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The Relationship between Employer Contact with Vocational Rehabilitation and Hiring Decisions about Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship between Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) professionals' interactions with employers and those employers' hiring decisions regarding individuals who are blind or visually impaired. A national sample of 382 employers responded to an online survey that included questions about their interactions with VR, their history of hiring and intent to hire people who are blind/visually impaired in the future, and their attitudes towards this population as employees. A strong relationship between VR contact/level of relationship with VR and having hired, intent to hire, and attitudes was found. Much has been written about the importance of VR agencies developing relationships with businesses, but this is one of the first studies to provide empirical evidence of its benefits.

The Relationship between Employer Contact with Vocational Rehabilitation and Hiring Decisions about Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired

Employment rates for people with disabilities have historically been low. The most recent data on the labor force status of the U.S. population between the ages of 16 and 64 that report a visual difficulty indicate that only 32.3% are employed, 10.7% are unemployed, and 63.8% are not in the labor force at all (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). These percentages do not compare favorably to the general population's labor statistics – fewer than half are employed and more than twice as many are unemployed. The high unemployment rate for people with visual difficulties indicates a significant problem with obtaining employment, even when actively seeking it. The low participation rate in the labor force may indicate a large percentage of discouraged workers with visual difficulties, who have given up on finding a job. State-federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies are tasked with helping people with disabilities obtain employment, and direct contact with employers has always been one avenue VR agencies have used to assist their consumers with locating a job.

Although demand-side job development and employer partnerships began receiving attention in the 1990s (e.g., Frye, 1997; Gilbride & Stensrud, 1992), the emphasis on employer engagement and the additional focus on developing long-term relationships with business has increased in the past decade. This is referred to as the dual customer approach, or the business relations model, and VR agencies are being encouraged to utilize this approach in their interactions with business at the local, state, and national level (Anderson et al, 2006; CSAVR Business, 2016). The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) has taken a lead role in promoting use of the dual customer approach among VR agencies by establishing a Business Relations department that has formed the National Employment Team

(NET), which includes a representative from all 80 state VR agencies. Working with business may be particularly important for counselors and agencies that serve consumers who are blind or visually impaired, as negative employer attitudes are considered the major barrier to employment for this population (Coffey, Coufopoulos, & Kinghom, 2014; Crudden & McBroom, 1999; Crudden, Williams, McBroom, & Moore, 2002; Kirchner, Johnson, & Harkins, 1997; McDonnall, Zhou, & Crudden, 2013; Salomone & Paige, 1984). VR professionals' direct communication with employers provides an opportunity to educate employers about the population and potentially change their attitudes.

The emphasis on engaging with employers will continue to expand with the reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act – the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, P. L. 113-128). WIOA involves substantial changes to the VR program, including an increased emphasis on business engagement and providing services to business (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). After a decade of increasing focus on business engagement by the VR system, WIOA sends the message that this activity is here to stay and can only be expected to increase in the future. Recent funding by the Rehabilitation Services Administration for a Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center, which includes a focus on helping VR agencies build and maintain employer relations and provide services to employers, also provides the same message (Research Projects of ExploreVR, 2016). Although many agencies employ staff whose primary job responsibility is working with business, counselors can be expected to do much of the work with business required in the current VR environment.

Research with Employers

A substantial amount of research has been conducted with employers regarding people with disabilities, particularly in terms of evaluating employer attitudes and the relationship between employer attitudes and hiring (see Burke et al., 2013; Hernandez, Keys, & Balcazar, 2000; Ju, Roberts, & Zhang, 2013; Unger, 2002 for comprehensive literature reviews). Far fewer studies have evaluated the impact of VR contact on employer behavior or what influences employer hiring decisions about people with disabilities. Several studies have documented that employers do not know where to find qualified applicants with disabilities (Domzal, Houtenville, & Sharma, 2008; Henry, Petkauskos, Stanislawzyk, & Vogt, 2014; Hernandez et al., 2008; Stensrud, 2007). Clearly this is an area that VR contact could provide assistance in, and a few studies have documented that disability organizations, including VR, are helpful in this respect (Boni-Saenz, Heinemann, Crown, & Emanuel, 2006; Hernandez et al., 2008). Several studies have also documented the value of rehabilitation organizations, including VR and community rehabilitation providers, providing support to employers to enable them to hire people with disabilities (Boni-Saenz et al., 2006; Gilbride, Stensrud, Vandergoot, & Golden, 2003; Graffam, Shinkfield, Smith, & Polzin, 2002; Henrandez et al., 2008).

