicants garnering a mean score of 139.59 trailed by applicants with a psychiatric disability (M = 126.15) and applicants with a physical disability (M = 125.95) respectively. The mean employability ratings of the two disability conditions are noticeably below the overall mean employability rating (M= 130.93, SD=17.62, Range = 109) just as the mean non-disabled rating is noticeably above the overall mean. This finding is congruent with previous studies that have found more negative evaluations of disabled workers than non-disabled workers (e.g., Berry & Meyer, 1995; Millington,

Szymanski & Hanley-Maxwell, 1994; Minskoff. Sautter. Hoffman & Hawkes, 1987;

Mithaug, 1987). But it obviously contrasts with previous studies that have found higher

employability ratings for applicants with a disability than for non-disabled peers (e.g.,

Byrd. et al., 1977; Christman & Slaten. 1991; Pedhazur-Schmelkin & Burrell, 1989;

Kregel & Unger, 1993). One way to interpret the variation in employer evaluations of

disabled workers across studies is to speculate that the more positive perceptions of

employers and other non-disabled evaluators may have been due to a social desirability

bias that masked negative perceptions (e.g.. Antonak & Livnch. 1995; Foucher, et al.,

1993). Alternately, it is possible that employers and other non-disabled evaluators of

persons with a disability mask an under estimation of disabled persons generally beneath

an over estimation of disabled persons functioning normatively (Kravetz, et al., 1994).

Perhaps this is why disabled workers who are positively evaluated in their current jobs

may nonetheless encounter more skepticism about their readiness for promotion than

their non-disabled peers (see Bordieri, Drehmer & Taylor, 1997). Unfortunately, the

beliefs underlying employer perceptions of disabled workers are difficult to assess

directly. first because of the social desirability bias around presenting a "positive" view of

disabled persons. It is conceivable that some progress might be made in alleviating social

desirability by having recourse to the range of survey methods for mitigating the effects

of a social desirability bias such as the error-choice method (Antonak & Livnch, 1995),

indirect questioning (Fisher, 1993), and counterbiasing methods (Raghubir & Menon,

1996). In this study. indirect questioning as described by Fisher (1993) was used to help

overcome social desirability biases around the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers. Neither the error-choice methods described by Antonak and Livnch (1995), nor the related counterbiasing methods described by Raghubir and Menon (1996) were feasible for this study because they required items relating the prevalence of an event in a given population or context and were thus conceptually incompatible with this study. Although it might be tempting to attribute this study's finding of a non-disabled applicant bias as evidence of having successfully circumvented the issue of a social desirability bias, this claim cannot be made. Indeed, although the indirect questioning method was used for assessing organizational climate, it was not used for assessing negotiation latitude or for assessing employability ratings. To have used the indirect questioning method for either negotiation latitude or employability impressions would not have made sense in the conceptual framework of this study. Perhaps more importantly, the potential effect of a social desirability is confounded by the fact that employer evaluations are conducted in a context that encompasses more factors than simply reaction to disability label: including prior experience with disabled persons, career progression issues, and attributions of responsibility for the disability, to name but a few

Indeed, the perceptions that non-disabled evaluators hold toward persons with a disability are subject to variance depending upon several factors:

attributions of blame for the disability (e.g., Berry & Meyer, 1995; Bordieri, 1993; Bordieri & Drehmer, 1988; Bordieri, Drehmer & Taricone, 1990) situational intimacy and emotional arousal (e.g., Berry & Jones, 1991; Dooley & Gilner, 1989; Karnilowicz,

Sparrow & Shikfield, 1994; Fitchen, et al., 1991; Nordstrom, Huffaker & Williams, 1998) likelihood of promotion (e.g., Bordieri, Drehmer & Taylor, 1997) previous contact (e.g., Anderson & Antonak, 1992; Levy, et al., 1992; Satcher & Dooley-Dickey, 1992) and disability type (e.g., Grand, et al., 1982; Fuqua, Rathburn & Gade, 1983; Gerhardt, 1997). The import of these studies is to suggest that employer perceptions of persons with disabilities are multi-dimensional, and inferring the cause of favorable or unfavorable perceptions without reference to the evaluative context is problematical. It may be instructive to consider the unexpected study finding that psychiatric disabilities were viewed more favorably than physical disabilities in this light.

It had been predicted that after non-disabled job applicants, applicants with a physical disability would be perceived as more employable. Contrary to expectations, the mean employability rating of job applicants with a psychiatric disability ($\underline{M}$=126.15, SD = 15.04) were substantially the same as those of the applicants with a physical disability ($\underline{M}$=125.95, SD =17.54). The original prediction was made on the basis of studies that have found hierarchies of employer perceptions of disabled workers, with physical disabilities at the top (e.g., Gouvier, et al., 1991; Grand, et al., 1982; Fouqua, et al., 1983) and workers with a psychiatric disability most stigmatized (e.g., Bordieri, Drehmer & Taylor, 1997; Gerhardt, 1997; Noble, 1998).

There are a number of possible alternative explanations for the unexpected finding of near equivalence between the employability ratings for the severely disabled job applicants. One possible alternative explanation is that due to employers' unfamiliarity

with the work accommodation needs of persons with severe disabilities, schizophrenia and an acquired brain injury were essentially indistinguishable, and therefore the job applicants were treated to essentially the same cautious evaluations. While each employer considered only one job applicant and one disability condition, it is conceivable that the cautious employability rating of applicants in both severe disability conditions indicates a kind of lumping together of severely disabled job candidates. This supposition of unfamiliarity is not unreasonable given the very low employment rate of persons with a severe disability. Even those 50.4 percent of employers in this study who had supervised a disabled employee were unlikely to have supervised one with a severe disability. It seems somewhat more likely that the 54.8 percent of employers in this study who had a close friend or family member with a disability might be familiar with some of the ramifications of having a severe disability; but again, not in the context of workplace accommodations.

A second possible alternative explanation is that the unforeseen parity of employability ratings may signify a recent amelioration of widespread preconceptions about persons with a mental illness. In recent years national advocacy organizations such as the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) have mounted both high profile and grassroots campaigns that reframe mental illness in terms of "brain diseases". The notion of mental illness as a brain disease counteracts some of the stigmatizing effects of previous notions that attributed mental illness to personal deficiencies, family dysfunction and poor parenting. If indeed the brain disease framework, combined with education

dispelling myths about mental illness has improved the public perception of mental illness then perhaps the parity of employability ratings might be one result.

Alternately, a third possible explanation may lie in the perceived nature of the impairments associated with an acquired brain injury. As described in this study, the effect of the acquired brain injury was to limit the physical mobility of the individual and to require a wheelchair for locomotion. No mention was made of corollary cognitive difficulties arising from the head injury. It is possible that study participants were concerned about the possibility of cognitive deficits and therefore viewed the applicant with an acquired brain injury as multiply disabled. Were this the case, the expected "advantage" of the physical disability would disappear. The possibility of differing interpretations of disability labels, even given a brief description of the job applicant's accommodation needs, is one of the thornier issues in research such as this, in which differential employer experience and knowledge of specific disability types is not controlled and may have unpredictable effects on employability impressions. It is to the issue of study limitations that the discussion now turns.

