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# Hiring Individuals with Ambulatory Disabilities: An Employer's Perspective

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Lindsay Marie Aslan

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University

2019

Abstract

Hiring Individuals with Ambulatory Disabilities: An Employer's Perspective

by

Lindsay Marie Aslan

MA, New Jersey City University, 2009

BA, Montclair State University, 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

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## Abstract

Statistics show that approximately 30.6 million individuals in the United States had an ambulatory disability (AD), the most prevalent disability in the country. In 2010, 17.5% of the disabled population was employed, and only 5% of that employed population had an AD. The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand the decision-making process of small businesses owners in New Jersey when deciding on whether to hire those with AD. Ajzen's theory of planned behavior was utilized in this study to make predictions and explain why individuals engage in a behavior. Interviews were conducted with 16 participants and 22 questionnaires were completed by non-interview participants. The criteria of interview participants included ownership of small businesses within New Jersey and experience with hiring or interviewing an individual with an AD. Questionnaires were given to those businesses that exceeded employee size and lacked experience with AD. participation. Interview transcripts and questionnaires served as the raw data for analysis. Analysis of data consisted of coding using Nvivo software; to assist with identifying patterns and themes. Findings showed employers are willing to hire individuals with AD if they are able to perform the job duties. The results of this study can benefit businesses and individuals with AD seeking employment. Providing a knowledge base for those in the hiring position and those in the candidacy position serves to inform those about what candidates with AD can contribute as an employee and what employers are looking for in an employee. Such benefits may increase the employment opportunity for individuals with AD.

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## Dedication

Dedicated to the memory of my beloved, late, paternal grandfather, George M. Aslan, Sr. who always believed in me. You may be gone, but your belief in me made this possible.

## Acknowledgments

This study would not have been done without the guidance provided by my committee during this process. Each member of my committee provided me with the professional guidance and support I needed throughout this research process. Especially Dr. Carpenter, my committee chair, who was always extensive and specific in his feedback to ensure that I would have a quality study.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Individuals with ambulatory disabilities (AD) have always found it difficult to do many things, including using stairs without assistance, having an unsteady gait, and being unable to cross curbs (Oregonlaws.org, 2015). Among the difficulties that such individuals have had, obtaining and maintaining employment has been particularly challenging for these individuals. The U.S. Department of Labor (2016) found that 17.5% of individuals with disabilities could find employment. Of that 17.5%, only 5% of those individuals with AD were employed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Such a meager employment rate of individuals with AD has led to the phenomenon that was the topic of this study. With this study, I sought to answer the question: Why do small business owners decide to hire or not hire individuals with AD?

Researchers have conducted studies in which employees with disabilities have been asked to describe their feelings with regards to accommodations provided by employers as well as the overall working environment that they face by being members of the workforce (Hasim & Wok, 2013; Telwatte, Anglim, Wynton & Moulding, 2017). There have also been studies conducted to identify the different factors that influence an employer's decision to hire individuals with disabilities (Mak, Ho & Kim, 2014; Paez & Arendt, 2014; Vedeler, 2014). However, no researchers have explored the employer's rationale for hiring or not hiring individuals with disabilities, specifically AD. By identifying this reasoning in this study, I developed an understanding of what employers

look for when interviewing individuals with AD and what they consider when deciding whether to hire these individuals and provide accommodations for them. The results of this study ultimately provide a guide to both employers and potential employees with AD on what to look for when such individuals apply for employment, and for individuals with AD, how to become a proper candidate for employment. Such a guide will assist in reducing human resource issues, expanding the workforce pool, and helping individuals with AD obtain employment. Using the findings from this study, individuals with AD may become more independent while also alleviating their reliance on financial support from others or government funding, reducing the cost to taxpayers for such programs.

This chapter will include a discussion of the background, consisting of a brief summary of the related current literature; problem statement; purpose of the study; research questions; theoretical framework; nature of the study; definitions of key concepts and terms; assumptions; scope and delimitations of the study; limitations; and significance of the study. In addition, the significance of the study will be discussed, with regard to societal change and impact.

### **Background**

Paez and Arendt (2014) and Ju, Roberts, and Zhang (2013) conducted studies that explored whether employers and managers had positive attitudes towards hiring, providing support and accommodations, and, including an individual with a disability in the workplace as well as how such an attitude would affect these decisions. Their findings showed that the hiring of employees with disabilities was impacted by the

attitude of employers and managers with regard to such individuals (Ju et al., 2013; Paez & Arendt). These researchers also explored the challenges regarding finances for training and accommodations for employees with disabilities (Ju et al.; Paez & Arendt).

Particularly in the hospitality industry, the authors reported that the number of years working with such individuals had a positive effect on managers' attitudes (Ju et al.; Paez & Arendt). Additionally, it was found that the size of the business also impacted employer attitudes towards employees with disabilities (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013). For example, in smaller businesses, employers may be less in favor of hiring employees with disabilities due to a lack of flexibility to shift job duties and limited resources to pay for accommodations (Jasper & Waldhart).

In a study regarding disability workplace inclusion and employer experience with disabilities, Vedeler (2014) found that the inclusion of those with physical disabilities was connected to the experience and exposure employers have had to those with disabilities. An employer's experience with such individuals was a determining factor regarding an employer's decision to hire an individual with disabilities (Vedeler). Yamatani, Teixeira, and McDonough (2015) and Kurata and Brodwin (2013) also reported that employers who have had prior experience with employees with disabilities were more likely to hire such employees in the future as well as have a more positive attitude towards them. Disability type, previous positive experiences with employees with disabilities, and familiarity with disabilities all yielded more positive attitudes in



employers about hiring such individuals (Ju et al., 2013; Kurata & Brodwin, 2013; Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt, & Brooks, 2014 Yamatani et al., 2015).

While these prior studies provide some insight into the attitudes that these employers have when employing such individuals and the effects that such attitudes have with regards to employing individuals with disabilities as well as the different challenges faced by these employers when considering whether to hire an individual with a disability, there continues to be minimal hiring of individuals with disabilities, specifically AD. In prior studies, researchers have not looked at this phenomenon from the perspective of the employer or discovered what rationale employers use when deciding whether to hire or not hire individuals with AD. As a result, there is a lack of understanding as to why or what leads to these individuals being hired or not hired. With this study, I intended to develop an understanding of this rationale in an effort to determine what plays a role in the decisions made by employers to hire or not hire an individual with an AD. By conducting this study, I obtained an understanding of the phenomenon that could potentially be used to mitigate the issue.

### **Problem Statement**

Individuals with an AD face employment barriers concerning job support, mobility limitations, attitudinal barriers, and adjustment of job duties (Bualar, 2014; Hasim & Wok, 2014; Nevela, Pehkonen, Koskela, Ruusuvuori, & Anttila, 2015). Of approximately 56.7 million people in the United States who had a disability in 2010, about 30.6 million of these people had an AD (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). While 17.5%

of the disabled population was employed (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016), only approximately 5% of that population had an AD (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). However, the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) reported that AD are the most prevalent type of disability.

Researchers have identified what factors act as deterrents for employers when it comes to hiring individuals with disabilities (Domzal, Houtenville, & Sharma, 2008). Studies have also shown that individuals with disabilities face challenges related to obtaining employment, maintaining employment, and being provided with the necessary accommodations needed to perform the duties of the job (Rumrill Jr., Li, Roessler, Umeasiegbu & Bishop, 2016; Sevak & Khan, 2016). As previously mentioned, recent research has suggested that barriers exist in the workforce for individuals with disabilities, such as multiple sclerosis, cancer patients, epilepsy, Parkinson's, and auditory disabilities (Frndak et al., 2015; Gustafsson, Nordström, Strähle & Nordström, 2015; Mak et al. 2014; Nevela et al., 2015; Shaw, Tetlaff, Jennings & Southall, 2013; Ziemba & Drazkowski, 2015). Other studies have indicated a need for future research regarding employer rationales for making decisions related to employing individuals with disabilities as well as that future research be conducted on procedural and interactional aspects of hiring employees with physical disabilities (Ju et al., 2013; Villanueva-Flores, Valle-Cabrera, & Ramón-Jerónimo, 2015) Heera (2016) also stressed that future research focus on employment factors that may affect employer attitudes and suggested the completion of case studies regarding employers' perspectives that influence their current hiring practices. Lastly, Gewurtz, Langan, and Shand (2016) found that in addition to the

current research regarding the hiring practices regarding individuals with disabilities, future research would be needed with stakeholders, such as employers, in order to obtain information to improve the hiring practices of these individuals.

Although the aforementioned research regarding the employment of individuals with physical disabilities focuses on how these individuals experience employment and issues encountered by employers when accommodating individuals with physical disabilities, I found no research that has focused on the employer's rationale for or thought process concerning the hiring, accommodating, and modifying for individuals with physical disabilities, specifically AD. With this study, I extended Heera's (2016) research by conducting a case study, using interviews, to uncover what factors affect an employer's attitude with regards to hiring or not hiring an individual with an AD and obtain employers' perspectives when faced with such a decision. Additionally, with this study I addressed the gap in the literature identified by Ju et al. (2013) as the lack of information regarding employer rationale for making decisions when it comes to employing individuals with disabilities, which is important in order to understand what employers are thinking when determining whether to hire an individual with an AD. Consequently, further research was warranted that examined the challenges that employers face in providing a fair and equal opportunity work environment for the employees with AD. Research was also warranted to discover how these challenges affect employers' thought process with regards to hiring and providing accommodations for employees with AD. Such challenges contribute to the documented problem of

minimal hiring of these employees and lack of advancement for them in the workplace (Hogan, Kyaw-Myint, Harris, & Denronden, 2012; Paez et al., 2014; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2016). I sought to address this problem with this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the decision-making process that small business owners in New Jersey (NJ) go through when reaching their rationale on whether to hire those with AD. Considering the amount of cases that were involved in this study, limiting the geographical location to one specific county, with another as back ups if needed, mitigated the cost of travel and time that would have been required to travel to each location. Additionally, with the abundance of businesses within the chosen N.J. county, with over 30,000 employer establishments (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), it provided the ideal location to find a sample that could provide the data necessary to reach saturation. With the great amount of businesses located within such county, I was afforded a greater opportunity to obtain the required sample for the study that alleviated the need for me to seek participants in other locations.

Developing an understanding relative to the employer's experience and interaction with potential employees with AD can assist in assessing if those experiences relate to their thought process when deciding to hire or not hire such individuals. To address this gap in research, I used a multiple case study approach in this study. With this study, I intended to describe this phenomenon, assess what leads to the minimal hiring of

individuals with AD, and understand why the phenomenon occurs. Ultimately, I hoped to uncover methods by which this phenomenon can be mitigated.

### **Research Questions**

1. Why do owners of small businesses in New Jersey decide to hire or not hire an individual with ambulatory disabilities?
2. How do owners of small businesses in New Jersey describe their rationale when making such decisions?

### **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

I used the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as the theoretical framework in this study. The TPB may be used to make predictions as well as explain why individuals engage in a behavior (Ajzen, 1985). TPB is made up of four main components: attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intention (Ajzen). An individual's behavior is directly influenced by their attitudes, which are affected by subjective norms as well as how much control they feel they have over the behavior (Ajzen). By determining these factors, the individual's intention when engaging in a behavior can be understood and ultimately predicted (Ajzen). Therefore, TPB provided me with guidance for understanding the reasoning behind an employer's decision to hire or not hire an individual with AD in this study. I will discuss TPB in more detail in Chapter 2 of this study and will include examples of when the framework was used in prior studies and the outcomes achieved by those studies.

### **Nature of the Study**

To address the gap in the research I discussed in the problem statement, I used the qualitative approach with a multiple case study design. I sought an understanding about the contemporary phenomenon, without any control or manipulation of any variables (see Yin, 2014). These research methods are used when developing an understanding about real world cases (Yin). I acted as the research tool in this study, in that I conducted interviews with the participants to gain information regarding their lived experience (see Yin) However, I was not limited to one method of data collection (see Yin). In addition to interviews, I also sent questionnaires to 100 businesses within the selected N.J. county and subsequently reviewed and analyzed the responses received. The completed questionnaires that I reviewed and analyzed focused on those businesses in which there was no prior interaction with an individual with an AD. Upon completion of this review, I then compared the rationales given by the interview participants to the rationales given by the individuals responding to the questionnaire to see if any patterns formed regarding the rationale used by employers within each setting. If the rationales were similar, then triangulation of the data was achieved. If they would have differed, then a conclusion could have been drawn that employers continue to differ in their rationale for hiring or not hiring individuals with AD.

A multiple case study is a research design that uses multiple cases to address a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Using multiple cases allowed me to gather information from multiple employers from different settings in an attempt to determine what rationale each

uses in their decision-making process when deciding whether or not to hire an individual with an AD. Each case provided a different perspective on the same topic, which allowed for a greater understanding of this phenomenon in the real-world context by incorporating the many different types of employment available to those individuals with AD and not limiting the study to just one particular type of business (see Yin).

Additionally, the study was a descriptive, multiple case study. Descriptive case studies are used when a researcher is attempting to describe a phenomenon in its real-world context (Yin, 2014). In this study, I explained the rationale that employers use when deciding whether to hire an individual with an AD, which ultimately provided a clear understanding as to why the phenomenon occurs.

This study involved 15 cases, which consisted of 15 small businesses in the selected NJ county, or until saturation was reached. I considered a case in this study to be one business, where I interviewed either the manager or owner (or whoever had hiring capabilities within the business) to obtain the required data for this study. I used an embedded study approach, which was appropriate due to the different settings within each potential case. Applying such an approach allowed me to consider the additional factors in each case that contributed to an employer's rationale with regards to hiring or not hiring individuals with AD, such as business size, business type, skills required, etc. (see Yin, 2014).

### **Definitions**

*Ambulatory disability (AD):* A person that

(1) has a physical and permanent disability to such a degree that the person is unable to move from place to place without the aid of a wheelchair; (2) is not able to cross curbs because of paralysis or loss of function of the person's legs; (3) is missing one or both legs; or (4) has a permanently impaired or unsteady gait that makes it impossible or impractical to walk as a means of transportation.

(Oregonlaws.org, 2015, para. 1)

Also, the U.S. Census Bureau (2014) defined AD as having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.

*Accommodations:* Any change or modification to the workplace to allow an individual with a disability to engage in all aspects of the job including application, performance, and access to benefits (Office of Disability Employment Policy, n.d.).

*Gainful employment:* A job that pays wages or salary (*Definition of gainful employment*, 2017). Cho and Schuermann (1980) also described being gainfully employed as having financial independence.

*Small business:* A business consisting of no more than 99 employees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

### **Assumptions**

I assumed that participants in the study had experience with making decisions regarding the hiring or not hiring of individuals with AD. Such an assumption was necessary in order to ensure that information received from the participants was relevant in answering the research questions and to avoid expending time with individuals that



would not have provided useful information to the study. It was reasonable to assume that all participants in this study had experience with making decisions regarding the hiring of individuals with AD because in order for the information they provided to be relevant to this study they would need to be able to provide their perspective as to why they do or do not hire these individuals (see Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). If the participant had never had any experience with making this decision, any information they provided would just be based on speculation, which would hinder the validity of the data (Pierce, 2008).

Another assumption was that participant responses to interview questions were accurate and trustworthy. Such an assumption was necessary to ensure the integrity of the study. This assumption was reasonable based on the fact that those participants that agreed to partake in the study would have no motive to fabricate information and were participating because they were interested in assisting with answering the research questions (see Pierce, 2008).

I also assumed the interview questions were valid and reliable. This assumption allowed for the study to be deemed valid and dependable once all information was received and analyzed. The interview questions were field tested prior to their use in the study to ensure that they would obtain the data necessary for this study (see Phoenix, 2015).

My final assumption was that participants worked in the selected N.J. county, spoke English, and came from diverse backgrounds based on their responses to the original demographic questions. Such an assumption was necessary to obtain information

that would cover a vast array of organizations and different employment types in which employees with AD may have applied. As aforementioned, I conducted this study within the selected N.J. county. The reasoning behind the selection of these counties as the geographical locations for this study was based upon my ease of travel within the counties as well as the financial feasibility and consumption of time that would occur by conducting the studies within these counties. Additionally, it was beneficial to conduct this study within the selected with it's high number of businesses, since I sought to understand the rationale and perspective of small business owners when deciding whether to hire individuals with AD.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

My main focus in this study was on the minimal hiring of individuals with AD and why this occurs. With such a low amount of individuals with AD being hired, the reasons why these individuals cannot find employment must be questioned. With the physical issues that individuals with AD face, such as the difficulty maneuvering up and down stairs, mobility issues, etc., it does not appear that their impairments would completely prevent them from being able to work; however, they still find it difficult to obtain employment. Therefore, a determination of what is causing this limited hiring of individuals with AD must be made. In this study, I focused on the rationale that the employer uses when deciding whether to hire an individual with an AD. In so doing, I discovered why this phenomenon is occurring.