Other factors found to influence hiring decisions by employers regarding people with disabilities are the person being well qualified and being a good match for the job, and organizational-level recruitment and hiring policies and practices (Boni-Saenz et al., 2006; Erickson, Schrader, Bruyere, VanLooy, & Matteson, 2014; Gilbride et al., 2003; Graffam et al., 2002). Employers have consistently indicated that an individual's qualifications for the job and fit with the job and company are important hiring considerations (e.g., Faiben, Luecking, & Tilson, 1995; Fry, 1997; Gilbride et al., 2003; Graffam et al., 2002). Having a commitment to hiring people with disabilities at the top levels of management and having a diversity plan that

includes people with disabilities are also considered important factors in business' hiring behavior (Boni-Saenz et al., 2006; Gewurtz, Langan, & Shand, 2016; Linkow, Barrington, Bruyere, Figueroa, & Wright, 2013). Strong senior management commitment to hiring people with disabilities, providing internships for people with disabilities, reviewing accessibility of online application systems, and including people with disabilities in diversity plans are just some of the specific organizational-level practices that were found to be associated with hiring people with disabilities in a recent empirical study (Erickson et al., 2014).

In a recent scoping review of the literature about hiring of people with disabilities, Gewurtz and colleagues (2016) identified seven overarching themes, or topics, in the 53 related articles that were published between 2000 and 2014. This included three factors that can potentially improve hiring of people with disabilities: provision of information and support for employers, relationship building with employers by disability organizations, and hiring practices that invite people with disabilities. However, the authors noted that there is little research that explores the actual use and implementation of these potential strategies or evaluates their effectiveness.

Research on Business Engagement

Anecdotally, business engagement activities undertaken by VR are believed to be very important to help consumers obtain employment, which may explain the increased focus on these activities. In a recent qualitative study that utilized expert opinion to identify best practices that lead to employment for VR consumers, employer relations were considered one of the best practices (Del Valle, Leahy, Sherman, Anderson, Tansey & Schoen, 2014). However, as Gewurtz et al. (2016) indicated, there is very little empirical evidence to support the importance of these activities and little has been documented about actual benefits of these interactions.

Although several reports have been published about business-led initiatives to hire people with disabilities and community rehabilitation provider-business partnerships (e.g., Donovan & Tilson, 1998; Miano, Nalven, & Hoff, 1996; Rutkowski, Daston, Van Kuiken, & Riehle, 2006; Unger, 2007; Unger, Wehman, & Green, 2011), no empirical research has been published regarding the impact of VR agency efforts to engage with business. We do not currently have data that supports the efficacy of business engagement or gauges how important working with business is for VR agencies.

Purpose of the Study

To address this void in the literature, this study was undertaken to evaluate the efficacy of business engagement by VR professionals on the employment of people with disabilities. The specific purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship between employer hiring decisions about applicants who are blind or visually impaired and their interaction with VR. Previous hiring behavior, intent to hire, attitude toward blind/visually impaired people as employees, and reasons for hiring were used to measure employer hiring decisions associated with people who are B/VI. Four specific research questions were investigated:

1. Is contact with VR and level of relationship with VR associated with previous hiring of people who are blind or visually impaired?
2. Is contact with VR and level of relationship with VR associated with intent to hire people who are blind or visually impaired in the future?
3. Is level of relationship with VR associated with employer attitudes towards people who are blind or visually impaired as employees?
4. Is contact with VR associated with why employers decided to hire someone who is blind or visually impaired?