Study Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. One of the study's chief limitations, alluded to above, arises from the fact that employers' are given brief, selected knowledge about each disability, which is presumed -- untested -- to provide all employers with common adequate information to complete their task. Moreover, the way in which different approaches to transmitting the information interacts with employer

preconceptions has never been measured, or even been identified as a subject of concern. This limitation is not unique to the present study; indeed, every study of employer perceptions of disabled workers reviewed by this author has faced this dilemma, albeit unacknowledged. Previous investigators have chosen to relay information about the job applicant disability in some distinctly different ways, including descriptions drawn from diagnostic classification schemes and text books (Gerhardt, 1997), brief cover letter description of impairment (Bordieri & Drehmer, 1988; Bordieri, et al., 1990) videotaped interview visuals (Christman & Branson, 1990; Christman & Slaten, 1991), videotaped work visuals and description of disability/health status (Bordieri, et al., 1997) diagnostic labels (Millington, et al., 1994; Millington, et al., 1997), personal interview encounters (Hayes & Macan, 1997; Nordstrom, Huffaker & Williams, 1998). In the current study, the disability-related information consisted of a disability label and a brief description of accommodation needs. There is no empirical basis for deciding which disability "presentation" is most helpful to the evaluation processes of employers, nor how different "presentations" interact with different employer preconceptions, nor yet which "presentation" adequately captures a real hiring situation to arouse "realistic" reactions in the employer.

In the current study the method of presentation was contrived, because both persons with a disability and employers are urged not to discuss disability-related information prior to the job interview (Fish, 1997; Hornsby & Smith, 1995). However, some mechanism was required to differentiate the disability conditions, and to focus

employer attention on the severe physical disability caused by the acquired brain injury, and the severe psychiatric disability caused by the schizophrenia, in enough depth that all participants, irrespective of prior experience would have some common basis for evaluation. Nonetheless, the mechanism for conveying disability-related information was contrived, and the impact of the particular information given on employer preconceptions, and ultimately employability impressions was unknown.

Another limitation of the study concerns the unknown impact of a social desirability bias on the reported negotiation latitude and employability rating scores. As mentioned previously, the indirect questioning method for mitigating social desirability biases was not used for either measure because to do so would have changed the conceptual framework which required that employers evaluate their own in-group/out-group status and report their own impressions of the job applicant.

One way of approaching the question of social desirability biases in this sample is to compare the NL and employability scores of participants in this study with those of previous studies, on the assumption that deviations might speak to sample-specific biases. An examination of the employability scores of Christman and Slaten's (1991) study reveal a close correspondence to this study with respect to impressions of the non-disabled applicant. In their study, Christman and Slaten had two non-disabled applicants evaluated. Their mean score was 6.36. In the current study the mean score for the non-disabled applicant was 6.34, suggesting little, if any evidence for sample-specific inflation of scores due to a social desirability bias. Christman and Slaten's applicant in a

wheelchair had a mean score of 6.23, as compared to a mean score of 5.72 for current study's the applicant in a wheelchair, suggesting if anything, a social desirability bias in the Christman and Slaten sample.

The comparison of NL score distributions in the current study with those of Kozlowki and Doherty's (1989) also fails to suggest a social desirability bias in this sample. Kozlowski and Doherty had two groups of subordinates (with different supervisors) take the Information Exchange Scale, and found a distribution of in-group to out-group membership of 31%:69% for group 1 and 67%:33% for group 2, for a mean of 45%:55%. The distribution of in-group to out-group membership in the current sample was a comparable 52%:48%. Kozlowski and Doherty in particular took pains to validate their instrument, which lends more weight to their in-group/out-group findings, and ultimately the findings of this study. To test the construct validity of the IES the authors gave both supervisors and subordinates a climate scale in pilot testing the IES, and administered the LMX to subordinates. Of course, the small number of total trials for both the IES and the ECS forebear any firm conclusions, but to the extent that social desirability biases were a factor with each instrument in this study, they appear not to have been too great.

The relatively low response rate obtained in this study presents another limitation. Because participants were randomly selected study results are potentially generalizable to the sampled population. the management membership of the national association from which their names were drawn. However, the relatively low response rate that was

achieved in this study suggests that the results be approached with some caution, even within the framework of generalizability to the membership population. The reason for the relatively low response rate may be due to the fact that the perceived "cost" or "risk" of completing a socially sensitive survey such as this was not adequately compensated by rewards. Building upon a through review of the literature, Childers and Skinner (1996) frame survey participation in terms of a trade-off between rewards (e.g., appeal, personalization, etc.) and costs (e.g., complexity, sensitivity, etc.) in an exchange process between sponsor and recipient. In the current study it was not possible to obtain sponsorship of the survey, which Childers and Skinner identify as a critical "reward" for participants. This fact probably had important negative implications for the development of trust, commitment and cooperation on the part of the recipients. Moreover, one of the competing "costs" of participating in the current study, the unavoidable "sensitivity" of the topic could not be ameliorated by the reassuring endorsements of a sponsor perceived to share a common interest with the survey recipients. This limitation must of course be put in the context of the low response rates typically obtained in studies of this nature, but the fact that active sponsorship by the member list organization could not be obtained probably had a role in holding down the response rate.

Another limitation related to the sampling frame itself, lies in the nature of the membership list. A membership list from a professional human resource management association was used and the members of that association tend to be human resource professionals. Certainly, study participants represented a broad constituency of diverse

industries and positions as noted earlier, which might mitigate somewhat against a professional bias. Nonetheless, it is possible that the participants' association with human resources introduced a systematic bias, as Rynes and Rosen (1995) noted in their study of diversity training, which also sampled the SHRM membership. Rynes and Rosen conjectured that human resource managers might be more positive about workplace diversity than other managers, introducing the possibility of a similarly positive bias about workers with a disability among participants in this study; particularly among those participants who reported a favorable climate for hiring disabled workers.

The absence of an "interview" process in the employer evaluation tasks constitutes another limitation of this study. Interviews have been identified as a critical component of the personnel selection process, with a strong positive correlation between interviewer impressions and hiring decisions (Cabel & Judge, 1997). In the current study, pre-interview materials (cover letter and application form) were used on the grounds that pre-interview materials have been found to have a strong prejudicial influence on interviewers' impressions (Macan & Dipboye, 1994; Marchioro & Bartles, 1994). Nonetheless, a more direct connection to actual employment decisions could have been drawn had an interview process been simulated in this study.

The use of a proxy measure for hiring climate imposed a further limitation of this study. Although the hiring climate measure and the participants' degree of reported consensus with other manager's views on hiring were perfectly correlated ($r=1.0$), this does not indicate that the employers' reported organizational climate opinions were

always reported to be the same as the consensus view of organizational climate. More

fundamentally, the use of an attitude measure to evaluate climate is problematical

because the validity of the proxy instrument is unknown. It was not possible to test the

validity of the proxy measure beyond an assessment of face validity by the panel of

expert judges used in the formative stages of this research project.