In this study, I focused on small businesses located only in the selected N.J. county. Such businesses were not franchises or part of large corporations; these businesses were single branches only. Interviews were conducted at the place of business with those who were in charge of hiring employees. I selected small businesses for participation in this study based on the differing factors that would prove useful for this study, including the fact that a small business will routinely specialize in one type of consumer product, which allowed me to obtain data from different settings that involve different tasks to be performed by an employee depending on the product being sold or produced (see Goffee & Scase, 2015). Another factor that made small businesses the proper choice for this study was the fact that most small businesses will have one individual conduct the hiring or interviewing of prospective employees, whereas larger corporations have hiring committees that involve multiple individuals being involved in the hiring process (see Goffee & Scase, 2015). If more than one individual was involved in the hiring decision, that would have required me to focus on the rationale of every individual involved in that process, which would have increased the amount of resources needed to conduct the study and increased the amount of time it would have taken to complete the study. Additionally, with smaller businesses, there is a greater likelihood that the owner of the business will be available to participate in the study, as opposed to a larger corporation that has multiple levels of management (Goffee & Scase).

This study did not involve discussions regarding other disabilities that are not ambulatory. The focus of this study was on individuals with AD and the decision-making

process that employers go through when deciding whether to hire these individuals. Should a discussion of other disabilities become intertwined with this study, then the general focus of the study would have been lost and the phenomenon in question would not be resolved. Therefore, my focus remained solely on individuals with AD.

I did not obtain data from sources other than those that were selected following the criterion sampling process in this study. I did not collect data from organizations that employ more than 99 individuals. I also did not seek to have any participants that exceeded that number of their employees because it would have caused this study to become too broad, and potentially unfeasible to complete. As defined by U.S. Census Bureau (2015) a small business consists of no more than 99 employees. In order to maintain my focus on small businesses, the participating businesses did not have more than 99 employees.

While there are numerous disabilities that face a similar issue with employment, I focused on the population consisting of AD in this study. As prior studies have shown, these individuals are poorly represented in the workforce; yet, there is no explanation for why this occurs (Herra, 2016). This study was limited to small businesses within the selected county. In this study, I also focused on the businesses within the consumer goods industry. The population that partook in the interview process was either business owners or managers that had hiring capacity within the business. While the subjects behind this study were individuals with AD, these individuals were not interviewed and they did not

provide data for this study. My focus was on the rationale that employers use when deciding whether to hire these individuals.

### **Limitations**

Due to the nature of the study, I assumed that the participants would provide truthful answers, but there was no guarantee. This could not be guaranteed because of the possibility that participants may not have wanted anyone to know if they discriminated, broke the law, or committed any other possible violations of their company's human resource mandates or violations of the rights of any individuals that have sought employment. Additional limitations of this study included ambiguities in the analysis of the data, a lack of ability to generalize the findings, the time-consuming nature of data collection and analysis, and a small sample size (see Marshall & Rossman, 2014). In addition, the results may have been influenced by my personal biases and opinions (see Mullane & Williams, 2013).

Concerns regarding the quality of the results of a study are a vital part of qualitative research (Anney, 2014). Quality refers to the degree to which the findings of the study represent the views of the participants (Anney). The measures I took to demonstrate the credibility of this study included prolonged engagement with the participants, persistent observation, referential adequacy, varied field experience, sampling, reflexivity, triangulation, member checking, peer examination, interview techniques, establishing my authority as researcher, and structural coherence (see Anney; see Loh, 2013).

Another concern regarding the quality of the results of this study was the dependability of the findings. Dependability is related to the stability of the findings over time, researchers, and analysis methods (Anney, 2014). This can be demonstrated through an audit trail, triangulation, peer examination, and member checks (Anney). In this study, I used member checks to demonstrate dependability and credibility. The process of conducting member checks involves the participant clarifying responses to me in regards to the descriptions and interpretations of the information provided (see Anney). These member checks included providing my interpretation of the information obtained from the participants to the participant for them to be able to clarify (see Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016). I also used a research audit trail to demonstrate the dependability and credibility of the data. The process of the research audit trail includes the documentation of the decisions I made throughout the study and why I made these decisions (see Birt et al.). For example, I documented why particular individuals were selected for the interviews, the information I obtained from these interviews, and how that information related to the other information collected (see Birt et al.).

Confirmability is demonstrated through audit trails, reflective journaling, and triangulation (Anney, 2014). I demonstrated confirmability for this study by engaging in reflective journaling (see Anney). Janesick (2011) recommended journal writing for the researcher to gain a deeper insight into the problem or issue of study. In addition, these journals or logs serve as additional data to participant interviews (Janesick). Journaling gave me the ability to engage in reflective practice and learn something from the

experience (see Alschuler, 2016). I engaged in journaling during the study and then reflected on my practices to see if my own beliefs, opinions, and values had any effect on the research process (see Anney).

In order to promote the replication of the study, I thoroughly documented each step of the study (see Noble & Smith, 2015). By doing so, any future studies done on the topic can follow those same steps to determine whether the results were arrived at properly, which would ensure reliability (see Noble & Smith). Checking transcripts of the study, providing clear code definitions and descriptions, and crosschecking codes and data also assist in preventing issues regarding reliability (Noble & Smith). I also engaged in bracketing to avoid bias (see Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). Bias can be very detrimental to a study. For this study to remain objective, I avoided injecting my own beliefs into the study by putting those feelings aside when conducting the study (see Pannucci, 2010). This is often most difficult for novice researchers, such as myself, because I did not have the experience or training with bracketing. However, this important step was conducted so that the results of the study remained credible.

My subjective position in the collection of the data as well as having clearly defined the cases under study demonstrated the content validity of the study. As the collector of data, I ensured that the questions used during the interview as well as any other data collection instrument obtained the data necessary to answer the research questions posed in this study. Through the use of field tests, I ensured that all instruments reached this objective. Additionally, having clearly defined the cases to be used in the

study, the data provided by the cases answered the research questions because those selected to participate in the study had met the requirements needed to provide the data required to answer the research questions. To demonstrate empirical validity, the results were compared to specifically set criterion to examine the correlation of the instrument to the outcome (see Sullivan, 2011). Construct validity can be demonstrated by comparing results of the study to the theory that was used in the study (see Kassab, Fida & Ahmed, 2014).

Transferability, or generalization, is how the findings of the study can be transferred to other contexts using other participants (Anney, 2014). This can be achieved by giving a thick description and the use of purposeful sampling (Anney; Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). Thick descriptions refer to very detailed accounts of narratives, interviews with the participants, the researcher as an instrument, research context, and processes (Mills et al.). Generalizability of the findings is the main indicator of transferability, which is concerned with how the findings are applicable in other settings (Mills et al.; Patton, 2015). In order to demonstrate the transferability in the study, I used multiple settings for the interviews with each interview taking place at the employer's place of business. By using multiple settings, the results of this study will be beneficial in different contexts and for different employment types as well as being applicable for different disabilities. For example, the findings of this study are not to be limited solely to the consumer goods industry but could also be used by businesses in the hospitality



industry. These findings could also relate to other disabilities, such as cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis.

Certain biases that could have influenced the outcome of the study included my affinity for individuals with disabilities, having worked with such individuals throughout my career. This could have led to the asking of questions that are leading in nature, requiring a participant to give me an answer that I prefer rather than giving an honest answer that the participant truly expresses based on their experience. There also may have been more favorable treatment to those businesses that have employed or currently employ individuals with disabilities. Such a bias could have influenced the comfort level of participants that do not employ individuals with disabilities, making for a potential, hostile interview environment. If placed in this position, the participant may not have been willing to provide honest or accurate data, which could have tainted the results of the study.

To address these biases, I engaged in bracketing. I set aside my feelings and preconceived notions regarding a business and its practices and approached the interviews in an impartial manner. Additionally, I focused on the questioning and obtaining of the data, and I did not interject my own beliefs or feelings regarding the subject into the interview.

To address these and other weaknesses, I needed to select, in a careful manner, not only the type of study but also the data collection and analysis methods. Ambiguity was addressed by explaining any possible discrepancies in the language that may have

been used in the data analysis. The bracketing of my experiences was done to make sure that the study would reflect a universal view (see Dempsey, Dowling, Larkin & Murphy, 2016). It was important that I understood the language of the participants or that I had an assistant that did (see Dempsey et al.). Additionally, I was aware that culture can influence the way questions are answered, and these could vary drastically across participants (see Dempsey et al.).

When conducting interviews, the main goal is to record as much thorough and accurate information as possible about the participant's accounts (Patton, 2015). It was essential for me and this study that some of the responses provided by the participants be recorded verbatim; however, this was not always easy to do by hand (see Patton). Audio recorders are widely used when conducting interviews, and were utilized in this study, to assist in data collection during the interviews (see Patton). Gomila, Littman, Blair, and Paluck (2017) recommended the use of a tape recorder when conducting semistructured interviews. If a recorder was used, the participant was made aware and I properly explained the rationale behind doing so (see Patton). The reasons for using a recorder are to increase the accuracy of data collection, and also, so that the interviewer can be more attentive to the participant, rather than be consumed by writing detailed verbatim notes (Patton). Taking verbatim notes can interfere with the level of attentive listening the interviewer can give to the participant (Patton). Despite this, notes should still be collected during interviews (Patton). These notes can assist in asking additional questions as the interview progresses, analysis of the interview during the transcription phase is

made easier by using notes to locate important parts of the interview, and these notes are also a backup in case there is a technological difficulty with the recorder (Patton). I had a backup recorder in case of a malfunction of the primary recorder being used (see Patton). Notes that I collected during the interviews were more general, focusing on key points made in the interview as well as main words or terms used by the participant (see Patton).

### **Significance**

The results of this research study filled the gap in the literature by adding an initial understanding about the decision-making process employers engage in when reaching their rationale of whether to hire an individual with an AD. Having such information can be important due to the lack of employment opportunities for individuals with AD and society's lack of understanding of the employer's rationale when it comes to making a determination as to these potential employees (Bualar, 2014). An understanding of this issue is also imperative to discovering why there is such limited hiring of individuals with AD in the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016). Acquisition of this information will also allow others to understand the causes and rationale underlying employers' decision to hire or not hire individuals with AD. This study was important for any business owner or manager as well as any individual seeking employment that has AD.

From the findings of this study, small businesses may be able to broaden their candidates for employment and eliminate certain human resource issues by addressing any identified factors in the decision-making process related to the reluctance to hire

disabled employees. Employment of these individuals may also increase, increasing the percentage of productive members of society that have AD and decreasing the number of individuals that rely on some form of government assistance (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). Individuals with AD, in turn, will feel independent as a result of being able to find employment, and these individuals will be able to rely on themselves more so than before. Lastly, individuals with AD may no longer be stigmatized and limited in what they are capable of doing because of their disability.

The results of this study can also provide society with a better understanding of how to equitably employ individuals with an AD. The information obtained from this study can serve as a guide to employers when considering applications submitted by individuals with AD. Also, if the employers already employ individuals with AD, they will have a guide for how to best provide accommodations for those individuals. Additionally, employers can develop training that would assist other employees to understand the best method for interacting with those with AD. Lastly, the information obtained from this study will allow others to understand the causes and rationale underlying employers' decision to hire, or not hire, individuals with AD and to provide the proper accommodations for same.

The findings of this study are important for any business owner or manager as well as any individual seeking employment that has an AD. The results are also important for individuals that seek to gain a better understanding of the rationale that employers use when deciding whether to hire or accommodate for employees with AD.

These individuals are likely to benefit from the results of this study in different ways. Business owners and managers will have a guide to assist them when dealing with individuals that have AD. Individuals seeking employment will enjoy the benefit of having potential employers that have a better knowledge of how to best provide accommodations for their disability and have a stronger willingness to hire individuals with AD.

### **Summary**

While historically there has been a very limited hiring of individuals with disabilities as a whole, this fact is even more true for individuals that have an AD. As aforementioned, only 17.5% of individuals with a disability are employed within the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). Of those individuals, only 5% have an AD (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Therefore, I conducted this study to understand why this phenomenon occurs and also to see if there is something that can be done to reverse this trend and increase the number of individuals with AD that are employed. In this study, I obtained information from employers as to why they do or do not hire individuals with AD. An understanding was gained as to the factors that either intentionally or unintentionally affect the ability of these individuals to obtain employment. One question that was prominent throughout this study was: Why do employers decide to hire or not hire individuals with an AD? By being able to answer this question, I gained an understanding as to why employers make certain decisions with regards to the

employment of individuals with AD as well as the steps that can be devised to assist these individuals in obtaining employment.

In the past, there have been researchers who analyzed the employment of individuals with disabilities. As I will identify in Chapter 2 of this study, a majority of these studies have focused on the employee's perspective, providing information as to how employees with disabilities feel about their current employment or the accommodations they receive from these employers. The studies reviewed showed that the focus has been on factors that affect the decision-making process of employers when they decide whether to hire individuals with disabilities. However, these researchers have not focused on the rationale these employers use when reaching their decision. Therefore, an understanding of what goes into these decisions or what employers consider and why they consider what they do has not been studied. With this study, I intended to discover this rationale, while also extending research that has already been done.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

This chapter will include a discussion of how I obtained the literature reviewed, the historical background, and the theoretical framework as well as a review of the current literature and the major themes within the literature. Theoretical links to the study will be discussed as well as the work of previous empirical researchers that used the TPB to interpret meaning from data that was obtained. Themes within the literature included: employment barriers for individuals with disabilities, workplace accommodations, vocational rehabilitation services, employment across different disability types, policy, attitudinal factors, employment, employer intentions, and subjective norms. I will also provide future implications for research based on the review of the current literature.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the decision-making process owners and managers of small businesses in the selected N.J. county go through when deciding whether to hire those with AD. Developing an understanding of the employer's experience and interaction with potential employees with AD can assist in assessing whether those experiences relate to employers' thought processes when deciding to hire or not hire these individuals. To develop this understanding from this study I used a multiple case study approach, in which I attempted to develop an understanding of this contemporary phenomenon of managers and business owners hiring individuals with AD.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I accessed the following databases through the Walden Library to locate extant literature: Ebscohost, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Primary Search, PsycARTICLES, psycBOOKS, psycCRITIQUES, psycEXTRA, psycINFO, psycTESTS, Research Starters-Education, Education Research Complete, Health and Psychosocial Instruments, SocIndex, Proquest Central, Thoreau, ScienceDirect, American Doctoral Dissertations, Business Source Complete, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Cochrane Methodology Register, Communication & Mass Media Complete, Computers & Applied Sciences Complete, Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), Education Source, GreenFILE, Health and Psychosocial Instruments, Health Technology Assessments, Hospitality & Tourism Complete, International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center, LGBT Life with Full Text, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts, MEDLINE with Full Text, Mental Measurements Yearbook with Tests in Print, Military & Government Collection, NHS Economic Evaluation Database, Political Science Complete, Regional Business News, Research Starters - Education, SocINDEX with Full Text, Teacher Reference Center, and Expanded Academic ASAP. The keyword searchterms used were as follows: *employers and hiring disabilities, discrimination and hiring disabilities, attitudes and hiring disabilities, resistance and hiring disabilities, attitudes and accommodating disabilities, accommodating workplace and disabilities, resistance and hiring disabilities,*



*employer and knowledge and disabilities, employer and hire and disabilities, employer and accommodations and disabilities, employer and promote and disabilities, employer and workplace and disabilities, rate of employment and physical and disabilities, employment and physical and disabilities, perspective and employment and disabilities, perspective and employment and physical disabilities, employer and perspective and physical disabilities, employer and cerebral palsy, hiring and cerebral palsy, employees with and cerebral palsy, cerebral palsy and employment, cerebral palsy and employee, hiring process and physical disabilities, employer and AD, hiring and AD, employees with and AD, AD and employment, AD and employee, history of individuals with physical disabilities, and history and physical disabilities.* In relation to these topics and search terms, I found hundreds of articles in the databases; however, 92 articles were used for this review and research.

The articles I selected for inclusion in this literature review ranged in publication date from 2013 through 2017. For the theoretical background and description, older sources were used as well as for the background and history of disability milestones and events. The methodology in the articles ranged from qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Multiple themes emerged from the literature reviewed; therefore, I will discuss the literature related to such themes in this chapter.