Method

Sample Identification and Data Collection Procedure

Hiring managers (i.e., people employed by a company that make hiring decisions for that company) were the target population for this study. SurveyMonkey (SM) Audience was used to identify the sample. This is a fee-based service provided by SM to identify participants that meet specific requirements for online surveys. SM has identified a large number of people who have agreed to complete surveys, with a small donation given to a charity for their participation. A stratified sample (based on company size) of people who were thought to likely have hiring authority was identified by SM Audience. This included people whose job titles were managers, executives, and human resources personnel. A screening question was used to determine if the individuals identified did have hiring authority, and those who did were invited to complete the survey. Data were collected online through a survey in the author's SM account. SM Audience sent the invitation to participate to 2,476 people who were employed in one of the job categories previously mentioned. A sample size of 400 was targeted.

Measures

Contact with VR and *level of relationship with VR* were measured with responses to the three questions presented in Table 1. Percentage who responded in each category is provided in the table. *Contact with VR* was based on the response to the first question only (whether the employer had ever communicated with their state VR agency about employment of people with disabilities). For analyses involving *level of relationship with VR*, the answer to the three questions were combined into four categories: (a) none (no communication with VR), (b) does not include talking about B/VI (had communicated with VR but not about B/VI people), (c) some contact (had communicated with VR about B/VI people once, in the past, or occasionally),

and (d) ongoing relationship (report an ongoing relationship that includes talking about B/VI people). *Intent to hire* was measured with a single question ("How likely would you be to hire a qualified legally blind person for the next open position you have?") with four response options: very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, and not at all likely.

Employer attitudes were measured with the Employer Attitudes toward Blind Employees Scale (EABES; McDonnall, 2014a, 2016). The EABES is an 11-item instrument that consists of two subscales: productivity and challenges. Items consist of statements that respondents are asked to rate using a 7-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (e.g., "People who are legally blind would be able to perform work of the same quantity as sighted people at my company" and "Our customers might feel uncomfortable having a person who is legally blind help them"). Higher scores indicated more positive attitudes, with a potential score range of 0 to 66. Psychometric analyses of the initial version of the instrument included evaluation of item-total correlations, standard deviations, item range of responses, coefficient alpha, and exploratory factor analysis. The instrument was then administered to the SM Audience sample and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to evaluate the measure (see McDonnall, 2016). CFA goodness of fit statistics (i.e., CFI of .976, SRMR of .047, RMSEA of .059) and Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .92 (productivity subscale) and .84 (challenges subscale) supported the reliability and validity of the measure.

Reason for hiring someone who is blind or visually impaired was asked as an open-ended question to those who had hired someone in the past ("What made you decide to hire someone who was blind or significantly visually impaired?"). Participant responses were coded into categories by the author and a second independent reviewer, with initial interrater agreement of 83.3%. Discrepancies were discussed until agreement was reached. The majority of responses

fell into one of three primary categories (see Table 6 for the categories).

Data Analysis

Pearson's chi-square test was utilized to determine whether a relationship existed between categorical variables. Cramer's *V* values were used to assess the magnitude of the relationship, or effect size. One-way between subjects ANOVA was utilized to assess the association between employer attitudes and level of relationship with the VR agency. Tukey's HSD test was used to determine whether significant differences existed between the four different relationship levels, and Cohen's *d* was used to evaluate effect size of the group differences that were significant. Descriptive statistics (percentages) were used to evaluate differences in responses on reasons for hiring someone who is blind or visually impaired.