The issue of "validity" concerning the climate measure hints at a broader, non-

methodological concern about the "social validity" of exploring hiring climate from the

perspective of the hiring manager alone. The term "social validity" has been used

primarily to describe the degree of acceptance, support and/or legitimacy given

interventions or behavioral change programs by the various parties involved; from the

consumer out to society and its institutions (Fox & McEvoy, 1993; White & Rusch,

1983). This perspective recognizes the importance of diverse constituent (and divergent)

views in evaluating what are appropriate goals and procedures for change programs. By

analogy, in the context of this study, the social validity of the hiring climate construct,

which has the potential to bring about change by affecting employment outcomes,

requires different vantage points in addition to that of the hiring manager.

Building on this notion of social validity, one additional potential criticism of this

study is that it was focused on the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers from

the perspective of employers only, and did not include the corresponding perceptions of

disabled workers. While this choice makes sense in the narrow context of the study

hypotheses, it is quite limiting in the applicability and utility of study findings for the

field. There are several implications of an exclusive focus on employer perceptions that make it an issue for potential criticism which are described below.

First, it overlooks the perspective of the worker with a disability, or other co-workers which are likely to be quite different, judging from the findings of previous investigators of climate in socially and ethnically diverse workplaces (see Jeanquart-Barone, 1996; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Yoder & Aniakudo, 1996). A "favorable" hiring climate from the perspective of the employer may be less favorable from the disabled worker's point of view, or vice versa. While more hiring of disabled workers might take place in a "favorable" climate (viewed from the employer's perspective), aspects of the climate unfavorable to job tenure or career progression that are perceptible only to the disabled worker might be overlooked, with negative post-employment consequences.

Second, employer-centered perspectives on hiring climate imply that workers with a disability ought to use the hiring managers' perspectives exclusively as a "climate map" in their job-seeking and career planning efforts. From a consumer-centered perspective on career planning, the differences in perspective between non-disabled managers and disabled workers are critical. Those differences require that the consumer's perspective be as familiar to the social worker as those of the employer and other key parties in planning work supports and other accommodations (see Gates, Akabas & Oran-Sabia, 1998).

Third, from a social justice vantage point, the unequal political influence of employee and employer in shaping the organizational climate must be examined because

of its effects on the quality of the employee's person-organization match and work experience (see Christiansen, et al., 1997). One potentially negative consequence of a monolithic view of climate could be a person-organization fit that is predicated upon the individual conforming to a homogeneous organization. In organizations with a homogenous and narrow view of organization-person fit interviewers may select out persons who are "different", such as persons with a disability (Powell, 1998).

Fourth, this study's exclusive focus on the employer's view of hiring climate tacitly supports the "normalization" of disabled workers into roles defined by the non-disabled majority. This is attributable to the fact that the employer and other non-disabled members of the organization shape the normative expectations in the organizational climate generally, and in the hiring climate specifically. Extending the arguments of authors who have emphasized the political and social dimensions of "disability" (see Barnes & Mercer, 1996; Oliver, 1996; Rioux, 1994; Shakespeare, 1996; Zola, 1994) to the realm of organizational climate, it is proposed that disabled workers recruited and socialized into the organizational expectations of non-disabled members may face the prospect of normalization into the non-disabled group ethos, and yet paradoxically find themselves negatively categorized as "other." This argues for research that examines the hiring climate from a critical perspective that takes into account the different interests of stakeholders such as employers, non-disabled co-workers and disabled workers. Having discussed the study limitations it is now appropriate to discuss some of the study's contributions.

Study Contributions

Implications for Social Work

Conceptualizing employer impressions of job applicants with a severe disability in the context of a perceived organizational context enlarges the theoretical context for social work research and practice in this area. The empirical evidence in this study supporting a relationship between employers' perceived organizational context and their impressions of the employability of job applicants with a severe psychiatric or severe physical disability lends support to the enlarged theoretical context and helps extend the focus of diversity employment intervention and research beyond individuals to groups. The need for group interventions to promote diversity in the workplace, and to accommodate the needs of workers who are different has recently been explored in the social work practice literature in the context of worker inclusion (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998) and in the context of socially-mediated accommodations for workers with a mental illness (Gates, et al., 1998).

The findings of this study suggest that interventions aimed at improving organizational receptivity toward hiring disabled workers, such as education on accommodations co-workers and disabled employees, may have a salubrious influence on hiring managers, independent of interventions aimed directly at the employer. As employees learn how to effectively accommodate their peers with disabilities, employers will witness a new model for achieving work performance, and more importantly be socialized into accepting this model and the new world view it entails. Change in

organizational expectations could then progress from the bottom, up the corporate ladder. This would provide social workers with a "back door" for improving the employment prospects of workers with a disability by fostering positive change in the perceptions of other organizational members. New shared organizational expectations around hiring disabled workers could also be achieved by facilitating good "matches" at various locations in the organization, or by providing helpful disability-related information, consultations or training for the organization. An ongoing relationship between social worker and organization is implied in this schema. Unfortunately, an agency overly concerned with case closure, such as Noble (1998) found among some state vocational rehabilitation agencies, might not see a benefit in diverting the substantial resources required for making long-term partnerships with employers. Resources that may now be directed toward increasing the number of case closures and raising placement rates might be redirected toward longer-term investments in organizational relations.

The study findings also suggest that efforts at engaging employers directly on issues of hiring disabled workers should proceed in the context of organization-wide efforts, including the active engagement of organizational leaders. Social workers in the role of job developer and/or employment specialist may not typically discourse with organizational leaders, nor even engage the co-workers and subordinates of the hiring manager in any systematic fashion, because of the focus on job placement, as noted above. Perhaps in the light of the current study, together with studies noting the importance of socially-mediated supports for workers with a disability (see Akabas, 1994;

Gates, et al., 1998; Tice, 1994), social workers may want to make more systematic attempts to engage key members of the workplace community, such as long-term employees, hiring managers, and executives in creating an environment favorable to hiring, training and promoting workers with a disability.

In addition, the findings of this, and related studies on organizational context suggest that the employment of larger numbers of disabled workers and a diverse workforce may be key factors in creating a more favorable hiring climate for disabled workers (see Schall, 1998). Theoretical work and empirical findings tend to support the proposition that a more diverse workplace demographically is often associated with a work climate that is more tolerant of differences (Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Powell, 1998). Demographic changes are rapidly making the workplace more heterogeneous but not necessarily leading to the inclusion of all groups in vital decision-making roles and processes (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998).

In addition, men and women perceive organizational support differently (Amason & Allen , 1997), as do minority group and majority group workers (Kossek & Zonia, 1993), suggesting that a diverse workforce introduces different interpretations of organizational expectations, values and commitments.

Recently, several authors have commented on the need for expanding existing notions of person-organization fit by actively recruiting and responding to the needs of a diverse work force in order to increase the participation of minorities; to the benefit of both individuals and organization (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998; Powell, 1998). This

suggests a process of mutual influence between new recruits and organization, raising the possibility that disabled workers could help create a more favorable organizational environment for the hiring, tenure and promotion of other persons with a disability.