With each database, I used the same initial terms and process to obtain articles that would closely relate to the topic of study. Each search began with the term *employer*. The term that followed related to an action an employer would take with regards to the

hiring process (i.e., hiring disabled). Once I identified all potential useful articles using these terms, the focus of the search term was switched to accommodations within the workplace and how they affected the hiring of individuals with disabilities. Once all potential articles that related to the topic of the study were found for the indicator term of *accommodations*, my focus then shifted to another potential employer action that would be taken when determining whether to employ an individual with an AD. For example, *employer and promote and disability* would be used, and after all of the articles were obtained that related to the topic of study, the search terms would switch to another potential employer action. This process was repeated throughout every database that I searched to ensure that all potential articles relating to the study would be obtained. When the same articles were found in each database, at that point I determined that those search terms were exhausted and a new set of search terms would need to be entered into the search criteria.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

#### **The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**

The TPB, designed by Ajzen (1985), both predicts and explains human behavior. This theory may be used to make predictions as well as explain why individuals engage in a behavior in the specific contexts in which they occur (Ajzen). Ajzen explained that intention of the individual is a key component to predicting the performance of a behavior. Intentions are driven by an individual's motivation to engage in a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Behavior is directly influenced by the intentions of the individual

(Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2015; Sawang, Sun, & Salim, 2014). Ajzen, Sawang et al. (2014), Kautonen, van Gelderen, and Fink (2015) explained that there are three components that influence a person's intention. These components include attitude, social norms, and, the perception of the actual behavior (Ajzen; Kautonen et al., 2015; Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2015; Sawang et al., 2014). Not only do intentions impact behavior, but they also affect the effort put forth by an individual to engage in such behavior (Kautonen et al., 2015; Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2015; Sawang et al., 2014).

An individual's behavior is directly influenced by their attitudes towards such behavior (Ajzen, 1985). With regard to this factor, the feelings of the individual about the behavior in question, partially determines if the individual will engage in that behavior (Kautonen et al., 2015; Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2015; Sawang et al., 2014). If an individual thinks positively or negatively about the behavior, they may be more or less likely to engage in it (Ajzen). Attitude formation may occur from the idea and associations with characteristics that the individual may have or make (Ajzen). Attitudes correlate with certain behaviors that may have positive or negative outcomes, which will ultimately affect the attitude and its connection to the outcome (Ajzen).

Additionally, subjective norms are another factor that influences intention (Ajzen, 1985). Subjective norms are a social factor, which pertains to social pressures on the individual to engage or not engage in the behavior in question (Ajzen, 1985; Kautonen et al., 2015; Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2015; Sawang et al., 2014). Normative beliefs shape an individual's outlook on the behavior as either being acceptable or unacceptable (Ajzen).

These normative beliefs, in conjunction with the individual's motivation to perform the behavior in question, shapes the individual's idea of the subjective norm related to such behavior (Ajzen).

Perceived behavioral control is the degree of difficulty or ease the individual views the behavior to have (Ajzen, 1985). This factor relates to the individual's expectancy of success, derived from the theory of achievement motivation (Ajzen). Difficulty levels for the individual to engage in the behavior impact whether they choose to engage in such behavior (Schwarzer, 2014). Perceived behavioral control also relates to the self-efficacy theory (Ajzen; Kautonen et al., 2015; Montaña & Kasprzyk, 2015; Sawang et al., 2014). The self-efficacy theory, developed by Bandura, assumes that individuals prepare themselves based on their belief in their capabilities of doing so when considering whether to engage in the behavior (Schwarzer, 2014). An individual is said to have low perceived behavioral control when they view the behavior as difficult to perform or engage in (Ajzen). If the individual perceives the behavior to be easy to perform or engage in, it is said that the individual has high level of perceived behavioral control (Ajzen). Additionally, the perception of behavioral control may be influenced by the previous experiences that the individual has had with the behavior (Kautonen et al., 2015; Montaña & Kasprzyk, 2015).

By determining these factors, the individual's intention when engaging in a behavior can be understood and ultimately predicted (Ajzen, 1985). Ajzen, Kautonen et al. (2015), and Montaña and Kasprzyk (2015) explained that if the individual has a

combination of a positive attitude, positive subjective norms, and positive perceived behavioral control, they will have strong intentions to engage in the behavior. However, in different contexts, such factors, and the degree to which they influence a person's intention may vary (Ajzen).

Previous researchers have applied the TPB as the framework in their studies. Greaves, Zibarras, and Stride (2013) used the TPB to understand environmental behavioral intention in the workplace. They administered a questionnaire to participants and found that constructs of the TPB were able to explain variable intentions amongst employees and that antecedent beliefs were the main influence on behavior intentions (Greaves et al., 2013). Kautonen et al. (2015) described the TPB and how attitude, social norms, and perception of the actual behavior affect the behavioral intent of individuals. Similarly, Kautonen, van Gelderen, and Tornikoski (2011) described the TPB and its relation to the behavioral intentions of individuals in their study. Jasper and Waldhart (2013) conducted a study to see what employers in the leisure and hospitality industry consider when hiring individuals with disabilities. They used the TPB as a lens when analyzing such considerations and attitudes of employers and determined that employer concerns varied by the size of the company as well as identified incentives to hiring disabled individuals (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013). Rimmerman, Araten-Bergman, Hernandez, and Chen (2015) conducted a study to establish the differences between Israeli and U.S. employers and their hiring intentions with regards to individuals with disabilities. Information obtained within their study was interpreted using the TPB as

well as a consideration of cultural effects on intentions (Rimmerman et al., 2013). The results of their study indicated that differences existed in the two countries with regards to incentives to hiring disabled individuals; such differences included subminimum wage, entry-level positions, seasonal employees, and market conditions (Rimmerman et al., 2013). Ang, Ramayah, and Amin (2015) and Ang and Supinah (2013) found that attitudes mediated relationships between the independent variables of subjective norms and perceived behavioral control and the dependent variable of intention of employers to hire. Ang and Supinah also found that the lack of understanding and knowledge of the disability affects the willingness of the employer to hire an individual with a disability. Ang et al. (2015) used the TPB to explain employer hiring intentions as well as how their attitudes affect how different variables relative to TPB affect one another concerning their intention to hire. Studies have shown that TPB successfully predicted employment-related behaviors including job searching, vocational rehabilitation counselors' intentions, and entry into self-employment due to subjective norms (Knaeps, Neyens, van Weeghel, & Van Audenove, 2016).

Additionally, Jasper and Waldhart (2013) conducted a study on how prior behavior also contributed to the analysis of government survey data on leisure and hospitality employer concerns regarding hiring individuals with disabilities. Hiring practices that would alleviate employer concerns of employee abilities and accommodations were analyzed (Jasper & Waldhart). One practice was identified that alleviated such concerns, which was the award of financial incentives related to attitudes

due to their impact on behavior (Jasper & Waldhart). Mak et al. (2014) identified factors that explain the hiring and retaining of cancer survivors in the workplace, which included moral obligations, attitudes toward cancer, employment situation. Employer efficacy was reported to be directly associated with intention to hire in combination with attitude towards cancer survivors (Mak et al.). A research model that incorporated the principles of TPB and demand side factors was used to gain an understanding of the intentions of recruiting managers to hire individuals with disabilities (Araten-Bergman, 2016). The relationship between the expressed intentions of managers to the actual hiring of individuals with disabilities was studied (Araten-Bergman). It was reported that TPB predicted the intentions of employers to hire individuals with disabilities but could not predict the actual hiring of such individuals (Araten-Bergman). To identify strategies of recruitment practices in India, the TPB was utilized as a framework to guide researchers to understand such strategies (Dhar, 2014). Strategies of these practices included fulfilling interests, obligation, cultural bias, status enhancement, and mirror reflection (Dhur). Results of the study indicated that TPB could be used to develop recruitment protocols due to its validity in the prediction of behaviors (Dhur).

Numerous studies used TPB to demonstrate the influence attitude had on intention. Knaeps et al. (2016) explained that studies had proven the TPB to be a predictor of employment related behaviors, which includes job searching and entry into self-employment. The TPB provides a rationale regarding subjective and moral norms and their effect on vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor intentions (Knaeps et al.).

Attitudes and their influence on the intentions of VR counselors are also reported in the study, as well as, prior behavior of VR counselors can serve as a predictor of their intentions (Knaeps et al.). Houtenville and Kalargyrou (2015) explored employers' experiences of workers with disabilities, with a particular focus on hiring intentions and hiring behaviors. Research examined perspectives of both nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and how each is affected by United States legislation related to disability and employment (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2015).

### **Alternate Theories**

**Theory of planned action.** Theory of planned action developed by Ajzen and Fishbein has been used for predicting behavioral intentions, as well as, behavior of individuals (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). This theory assumes that the behavior intentions and beliefs about performing the specific behavior will lead to a certain outcome (Madden et al.). Behavioral beliefs have an effect on the attitude and subjective norms with regards to performing such behavior (Madden et al.). Attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control affect behavioral intentions, which in turn affect the actual performance of the behavior (Madden et al.).

**Cognitive dissonance theory.** The cognitive dissonance theory was founded by Festinger in the mid-1950s (Harmon-Jones, 2012). This theory assumes that when an individual has inconsistency between their attitudes and beliefs related to one another, discomfort is caused for the individual, which is referred to as dissonance (Harmon-Jones). It was theorized that the individual is then motivated by this uncomfortable state



of dissonance to address the inconsistency amongst the beliefs (Harmon-Jones).

Dissonance can be resolved by changing one's beliefs, actions, and/or one's perception of action (Harmon-Jones).

### **Application of TPB**

In this qualitative study, the TPB was utilized as the framework. The TPB may be used to make predictions, as well as, explain why individuals engage in a behavior (Cornally, 2014). Ajzen (1985) discussed that the application of the TPB when studying a phenomenon of interest could provide an abundant amount of information that may assist in understanding human behavior. Additionally, utilizing this theory can provide information that may be useful in developing interventions to change such human behavior (Ajzen). TPB is made up of four main components: attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intention (Cornally). An individual's behavior is directly influenced by their attitudes, which are affected by subjective norms, as well as, how much control they feel they have over the behavior (Cornally). By determining these factors, the individual's intention when engaging in a behavior can be understood, and ultimately predicted (Cornally). Thus, TPB provided the appropriate framework for understanding the reasoning behind an employer's decision to hire or not hire an individual with an AD, and also the reasoning behind providing, or not providing, appropriate accommodations for those individuals with AD.

The TPB related to the dissertation topic of employers hiring and accommodating for individuals with AD in the workplace. An important aspect of hiring employees of

any kind is whether the employer has an interest in hiring said employee (Nota et al., 2013). Whether the employee fits the expectation of what the employer perceives to be a qualified employee is something strongly considered (Nota et al.). This can be heightened when a candidate has an AD. The employer must determine whether this employee will fit the job requirements despite his/her disability (Nota et al.). In so doing, the employer considers whether appropriate accommodations can be made (Nota et al.). However, when making this determination, the employer must consider whether the hiring is worth the financial obligations needed. Another consideration is whether the law requires such actions to be taken, and how the public will perceive the company if they fail to properly consider such employees. Such thoughts and actions relate to the TPB. It also takes into consideration the employer's attitude towards hiring individuals with AD and providing the necessary accommodations, the subjective norms faced by these employers when determining whether accommodations can be made, and the employer's perceived behavioral control when it comes to individuals with AD.

During this study, I aimed to obtain information regarding the attitude of the employer when hiring individuals with AD. Information was obtained related to how employers feel regarding this hiring behavior (Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2015; Sawang et al., 2014). Subjective norms were shared with me so that connections can be made regarding how these norms influence the employer (Sawang et al.). Pressure from the social environment, about performing or not performing the behavior, are what make up subjective norms (Sawang et al.). Such norms become the norms of the individual

(Sawang et al.). Norms should be identified regarding the topic. However, I must be aware that these norms may vary depending on the location or type of business (Ostrom, 2014).

This study also examined an individual's perception of behavioral control (Montaño & Kasprzyk, 2015). To gain a measure of this perceived behavioral control, I asked the employer to share their feelings about their abilities (Montaño & Kasprzyk). Such abilities should relate to behaviors directly having to do with the hiring of employees with AD (The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). The employer may not have positive feelings about their experiences, which, in turn, influences their ability to hire such individuals (Ameri, Schur, Ada, Bentley, McKay & Kruse, 2015). These negative feelings may be a result of poor training, lack of training, lack of education, and lack of experience working with such individuals (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

Upon obtaining information on all three areas, I began to explore the employer's intention regarding the behavior (Kautonen et al., 2015). Such intention can assist in predicting whether or not the behavior will take place (Kautonen et al.). With this information, I was able to identify what an employer needs, regarding specific attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control or self-efficacy, to successfully hire employees with those disabilities (Kautonen et al.; Parschau et al., 2014). Thus, leading to the understanding of what causes an employer to engage in a particular behavior

(Kautonen et al.; Parschau et al.). This can ultimately lead to discovering what can be done to guide an employer to heavily consider employees with AD.

## **Historical Background**

### **Problem Statement**

As aforementioned, individuals with an AD face employment barriers (Bualar, 2014; Hasim & Wok, 2013; Nevela et al., 2015). Approximately 56.7 million people in the United States had a disability in 2010, with 30.6 million having an AD, comprising of about 32.4 percent of adults with a disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2016), 17.5 % of the disabled population was employed, and approximately 5 % of that working population had an AD (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

In 2008, a national survey was conducted by The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy regarding employer perspectives on employing individuals with disabilities, which yielded the size of the corporations, as well as, deterrents that impacted the hiring of such individuals, such as lack of ability to perform job duties, healthcare costs, and fear of litigation (Domzal, Houtenville & Sharma, 2008). Other studies have demonstrated that individuals with disabilities face challenges when obtaining employment, maintaining employment, as well as, being provided with the accommodations to enhance their work performance (Rumrill Jr. et al., 2016; Sevak & Khan, 2016). Research has suggested that future research is needed with stakeholders, such as employers, in order to obtain information to improve hiring practices of these

individuals, as well as, research related to employer attitudes towards employees with disabilities other than intellectual, psychological, or sensory in nature (Gewurtz et al., 2016; Nota et al., 2013). Further research has indicated that there is a need for future research regarding employer rationales for making decisions related to employing individuals with disabilities (Ju et al. 2013; Villanueva-Flores et al., 2015). Also, Heera's (2016) study stressed that future research focus on employment factors that may affect employer attitudes and completion of case studies regarding employer perspective that affect their current hiring practices.

This study extended Heera's (2016) study, which identified some factors and their effects on employer decision to hire, as well as, recommended the exploration of different factors that affect this decision. Also, Heera suggested that case studies be conducted on the perspective that employers have in conjunction with current hiring practices. Furthermore, this study addressed the gap in the literature identified by Ju et al. (2013): the lack of information regarding employer rationale for making decisions when it comes to employing individuals with disabilities. Such information is important to understand what employers are thinking when determining whether to hire an individual with an AD.

### **Defining Disability**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted in 1990 to provide protection to individuals with disabilities, prohibiting discrimination against those individuals when it comes to employment (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). Additionally, the ADA provided definitions as to what constituted a disability

(Gostin, 2015; Bernstein, 2014). Disability was defined as one of three versions: (a) having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (b) having a record of such impairment, or (c) being regarded as having such impairment (Gostin; Bernstein). Substantial limitation refers to a condition that “prevents or severely restricts” one from engaging in a major life activity (Gostin, p. 2232). A major life activity includes only activities that are regarded as of “central importance to most people’s daily lives” (Gostin, p. 2232). As a result of Title I of the ADA, discrimination in the workplace was prohibited, and employers meeting the requirements to be subject to the ADA were required to provide equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to benefit from gainful employment (Gostin; Bernstein).

Additionally, terminology used to describe individuals with disabilities went through changes over the years (Burtner, 2016). Old terms, that included idiot, imbecile, and moron, were replaced with *mentally retarded* and *disabled* (Burtner). Presently, the preferred way to describe individuals with disabilities, which is stressed, is to refer to them as *differently abled*, avoiding any description related to the individual’s actual disability (Burtner). The article also reported that approximately 52 million Americans have a disability (Burtner). Such individuals have issues that affect their daily lives, such as community living, transportation, education, employment, and health care (Burtner).

### **Disability Laws**

Through the years, there have been stereotypes, cultural representations, and attitudes towards individuals with physical disabilities (National Health Society (NHS)

North West, 2013). Legislation and policies have been implemented over the years, which lead to some achievements, such as the disability rights movement, and social advances for such individuals (NHS North West). There have been increasing developments in the medical and technical fields to assist those with disabilities (NHS North West). However, from Before the Common Era through present time, cultural attitudes towards individuals with disabilities have ranged negatively from infanticide and disposal of babies who had a disability, to some thoughts of such individuals to be magical, and some associating them with sin or pollution. (NHS North West).

Over the centuries, different laws were enacted that limited the protections afforded to individuals with disabilities, which were subsequently repealed. For example, in the 1300s, a law was generated which allowed the seizure of any property owned by individuals with either a mental illness or a disability (NHS North West, 2013). The laws that allowed police to arrest individuals with visible disabilities were repealed in 1974 (National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)-youth, 2007). In addition, the “ugly law,” which made it illegal for certain individuals with visible disabilities to appear in public was repealed in 1974 (Massachusetts Office on Disability, 2016).