Results

Participants

We received 845 responses to the online survey invitation (a 34.1% response rate[1]), of which 605 were eligible to participate (i.e., employed in hiring positions). The online survey was completed by 579 of these respondents. Data was carefully screened to ensure respondents took adequate time to complete the survey (more than 5 minutes was required), answered the screener question correctly (i.e., a question that asks the person to select a specific response), and did not provide nonsensical answers to any write-in items. Respondents who did not meet these requirements were dropped from the analyses to ensure integrity of the data. The primary reason for dropping respondents was that less than 5 minutes was taken to complete the survey (n=128), followed by providing nonsensical answers (n=43), missing the screener question (n=42), and not providing complete data (n=2). This screening resulted in a usable sample of 382 participants with no missing data on variables of interest to this study. One-third of the sample (*n* = 126) had

hired someone who was blind or visually impaired in the past. The majority of participants were female, between the ages of 35 and 54, held a Bachelor's or graduate degree, and had an annual income of $75,000 or more. Additional information about participant demographics, job titles, and company size is presented in Table 2.

Contact/Relationship with VR and Previous Hiring

A relatively large portion of the sample – 38.1% – had communicated with the VR agency in their state about employing people with disabilities. Most of these communications did involve talking about people who are blind or visually impaired – 30.9% of the total. Chi-square results indicated a strong relationship between contact with VR and having hired someone who is blind or visually impaired: $\chi^2(2, N=382) = 156.40$, $p < .0001$, Cramer's $V = 0.64$. When evaluating the level of relationship with VR, there was also a strong association between this variable and having hired someone who is blind or visually impaired: $\chi^2(3, N=382) = 185.68$, $p < .0001$, Cramer's $V = 0.70$. Percentages in each category are provided in Table 3. Of the 126 employers who had hired someone who is blind or visually impaired in the past, 82.5% of them had communicated with VR.

Contact/Relationship with VR and Intent to Hire

Chi-square analyses indicate a strong relationship between contact with VR and intent to hire in the future: $\chi^2(3, N=379) = 60.90$, $p < .0001$, Cramer's $V = 0.40$. A significant association also existed when considering the level of relationship with VR and intent to hire someone who is blind or visually impaired: $\chi^2(9, N=379) = 77.34$, $p < .0001$, Cramer's $V = 0.26$. Percentages in each intent to hire category are provided in Table 4.

Relationship with VR and Attitudes

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to evaluate differences in employer

attitudes towards people who are blind or visually impaired as employees based on level of relationship with VR. Relationship with VR was significantly associated with employer attitudes [$F(3,378) = 24.95$, $p < .0001$]. Means for each relationship level are provided in Table 5. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test were conducted to determine which groups were significantly different from each other. Tukey's HSD controls the experiment-wise error rate at alpha = .05. All groups were significantly different from each other, with the exception of those who had no contact with VR and those who had contact that did not include talking about people who are blind or visually impaired. These two groups had similarly lower scores on the attitude measure, while those who had some contact that involved talking about people who are blind or visually impaired exhibited more positive attitudes, and those with an ongoing relationship that involves talking about people who are blind or visually impaired exhibited the most positive attitudes. The effect size for the significant differences between the groups (Cohen's *d*) ranged from a low of 0.55 for those with some contact versus an ongoing relationship to a high of 1.32 for those with no contact versus those with an ongoing relationship.

Contact with VR and Reason for Hiring

Chi-square analyses were not used to evaluate differences in reasons employers provided for hiring people who are blind or visually impaired because some respondents gave an answer that fit in more than one category. For both groups (i.e., those who had communicated with VR and those who had not), the most common reason given for hiring was that *the person was qualified for the job, or the best candidate* (70.6%). Examples of comments that fit in this category include "He had the necessary skills for the job.", "She has the skills we needed and was able to perform the job.", and "Best qualified for the position, even with accommodations." The second most popular reason given for hiring was out of *empathy or compassion* for the blind

or visually impaired person (18.3%). Comments such as “deserved a chance,” “to help,” “wanted to give them the opportunity to work and prove themselves,” and “all people have the same worth” were coded in this category. Another 7.9% reported that they wanted *to provide equal opportunity* for the person, with comments such as “equal opportunity,” “we do not discriminate against people with disabilities,” and “fair approach.” The remaining 10.3% of comments were either unclear or coded in more unique categories, such as *knew the person personally* or *required to hire people with disabilities*. Percentages do differ by group, particularly in the categories of *empathy or compassion* and *to provide equal opportunity*. Percentages for each group are provided in Table 6.