Furthermore, both the conceptual framework of this study and other research suggest that organizational leaders are also critical to supporting workplace diversity-related efforts, particularly in the promotion and maintenance of diversity training effects (Rynes & Rosen, 1995). This focus on organizational leaders is congruent with the emphasis on "leaders" as agents of organizational climate socialization. In the context of this study, organizational leaders might actively promote practices and expectations supporting a favorable organizational climate for hiring disabled workers.

It is proposed that social workers, along with other professionals and consumers, provide information, education and consultation for key workplace constituents, such as employees, union representatives, employers and organizational leaders. Social workers and their collaborators could bridge gaps in knowledge and comfort levels in dealing with differences, while still attending to the organization's strategic goals, with the aim of increasing the employment and participation of workers with a disability.

Finally, the discussion above suggests that workers with a disability themselves take on a more important role in assessing and interfacing with prospective hiring organizations. An important part of the "relationship" building with an organization would be relegated to the individual with a disability whose interests, abilities and

influence would help shape the evolving dialogue between consumer and organization, perhaps even impacting upon the organizational climate for hiring disabled workers.

In conclusion, the study findings suggest focusing practitioner efforts at creating a more favorable employment environment for disabled persons at the organizational level. This shift of focus has implications for the way social workers engage employers; emphasizing relationship over placement outcomes. It also broadens the scope of engagement to include key members of the organization in change efforts. As part of a more diverse workforce persons with a disability have a vital role in creating new organizational perspectives on disability.

Implications for Research and Theory

A unique two-part model of organizational context was explored that included organizational climate and leader-member exchange. The employability impressions of hiring managers were conceptualized as being shaped in part by the organizational context in which employers participate as members and co-creators. Previous studies had framed employer perceptions of disabled job applicants in terms of either individual attitudes impressions and/or expectations (see Hayes & Macan, 1997; Macan & Hayes, 1995: Millington, et al., 1997) or in terms of structural aspects of organizational membership such as policy constraints, (see Gerhardt, 1997), industry type, (see Levy, et al., 1992, Levy, et al., 1993) or company size (see Kregel & Tomiyasu, 1994). This study extends the theoretical and empirical approaches to understanding employer hiring perceptions in two areas. First, it reframes employers as organizational members as well

as individuals. Second, it re-conceptualizes organizational membership in terms of the dynamic interplay between influences at the dyadic level of leadership and the organization level of hiring climate, rather than view organizational membership in relatively static, structural terms such as industry type and company size.

This study also expanded the framework in which the personnel selection process for disabled workers is viewed by linking two related concepts: organizational climate and the leader-member exchange to employer impressions of a job applicant. Previous studies have linked climate and leader-member exchange to each other, and to organization member behaviors (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Griffin & Mathieu, 1997), but never in the context of a hiring decision-making process. Organizational climate has been linked to discriminatory personnel selection practices (Katz, 1987), discriminatory behavior in the workplace (Jeanquart-Barone & Sekaran, 1996; Yoder & Aniakudo, 1996), employer efforts to promote diversity (Kossek & Zonia, 1993), perceived worker-organization "fit" (Christiansen, et al., 1997), and, at least conceptually, to the employment success of workers with a mental disability (Wilgosh, 1990). However, organizational climate had yet to be explored in its relationship to employer impressions of the employability of persons with a severe disability. Positive leader-member exchanges, expressed as a high negotiation latitude, had been linked to organizational climate (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989), as well as to worker loyalty, flexibility (Shriesheim, et al., 1992: McClane, 1991), innovation, risk-taking (Basu & Green, 1997) and role perceptions (Gestner & Day, 1997). However, the leader-member exchange had

yet to be explored in its relationship to employer perceptions of job applicant

employability. Despite evidence for a link between perceptions of organizational climate

and the quality of leader-member exchange for members of an organization (see Griffin

& Mathieu, 1997; Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989), personnel selection processes had yet to

be conceptualized in terms of a process that is influenced by organizational membership.

In conclusion, this study has expanded the theoretical framework for

understanding employer perceptions of the employability of workers with a severe

disability by embedding those perceptions in an organizational context with related but

distinct influences from the employer's organization and boss. This entailed a new

application of the constructs in an empirical test, with predictions based upon known

properties of each construct. The empirical test partially supported the predicted results,

but for the framework to be thoroughly explored will require future research, to which the

topic now turns.

Implications for Knowledge Building and Research

Future research on the relationship of employers' perceived organizational context

and their impressions of the employability of individuals with a severe disability must

first address some methodological difficulties. To begin with, the issue of study design

must be addressed. Mail surveys, such as the current study, fall far short of realism, and

force investigators into awkward compromises around introducing disability-relevant

information. Simulated hiring processes, typically hiring interviews, allow for a more

"natural" exchange of information, particularly in those instances in which a live

"interview" takes place. However, recruiting employers for the expenditure of time and effort that such simulations involve is problematic, and may conceivably introduce strong demand characteristics into the process "under glass" that would be lacking in the anonymous completion of a survey. It also seems likely that a strong self-selection bias would be introduced as companies present their best "representative" for study. The assumption that data gathered from a "simulation" is more revealing than survey data, while intuitively appealing, is without empirical basis. A more authentic process for studying job interviewers' impressions and decisions was pursued by Cable and Judge (1997) who enlisted both recruiters and job applicants using the career office of a large northeastern university to participate in their study. Recruiters completed surveys on their organization and applicant evaluations as soon as possible after the interview, while applicants reported their second interviews, job offers and demographic information (Cable & Judge, 1997). This process is clearly superior in its realism to either simulated interviews or pre-interview vignettes, but suffers from constraints around generalizability because recruiters visiting a single campus career office were used. Future studies employing this more authentic process may face similar generalizability constraints because of the need to persuade interviewers/recruiters to participate; participation only made possible in the Cable and Judge study by the support of the campus career office.

Technological tools permitting convenient and anonymous real-time participation might provide a less threatening setting for employers to evaluate job applicants. Computers might prove an attractive technological tool in this regard. In this scenario

the employer might engage in an interactive videotaped "interview" of a hypothetical job

applicant in one of several disability conditions using a touch screen. The employer

could ask "questions" from a branching menu of interview questions then answer survey

questions accordingly. The computer would allow the employer anonymity while

keeping track not only of his or her answers, but also his or her questions. Using this

medium would have the additional advantage of permitting researchers to track the

decision-making process of employers as they actively evaluate a hypothetical job

applicant, rather than relying upon retrospective evaluations.

The current study suggests several other areas for further inquiry, beginning with

the unexpected findings that failed to support the study hypotheses. Against predictions,

high negotiation latitude was not a significant predictor of a favorable employability

rating. The original prediction was based upon research findings that linked increased

risk-taking, flexibility and innovation to a high negotiation latitude. In light of this

knowledge gap, future research could focus on employers' willingness to take risks in the

context of hiring severely disabled workers. The employers' perceptions of the "risks"

involved in hiring severely disabled workers could be investigated along with the

association between willingness to risk and level of negotiation latitude. Because a type

two error cannot be ruled out, obtaining a higher response rate in future research is also

recommended. This might be obtained in future research by increasing the monetary

award, and by obtaining the active sponsorship and promotion of the study by the

membership list owner, or other entities influential to the potential participants. In order

to obtain the active promotion and sponsorship of membership list owners or other influential entities, future researchers might want to pursue studies such as this in the context of a larger on-going program of collaborative research with sponsoring organizations thereby establishing a foundation of trust and mutual support. A research partnership along these lines might give studies of a sensitive nature such as this greater appeal and legitimacy in the eyes of organization members and help to create a perceived mutuality of interests. With this benefit comes the possibility of partisanship and parochialism, so such partnerships will have to be approached with a certain amount of caution and an awareness of the trade-offs associated with reciprocal expectations of advocacy and support.