Additionally, programs were created that provided services to individuals with disabilities, as well as, different laws were enacted that protected the rights of the individuals with disabilities. Edgar Allan established one such program, The Easter Seals program, which became the National Society for Crippled Children, in 1919 in order to provide services to adults and children with disabilities (Massachusetts Office on

Disability, 2016). U.S. President John Adams signed the act for the relief of sick and disabled seamen in 1798 (NCLD-youth, 2007). Franklin D. Roosevelt contracted polio, which left him paralyzed from the waist down. Roosevelt assisted in the founding of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis in 1932 (NCLD-youth). In 1950, to provide education to parents and others, the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) was formed (NCLD-youth). Mitigation of discrimination was attempted by the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 (NCLD-youth). The Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act was enacted in 1980, enabling individuals with disabilities not to be held against their will (NCLD-youth). Alan A. Reich founded national Organization on Disability in 1982, which advocated for participation and contribution of Americans with disabilities in all areas of life (NCLD-youth). An assistive technology initiative began in 1988 by the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988 (NCLD-youth). During 1990, a civil rights law for the disabled called the Americans with Disabilities Act was introduced (NHS North West, 2013), and was signed into law, which protects the civil rights of individuals with disabilities (NCLD-youth). In 1996, according the Community Care (Direct Payments) Act, direct payments were required by the government for social care of individuals with disabilities (NHS North West). The Social Security Act required Medicaid assistance low-income individuals with disabilities (NCLD-youth).

Legislation has also been passed that required certain buildings and other structures, to be accessible by individuals with disabilities. The Barrier-free movement



began in the 1950s, which promoted barrier-free buildings. In 1961, the American Standards Association (National Standards Institute) published Making Building Accessible To and Usable By the Physically Handicapped, which set the first standard for accessibility. Following this, in 1968, The Architectural Barriers Act ordered the removal of physical barriers to persons with disabilities which required that all buildings designed, constructed, altered, or leased with federal funds be made accessible to individuals with disabilities (NCLD-youth, 2007). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 made it illegal for public entities to discriminate due to disability (NCLD-youth). The Americans with Disabilities made public transportation accessible in 1983 for Accessible Public Transportation (ADAPT)'s national campaign (NCLD-youth). Also, in 1986, air carrier access was prohibited to discriminate against individuals with disabilities (NCLD-youth). Accessible housing was mandated in 1988 by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, which required the availability of accessible housing units for individuals with disabilities (NCLD-youth). Reasonable adjustments of buildings were required as of 2004 to promote accessibility to buildings for individuals with disabilities (NHS North West, 2013).

Furthermore, the disability rights movement also entered the realm of education. FERPA, also known as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 enabled parents of minors, and those over 18 years old, the right to view school records that were kept in the student's personal file (Karten, 2008). The Education of the Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was introduced which allowed individuals with disabilities to

access free appropriate public education (NCLD-youth, 2007). This act is now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (NCLD-youth). The Special Education Needs and Disability Act increased anti-discrimination legislation with regards to education in 2001 (NHS North West, 2013). In 2004, Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act was established which allowed for functional and non-academic goals to be included into the individualized education plan of the student (Karten). K-12 public school curriculum added the introduction of history of disability rights in 2006 (NCLD-youth).

In addition to the legislation that was enacted to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities, and the programs that were created to assist the individuals, there were events throughout history that marked important accomplishments for individuals with disabilities. In 1978, inaccessible buses were protested which led to the creation of legislation requiring that buses be made accessible to individuals with disabilities (NCLD-youth, 2007). Also, the National Council on Disability was established in 1978 that promoted policies, programs, practices, and procedures that guaranteed equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities (NCLD-youth). The United Nations World Program of Action Concerning the Disabled prompted full participation and equality for individuals with disabilities around the world in 1982 (NCLD-youth). California hosted a youth leadership forum for youths with disabilities in 1992 (NCLD-youth). A disabled golfer, Casey Martin, was ruled in favor of allowing her to use a golf cart in the PGA Tour tournaments in 1988 (NCLD-youth). Similarly, a disabled soccer player was

allowed to play in a soccer league in 1999 by the United States District Court (NCLD-youth). In 1999, it was no longer acceptable to hold an individual with a disability in an institution against their will and was considered a direct violation of the ADA (NCLD-youth). Lastly, the first Disability Pride Parade was held in 2004 (NCLD-youth).

### **Employment and Disabilities History**

In the United States, individuals with disabilities have been limited in their day-to-day activities and functioning due to societal perceptions and stigmas (Cimera, Burgess, Novak, & Avellone, 2014). At one time, it was assumed that many individuals with disabilities could not learn vocational skills (Cimera et al). However, with the introduction of supported employment and vocational rehabilitation, although at a low rate, individuals with disabilities were able to find gainful employment (Cimera et al.). According to Mast (2001), individuals with physical disabilities struggle to find employment due to many factors, which include the need for negotiated jobs, time needed to assist in finding employment, increased funding, employer reluctance due to the technology required, as well as, potential cost of accommodations (Mast).

The National Organization on Disability reported that individuals with disabilities in the United States fall behind those without impairment in a majority of areas, which lead to a functional life. Although the law protects individuals with disabilities, they continue to have the highest rate of unemployment (Kim & Williams, 2012). This indicates the great struggles of individuals with physical disabilities that are motivated to become part of the workforce (Kim & Williams). Legislation was introduced to attempt

to mitigate such challenges. Congress developed a benefits system specifically for Veterans, known as the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1917, which provided services and support related to vocational rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities (Massachusetts Office on Disability, 2016). After WWI, veterans had returned from the war with disabilities. As such, a rehabilitation program was passed to provide money for job counseling and vocational training for disabled soldiers in 1918 (NCLD-youth, 2007). The Vocational Rehabilitation Program for Americans with Disabilities was passed in 1920 (Massachusetts Office on Disability). In 1935, the League for the Physically Handicapped protested employment discrimination by the Works Progress Administration (Massachusetts Office on Disability). This group comprised of physically handicapped individuals who were turned down for jobs by the Works Progress Administration (Massachusetts Office on Disability). This event shed light on employment discrimination and raised more awareness to the public (Massachusetts Office on Disability). Social Security Act was also set forth in 1935, which assisted adults with disabilities (NCLD-youth). Protests in 1935 helped to secure jobs nationwide (NCLD-youth). In 1944, the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act was enacted, which required that employers have at least 3% of their employees have a disability (NHS North West, 2013). The first week of October was designated as National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week, in order to raise awareness for individuals with physical disabilities (Massachusetts Office on Disability). Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments were introduced in 1954 that increased the scope of the Vocational Rehabilitation

program; in order to assist individuals who are disabled achieve gainful employment (Massachusetts Office on Disability). In 1956, an insurance program was created for employees with disabilities ranging from the ages of 50 to 64, which is currently known as the Social Security Disability Insurance Program (Massachusetts Office on Disability). The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibited any federal programs, federal employers, or federal contractors to discriminate due to disability (Massachusetts Office on Disability). Also enforced in 1984 was the Vocational Education Act that required vocational education be provided for students with disabilities (Karten, 2008). Employment Opportunities for Disabled Americans Act in 1986 removed many disincentives from SSI and SSDI recipients from going to work (Stroman, 2003). This act allowed such individuals to maintain Medicaid and Medicare benefits, in addition to a portion of their earnings (Stroman).

Individuals with disabilities protested in 1995 which led to the Disability Discrimination Act, making it illegal to discriminate against such individuals concerning employment, as well as, access to foods, facilities, and services (NHS North West, 2013). The 1999 Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act provided opportunities for individuals with disabilities to access vocational training and employment placement services (Stroman, 2003). In 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was established to refine employment services for individuals with disabilities (Massachusetts Office on Disability, 2016).

## Literature Review

### Employment Barriers

Barriers for the physically disabled were examined with studies identifying that certain external and self-created barriers affecting those individuals, such as built environment, personal limitations, attitude from the nondisabled community, overprotection from their families, lack of accommodations, as well as non-disclosure of the disability or disclosure of the disability (Bualar, 2014; von Schrader, Malzer & Bruyere, 2013; Wilson, Butler & Butler, 2016). With regards to disclosing, influences on this decision were identified as the risk of being fired or not hired, limited promotion opportunity, non-supportive supervisor, loss of health care benefits, and being treated differently (von Schrader et al.). It was found that 80% of respondents with disabilities disclosed their disability in current positions, and 25% of those who disclosed reported long-term negative consequences from such disclosure (von Schrader et al.). Contrarily, Strand (2015) found that employers desired potential employees with disabilities to briefly disclose their disability and limitations. von Schrader et al. recommended strategies for employers to implement in order to promote disclosure, such as making an effort to create a welcoming workplace, active recruitment of employees with disabilities, have other employees who have disclosed and were successful, and foster diversity in the workplace (von Schrader et al.).

Variations of barriers exist amongst different types of disabilities, ranging from ability accessing the premises, human resource mismanagement, selection processes,

integration of assistive technology, perceptions of the cost of disability, and inflexible workplace practices. Stigmatizations and misconceptions regarding abilities of legally blind individuals and attitudes of colleagues and employers (Darcy, Taylor & Greene, 2016; Benoit, Jansson, Jansenberger & Phillips, 2013; Miller et al., 2014). Facilitators were also identified, which included technical help and assistance in accessing information (Miller et al.). Miller et al. suggested sensitizing employers about the work environment reality of individuals with visual impairments. Additionally, employment outcomes vary for those with certain limitations, with activity limitations being indicators of barriers to independent living and need for support services, and are related to lack of likelihood to obtain employment (Brucker, Houtenville & Lauer, 2016). Regarding employment, individuals with cognitive and AD had more difficulty obtaining employment than those with sensory impairments (Brucker et al.).

Different impairments provided barriers to attaining and maintaining employment for various reasons. Individuals with epilepsy found barriers in the form of driving restrictions, lack of specific education or training, stigmatizations, and workplace discrimination (Ziemba & Draskowski, 2015). Also, specific job limitations were in place for individuals with epilepsy due to the nature of the disability and the nature of the job, which could pose a danger to the individual (Ziemba & Draskowski). Whereas, individuals with hearing loss suffered from injustices related to performing work tasks and actions taken to adapt or influence changes to support employment related

accommodations, also work-related stress and fatigue (Shaw, Tetlaff, Jennings & Southall, 2013; Punch, 2016).

### **Workplace Accommodations**

Workplace accommodations have been identified as a major factor when it comes to employee satisfaction within the workplace for those employees with disabilities (Hasim & Wok, 2013; Telwatte, Anglim, Wynton & Moulding, 2017; Schur, Nishii, Ada, Kruse, Bruyère & Blank, 2014; Miller, Gottlieb, Morgan & Gray, 2014; Hanga, DiNitto & Wilken, n.d.). Many studies have been conducted to determine the impact that such accommodations have on employee morale, as well as, how those accommodations affect the decision-making process of employers (Telwatte et al.; Schur et al.). These studies revealed that when these accommodations were provided, employees with disabilities were loyal, committed, satisfied with the job, and also, when such accommodations were requested by the employees the decision-making process for these accommodations were found to have greater empathy, legitimacy, necessity (Hasim & Wok; Telwatte et al.). These studies also found that there was a lower perceived cost, which predicted perceptions of greater reasonableness and granting of accommodations requested by the employees (Hasim & Wok; Telwatte et al.). Studies identified benefits to companies that provided accommodations to employees with disabilities, as well as, the negative impact that companies faced when they did not provide accommodations (Park, Seo, Park, Bettini & Smith, 2016; Hogan, Kyaw-Myint, Harris & Denronden, 2012; Murphy, Markle, Nguyen & Wilkinson, 2013). The benefits include improved employee



productivity, monetary benefits, morale, and retention, whereas the negatively affected aspects were described as attitudes relating to coworker relationships, work satisfaction, inclusion in the workplace, and motivation levels of employees with disabilities (Schur et al.; Miller et al.).

Nevela, Pehkonen, Koskela, Ruusuvouri, and Anttila (2015) identified that accommodations, participation, and environmental factors in the workplace had significant impacts on employees with disabilities. Additionally, it has been proven by Denny-Brown, O'Day, and McLeod (2015) that services, supports, and accommodations assisted those with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment. Physical aspects were identified as contributing to the workplace experience of employees with disabilities. The exterior building, interior building, assistive technology, personal assistance services and transportation to be physical environment features that affected employees with mobility impairments, with working aged individuals with disabilities having had difficulty navigating the physical environment of the workplace (Miller et al., 2014; Hanga et al., n.d.). Furthermore, Hogan et al. (2012) reported that the nature and extent of accommodations for individuals with disabilities would differ depending on the type of disability. Also, cancer survivors experiencing symptoms at work but were reluctant to request accommodations from employers due to jobs requiring more manual labor having been less likely to provide accommodations to such individuals (Murphy et al., 2013).

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

VR services are available for individuals with disabilities including multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, and multiply disabled individuals (Brown & Johnson, 2014). Employers in the United States were found to rely on vocational rehabilitation agencies, as well as, disability networks to hire individuals with disabilities (Rimmerman, Araten-Bergman, Hernandez & Chen, 2013). When deciding appropriate accommodations to provide, VR agencies were reported to be helpful (Schur et al., 2014).

Rehabilitative service workers for individuals with disabilities have demonstrated to be invested in placing such individuals as reported in a study conducted by Hergenrather, Haase, and Rhodes (2013). This study utilized the TPB to explore job placement of individuals with major depressive disorder (MDD), finding that Public Rehabilitation Placement Professionals were mainly focused on placing individuals with MDD in the workforce as their primary goal (Hergenrather et al., 2013). Despite the use of VR services, there are challenges still faced (Lidz & Smith, 2016). Lidz and Smith described the thoughts and concerns of employment specialists regarding finding and supporting employment for youth and young adults with disabilities, such as including larger organizations not hiring locally, employer resistance, use of online applications, and resistance from families of young adults with mental illnesses (Lidz & Smith).

### **Employment Across Disability Types**

Racasan (2016) explored differences by employment status (occupied or not) and associations regarding the time spent working (measured in hours per week). This study

focused on certain characteristics such as gender, age, education level, residual vision level, depression, anxiety, self-esteem, satisfaction with life, self-efficacy, self-perceived independence, social support level, satisfaction with involvement in social activities, level of business self-appreciation, financial level, and self-perceived health (Rascan). Results yielded participation levels in paid work of both men and women were similar, as well as, working hours and function of educational levels (Rascan). Krueger, Stone, and Stone-Romero (2014) assessed the main "interactive effects of job applicant conscientiousness, and nurturing job demands on ratings of overweight female applicants on job suitability and a hiring recommendation" (p.85). The study also examined relations between rater ethnicity and ratings of the job suitability of normal and overweight applicants (Krueger et al.). Similarly, Pattison, Eixman, and McClung (2016) looked at the economic impact of obesity, particularly concerning discrimination in employment. Results yielded a correlation between employee obesity and increased health care costs, absences related to illness, and poor performance assessment outcomes (Pattison et al., 2016).

Naraharisetti and Castro (2016) conducted a study to investigate the correlation of the proportion of individuals with disabilities employed in India, related to geographic variation at state and residential levels. It was reported that there are different factors in rural and urban areas, which contribute to the employment of individuals with disabilities (Naraharisetti & Castro). In rural areas, mental disabilities led to a decrease in the likelihood of employment, and females having physical or sight impairments led to an

increase in the likelihood of employment in such areas (Narahariseti & Castro). Those in urban areas who were female and illiterate led to a decrease in the likelihood of employment; however, sight, mental, and physical impairments led to an increase in the likelihood of employment for such individuals (Narahariseti & Castro). Boman, Kjellberg, Danermark, and Boman (2015) found similar results from their study, which aimed to contribute to knowledge in the area of disability and employment by examining factors of importance for employment opportunities of people with disabilities in the Swedish labor market. It was noted that a woman with a primary education or higher, along with a mildly or severely impaired work ability leads to a reduction in employment opportunities (Boman et al.). The highest rate of employment for such individuals was a disability related to communicative hearing, whereas the lowest rate of employment for such individuals was for those with a psychological disability (Boman et al.).

Categorization systems of disabilities were studied by Stahl (2015). In this study, imperfections in the existing categorization systems of disabilities, as well as, justification of a categorization system more detailed than the typical psychological/physical disability distinction in vocational rehabilitation literature were discussed (Stahl). Researchers examined differences in job placement rates using disability status of disabled or nondisabled and job training as predictors (Stahl). An alternative category system of disabilities was used to examine the effect on placement rates for individuals with disabilities (Stahl). It was found that job training moderated any

negative impact of disability status on employment (Stahl). Stahl suggested that a functionally based system of disabilities might yield more information in this area.

Mann and Wittenburg (2015) found evidence that employment gaps and wage differences for individuals with and without disabilities occur early on in employment, and are also the largest gaps for individuals with severe limitations, including mental limitations. Brucker et al. (2016) tested a hypothesis regarding employment outcomes for those with disabilities with certain limitations and the level in which they vary. It was reported that activity limitations are indicators of barriers to independent living and need for support services and correlate with decreased likelihood of employment (Brucker et al.). Reinhardt, Post, Fekete, Trezzini, and Brinkhof (2016) described the employment rate, identify factors that affect individuals with a spinal cord injury (SCI) in Switzerland, and compared such rates with the general population. It was reported that the employment rate is high for those with SCI, but is lower than the general population (Reinhardt et al.). Ziembra and Drazkowski (2015) reviewed information from the North American Commission of the International League Against Epilepsy from 1965 through 2007 to identify discrepancies between those with epilepsy and those without. Discrepancies found were a higher rate of unemployment, lower educational achievement, and income (Ziembra & Drazkowski). Large gaps were found to exist between employment rates and those with and without disabilities, as well as, individuals with sensory impairments had a greater chance of obtaining employment compared to those with cognitive or AD (Brucker et al.).