Discussion

This investigation adds to the existing literature about hiring of people with disabilities by providing empirical data on the relationship between VR interactions with employers and their hiring decisions. These results provide compelling evidence for a strong relationship between VR professionals’ contact with employers and employers’ hiring decisions about people who are blind or visually impaired. The fact that such a relationship exists may not be surprising, but the strength of the association perhaps is. Previous hiring of people who are blind or visually impaired was strongly associated with contact with VR and the level of the relationship, as evidenced by the large effect size measures. Any amount of contact with VR was associated with previous hiring, but employers with an ongoing relationship with VR were more likely to have hired someone in the past. Intent to hire in the future was also strongly associated with contact with VR and the level of the relationship. Intent to hire in the future was most likely when the employer reported having an ongoing relationship with VR. More than half of those with an ongoing relationship reported that they would be “very likely” to hire someone who is blind or

visually impaired in the future, a much higher percentage than any other group. Employer attitudes also differed significantly based on the level of the relationship with VR, with those with no communication having significantly more negative attitudes towards blind or visually impaired people as employees compared to those who had contact that included talking about the population. It is relevant to note that the group with the most positive attitudes were those that had an ongoing relationship with VR.

Worthy of particular attention in the findings is that VR professionals specifically discussing people who are blind or visually impaired is important to each of these relationships investigated. Although employers who had communicated with VR but had not talked about people who are blind or visually impaired were more likely to have hired someone in the past and to indicate they are very likely to hire someone in the future compared to those with no communication, the differences are much larger when the communication did involve discussing this population. Employer attitudes were not significantly different for those who had communicated with VR but not about people who are blind or visually impaired and those who had not communicated. All of these findings support the importance of specifically talking to employers about this population, which is something that is particularly relevant to remember for VR professionals who serve consumers with a variety of disabilities.

Research has supported that employers generally do not know much about how blind/visually impaired people can perform typical work tasks, but that having greater knowledge in this area is associated with more positive employer attitudes (McDonnall, O'Mally, & Crudden, 2014; McDonnall, Crudden, & O'Mally, 2015). It seems likely that most employers simply do not know enough about how a blind/visually impaired person could perform the jobs they have to consider them for employment. That is one reason that talking

specifically about this population with employers is so important. Providing education and explaining, or demonstrating, how people who are blind/visually impaired could perform the essential functions of the job is important to allow an employer to consider hiring them.

Interestingly, the reason employers gave for hiring someone who is blind or visually impaired differed based on contact with VR. Both groups were most likely to state that their primary reason for hiring the person was that he/she was qualified for the position or was the best candidate. This is the typical reason that employers hire anyone, and it concurs with the literature as a primary reason for employers to hire someone with a disability (Boni-Saenz et al., 2006; Gilbride et al., 2003; Graffam et al., 2002). However, a lower percentage of those who had communicated with VR gave this as their reason, and more than one-fifth indicated their reason for hiring was empathy or compassion for the person (note that a few employers gave both answers – the person was qualified and empathy or compassion). None of the employers who had not communicated with VR gave this as their reason, although a higher percentage said their reason was to provide equal opportunity to the person. These differences seem to indicate that either those who are willing to communicate with VR are more empathetic toward this population in general, or that the VR professional that they communicated with encouraged them to hire someone for these reasons. We cannot be sure which of these scenarios, if either, is correct, but it is not currently recommended for VR professionals to approach an employer from the perspective of hiring someone out of generosity, altruism, or a sense of compassion as this is not congruent with the idea of business engagement and treating the business as a customer. However, in the past this seems to have been a typical approach that was taken by VR professionals (Luecking, 2008).