Also contrary to predictions, the employability of applicants with an acquired brain injury were not viewed more favorably than that of applicants with schizophrenia. One of the potential alternative explanations for this was that an acquired brain injury might have been perceived as a multi-faceted (physical and cognitive) disability. Future research might therefore substitute a spinal cord injury, or other trauma not associated with corollary cognitive deficits, as the severe physical disability. Another potential alternative explanation was that employers had little experience with the accommodations for severely disabled persons in the workplace. Future research might thus explore the depth and breadth of participants' experience with accommodations for persons with the target disability conditions and other related conditions. Employer's overall expectations of workers with the target disability conditions might also be assessed in future research

to explore differences in societal preconceptions over time as suggested by the alternative explanation which posited a positive change in societal perceptions of mental illness.

Future research might also substitute an individual not requiring any accommodations as the non-disabled applicant, rather than the single parent requiring day care who represented the non-disabled condition in this study. This would be done in order to ascertain if the "employability gap" would widen when the need for accommodations becomes a differentiating factor between non-disabled and disability condition job applicants.

Future investigations might also explore the association between perceived organizational context and employer decision-making on employment and promotion. In other words, to first examine how employer hiring decisions are related to perceived organizational context, and subsequently, how employer promotion decisions are related to perceived organizational context. Previous research has shown that employment and promotion evaluations of disabled workers are sometimes quite distinct (Bordieri, Drehmer & Taylor, 1997).

Varying the age of the job applicant from early- to mid- to late-career would also be instructive and worthy of future research. It would be helpful to explore the changing perceptions of disabled persons over the working lifespan. Similarly, varying the degree of disability within a single disability type could also provide useful information on the role of organizational context in shaping perceived work functioning. Varying the information provided on the disability from clinical information, to work-related

functioning, to a simple label might provide important data about the robustness of organizational context-generated expectations in the face of different kinds of prejudicial information. As mentioned earlier, future research should include the development of a psychometrically tested and validated measure of organizational climate for hiring disabled workers.

Finally, participatory action research is proposed that includes the individual with a disability as collaborator. such as that embarked upon by Sample (1996) in her study with adults who have a developmental disability. In the participatory action research (PAR) model participants (group or community members) are involved in the design, implementation and presentation of the study (Whyte, 1989 in Sample, 1996). Participants are also involved in discussions of future action steps, with the overall goal of producing research that is highly relevant and empowers disenfranchised groups such as persons with a disability (DePoy & Gitlin, 1998).

Participatory action research is an approach, not a research methodology, so both quantitative and/or qualitative methodologies are feasible (DePoy & Gitlin, 1998). This research approach speaks directly to the concerns articulated earlier about some of the potential limitations around an exclusively employer-focused understanding of organizational climate. Future PAR studies are suggested in which the focus is on disabled workers' perceptions of both organizational context and related employment outcomes. with the goal of creating knowledge and action steps for empowering disabled workers.

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between employers' perceived organizational context and their impressions of the employability of job applicants with a severe disability. The findings of this study suggest that social work practitioners and researchers consider forging new partnerships with employers, hiring organizations and workers with a disability that emphasize facilitated change and long-term investments. Relationship building and organization or system-wide interventions are recommended to capitalize upon the behavioral influence of perceived organizational context.

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Appendix A
(Letter of Introduction to Employers)

April 23, 1998

Mr. John Doe Smith
Manager
Designs For Tomorrow
555 Monmouth Court
Brookline, MA 02146

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to ask you if you will consider being a participant in my doctoral dissertation study on employer's impressions of the employability of hypothetical job applicants. Your name was randomly selected from a member list by a non-profit organization. Officials from that organization have reviewed my research proposal and have subsequently approved my purchase of a member list at cost. I am also sending them a summary of study results.

The purpose of this study is to increase our understanding of the organizational factors influencing hiring managers' impressions of job applicants with accommodation needs and/or disabilities. Participant responses will be anonymous and aggregated for analysis.

Participation in the study will entail completing a 52-question survey and reading a cover letter and job application form describing a hypothetical job seeker. The entire process should take about 15 minutes to complete. A self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) is provided to return the completed survey. A dollar bill has also been enclosed with this survey: please enjoy a cup of coffee or soft drink on me while reviewing this survey.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have by telephone at (home) 757-631-8565 (work) 804-828-1851or via e-mail at Bricout@erols.com. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Kia J. Bentley by telephone at (work) 804-828-0453, or via e-mail at kbentley@saturn.vcu.edu.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

John C. Bricout, M.A., M.S.W.
Ph.D. Candidate in Social Work

Appendix B
(Vignettes: Cover Letters and Employment Application Forms)

Dear Study Participant:

On the pages following this sheet you will find materials that you will need to complete your evaluation of the hypothetical job applicant in the last part of the survey instrument. The materials are addressed to a hypothetical employer and include a cover letter and a completed job application form. Please take a moment to review these materials before proceeding to the evaluation questions (numbers 20-41).

Thanks again for participating!

THE NORRIS CORPORATION
EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Personal Information

Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial	Social Security
Powell	Nancy	A.	227-00-7777

Home Address Apt. #	City	State	Zip
125 Summoner's Way	Yorktown	VA	23690

Position Applied for: Administrative Assistant

U.S. Citizen?	18 Years of Age or Older?	Availability (Days)
Yes X No _	Yes X No _	From/To: Mon-Sat. 8a.m. - 5 p.m.

Limitations on Hours?   **If Yes, Please Explain:** Require flexible schedule for child day care
Yes X No _   needs.

Education

Level	School	Years Attended	Major	Diploma _
High School	York High School 1988-1991	None		Yes X No _

College Thomas Nelson Community College 1991-1993   Business (Associate's)   Yes X No _

Employment History

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Impact Mediation. Newport News, VA	Mediator Assistant	8/96-9/97	$10/hr.

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time X
Mr. Henry Fahey	Prepared briefs, interviewed and scheduled disputants.	Part-time _

Reason for Leaving:
Company downsized -- most junior employees terminated.

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Arts for Hampton, Hampton, VA	Booking Agent	1/94-8/96	$8/hr.

THE NORRIS CORPORATION
EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Employment History (Continued)

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time X
Ms. Wynona Johnson	Scheduled performers and contracted event services.	Part-time _

Reason for Leaving:
Given my day care needs as a single parent, the company(Arts for Hampton) indicated that it would be unable to provide training necessary for promotion opportunities.

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Mercer Shipworks, Newport News, VA	Receptionist	6/93-1/94	$6/hr.