**Cerebral palsy.** Verhoef, Bramsen, Miedema, Stam, and Roebroek (2014) documented the development of participation of young adults with cerebral palsy in the workplace during their transition to adulthood over a 4-year period. Also, researchers examined the associations of demographic and clinical characteristics with work participation in young adults with cerebral palsy who were in the age range 20-24 years about work limitation and situational or health barriers to employment among employed persons (Verhoef et al.). It was reported that young adults with cerebral palsy who had an average intelligence level, struggled with participating in the workforce, with barriers including situational, health, fatigue, pain, work limitations, and physical demands that could not be met (Verhoef et al.).

Transition experiences, perceptions, and needs of young adults with cerebral palsy living in southeastern United States were explored by Bagatell, Chan, Rauch, and Thorpe (2016), reporting that these individuals had difficulty transitioning into adulthood, including accessing and navigating systems and services, understanding and managing their body, and coping with stereotypes and prejudice. Similarly, results from Mik-Meyer's (2016) study reported discrimination practices against individuals with cerebral palsy, including lower wages, lack of career opportunities, ill-treatment by managers and coworkers, and stigmatization. When looking at employment rates of individuals with cerebral palsy from 1997 to 2006, Tornbom, Jonsson, and Sunnerhagen's (n.d.) study reported a decline.

**Multiple sclerosis.** Significant factors associated with employment outcomes for individuals with multiple sclerosis have been identified. Some elements have been described as equal opportunity and benefits, fair treatment, legal rights, access to resources, and lack of accommodations, which correlated with a lack of long-term employment for such individuals (Rumrill Jr. et al., 2016). Additionally, a study to determine if a recently validated online survey of negative work events can serve as a predictor of future job loss among multiple sclerosis patients, with an aim at clarifying whether co-occurring symptoms related to the presence of negative work events in employed multiple sclerosis patients (Frndak, Irwin, Kordovski, Milleville, Fisher, Drake & Benedict, 2015). Employed multiple sclerosis patients with co-occurring motor, memory, and processing speed impairments were most likely to report a negative work event, and classifying them as uniquely at risk for job loss (Frndak et al., 2015).

Meade, Rumrill, Krause, Reed, and Aust (2016) identified the motivation for employment, as defined by those with multiple sclerosis who had employment post diagnosis. Many participants reported the only motivation of work consisted of the ability to pay for medication and other healthcare related costs (Meade et al.). However, some participants reported a sense of purpose, accomplishment, self-actualization, socialization, happiness, fulfillment, and the ability to serve as an inspiration to others as motivation to work (Meade et al.). For some individuals with multiple sclerosis, employment poses a large challenge. van der Hiele et al. (2015) examined predictors of potential changes in employment status and work absenteeism in relapsing-remitting

multiple sclerosis patients over a period of 3 years, with approximately 50% of individuals having difficulty maintaining employment. As a potential facilitator of employment opportunities, Inge, Cimera, Rumrill, and Reveli (2016) profiled demographic characteristics, services received funds expended, and employment outcomes that have been achieved by individuals with multiple sclerosis who participated in the VR program. Similarly, when assistive devices were implemented as a modification to the environment, there was a correlation between impaired upper limb function and employment status (Marrie, Cutter, Tyry, Cofield, Fox & Salter, 2017).

### **Policy**

Agovino and Rapposelli (2014) identified various similar areas in the United States to recommend actions that should be taken to facilitate employment of individuals with disabilities by adjusting economic policy. It was reported that employment of individuals with disabilities is affected by factors such as funding of interventions, coordination of interventions, and promotion of policy for such interventions (Agovino & Rapposelli). Also, the relationship between efficiency and effectiveness of employment policy programs for vulnerable people was studied by Lee and Cho (2016) finding that operating bodies, processes, and evaluations have an impact on the success of a program (Lee & Cho). Efficiency may be improved by adjusting the definition of the target group, adjusting the program plan, operation, and delivery, as well as, general improvements to the program (Lee & Cho). Similarly, Novak (2015) suggested improvement areas for



policy, such as increase in efforts when aligning service delivery and funding with disability policy to promote the success of such policies, and individuals.

Hemphill and Kulik (2016) conducted a study to see what attitudinal changes and hiring behaviors occurred in employers once new disability support legislation was introduced. As a result of the new legislation, employers increased their interaction with individuals with disabilities, as well as, developed more positive attitudes, however, hiring practices have not been improved for such individuals (Hemphill & Kulik). The effect of workforce policies on individuals with disabilities was also studied and reported that the rights, expectations, and practices of individuals with disabilities are associated with reforming policies currently in place (Harris, Owen, Jones & Caldwell, 2013).

### **Attitudinal Factors and Employment**

Paez and Arendt (2014) studied the attitudes of managers who either had experience or were working with individuals with disabilities at the time of the study in the hospitality and food industries in the United States. Manager attitudes varied concerning the importance of training individuals with disabilities; and were impacted by age and length of employment, as well as, the cost of necessary accommodations (Paez & Arendt). Studies were conducted in which employers were affected by a moral obligation when it came to their attitude towards cancer survivors, which was similar to the results found when exploring the job interview experience of individuals with mobility impairments (Mak et al., 2014; Vedeler, 2014) It was reported that employers with previous experience with disabilities tend to be open and more willing to hire employees

with disabilities (Vedeler). Such employers also tend to have more ease when integrating and including employees with disabilities (Vedeler).

Friedman and Owen (2017) tracked relationships between participants' understandings of disability and their conscious and unconscious attitudes towards it using The Disability Attitudes Implicit Association Test, Symbolic Ableism Scale, and open-ended questions to examine participant attitudes. Participants were found to have a complex understanding of disability but mainly defined disability as a preventing or slowing action, atypical function, lack of independence, socially constructed obstacle (Friedman & Owen). Other studies were conducted, using different tests to assess employer attitudes toward hiring individuals with a disability, with one such test conducting surveys to examine employer attitudes and the role variables play in impacting these attitudes (Kautonen et al., 2015; Nota et al., 2013). In the study conducted by Nota et al., researchers hypothesized that employer attitudes would be more positive towards those with less severe disabilities (Nota et al.). Additional factors were identified as having an effect on an employer's attitude towards hiring an individual with a disability, such as the type of disability, positive previous experience with hiring individuals with disabilities, familiarity with individuals with disabilities, and experience working with individuals with disabilities, noting a more positive attitude when there was prior experience and a greater desire to hire such individuals (Ju et al., 2013; Kurata & Brodwin, 2013; Yamatani, Teixeira & McDonough, 2015; Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt & Brooks, 2014). Additionally, size of the organization was found to have an impact on

employer attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, and could lead to positive attitudes toward those individuals (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013; Sehic, Satrovic & Fijuljanin, 2015). On the contrary, Lengnick-Hall et al. (2014) found no direct relationship between employer size and hiring individuals with disabilities.

Enhancement of the company's community image was found to be a benefit for employers to hire individuals with disabilities (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014). Financial incentives resolve employer concerns especially with regard to providing accommodations, where government incentives could remedy issues related to workplace environment (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013; Sehic et al., 2015). Employers also expressed concerns in a study conducted by Jansson, Bjorklund, Perseius, and Gunnarsson (2015), highlighting productivity as the main concern, and viewed ability to work is not a goal, but a tool for production.

### **Intentions and Subjective Norms**

Different factors were examined to determine what intentions and subjective norms had an effect on the hiring of individuals with a disability. Certain factors that were identified that affected the employment status of individuals with disabilities included perceived acceptance by society and the employment market, psychological states, attitudes, and life-planning styles, which affected attitudes and strategies in job searching for individuals with disabilities (Chen, 2015). Additionally, mediating effects of stigma on the relationship between the past and future hiring behavior for individuals with serious psychiatric disabilities were studied, with effects such as stigma of

employers towards employees with disabilities, had a direct impact on past and future hiring behavior (Kosyluk, Corrigan & Landis, 2014). Similarly, stereotypes of employees toward people with disabilities, as well as employee attitudes and work-related pressures, had an effect on the hiring and inclusion of such individuals in the workplace (Nelissen, Hulsheger, van Ruitenbeek & Zijlstra, 2015). In a study conducted by Sawang, Sun, and Salim (2014), examining the interaction between constructs of the theory of planned behavior and intent about subjective norms, attitudes, and subjective norms were found to predict intention, more so than perceived behavioral control.

Although there have been many studies that have addressed different issues that affect individuals with disabilities when it comes to employment, as shown above, these studies have focused mostly on the experiences of the employee with a disability and what is done to provide them with a proper work environment. The studies focused on different disabilities and how the individuals with these disabilities functioned in the workforce, and how their employment was affected, either negatively or positively, by the actions taken by the companies they worked for to provide them with accommodations or other necessities that would allow them to thrive in the work environment. However, the focus of these studies remained on the experiences of the employees, with little information being provided as to the rationale used by employers to hire these individuals or the rationale used in determining whether to provide accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Since the hiring decision will ultimately depend on whether an employer considers an applicant appropriate for a

position, it is imperative to understand what it is that an employer takes into consideration when determining whether to hire an individual with a disability. Such prior studies have established that employees with disabilities are capable of being hired, and can be effective employees when provided proper accommodations to assist them with their disabilities. Additionally, these studies have described the barriers that certain individuals with disabilities face when seeking employment or have employment. These prior studies provided no insight into what employers consider when determining whether to hire individuals with disabilities. This information can prove vital to understanding what is necessary for an individual with a disability to be employable, and to succeed once employment is obtained.

Such lack of information led to the determination that a study needed to be conducted to understand what rationale employers use when deciding whether they will hire an individual with a disability, specifically an AD. This study provides information that was otherwise undisclosed, which could ultimately provide direction to both employers and employees with disabilities when such is joined in the interviewing process. The subsequent section illustrates that prior researchers have indicated that such a study should be conducted to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of the limited hiring of employees with AD.

### **Future Implications**

Lindsay et al. (2014) recommended that research focus on how hiring practices are affected by employer preferences, as well as, the demand for soft skills, pliable

workers, and aesthetic labor. The researchers discussed how the possible effects an individual's responses during job interviews might affect an employer's decision to hire the individual (Lindsay & DePape, 2015). Concerning responses by a candidate with a disability may include those that indicate limited interpersonal skills, as well as, any discussion of personal weaknesses (Lindsay & DePape; Lindsay et al.). Additionally, Lindsay and DePape expressed that some hiring decisions made by the employer can have negative effects on the company. These effects include a decrease in available financial resources, reduction in positive employee morale, and potential harm to the reputation of the company (Lindsay & DePape). Therefore, it is vital to understand what responses, if any, from a potential candidate with a disability affect the hiring decision of the employer.

Future implications for study also includes discovering the need to prepare service providers for addressing accommodations, as well as, understand how different stakeholders such as employers, educators, individuals with disabilities, siblings, and employment support workers' view the process of providing such accommodations (Friedman & Owen, 2017; Gewurtz, Langan & Shand, 2016; Telwatte et al., 2017). Friedman and Owen studied siblings of individuals with disabilities and their understanding of disabilities. Findings demonstrated that 83% of participants favored non-disabled individuals and were found to understand and define disabilities as slowing actions, lack of independence, and functioning levels below those of non-disabled people (Friendman & Owen). Participants also expressed disability definitions to be affected by

societal views and beliefs (Friendman & Owen). Ableism, which is a bias or prejudice against those with disabilities, may affect the definitions and understanding people have of disabilities (Friedman & Owen). Gewurtz et al. and Telwatte et al. explain that lack of education and support for employers may influence hiring decisions. If such limited understanding exists in siblings of individuals with disabilities and affects how they view such individuals, researchers should focus on employer understanding of disability and potential influences that may have on hiring decisions.

There is a need for future research to breakdown the types of disabilities within the industries (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013; Kulper, Bakker & van der Klink, 2016). Employers tend to view different disabilities in different ways (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013; Nota et al., 2013). Type of disability has proven to affect the individual's attitude, and if the attitude is negative, the individual with a disability was less likely to be accepted (Nota et al.). These views may affect the way an employer makes their hiring decision regarding individuals with AD. Research needs to be conducted to discover if employer views of those with AD play a role in their decision making.

Studies should be done to explore employer hiring decisions in different size companies (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013). Jasper and Waldhart discuss the willingness that exists in hiring individuals with disabilities in larger companies. Employer size may be correlated to attitudes towards individuals with AD. Since larger sized organizations have been previously studied about individuals with disabilities, smaller sized organizations should be studied. Employer hiring decisions may be affected by the size of the company

when it comes to those with AD. Additionally, future research is needed to generalize findings to large nonprofit and profit sectors and the mission of the company (Rimmerman et al., 2013). Rimmerman et al. discussed how nonprofits were open to hiring individuals with disabilities due to their mission of positive social contributions. On the contrary, profit organizations were only open to hiring individuals with disabilities based on market conditions and how the performance of the company would be affected (Rimmerman et al., 2013). In addition to generalizing findings of such research, there is a need to explore the employer's hiring decision in the non-profit and profit sectors with regard to specific types of disabilities, such as ambulatory. In 2013, Ju et al. published research that indicated the need for future research regarding employer rationales for making decisions related to employing individuals with disabilities. Ju et al. conducted a literature review and found that employers had positive attitudes towards disabilities. However, employer attitudes differed based on types of disabilities (Ju et al.). Types of disabilities were limited to two categories: physical and psychological (Ju et al.). Research needs to focus on employer attitudes related to AD and how hiring decisions are affected by those attitudes.

Employer experience and perspective need to be focused on, especially about the effectiveness of incentives for employers to hire individuals with disabilities (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014). Lengnick-Hall et al. identified 6 factors that may affect the employment status of individuals with disabilities. Factors included lack of employer knowledge, accommodation costs, stereotypes, fear of litigation, negative coworker and



customer behavior, and financial incentives (Lengnick-Hall et al.). These factors need to be further explored, and how they affect an employer's hiring decision for an individual with an AD. Additionally, previous experience and knowledge, or lack thereof, has been proven to affect the perspective of an individual (Lengnick-Hall et al.). Exploration should be done to see if prior experience with individuals with AD, in any capacity, affects the perspectives and hiring decisions of employers.

Future studies should incorporate perceived social norms and behavioral control into the framework (Nelissen et al., 2015). Since Nelissen et al. utilized the theory of reasoned action to interpret findings, only effects of attitudes on employment of individuals with disabilities were studied. All three components of the TPB should be used to interpret findings, specifically how attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control affect employer hiring decisions of employees with AD.

A literature review was conducted by Heera (2016) to understand employer perspective regarding employing individuals with disabilities. Similar to Ju et al.'s (2013) study, types of disabilities were found to affect such perspectives (Heera). Heera's study also stressed that future research focuses on employment factors that may affect employer attitudes and completion of case studies regarding employer perspective that affect their current hiring practices. It is also recommended that studies be done on specific types of disabilities and employer perspectives (Heera). Research should include employer perspectives and how it relates to the hiring decision of an individual with an AD.

Policies, procedures, culture, accommodations, and legislation's effect on employer perspectives and hiring decisions need to be explored, as well.

### **Summary**

The alarming rates of unemployment for those with AD has increased the need for further research to be done in an attempt to explain such high rates, and possibly present solutions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Current literature has focused on physical disabilities in general, accommodations for such individuals, as well as, the barriers these individuals face when attempting to achieve gainful employment (Hasim & Wok, 2013; Telwatte, Anglim, Wynton & Moulding, 2017; Schur, Nishii, Ada, Kruse, Bruyère & Blank, 2014; Miller, Gottlieb, Morgan & Gray, 2014; Hanga, DiNitto & Wilken, n.d; Bualar, 2014; von Schrader, Malzer & Bruyere, 2013; Wilson, Butler & Butler, 2016). Also, employer attitudes and intentions have been studied concerning their influence on the employment status of individuals with disabilities (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013; Sehic, Satrovic & Fijuljanin, 2015; Kautonen et al., 2015; Nota et al., 2013). Although current research has been beneficial to the field, employer rationale and decision process when hiring or not hiring an individual with a disability is left to be known. Furthermore, lack of research exists about specific physical disabilities, such as ambulatory. Particularly, research should be focused on employer rationale for the hiring or lack of hiring of individuals with AD, as there already exists an abundance of research concerning the employee's perspective.