Limitations

The use of an online survey to collect data results in inherent limitations to a study. Self-selection bias is always an issue with volunteers who can decide whether or not to complete a survey. Although we had respondents from across the country, our sample is not nationally representative, and we had a high percentage of employers that have hired someone who is blind or visually impaired. Undoubtedly employers who had experience with this population were more likely to respond to the invitation to participate provided by SM Audience. Another limitation of survey data is the inability to determine the accuracy of responses; participants may unintentionally or intentionally provide incorrect data. We attempted to address this issue by removing data from respondents who provided nonsensical answers to open-ended items, answered a screener question incorrectly, or who took a short time to complete the entire survey. In addition, we do not know if the employers in our survey spoke to a VR professional before or after they hired someone who is blind or visually impaired. We assume it is likely that the VR contact happened before the hiring, but it is possible that the contact happened after the person obtained a job on their own. Regardless of the order, contact with VR was strongly associated with employer hiring, indicating that VR communication with employers is important. Finally, that we asked only about employment of people who are blind or visually impaired limits the generalizability of these findings to the broader population of people with disabilities. We cannot be certain that the relationships exhibited in this study regarding the importance of VR contact would be the same if another disability group, or people with disabilities in general, were studied.

Implications for VR Professionals

The most obvious implication of these findings for rehabilitation professionals is clear – it is important to get out and make connections with employers! Employers who have talked to a

VR professional about hiring people with disabilities are much more likely to have hired someone. If your consumers include individuals who are blind or visually impaired, it is important to specifically talk about this population with the employer. However, it is not certain whether the initial meeting with the employer should include a discussion of consumers' impairments – many business relations professionals do not recommend leading the discussion with disability (K. West-Evans, personal communication, May 1, 2012) or specifically with blindness or visual impairment, even if that is the population you serve (McDonnall, 2014b). Beyond just connecting with employers, the results support the importance of developing an ongoing relationship with employers. Although previous hiring was strongly associated with any level of contact that included talking about people who are blind or visually impaired, intent to hire in the future was clearly most closely associated with having an ongoing relationship with VR.

More positive attitudes towards people who are blind or visually impaired as employees were associated with hiring in a previous study (McDonnall et al., 2015). The present study documents that only communication with a VR professional that includes talking about people who are blind or visually impaired is associated with more positive attitudes towards the population as employees. Those who had communicated with a VR professional but did not discuss people who are blind or visually impaired had attitudes that were no different than employers who had never communicated with someone from VR. This finding underscores the importance of VR staff who work with employers being able to communicate about people who are blind or visually impaired, including accommodations they may use and how they can function in a job. Business relations staff in combined agencies need to have this knowledge

themselves or involve another staff person, such as VR counselor who works with the population, in meetings with employers.

This study supports the importance of VR professionals making connections with employers and establishing ongoing relationships, but it does not address how to do this or what it should involve. Fortunately there is a body of literature that has addressed this issue. Previous studies have documented several things that employers want from VR agencies, including: qualified applicants who can be productive and are a fit with the job and company; consistent follow-up services; access to experts who can provide services such as diversity training and information about accommodations, laws, and tax incentives; and clear communication and information about scope of an agency's services (Buys & Rennie, 2001; Hernandez et al., 2008; Kirchner et al., 1997; McDonnall & Crudden, 2015; Simonsen et al., 2011; Stensrud, 2007). Although some employers in this study reported that they hired a person who is blind or visually impaired out of empathy or compassion, it is not recommended that a VR professional use this approach with employers. People who are blind or visually impaired can function effectively in most jobs if provided with appropriate accommodations – and that is the message that VR professionals should provide to employers.

Finally, it is important to consider that several studies have documented employers' concerns about VR agencies' lack of support, efficiency, and business knowledge (Boni-Saenz et al., 2006; Fraser et al, 2010; Gilbride, Stensrud, Ehlers, Evans, & Peterson, 2000; Henry et al., 2014; Hernandez et al., 2008). VR agencies should ensure that their staff are well-prepared to engage with business, providing training as necessary to prepare them for this activity. VR professionals themselves should ensure that their interactions with employers are meeting the

businesses' needs and expectations so that they have a chance to establish a relationship, which may result in additional hiring of people with disabilities in the future.