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time _
Mr. Jay Traynor	Greeted visitors and answered telephones.	Part-time X

Reason for Leaving:
Company did not have full-time positions available. Sought full-time employment.

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Barnes and Noble Bookstore, Newport News, VA	Book Seller	9/91-6/93	$4.50/hr.

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time _
Ms. Emily Chow	Sold and inventoried books.	Part-time X

Reason for Leaving:
Part-time position to meet college expenses.

May we contact past employers?   Yes X   No _

Special Skills

Keyboard: Sixty-five words per minute.

Software: Microsoft Word, Word Perfect, Excel

General Office: Administrative, clerical, some budgetary experience.

THE NORRIS CORPORATION
EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Personal Information

Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial	Social Security
Gable	Dorothy	P.	227-00-8888

Home Address Apt. #	City	State	Zip
125 Summoner's Way	Yorktown	VA	23690

Position Applied for: Administrative Assistant

U.S. Citizen?	18 Years of Age or Older?	Availability (Days)
Yes X No _	Yes X No _	From/To: Mon-Sat. 8a.m. - 5 p.m.

Limitations on Hours?   **If Yes, Please Explain:** Overtime work hours must be scheduled
Yes X No _   during periods of high work stress.

Education

Level	School	Years Attended	Major	Diploma _
High School	York High School 1988-1991	None		Yes X No _

College Thomas Nelson Community College 1991-1993   Business (Associate's)   Yes X No _

Employment History

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages	
Impact Mediation, Newport News, VA	Mediator Assistant	8/96-9/97	$10/hr.	

Supervisor	Job Duties			Full-time X
Mr. Henry Fahey	Prepared briefs, interviewed and scheduled disputants.			Part-time _

Reason for Leaving:
Company downsized -- most junior employees terminated

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages	
Arts for Hampton, Hampton, VA	Booking Agent	1/94-8/96	$8/hr.	

THE NORRIS CORPORATION
EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Employment History (Continued)

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time _X_
Ms. Wynona Johnson	Scheduled performers and contracted event services.	Part-time _

Reason for Leaving:
Given my diagnosis of schizophrenia and medication needs, the company (Arts for Hampton) indicated that it would be unable to provide training necessary for promotion opportunities.

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Mercer Shipworks, Newport News, VA	Receptionist	6/93-1/94	$6/hr.

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time _
Mr. Jay Traynor	Greeted visitors and answered telephones.	Part-time _X_

Reason for Leaving:
Company did not have full-time positions available. Sought full-time employment.

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Barnes and Noble Bookstore, Newport News, VA	Book Seller	9/91-6/93	$4.50/hr.

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time _
Ms. Emily Chow	Sold and inventoried books.	Part-time _X_

Reason for Leaving:
Part-time position to meet college expenses.

May we contact past employers?   Yes _X_   No _

Special Skills

Keyboard: Sixty-five words per minute.

Software: Microsoft Word, Word Perfect, Excel

General Office: Administrative, clerical, some budgetary experience

THE NORRIS CORPORATION
EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Personal Information

Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial	Social Security
Austin	Anne	C.	227-00-9999

Home Address Apt. #	City	State	Zip
125 Summoner's Way	Yorktown	VA	23690

Position Applied for: Administrative Assistant

U.S. Citizen?	18 Years of Age or Older?	Availability (Days)
Yes X No _	Yes X No _	From/To: Mon-Sat. 8a.m. - 5 p.m.

Limitations on Hours?   If Yes, Please Explain: Work hours must be scheduled when van/
Yes X No _   paratransit service is available.

Education

Level	School	Years Attended	Major	Diploma _
High School	York High School 1988-1991	None		Yes X No _

College Thomas Nelson Community College 1991-1993 Business (Associate's)   Yes X No _

Employment History

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Impact Mediation, Newport News, VA	Mediator Assistant	8/96-9/97	$10/hr.

Supervisor	Job Duties		Full-time X
Mr. Henry Fahey	Prepared briefs, interviewed and scheduled disputants.		Part-time _

Reason for Leaving:
Company downsized — most junior employees terminated.

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Arts for Hampton, Hampton, VA	Booking Agent	1/94-8/96	$8/hr.

THE NORRIS CORPORATION
EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

Employment History (Continued)

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time X
Ms. Wynona Johnson	Scheduled performers and contracted event services.	Part-time _

Reason for Leaving:
Given my acquired brain injury, and confinement to a wheelchair, the company(Arts for Hampton) indicated that it would be unable to provide training necessary for promotion opportunities.

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Mercer Shipworks, Newport News, VA	Receptionist	6/93-1/94	$6/hr.

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time _
Mr. Jay Traynor	Greeted visitors and answered telephones.	Part-time X

Reason for Leaving:
Company did not have full-time positions available. Sought full-time employment.

Employer Name/Address	Position	Dates	Wages
Barnes and Noble Bookstore, Newport News, VA	Book Seller	9/91-6/93	$4.50/hr.

Supervisor	Job Duties	Full-time _
Ms. Emily Chow	Sold and inventoried books.	Part-time X

Reason for Leaving:
Part-time position to meet college expenses.

May we contact past employers?   Yes X   No _

Special Skills

Keyboard: Sixty-five words per minute.

Software: Microsoft Word, Word Perfect, Excel

General Office: Administrative, clerical, some budgetary experience.

April 23, 1998

Ms. Emma Granger
Director. Human Resources Division
Colbert-Lance Industries
Chicago, IL 60609

Dear Ms. Granger:

I am writing to you because *Forbes* magazine has identified the Norris Corporation as both an industry leader and an innovative employer. I am seriously interested in moving into an administrative assistant position at Norris. Although I have not worked in an administrative assistant role, I have several years experience in administrative support roles of increasing responsibility as outlined in my attached employment application.

I believe that several of my accomplishments in my most recent position, as a Mediator Assistant at Impact Mediation, are relevant to future success in an administrative assistant position. While working at Impact Mediation I:

- Developed a new procedure for scheduling disputants that streamlined paper work,
- Wrote a training script on active listening skills for new mediator assistants,
- Contributed ideas for improved customer service as a member of the customer service advisory team.

I have earned an associate's degree in business and would very much like to contribute my experience and, above all, my enthusiasm for quality work to the Norris Corporation. Although I rely on daycare for my child, I have always been able to carry out my primary job responsibilities. I am very willing to relocate.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Nancy A. Powell

April 23, 1998

Ms. Emma Granger
Director, Human Resources Division
Colbert-Lance Industries
Chicago, IL 60609

Dear Ms. Granger:

I am writing to you because *Forbes* magazine has identified the Norris Corporation as both an industry leader and an innovative employer. I am seriously interested in moving into an administrative assistant position at Norris. Although I have not worked in an administrative assistant role, I have several years experience in administrative support roles of increasing responsibility as outlined in my attached employment application.

I believe that several of my accomplishments in my most recent position, as a Mediator Assistant at Impact Mediation, are relevant to future success in an administrative assistant position. While working at Impact Mediation I:

- Developed a new procedure for scheduling disputants that streamlined paper work.
- Wrote a training script on active listening skills for new mediator assistants,
- Contributed ideas for improved customer service as a member of the customer service advisory team.