Each theme discussed had the same general focus, which was predicated on the experiences of individuals with a disability. Whether it was workplace accommodations, employment barriers, employer attitudes, or employment status across disabilities, each one of the themes discussed how an employee with a disability was affected by the topic of that theme. These studies revealed the feelings employees with disabilities had towards their work environment when accommodations were, and were not, provided.

Across all the themes that were discussed above, the main focus was on how employees with disabilities are affected by the different factors in the workforce. What was learned is that employees with disabilities face numerous barriers, which can be enhanced based on the type of disability they have, yet they can still be effective members of the workforce if they are provided the necessary accommodations or support that they require to succeed. What these studies have also shown is that employers are willing to hire individuals with disabilities, however, this willingness is dependent on the prior experiences that employers have had with individuals with disabilities. As a result of these studies, we can now understand what individuals with disabilities face when seeking employment, or are already a part of the workforce. However, there is very little information that has focused on what employer's key in on when deciding whether to hire an individual with a disability, specifically an AD. The studies discussed above provide no insight as to what employers think, or how they reach their decision on whether to hire an individual with a disability. Such an understanding would provide a greater

understanding as to what an employee with an AD would need to become a proper candidate for employment. At this time, such information is not known.

This study aims to address this lack of information. It focused on the rationale employers use when reaching a determination to hire an individual with an AD. A multiple case study method was used in this study to obtain this information. During the study, interviews were conducted of employers within the consumer goods industry where they will be asked to express their thoughts on the hiring process when it comes to interviewing individuals with an AD. They were also asked to express their thoughts with regards to any instances in which they had individuals with an AD work as an employee within their company. This information ultimately provided insight into what employers look for, or what they find important, when they are considering an individual with an AD for employment. It established the basis for identifying the rationale used by these employers when making their decision as to whether to hire an individual with an AD. As there is no current literature that addresses this topic, through this study this gap in the literature was addressed, and the information obtained will provide employers and employees with disabilities, alike, guidance as to what should be done when individuals with AD seek employment.

Prior studies using the case study method have been conducted; however, the focus remained on the experience of individuals with disabilities in the workplace. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Labor conducted a case study that created a framework for establishing policies and practices in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations with

regards to employees with disabilities (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). Findings of this study focused on the workplace climate, and how such climate affected an employee's experience and their performance (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). This study used in-depth interviews, focus groups, and analysis of a collection of data (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). Cornell University (2013) conducted an in-depth case study into the factors that affect disability inclusiveness in the workplace in both the private and public sector. The study collected surveys from employees in one public sector organization and one private sector organization, with these employees providing information regarding their personal work experience, disability status, and accommodation experience (Cornell University, 2013).

While these case studies provided information regarding employment of individuals with disabilities, and the steps being taken to assist these individuals, the focus of these studies was primarily from the perspective of the employees. Case studies can be a useful method of gaining information regarding a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2014). However, research needs to be done to understand the employer's rationale when it comes to hiring individuals with disabilities. Thus, just as case studies provided useful information in prior studies that focused on the employee's experience, this method also obtained knowledge regarding the employer's rationale for hiring or not hiring an individual with an AD, which was the focus of this study. Chapter 3 will discuss a detailed description of the execution of this study including the research design and methodology.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

This chapter will include the purpose of the study, research design, role of the researcher, methodology, data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, procedures for withdrawal from the study, treatment of data, and, sociopolitical and economic considerations. The purpose of this chapter was to provide a brief description as to the phenomenon I explored in this study and the methods used to accomplish this. The multiple case study design was used as the research method, which will be described in the research design section. Included in the design will be the research questions and the procedure that I followed when analyzing interview and questionnaire data. In the role of the researcher section, I will describe the position that I took regarding this study and discuss the biases that I attempted to avoid during the course of the study. In the methodology section, a detailed description will be provided as to how participants were selected, including the population and sampling strategy that were used to obtain the participants for the study. A discussion will be had regarding the instrumentation that was used during the study, including a description of the interviews and the questionnaires. In this section, I will also describe the procedure that was used for recruitment, participation in the study, and how the data were collected. A description of how the participants were debriefed and what procedure was used for follow-up discussions once the interviews were completed will also be provided in the methodology section of this paper. Following the methodology section, I will provide a data analysis plan with a discussion of the

implementation and evaluation of the data. Additionally, in this section, a discussion of discrepant cases for this study will be provided As well as the issues regarding the trustworthiness of data, including consideration of the internal validity, external validity, dependability, and confirmability of the data that were obtained. After sections on the ethical procedures, withdrawal from the study, how the data were treated, and the sociopolitical and economic considerations of this study, I will present the field-tested interview protocol and the field-tested questionnaire review protocol as the sources from which the data were generated. Ethical considerations concerning the data collection instrument, informed consent of participants, and confidentiality will be addressed in this section.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The focal point of this study was the purpose for which it was conducted. The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand the decision-making process of small business owners in New Jersey use when reaching their decision on whether to hire individuals with AD. In so doing, I completed an assessment to determine whether an employer's experience and interactions with these individuals coincides with their decision to hire or not hire an individual with AD. I used a multiple case study approach to attempt to answer the research questions to address the gap in the research.

### **Research Questions**

1. Why do owners of small businesses in New Jersey decide to hire or not hire an individual with AD?

2. How do owners of small businesses in New Jersey describe their rationale when making such decisions?

### **Research Tradition**

In this study, I used the qualitative approach with a multiple case study design. Yin (2014) defined the case study method as the compilation of case histories, which then are analyzed to see if general principles are formed. Such an approach is appropriate when a study seeks an understanding of the contemporary phenomenon (Yin). In this study, I intended to answer the aforementioned research questions to understand why there is a lack of hiring of individuals with AD, without any control or manipulation of any variables. To do so, I sought information from employers regarding their experiences with interviewing and/or hiring individuals with AD to uncover the rationale employers use when deciding whether to hire individuals with AD in their real-world setting (see Yin). The multiple case study method is used when developing an understanding about real world cases (Yin). I acted as the research tool, in that I, myself, conducted interviews with the participants to gain information regarding their experience with hiring or not hiring individuals with AD; however, I was not limited to one method of data collection (see Yin). I also distributed, via e-mail and postal mail, questionnaires to the small businesses in New Jersey and then reviewed the information obtained regarding the hiring rationale employers go through when determining whether to hire individuals with AD. In this study, the TPB acted as a guide when collecting and analyzing data (see Yin). The TPB provided me with a reference point for determining why an individual makes a



particular decision and assisted in the development of the questions used in the interview protocol by providing a starting point for which questions would ultimately acquire the data necessary to understand what causes the behavior of the owners (i.e., their rationale for hiring or not hiring individuals with AD).

A multiple case study is a method that utilizes multiple cases to address a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Using multiple cases allowed me to gather information from multiple employers from different settings in an attempt to determine what rationale each of the employers use in their decision-making process when deciding whether to hire an individual with an AD. Each case provided a different perspective on the same topic, which allowed for a greater understanding of this phenomenon in the real-world context by incorporating the many different types of employers available to those individuals with AD and not limiting the study to just one specific type of business (see Yin). Additionally, this study was a descriptive multiple case study. Descriptive case studies are used when a researcher is attempting to describe a phenomenon in its real-world context (Yin). In this study, I explained the rationale that employers use when deciding whether to hire an individual with an AD, which will ultimately provide a clear understanding as to why the phenomenon occurs.

This study involved 16 cases, as well as an embedded study approach. The embedded approach involves more than one unit, or subunits, of analysis within each case (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). The embedded approach was appropriate for this study due to the different settings within each potential case. Applying such an approach allowed

me to consider additional factors in each case which may have contributed to an employer's rationale with regards to hiring or not hiring individuals with AD, such as business size, business type, skills required, etc. (see Yin, 2014).

## **Role of the Researcher**

### **Researcher as an Interviewer**

In this study, I played the role of the data collection instrument. I conducted interviews based on a field-tested interview protocol that I developed. The protocol was field tested by experts with knowledge of the field that I studied. My role as a researcher was the interviewer. Since I was involved and interacted with participants in an interview setting and not in the social setting, I engaged them solely as the person conducting the interviews.

### **Researcher Bias**

The researcher must be aware that they need to keep their subjectivity to a minimum when collecting the data (McLachlan & Garcia, 2015). Bias is a crucial factor to be aware of when using the researcher as the data collection tool (Cope, 2014). Since I was the data collection instrument and was conducting the analysis and interpreting the results, my bias needed to be managed. The occurrence of bias can be for many reasons including an error in research design or lack of objectivity (Cope).

However, strategies can be used to mitigate bias (Chang, Fung & Chien, 2013). Bracketing, which is the identification and the setting aside of any preconceived assumptions or beliefs regarding the topic, is one method that I used to reduce bias (see

Chang et al., 2013). To remain objective, I had to avoid injecting my beliefs into the study, so I put my feelings aside when conducting the study (see Chang et al.). By bracketing, the information shared by participants is reported more accurately and contributes to the validity of the study (Chang et al.). It is also imperative to avoid development of a close relationship to the participants (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi & Cheraghi, 2014). By developing close relationships with the participant, there is a risk of a conflict of interest (Sanjari et al.). To avoid this occurrence, I clearly explained the parameters of the interaction between the participants and me as the researcher. I avoided any discussion that did not focus on the study itself and avoided any conversation that appeared to be personal in nature. Another concern to consider when using myself as an instrument was a lack of consistency in carrying out the research procedures (see Sanjari et al.). To mitigate this concern, the research plan was detailed and had a clear outline to contribute to the credibility and generalizability of the study (see Sanjari et al.). I took responsibility for my actions as researcher and did not falsify any information (see Yin, 2014).

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

**Population.** The participants for the study were small consumer goods business owners in New Jersey who had experience with either hiring or interviewing at least one individual with a disability, specifically an AD, which is an inability to walk without assistance. I narrowed in on a single county in N.J. as the geographical location for the

sample due to the large quantities of small businesses located within the county and its close proximity to my location, making for the ease of travel to each location (see U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Consumer goods refers to companies that sell appliances, toys, furniture, home furnishings, recreational boats, recreational vehicles, motorcycles, games, gifts, greeting cards, school products, office products, musical instruments, jewelry, sporting goods, and processed foods and beverages (U.S. Department of Commerce, n.d.). In 2015, the U.S. consumer goods industry was the largest in the world (U.S. Bureau of Labor Standards, 2015). To be considered a small business, staff size is not to exceed 99 employees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Businesses that had less than 15 employees were excluded from the study.

**Sampling strategy and criteria sampling.** I used purposeful sampling, specifically criteria sampling, to determine which participants to select for the study, which consisted of semistructured, face-to-face interviews, as well as, questionnaires. Criteria sampling is defined as sampling that involves the selection of cases that meet a specific set of predetermined criteria (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Through criteria sampling, I selected participants that would provide relevant information regarding the issue of the employers' rationale when determining whether to hire an individual with an AD.

Participants were selected based on the level of experience they had with hiring or interviewing individuals with AD, which requires having interviewed or hired at least one individual with an AD. Each participant in this study was either an owner or manager of a

small business within the selected county in New Jersey who had, at one point, either interviewed an individual applying for a job with their business who had an AD, or employed such an individual (National Institute of Health, 2016). To determine which participants would be involved in the study, phone calls were made, and when email contact information was available, emails were sent to the small businesses within the selected county. Contacting the businesses assisted in determining what businesses meet the criteria needed for the study, which is detailed in the subsequent paragraph. As mentioned in Chapter 1, small businesses were selected for participation in this study based on the differing factors that would prove useful for this study, which includes the fact that a small business will routinely specialize in one type of consumer product, allowing the study to obtain data from different settings requiring different employment tasks; one individual conducts the hiring or interviewing of prospective employees; and there is a greater likelihood that the owner of such a business will be available to participate in the study, as opposed to a larger corporation that has multiple levels of management (Goffee & Scase, 2015).

The sample consisted of 16 cases, or business owners, that were interviewed. Studies have shown that when conducting qualitative research, there is no set number of participants that should be followed. However, sufficient participants should be chosen to allow for saturation of the data (Korrapati, 2016). Fifteen participants was the starting point for this study, as it was feasible to reach these participants, and provided a better opportunity to reach saturation without needing to obtain more participants. Also, by

starting with 15 participants I was able to mitigate the additional expenditure of time that would be required if I needed to select a new set of participants using the selection criteria due to a failure to reach saturation. However, should saturation not have been reached with the initial group of participants, I would have adjusted the sample size and obtained additional participants in order to reach saturation (Korrapati).

**Procedures for identification, contract, and recruitment of participants.**

First, e-mails were sent which included a brief description of the study that I intended to conduct, and the information that was sought. The e-mail also provided a description of the type of data collection that would occur, i.e., interviews and potentially a questionnaire, and the anticipated length of time for the interview. Also, the location for each interview was provided. An e-mail was sent out prior to any other form of communication due to the less intrusive nature of an e-mail, which allowed the potential participant the opportunity to respond at their convenience. However, should a potential participant not have responded within a week of sending the e-mail, I then proceeded to make a phone call to the business in order to make direct contact and provide them the information regarding the study that would have been within the e-mail. A phone call was also made to those businesses that did not have an e-mail address available.

Subsequently, a letter was sent out to all potential participants informing them that they had met the requirements for participation in the study and requested permission to conduct the study at their place of business. Additionally, consent forms and packets with information regarding the study were provided to those potential participants

informing them of the procedures that would be taken in conducting the study, and also, informing them of how all information would be kept confidential and the rights they have while participating in the study. Those participants that fit the criteria, and grant permission, were then scheduled for an appointment to be interviewed.

Purposeful sampling was utilized and helped ensure that the participants selected for the study have experience hiring, or interviewing, individuals with AD (Elo et al., 2014; Robinson, 2014). Criterion sampling is one in which the participants that have been selected share the same characteristics (Palinkas et al., 2015). These features acted as the criterion for the participants in the study (Palinkas et al.). Criterion sampling will list inclusionary criteria that the participants must meet to participate in the study (Palinkas et al.). When utilizing criterion sampling, I also included exclusionary criteria that aided in the removal of any potential candidates that would not contribute valuable information to the study (see Palinkas et al.). This type of sampling is utilized mainly to research issues regarding quality assurance (Palinkas et al.). To identify the included participants for the study, a screening was conducted using telephone or Internet communication (see University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2017). Once the screening was complete, I notified the selected participants by either mailing or hand delivering letters and information packets. These information packets included confidentiality agreements and related information, and also informed consent documents. When these packets were returned, I categorized the participants to determine which participant best meets the criteria. After this was done interview sessions were scheduled.

Inclusionary criteria were that the participant must be the individual who conducts the interviews for new hires, as well as, participates in the decision process when determining what candidates will be hired, or not hired. Also, the business where potential participants are employed, or own, must have at least 15 employees on staff. To narrow the scope of the participants further, the study had a minimum number of 15 employees per business for participation in the interviews. The number 15 was chosen based on ADA requirement of a business to have a minimum of 15 employees (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). By falling under these requirements, an employer has the additional task of taking into consideration the legal ramifications that may apply if they do not give an individual with an AD an equal opportunity to obtain a position within their business. Also, participants must have had experience with interviewing or hiring individuals with disabilities, specifically AD. A participant was excluded from the study if they were not involved in the hiring or decision process when employing new individuals, or if they had no experience employing or interviewing individuals with disabilities. They also were excluded if they work at, or own, a place of business with more than 99 employees on staff.

This study plans to have 16 participants total. The number proposed was selected since each interview will need to be analyzed very intensively (Robinson, 2014). Using a sample size of this amount enabled me to spend time analyzing each interview, looking for similarities across responses (Robinson, 2014). Robinson (2014) noted that the projected sample size in such a study might need to be adjusted based on resources,



accessibility of participants, time limitations, and competence of the researcher. Sample size can be officially determined once the data reaches the point of saturation when no more information can be obtained on that topic (Marshall et al., 2013). When analyzing the data, I created a grid where the major ideas and concepts from the data are listed. If at the end of the data analysis, new information arose, I went back and conducted more interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

For all of the following participation selection steps, the location where all took place is the place of business and the communication format will be in person.

Step 1: Obtain a list of local businesses in the consumer goods industry within the selected county in New Jersey using NJ.com as the primary source, which is provided information from NJ Media. NJ Media is a company that provides information related to marketing, advertising, as well as, content to *The Star-Ledger*, the leading newspaper in the state of New Jersey (New Jersey Advance Media, 2014).

Step 2: Reach out to the local businesses to first identify if they have 99 or fewer employees to be eligible for participation, and ensure that they meet all inclusionary criteria.

Step 3: If the business is eligible, obtain a signed letter of cooperation to participate in the study.

Step 4: Once the letter of cooperation is received, provide a confidentiality agreement to the place of business.

Step 5: Provide a consent form to all those businesses participating in the study.

Step 6: Once consent forms are received, the face to face interview will be scheduled.

Step 7: The face-to-face interview will take place.