Note

[1] Once the targeted number of responses in each company size category was obtained (most within a few days), potential respondents no longer had the opportunity to participate. This truncates the response rate from what it may have been if participants were provided more time to provide a response.

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Table 1

Contact and Relationship with Vocational Rehabilitation

Question	**Percent Yes**	**Frequency**
Have you ever communicated with your state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency about employment of people with disabilities?	38.1	146
Has this included talking about people who are blind or significantly visually impaired?	30.9	118
Which best describes your relationship with the VR agency?		
Spoke to someone once	20.6	30
Had several interactions in the past, but not currently	26.7	39
Have occasional contact with someone from the agency	29.5	43
Have an ongoing relationship with someone from the agency	23.3	34

Overall $N = 382$

Table 2

Sample Demographics and Company Size

Variable	Percent	Frequency
Gender (Female)[a]	58.6	222
Age[a]		
18 to 34	23.0	87
35 to 44	28.8	109
45 to 54	27.7	105
55 or older	20.6	78
Education level[a]		
High school or less	8.7	33
Some college/two-year degree	27.4	104
Bachelor's degree	41.2	156
Graduate degree	22.7	86
Income level[a]		
Less than $25,000	3.2	12
$25,000 to $49,999	15.3	58
$50,000 to $74,999	23.2	88
$75,000 to $99,999	23.2	88
$100,000 or more	35.1	133
Region[a]		
Northeast	19.3	73
Midwest	23.0	87
South	36.7	139
West	21.1	80
Job title[b]		
Managers/Supervisors	62.8	240
Directors/Chief executives	15.7	60
Human resources personnel	10.5	40
Owners	7.9	30
Other	3.1	12
Company size (number of employees)[b]		
1 to 14	5.0	19
15 to 99	33.5	128
100 to 499	20.9	80
500 to 1,999	22.3	85
2,000 or more	18.3	70

[a]N=379; [b]N=382

Table 3

Contact/Relationship with VR and Previous Hiring

Variable	**Have Hired**	
	Yes	No
Communication with VR		
Yes	104 (71.2%)	42 (28.8%)
No	22 (9.3%)	214 (90.7%)
Relationship with VR		
None	22 (9.3%)	214 (90.7%)
Does not include talking about B/VI	8 (28.6%)	20 (71.4%)
Some contact (once, in the past, or occasional)	68 (79.1%)	18 (20.9%)
Ongoing relationship	28 (87.5%)	4 (12.5%)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 4

Contact/Relationship with VR and Intent to Hire

Variable	**Likelihood of Future Hiring**		
	Not at all /Not very	Somewhat	Very
Communication with VR			
Yes	24 (16.6%)	63 (43.5%)	58 (40.0%)
No	101 (43.2%)	109 (46.6%)	24 (10.3%)
Relationship with VR			
None	101 (43.2%)	109 (46.6%)	24 (10.3%)
Does not include talking about B/VI	12 (42.9%)	9 (32.1%)	7 (25.0%)
Some contact (once, in the past, or occasional)	11 (12.9%)	40 (47.1%)	34 (40.0%)
Ongoing relationship	1 (3.1%)	14 (43.8%)	17 (53.1%)

Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 5

Employer Attitude Means by Level of Relationship with VR

Level of Relationship	**Employer Attitude**		
	Mean	**SD**	**N**
None	31.80	13.02	236
Does not include talking about B/VI	34.25	12.58	28
Some contact (once, in the past, or occasional)	41.43	10.64	86
Ongoing relationship	48.19	11.55	32

Table 6

Contact with VR and Reason for Hiring

Reason	**Overall**	**Communication with VR**	**No Communication with VR**
Qualified/Best candidate	70.6	69.2	77.3
Empathy/Compassion	18.3	22.1	0.0
Equal opportunity	7.9	4.8	22.7
Other or unclear response	10.3	10.6	9.1

Note: All figures are percentages, overall *N*=126, totals exceed 100% due to some responses fitting into multiple categories