I have earned an associate's degree in business and would very much like to contribute my experience and, above all, my enthusiasm for quality work to the Norris Corporation. Although I take daily medications due to my medical condition, I have always been able to carry out my primary job responsibilities. I am very willing to relocate.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Dorothy P. Gable

April 23, 1998

Ms. Emma Granger
Director, Human Resources Division
Colbert-Lance Industries
Chicago, IL 60609

Dear Ms. Granger:

I am writing to you because *Forbes* magazine has identified the Norris Corporation as both an industry leader and an innovative employer. I am seriously interested in moving into an administrative assistant position at Norris. Although I have not worked in an administrative assistant role, I have several years experience in administrative support roles of increasing responsibility as outlined in my attached employment application.

I believe that several of my accomplishments in my most recent position, as a Mediator Assistant at Impact Mediation, are relevant to future success in an administrative assistant position. While working at Impact Mediation I:

- Developed a new procedure for scheduling disputants that streamlined paper work,
- Wrote a training script on active listening skills for new mediator assistants,
- Contributed ideas for improved customer service as a member of the customer service advisory team.

I have earned an associate's degree in business and would very much like to contribute my experience and, above all, my enthusiasm for quality work to the Norris Corporation. Although I use a wheel chair due to my medical condition, I have always been able to carry out my primary job responsibilities. I am very willing to relocate.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Anne C. Austin

Appendix C
(Questionnaire, Response and Reminder Postcards)

<u>Directions</u>: Please answer questions 1-19 *before* reading the cover letter and job application form. The specific instructions for each cluster of questions are provided at the head of each cluster. Thank you for participating in this study.

Please answer the following questions about what employers 'should' do in terms of the expectations that guide hiring practices at <u>your</u> company. Circle the number that corresponds to your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement, using the following five-point scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree	4 = Agree
2 = Disagree	5 = Strongly Agree
3 = Neutral	

---

1. Small businesses should be required to actively recruit people with physical or mental handicaps.

   1 2 3 4 5

2. Employers should be required to limit pre-employment inquiries concerning the ability of the applicant to their ability to perform essential job functions.

   1 2 3 4 5

3. Employers should be required to make reasonable accommodations (e.g., restructure jobs, modify work schedules, or modify equipment) to the known physical or mental limitations of a qualified individual or employee, unless such accommodations would impose undue hardship on the employer.

   1 2 3 4 5

4. Employers should not be allowed to administer employment tests or use other selection criteria that screen out, or tend to screen out, people with disabilities, unless such tests, or criteria are shown to be job-related and consistent with business necessity.

   1 2 3 4 5

5. Employers should be required not to discriminate against people with hidden disabilities (e.g., recovering drug addicts or alcoholics, diabetics, epileptics, cancer patients, HIV-infected (AIDS), etc.) when recruiting, hiring and promoting.

   1 2 3 4 5

6. Employers should be required to make all non-work areas and services used by employees (e.g., cafeterias, lounges, or employee-provided transportation) accessible to people with disabilities.

   1 2 3 4 5

7. Employers should be required to hire the most qualified person who can perform the essential job functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodations.

   1 2 3 4 5

8. Employers should be required to develop and maintain job descriptions and prepare written job descriptions before advertising for jobs which list only the essential job functions.

   1 2 3 4 5

9. Employers should be allowed to require people with disabilities to take medical examinations after they have been offered the job, if all employees are required to take medical examinations as part of the employment process.

   1 2 3 4 5

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

10. Individuals should have legal recourse against employers who   1   2   3   4   5
discriminate against them because of the known disability of an
individual with whom the qualified individual is known to have
a family, business, social or other relationship or association.

11. I believe that the opinions I have voiced above are the same as those   1   2   3   4   5
generally held other hiring managers in my company.

Please respond to the statements below by circling the number that best corresponds to how much
you agree or disagree with it, using the following seven-point scale:

1 = Very much agree	5 = Disagree somewhat
2 = Generally agree	6 = Generally disagree
3 = Agree somewhat	7 = Very much disagree
4 = Neutral	

12. Does your supervisor give you the "scoop" on what's going   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
on in the company (e.g., corporate level)?

13. Is your supervisor willing to listen to you?   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

14. Do you confide personal information to your supervisor?   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

15. Does your supervisor ask you for input or advice?   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

16. Do you consider yourself "OUT" (basically a hired hand)   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
in your relationship with your supervisor?

17. Do you consider yourself "IN"(basically a trusted assistant)   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
in your relationship with your supervisor?

18. Do you give your supervisor the "scoop" on what's going on   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
in your (immediate) work group?

19. Does your supervisor confide personal information to you?   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

STOP
PLEASE READ THE COVER LETTER AND JOB APPLICATION FORM FIRST,
THEN PROCEED TO ANSWER THE REMAINING QUESTIONS BELOW.
PLEASE REVIEW THE MATERIALS AS IF THIS WERE AN ACTUAL
EMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN WHICH YOU WERE FORMIING
IMPRESSIONS OF THE JOB APPLICANT'S EMPLOYABILITY.

In the next section you will find listed some work-related employee attributes. Please evaluate the attributes of the job candidate about whom you have just read, using your impressions of her employment-related characteristics as the basis for your response.

Please respond to each attribute by circling the number that best corresponds to how characteristic or uncharacteristic of the job candidate you think that attribute is using the following nine-point scale:

1 = Most Uncharacteristic
2 = Very Uncharacteristic
3 = Quite Uncharacteristic
4 = Somewhat Uncharacteristic
5 = Neutral (Neither Characteristic nor Uncharacteristic)

6 = Somewhat Characteristic
7 = Quite Characteristic
8 = Very Characteristic
9 = Most Characteristic

20. Intelligent   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

21. Consistent   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

22. Dependable   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

23. Responsible   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

24. Effective   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

25. Stable   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

26. Cooperative   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

27. Trust   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

28. Powerful   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

29. Strong   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

30. Aggressive   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

31. Bold   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

32. Self-Reliant   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

33. Forceful   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

34. Dynamic   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

35. Decisive   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

36. Businesslike   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

37. Efficient   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

38. Expert   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

1 = Most Uncharacteristic	6 = Somewhat Characteristic
2 = Very Uncharacteristic	7 = Quite Characteristic
3 = Quite Uncharacteristic	8 = Very Characteristic
4 = Somewhat Uncharacteristic	9 = Most Characteristic
5 = Neutral (Neither Characteristic nor Uncharacteristic)	

39. Experienced   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

40. Professional   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

41. Successful   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS
(One response per item only)

---

42. Job title: __ President __ Vice President __ General Manager __ Regional Manager
__ Manager __ Assistant manager __ Director __ Deputy Director
__ Assistant Director __ Supervisor
__ Other (please specify _____)

43. Your company's type of business: __ Service __ Manufacturing __ Consulting
__ Federal Government __ State Government __ Local Government __ Health Care
__ Retail __ Food Industry __ Sales/Marketing
__ Other (please specify _____)

44. Total number of company employees: **Full-time** _____   **Part-time** _____

45. Highest Education Level: __ No H.S. diploma __ H.S. diploma __ G.E.D.
__ Associate's __ Bachelor's __ Master's __ Doctorate
__ Other (please specify _____)

46. Age: _____

47. Sex: __ Male __ Female

48. Race: __ Caucasian __ African-American __ Hispanic __ Native American
__ Asian-American __ Multi-Racial
__ Other (please specify_____)

Please consider this definition of "disability" (from the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) in answering the questions below: A disability is a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, a record of such impairment, or having been viewed as having such an impairment.