**Saturation and sample size.** Factors that affect saturation include quality of the data, the scope of the study, nature of the topic, the amount of information derived from each participant, the number of interviews, and research method (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Evaluation of the quality of the information that is collected from the participants was a large determinant on whether the sample size is reached (Fusch & Ness). Fusch and Ness stated that it is too difficult to have strict recommendations regarding a minimum or appropriate sample size. According to Fusch and Ness, ideally, the researcher should interview until the point of redundancy, meaning until the information begins to repeat itself. This is also known as saturation (Fusch & Ness). Saturation is when the data collection does not discover any new data (Fusch & Ness). Fusch and Ness reports that saturation is the main determinant of the sample size in qualitative research. This strategy was used in this study as interviews were a method of data collection (Fusch & Ness).

Also, I must be sure that the sample size is not too small to support the results of the study (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). The data collected must reach saturation, support the study, as well as, demonstrate repetition of the findings (Patton, 2015). It is recommended for repetition of the results to be demonstrated to make for a credible and reliable study (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar & Fontenot, 2013). On the other hand, I must

ensure that the sample size is not too large, or that there is too much information that the actual goal of the study is lost (Fusch & Ness). I understood that during this study there might be a need to adjust the proposed sample size (Patton).

This study had a sample size that had at least 15 participants. Each participant was defined as one manager or owner of the business. While there is no recommendation as to the minimum number of participants selected for a study, I needed to ensure that the number of participants I choose provided me the best opportunity to achieve saturation without needing to once again select new participants, which could prove to be time consuming and expensive. Therefore, my study had a minimum of 15 participants. By selecting an initial number of 15 participants, I was able to optimize my potential to reach saturation without needing other participants. As aforementioned, data saturation is defined as reaching a point in which no new information is obtained from the sample (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In order to participate in this study, each participant needed to satisfy a specific set of criteria, which were provided prior to selection for the study. This task can prove to be time consuming. As such, while there is no way to predict at what point saturation is reached, by having more participants that have met the criteria for participation, I gave myself a greater opportunity to reach saturation with the initial group of participants without needing to screen a new set of participants, which could prove to be extremely time consuming.

Since data saturation is directly related to the depth of the data, such depth will need to be achieved during the interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Also, data triangulation

will be utilized. In addition to interviews, which were the primary source of data collection, this study also used a secondary source which consisted of questionnaires that were sent out to the small businesses within the selected county, and subsequently analyzing the responses given, and then comparing the responses given within the questionnaire to the responses provided during the interviews to see if any patterns formed. Saturation of the data was ensured through triangulation of data (Fusch & Ness). Data triangulation gathers information on the phenomenon of interest, but from multiple perspective and levels, assisting with the achievement of rich and thick data needed for saturation (Fusch & Ness). With a narrow scope for this research study, it will be difficult and time-consuming to find participants that meet the criteria. If I was required to perform the selection process for the second time, then it would have further delayed the study. Having a feasible number of 15 participants, while not guaranteeing that saturation would be reached, provided a greater probability that I could reach saturation due to the greater number of interviewees providing data on the same subject from the first group of participants (Fusch & Ness). This potentially allowed me to only need to conduct the sampling phase of the study one time.

### **Instrumentation**

Semistructured style interviews were conducted in this study. An interview protocol that I produced was utilized. This was done to obtain information shared by participants regarding their personal experiences about the phenomenon under study (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Utilizing semistructured interviews allowed the participant to

have the opportunity to discuss other topics that may arise from the interview questions and information (see Doody & Noonan). In addition to other topics that may arise, the participants were also able to disclose and discuss their thoughts and feelings when sharing their experiences (Doody & Noonan). It was important that the data collection instrument include enough questions that allow for the openness of the multiple participants in the interview sessions (Fusch & Ness, 2015). These interviews were audio recorded to facilitate the participant having my undivided attention (Berazneva, 2014). The audio recording allowed for a more thorough and accurate analysis of the data since there will be no missing information (Berazneva). Follow-up sessions were also conducted with participants to review the transcripts (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Interviews served as the primary data collection tool for this study and are most appropriate because interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to express their feelings regarding the issue (Doody & Noonan, 2013). This study seeks to discover an employer's rationale when it came to hiring, or not hiring, individuals with AD. To do so, the participants must discuss their thought process, or why they act in a certain manner when it comes to this decision (Doody & Noonan). A researcher cannot obtain this detailed information by observation alone (Doody & Noonan). Participants must have the opportunity to openly discuss their thinking and rationale for hiring, or not hiring, individuals with an AD. Additionally, they must be able to openly discuss their rationale for providing certain accommodations for these employees. Interviews provided the perfect setting for the participants to provide this information (Doody & Noonan). They

were given the opportunity to express their thinking and rationale, which otherwise could not be observed. As such, interviews were the most appropriate data collection tool for this study.

While interviews were the primary source of data collection, this study shows data triangulation through the use of a secondary source of data collection which consisted of sending out questionnaires to the small businesses, capping the number of questionnaires sent out to 100, and then reviewing the responses provided in order to determine whether there are patterns that developed with regards to the rationale used by employers when considering individuals with AD for employment (Cheng & Phillips, 2014). The questionnaire consisted of questions that will attempt to elicit the same information as the in-person interviews, focusing on those employers who have never had any experience hiring or interviewing individuals with AD. By doing so, I was able to uncover whether employers have preconceived notions regarding the hiring of such individuals. If such notions are detected, they can form the basis for the rationale used by employers for not hiring individuals with AD.

Data triangulation is used to show the validity of the study and to remove the bias of the study, as well as, ensure data saturation due to the acquisition of deep data during employing all data collection methods used for triangulation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). By using the above described method of data triangulation, the study did not only get the perspective from employers who have had prior experience with individuals with AD, but also got the perspective of those individuals who have not had any experience. Obtaining

both perspectives provided insight into what rationale employers have used to determine whether to hire an individual with an AD, and also will provide insight into what rationale an employer may use if ever faced with such a situation. Thus, providing full data from both perspectives and ensuring saturation. There are different manners in which triangulation can be conducted, such as triangulation of method, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and triangulation of data sources (Yin, 2014). I focused on a triangulation of data sources (see Yin). To do so, as aforementioned, I sent out questionnaires to a maximum of 100 small businesses and reviewed the responses obtained, focusing on those employers with no experience interacting with individuals with AD, and then compared those results to the results obtained from the in-person interviews. By doing so, I was able to determine whether there were patterns that formed amongst the responses between individuals with experience and those without experience, such as whether the employers have similar rationales when deciding whether to hire or not hire, an individual with an AD. Lastly, I compared these responses, and this information, to the data obtained through the interviews to identify whether the rationale used by the employers for hiring, or not hiring, these individuals are similar to each other. By expanding the types of participants to encompass a large variety of different settings, the data received provided a more valid interpretation of the rationale employers use when deciding whether to hire or not hire an individual with an AD.

Before the interview protocol and questionnaire protocol were used in this study, I needed to field test my data collection tools to determine whether the interview questions

would obtain the data that this study seeks to obtain. To conduct the field test, I sought the assistance of three to five experts in fields related to the hiring of individuals with disabilities (University of Phoenix, n.d.). To find these volunteers, I first reviewed the Walden University faculty expertise directory to see if there were any faculty members that had some knowledge of the subject matter who will be willing to assist me during the field test portion of this study. After exhausting the resources from Walden University, if I was still in need of experts, I then conducted a local search using search engines, such as Google, to see if there are any individuals within the selected county that have experience with the subject matter. I then checked to see if those individuals would be available to participate in the field test. Once I obtained three to five individuals to partake in the field test, I provided them with my interview protocol for their review (University of Phoenix, n.d.). It was anticipated that the researchers would provide me feedback as to whether my interview questions would obtain the data that the study required.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

I conducted semistructured interviews to gain information about the participants experiences regarding the phenomena under study (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Semistructured interviews allowed participants to respond to questions in a manner in which they can fully express their views with regard to the questions asked, and would not be limited to yes or no responses, while also allowing for flexibility in the questioning despite the creation of a predetermined set of questions (Doody & Noonan). This would



allow for a fluid and conversational interview, allowing me to adjust questions based on responses provided to me (see Doody & Noonan). An audio recording of each interviews, as well as, hand-written notes were collected throughout the interview so that a thorough analysis of all information obtained could be conducted (see Berazneva, 2014). A rapport and trust must be established between the interviewee and I (see Bourke, 2014). This was done through a thorough explanation of how the interview would be conducted and managed, as well as, through the comfort level displayed by me (see Bourke). Neutrality was also maintained throughout the interview through my responses to the participant, as well as, the body language they exhibit (see Doody & Noonan). In regard to interview questions, they were probing as well as open-ended questions (Doody & Noonan). Questions were asked that drew details and encouraged clear and useful information from the participant (Doody & Noonan). Also, the questions engaged the participant in the interview (Doody & Noonan). Hand written notes were taken. However, audio taping the interview was also done to assist in ensuring no information was missed during the interview process (see Jamshed, 2014).

There were also practices to avoid in the interview process. I avoided providing unclear information on how the interview would be conducted and managed (see Bourke, 2014). I provided a detailed explanation of what was expected of each interview at the outset. Specifically, I informed the participant of his/her rights regarding the study, and how I intended to keep the information confidential. I informed the participant of the purpose of the study, and what information I was seeking. I then provided the participant

with the anticipated length of the interview and provided information as to how he/she may withdraw from the study. My opinions and feelings were kept to a minimum, as well as, the avoidance of withdrawn body language to prevent the participant from feeling discomfort, ignored, or coerced (see Bourke). To do this, I made a checklist of what feelings or thoughts I have regarding the topic of this study so that I can be aware that they exist and make a conscious effort to avoid interjecting them into the study. I also placed careful attention to my mannerisms while conducting interviews so as to be aware of the body language I am projecting. When asking questions, they were not closed or one-word answer style questions (Bourke). The questions were open-ended and required responses that had the participant provide an explanation for why they make certain decisions regarding the hiring, or not hiring, of individuals with AD. These questions required the participant to provide a detailed explanation of why certain decisions were made by them during the hiring process. Also, these questions allowed for follow-up questions to be asked in order to clarify responses given by the participant.

I conducted follow-up sessions to review interview transcriptions with each of the participants (see Edwards & Holland, 2013). Once the follow-up sessions were completed, I developed a system to manage and analyze the data (see Edwards & Holland, 2013). If there were too few participants, the participant selection process was done again using the same initial procedures, but then would have sought out additional participants that own or manage small consumer goods businesses in an additional county in New Jersey. This would have also been done if the data had not reached saturation.

### **Debriefing Procedures**

Debriefing and exit interview procedures followed the script below.

Interviewer: “Thank you for your time and participation in the study. Please, do not discuss the study or your experience participating in this study with anyone outside of myself, or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University, due to potential effects of your responses. The purpose of this study is to understand the rationale that employers have when determining whether or not to hire an individual with an AD. Here is my contact information. If you have any further questions, comments, please do not hesitate to contact me. Also, here is the IRB contact information in case you need to contact them, as well.”

### **Follow-Up Procedures**

Follow-up sessions were held to review responses from the initial interview with the participant. Participants were asked to sign a written notice, which included a detailed summary of the interview. At the end of the entire study, a summary of the findings was given to the participants.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

To connect the data to a specific research question, first, the proper data collection method must be identified (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In this study, in person, one-on-one semistructured interviews were used as the data collection method. Semistructured interviews are deemed beneficial to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon (Doody & Noonan). In semistructured interviews, I was able to adjust the questioning based on

the responses that were being given by the participant in the study, allowing for the interview to freely evolve (see Doody & Noonan). Connecting the data to specific research questions required me to construct interview questions that focused on the issues provided by said research questions. The interview questions focused on the hiring practices of the different businesses, and also the thinking process that employers go through when deciding whether to hire someone with an AD. By focusing the interview questions in this manner, I was able to obtain data related to the research questions. Once this data were obtained, it was organized and coded based on the type of information received (see Lawrence & Tar, 2013). Once this was done, the data were analyzed to determine whether the research questions were answered.

### **Implementation and Evaluation**

The study took place at the location of each business. Communication format was face to face, through an interview made up of open-ended questions, as well as, standardized questions. After all surveys and interviews were completed, a follow-up session took place to review the transcripts of the interview with the participant. Each participant was assigned an identification code to conceal identity (see Elo et al., 2014). A classical content analysis method was used when analyzing the data collected in this multiple case research study (Elo et al.). Raw data from the interviews were transcribed into codes (see Elo et al.). Transcription of the data was done by creating files from the data in which I read the text and memo, where necessary, to create codes (see Elo et al.). The interview transcripts served as the raw data for the coding process. Descriptive codes

reflected a summary of the primary topic in the excerpt of the raw data. During the first cycle of coding, there were preliminary codes given to each portion of the raw data. A code is essentially a category. From the codes, the data can be sorted into categories and subcategories. I looked for patterns, which may reflect similarities, differences, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and/or causation (Saldaña, 2009). The coding chart was used to keep hard copies of notes and act as a guide for organization during the coding process. Once categories were established, I looked to identify themes that emerge from such categories. Analytic memos were kept during the coding process in order to document the coding process and my choices for the codes, as well as, help to identify patterns, categories, subcategories, themes, and concepts from the data (Saldaña). These types of memos should be a reflection on any ethical dilemma with the data, personal relation to responses, how connections between segments of the raw data were made, future directions for the study, and about the final report for the study (Saldaña).

During the first cycle of coding, attribute coding and In Vivo coding were utilized. Attribute coding was done at the start of the data set and contains descriptive information such as setting, participant characteristics, data format (which would be interview or document), and time frame (Saldaña, 2009). This type of coding is recommended for managing qualitative data (Saldaña). In Vivo coding was utilized, and was included in column 1 of the coding chart. When using an In Vivo code, which is a direct quote of the participant in the excerpt, quotation marks will be utilized in the coding chart (see Saldaña). If a second cycle of coding was needed, the data was given a

final code and put into the third column of the coding chart once all of the raw data were initially coded and analyzed. Pattern coding was utilized if the second cycle of coding was needed in order to assist with categorizing and sorting the data that are similarly coded into sets, themes, or constructs (see Saldaña). Code weaving was then done from the coding results of the first and second cycles (Saldaña). I summarized my coding of themes and categories in order to create a theme. Themes were then identified once the coding process is complete. When the coding of the data is complete, I will report the findings in narration style (see Saldaña, 2015). Participants in the study will also receive the summary of the findings.

This strategy for data analysis was appropriate to use for the research questions in this study due to the ease of use, which allowed for the simplification of conducting the analysis (Saldaña, 2015). The data were organized and managed through the utilization of Nvivo software. Software such as Nvivo is commonly used in the academic field due to the rigorous research conducted (Silver & Lewins, 2014). According to Castleberry (2014), Nvivo is user-friendly and will allow me to code and organize data in digital format. It is also explained that documents can be imported directly from Microsoft Word to code and note any additional information (see Castleberry). As with the many great accommodations that computer software has to offer in the area of data management and analysis, there are concerns (Castleberry). There have been concerns expressed that the software may influence the researcher to interpret findings in a particular direction (Castleberry). Other concerns include distancing the researcher from the data,

quantitatively analyzing qualitative data, and support homogeneity in data analysis methods in science (Castleberry).

### **Discrepant Cases**

Discrepant cases are those cases, which do not necessarily fit the explanation of the phenomenon under study (Krishnankutty, Bellary, Kumar & Moodahadu, 2012). These cases were purposely sought out towards the end of the study and were analyzed to determine if there are any cases that would disprove the explanation of the phenomenon (Krishnankutty et al.). If there is one case that disproves this explanation, then the explanation must be reformulated (Krishnankutty et al.). The purpose of seeking discrepant cases is so that the adequacy of the data can be measured and combat researcher confirmatory bias (Krishnankutty et al.). In using the discrepant case analysis, I sought disconfirming instances of the phenomenon and compared them to the confirming instances to understand the complexity of the phenomenon (see Krishnankutty et al.). Themes, patterns, and categories were compared to create an accurate depiction of the information shared by participants (Krishnankutty et al., 2012). If during this search I found no disconfirming cases, then it was deemed that the data used to reach the explanation of the phenomenon are adequate. However, should I have found cases that disconfirm the explanation, then I would adjust the explanation to reflect these cases.

## **Issues of Trustworthiness**

### **Internal Validity**

It is important that I considered how to ensure the reliability and validity of the study (Noble & Smith, 2015). During this study, I engaged in a thorough documentation of each step of the research process, noting any decisions that were made, and a rationale for each (see Noble & Smith; see Cope, 2014). By engaging in this, I also engaged in reflective journaling, which can also assist in demonstrating the reliability of the study (see Cope). This thorough documentation can assist any researcher with replicating the study in the future (Cope). Also, to demonstrate the reliability of the study, I double checked the transcription of the raw data and define categories and key terms (see Leung, 2015). Results of the study can be compared to the theoretical framework utilized in the study to check for validity (Leung). It is recommended that I have an objective stance when conducting the study to assist in the demonstration of validity (see Delgado-Rico, Carterro-Dios, & Ruch). Researcher credibility is another area one must be cautious of when using the researcher as an instrument (Cope; Noble & Smith). To demonstrate researcher credibility, I bracketed my opinions to avoid bias, as well as, maintain an objective mindset (see Chang et al., 2013). Lastly, avoidance of research design errors assisted in demonstrating such credibility (Chang et al.).