---

49. Do you have a disability?   Yes __ No __
50. Do you have a close friend or a family member who has a disability?   Yes __ No __

51. Have you ever supervised an employee with a disability?   Yes __ No __

Please answer questions 51a and 51b only if you have supervised an employee with a disability. If you have supervised more than one disabled employee, please consider your "typical" experience in answering these questions.

51a. Please rate candidly your overall satisfaction with his or her performance as an employee:

__ Very Satisfied __ Generally Satisfied __ Satisfied __Generally Unsatisfied __Very Unsatisfied

51b. Given your experience, how likely would you be to recommend hiring a qualified worker with a disability to a colleague?

__ Very Likely   __ Generally Likely   __ Likely   __ Generally Unlikely   __ Very Unlikely

52. Please take a moment to share your thoughts about this survey, or any aspect of this topic.

Your answers to this questionnaire will be anonymous. After you return your completed questionnaire to us, please send the enclosed postcard separately. The postcard will tell us that you do not need any reminders to complete the survey. I truly appreciate your time and effort.

Response Card

_____

Please return this card separately with your name and address upon completion of the survey so we do not send you any reminders. If you wish to have a copy of study results sent to you please check here ___ (Yes, I would like the study results).

Name/Title: _____

Address: _____

_____

Thanks for Participating!

_____

Reminder Card

Dear Study Participant:

This is a friendly reminder card about the survey on employers' impressions of job applicant employability you received a few weeks ago. Please consider taking a few moments to complete the survey and mail it back.

**Thanks for your Consideration!**

Vita

John Constantine Bricout was born on May 19, 1959 in Buffalo, New York and is an American citizen. He graduated from the Cathedral Preparatory School. Erie Pennsylvania in 1977. He received his Bachelor of Arts in History from Brown University, Providence. Rhode Island in 1981. He received his Master of Arts in Psychology degree from Boston University, Boston. Massachusetts in 1990. He received his Master of Social Work degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1994. Since that time, he has worked as a research specialist and then as a NIDRR-funded research fellow at the Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center. He has also taught social work courses at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (QA-3)

150mm

6"
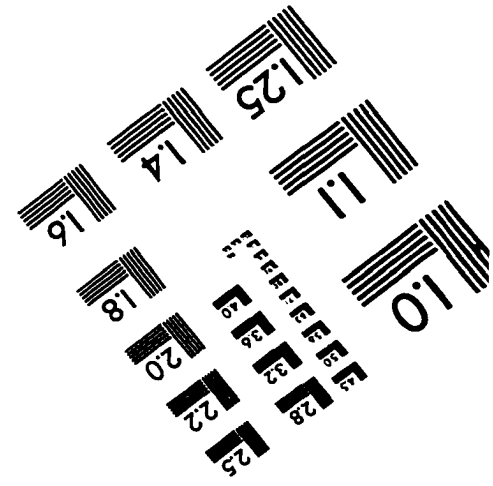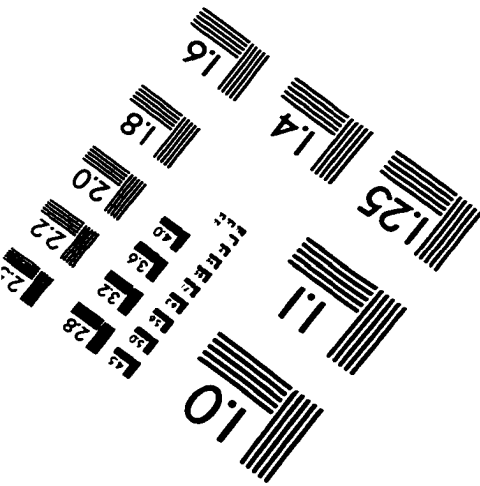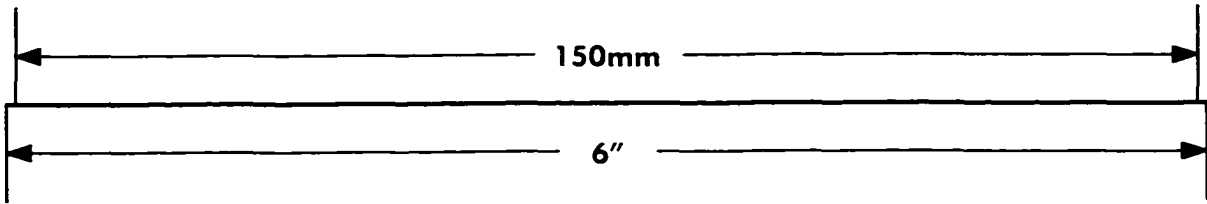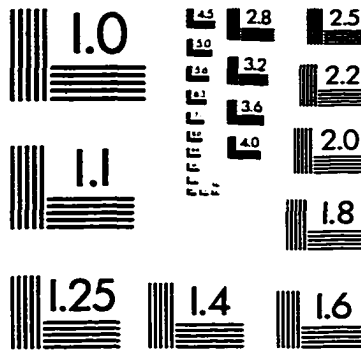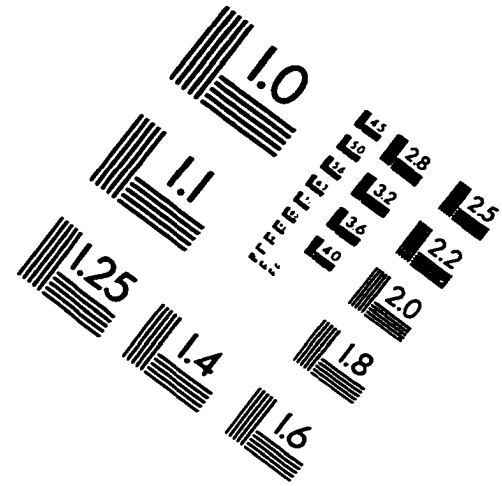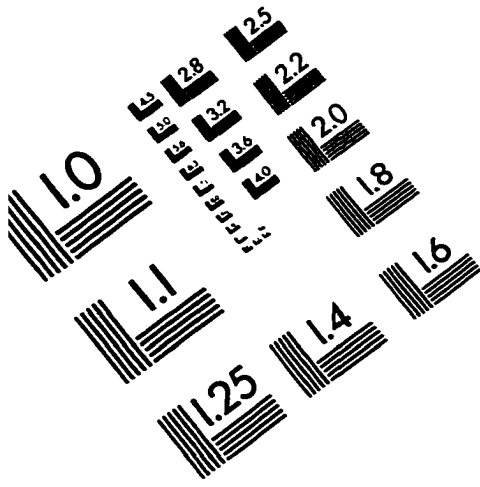
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