### **External Validity**

An important aspect of reliability is that the study can be replicated. Transferability, or generalization, is how the findings can be transferred to other contexts,



using other participants (Anney, 2014). This can be achieved by giving a thick description and by using purposeful sampling (Anney). Thick descriptions refer to very detailed accounts of narratives, interviews with the participants, the researcher as an instrument, research context, and processes (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy, 2013). Generalizability of the findings is the main indicator of transferability (Patton, 2015). This is concerned with how the findings are applicable in other settings (Patton). To demonstrate the transferability within the study, multiple settings were utilized for the interviews, which included differing staff size, differing production of products, and differing work requirements. Each interview took place at the employer's place of business. A recommendation that researchers should follow is that the researcher thoroughly documents each step of the study. By doing so, any future studies done on the topic can follow those same steps to determine whether the results were properly arrived at, which would ensure reliability.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is related to the stability of the findings over time, researchers, and analysis methods (Anney, 2014). Loh (2014) mentioned that dependability is associated with the accuracy of the data. This can be demonstrated through an audit trail, code-recode strategies, stepwise replication, triangulation, peer examination, and interior comparisons (Anney). Member checks will be utilized to demonstrate dependability and credibility. The process of conducting member checks involves the participant clarifying responses to the researcher in regard to the descriptions and interpretations of the

information provided (Anney). These member checks included me providing my interpretations for the information provided by the participants to the participant for them to be able to clarify (Anney). A research audit trail will also be utilized to demonstrate the dependability and credibility of the data. The process of the research audit trail included the documentation of the decisions I made throughout the study and why I made these decisions (see Anney). For example, I documented why particular individuals were utilized for the interviews, the information from these interviews, and how that information related to the other information collected (see Anney).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the results of the study can be confirmed by other researchers (Anney, 2014). This was demonstrated through audit trails, reflexive journaling, and triangulation (Anney). Demonstration of confirmability was achieved by engaging in reflexive journaling (see Anney). Cope (2014) recommends journal writing for the researcher to gain a deeper insight to the problem or issue of study. Also, these journals or logs can serve as additional data to participant interviews (Cope). Journaling gives the writer the ability to engage in reflective practice and learn something from the experience (Cope). I did journal during the study and then reflected on their practices to see if my beliefs, opinions, and values had any effect on the research process (see Anney).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical procedures will be followed throughout this study. First, an extensive application was submitted to the IRB at Walden University for approval. Once approval was received (06-01-18-0529280), participants were contacted and provided with a consent form. The purpose of the study was explained through the letter, as well as, procedures that would be followed for interviewing, confidentiality, and data storage. The following elements were included in the consent form: statement that the study involves research; why subject was selected; disclosure of the identity and all relevant roles of the researcher; an understandable explanation of the research purpose; an understandable description of procedures; expected duration of subject's participation; statement that participation is voluntary; statement that refusing or discontinuing participation involved no penalty; description of reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts; description of anticipated benefits to subjects or others; information on compensation for participation; description on how confidentiality will be maintained; whom to contact with questions about the research; whom to contact with questions about their rights as participants; statement that participants may keep a copy of the informed consent form; all potential conflicts of interest are disclosed; consent process and documentation are in language understandable to the participant; and there is no language that asks the subject to waive his/her legal rights.

**Ethical Concerns Related to Recruitment**

Some ethical concerns that may arise during the recruitment process are the potential that personal identifying information could be revealed unintentionally, sensitive material related to the business could be disclosed, or the information could be provided by an individual under the age of 18. To address these concerns, I explained, from the outset, the requirements needed to participate in the study. Additionally, I advised all participants being recruited that they would be required only to provide a limited amount of information during the recruiting process. Information such as business name, size of staff, whether they have any experience in the hiring process for the business or have participated in the hiring process in the past, whether they have ever had any experience with hiring and employing individuals with a disability, specifically AD, and a description of what the business sells or produces may be required. Lastly, if the participant was selected, a packet was mailed or hand delivered to them enclosing the confidentiality agreement, the rights reserved by the participant, and an explanation of the study was provided. Other materials pertaining to the study and what can be expected from their participation, as well as, what is expected from the study overall was provided as well.

**Ethical Concerns Related to Data Collection**

Additional ethical concerns were also involved with the data collection portion of the study. These concerns included participants' refusal to participate or withdrawing from the study prior to completion of interview, participants may become defensive due

to the sensitive nature of the study, disclosure of personal information or sensitive material pertaining to the business, individuals under the age of 18 taking part in the study, attempts by participants to provide information of a personal nature not related to the study, personal relationships developing between participants and the researcher, participants purposely providing inaccurate information as a result of being embarrassed, failing to provide completely truthful answers for fear that they could be penalized, or release of confidential information provided by the participant without consent. To address these concerns, I took proper precautions to ensure that the participant remains comfortable throughout the study and that all information provided was kept confidential. One step that was taken was that I thoroughly explained the parameters of the study to the participant, so that said participant was aware of what was expected of him/her throughout the study. I also provided the confidentiality agreement to each participant and explained that all information provided will be kept confidential. This provided the participants with a sense of security when disclosing information related to their hiring process. Also, it allowed each participant to feel comfortable when providing such information knowing that their responses would not be revealed to anyone other than those individuals described in the participation packets. Lastly, each participant was informed of the rights they have during the study and the process by which they can withdraw from the study if they so choose. They were advised as to what information would be kept and how that information would remain confidential, even after they have withdrawn.

### **Withdrawal from Study**

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010), a participant may withdraw from a study at any time without penalty. Also, I may also decide to remove the participant from the study (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2010). If a participant withdrew or was removed from the study, I would be entitled to maintain any data collected during the participant's participation as long as such data and analysis were in the approved IRB application (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2010). A withdrawal form would be filled out by the participant if they chose to withdraw from the study, as well as, I would fill out a form if their participation is terminated.

### **Treatment of Data**

It was not possible to collect the data in this study anonymously. My consent procedures required one or more identifiers to be shared with me. However, I confirmed that I would provide complete confidentiality. I would need to retain a link between study code numbers and direct identifiers after the data collection was complete to identify participants who indicate that they want their data withdrawn. I approached the businesses to see if they want to participate in the study. To protect the individual's privacy in the process, adherence to the confidentiality agreement will protect their privacy.

### **Protections for Confidential Data**

Data will be obtained through paper and audio formats. The raw data were stored in secure file storage for at least 5 years. Security provisions include password protected computers and accounts. Fireproof file storage safe with a lock and key, or combination lock, was used to secure paper-formatted data. After the minimum requirement of 5 years, the data will be shredded in front of a witness. At this time, the audio data will be deleted, and the device in which it is stored will be physically destroyed.

### **Sociopolitical and Economic Considerations**

Considerations include compensation for participation, duration, time, and location of the study. There was no compensation for participating in this study. The expected duration of the study was two sessions over the course of 4 weeks for approximately 30 minutes per session. The time of the interviews was up to the discretion of the participant to either be before, during, or after work hours. Location of the interviews also needs to be considered. Interviews were conducted at the place of business in a private room. Participants were provided this information when invited to participate in the research study.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented how this study was to be conducted, specifically the multiple case study method. Previous research utilized case study methodology to study the experiences of the employee with a disability. In such instances, useful information was discovered. Similarly, case study methodology was utilized to obtain information

regarding the rationale for decisions made by employers regarding the hiring or not hiring of individuals with an AD. Although procedures were clearly and concisely outlined, there remained a risk that unanticipated events may occur related to the methodology. Information was obtained that addressed the phenomenon under study through the use of semi-structured interviews, as well as questionnaires. Results were interpreted using coding analysis methods, as well as, through the lens of the TPB. The results of the study were expected to answer the research questions; however, it is recommended that future research focus on replicating the study in other industries and with different disabilities.

The multiple case study method that was used for this study provided me with information from a wide-range of different settings relating to the phenomenon. By using the multiple case study approach, the data received were not be limited to just one type of setting, but provided data from multiple settings, with differing needs from personnel and differing sizes and types of businesses, which can provide data that is useful to a varying array of businesses upon completion of the study. To conduct these case studies, I relied on one-on-one, face-to-face interviews, which were semistructured, permitting the participants to answer questions in an open-ended fashion. This format also permitted me to adjust questions, or ask follow-up questions, depending on how the initial interview questions were answered. Such a format allowed for the interview to be conducted in a free-flowing, conversational manner. Thus, allowing the participant to feel more at ease in disclosing information that is sought by the study. Once the data had been collected, then the data analysis began. During this process, the data were coded and organized into



different categories based on the type of information that was received. To do this, the database, Nvivo, was used, as well as, other methods. This information will provide the basis for which the research questions are answered, and the phenomenon is explained. Chapter 4 will go into detail about the setting of the study and the demographics of the participants. It will also describe how the data were collected, analyzed, and will include a report of the findings.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the decision-making process that small business owners in New Jersey go through when reaching their decision to hire or not hire individuals with AD. This study was limited to the geographical location of a selected county due to the amount of cases that would be required. Limiting the location to 1 selected county mitigated the cost of travel and time that would be required to travel to each case location. With over 30,000 reported employer establishments, The selected county provided access to the sample that would provide sufficient data necessary to answer the research questions posed by this study. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

I believed that developing an understanding relative to the employer's experiences and interactions with potential employees with AD would assist in assessing if those experiences relate to their thought process when deciding to hire or not hire those individuals. As such, I used a multiple case study approach in this study to address the gap in research mentioned in the previous chapters. My intent with this study was to describe this phenomenon and assess what has led to the minimal hiring of individuals with AD, leading to an understanding of why the phenomenon occurs. Ultimately, I hoped to uncover methods by which this phenomenon could be mitigated. I came to discover that this phenomenon is not caused due to a reluctance to hire individuals with AD. The results of this study showed that a majority of employers are willing to hire

individuals with AD if they are able to perform the required tasks. In conducting this study, I answered the following research questions and achieved an understanding of the phenomenon:

1. Why do owners of small businesses in New Jersey decide to hire or not hire an individual with AD?
2. How do owners of small businesses in New Jersey describe their rationale when making such decisions?

In this chapter, I will discuss all the steps taken in conducting this study. A description of the participants and how they were selected will be provided. I will also discuss how the data were collected and then analyzed as well as the codes used for the analysis. Next, I will discuss the trustworthiness of the data and how it was obtained. A comparison will be shown between the data collected and the evidence of trustworthiness through the steps previously identified in Chapter 3. Following this discussion, I will provide the results of the study from both the interviews and the questionnaires and explain how the codes were used to answer the research questions of this study. Lastly, a summary of the answers to the research questions will be provided.

### **Setting**

Each interview took place at the participant's place of business during normal business hours. The interviewee was the individual in the business that had the authority to make hiring decisions. While some of the participants did indicate that they had experienced some turnover, it was not recent and did not involve, in many cases, the

employee with an AD. None of the participants indicated having experienced any recent financial issues that required them to reduce staff. No participant indicated that they had any conditions or situations that had occurred that would influence their responses to the questions posed in this study. In fact, all participants indicated that their businesses were running at a normal capacity.

### **Demographics**

All participants, both interview and questionnaire, were located in the selected county in New Jersey. The businesses of interview participants had less than 99 employees and were in the consumer goods industry. All interview participants had prior experience with interviewing or hiring an individual with an AD (see Appendix A). Questionnaires were sent out to any business owner that was screened and did not meet the criteria for an interview (see Appendix B). This included those who had a business that was not in the consumer goods industry, more than 99 employees, or never had experience interviewing or hiring an individual with an AD. The data obtained from both the interviews and the questionnaires provided the basis for the results of this study and my recommendations concerning the topic of this study.

### **Data Collection**

I made 357 screening calls to potential participants. Sixteen business owners participated in the interview data collection portion of the study. Over 100 questionnaires were mailed to those who did not qualify for the interview portion of the study, and 22

questionnaires were completed and returned. Using these interviews and questionnaires, I obtained the raw data to develop themes and codes for this study (see Appendicies O-R).

I conducted face-to-face interviews with those who qualified and consented to participate in the study. Each participant was assigned an identification code to conceal their identity. Interviews took place at the participant's place of business. These interview sessions ranged in duration from 9 minutes and 28 seconds to 28 minutes and 53 seconds. After all interviews were completed, a follow-up session took place to review the transcripts of the interview with the participant. None of the participants reported any discrepancies or dissatisfaction with the interview transcripts.

I sent questionnaires to those who did not qualify for the interview portion of the study. Each questionnaire was assigned a business code prior to mailing so I could track who already received it and which participants completed it. The questionnaires were mailed to the place of business, with attention to the business owner's name; or if that information was unavailable, the questionnaire was addressed *Attn: Business Owner*. Questionnaires were mailed as early as June 18, 2018 and the final questionnaire was received back October 2, 2018. It is unknown how long the questionnaires took to fill out.

I audio-recorded the interviews with the participant's consent. I took any additional notes on the interview protocol sheet from which I asked the questions. Any notes were noted on the side of the interview transcript. Each participant received a copy of the consent form and the interview transcript. I provided them with the transcript of the

interview within 2 weeks of completion via e-mail for their review prior to the follow-up meeting.

Questionnaire data were handwritten by the participant on the questionnaire. The questionnaires were returned to me, at no cost to the participant, in a prepaid envelope. My post office box return address was already filled out on the envelope. I had put a brightly-colored, post-it note with instructions near the return address stating, “DO NOT FILL OUT RETURN ADDRESS TO ENSURE CONFIDENTIALITY.” I checked the post office box on a biweekly basis.

### **Data Analysis**

The interview transcripts and completed questionnaires served as the raw data for the coding process. I used Nvivo, a coding software program, to assist in organizing the data. Microsoft Word versions of the interview transcripts were imported into the program along with PDF versions of the questionnaires. I completed attribute coding at the start of the data set, which contained descriptive information about participants. These descriptive data consisted of setting, participant characteristics, data format (i.e., interview or questionnaire), and time frame. During the first cycle of coding, there were preliminary codes given to each portion of the raw data. These codes were created as top level nodes in the Nvivo software. I linked raw data to these preliminary Nvivo codes since they contained actual quotes from the data. From these codes, the data were sorted into categories and subcategories, where my second cycle of coding took place.

At this time, I linked certain codes to the research questions, which I generated new top level nodes for and called them RQ 1 Interview, RQ 2 Interview, RQ 1 Questionnaire, and RQ 2 Questionnaire. The main codes that were developed for RQ 1 Interview included the following: deter from hire, employee reaction to hire, feel the need to hire AD because right thing to do, explanation given when have not hired candidate with AD, incentives for hiring, preferred disabilities, employee status, interview/application topics, and motivates for interview. For RQ 1 Questionnaire, another main code was developed, job application questions. I then determined which codes would correspond to RQ 2 Interview and RQ 2 Questionnaire. The main codes that developed for RQ 2 Interview were as follows: choose between two or three candidates, experience with accommodations, difficulty in providing accommodations, promotions are given to those who have, and protocol/process when hiring. The codes developed for RQ 2 Questionnaires were choice between equally-qualified candidates, would not pick the AD candidate, and would pick the AD candidate.

Once the codes were developed for each research question, I then sorted the data into categories for each code. For RQ 1 Interview, the categories that were attributed to the code, deter from hire, included the following: lack of availability, lack of experience, inability to perform job duties, and lack of interest/negative attitude. The category developed for employee reaction to hire was positive. As for the code, feel the need to Hire AD because right thing to do, I found that the data could be sorted into the category of no. With regards to the code, explanation given when have not hired candidate with

AD, I found that the only category that developed was honest and explain it is not a good fit due to inability to fulfill job duties. The incentives for hiring code developed multiple categories, which included the following: not aware of any incentives, internal/emotional incentive, aware but not utilizing, and performance history of such hires. When sorting the data that related to the main code, preferred disabilities, the only category that emerged was that physical was the most reported preferred disability. The employee status code developed numerous categories which included the following: 31 employees with disabilities are still employed, seven without AD were terminated due to their disability, zero with AD were terminated due to their disability, nine left or resigned without AD, and eight left or resigned with AD. The data for the codes, interview/application topics and motivates for interview, developed multiple categories for each. For interview/application topics, the categories that were developed were experience, employment history, availability, education/training, and skills. As for motivates for interview, the following categories were developed: background info, availability, experience, skills, and abilities.

The data obtained through the completed questionnaires that corresponded to Research Question 1 was more limited than the data for the interviews. Unlike the interviews, the data for the questionnaires revealed only one main code from which categories could be developed. Therefore, the number of categories was much less for the questionnaires under Research Question 1 than for the data for the interviews. These categories included the following: experience, questions relative to the job being applied



for, and skills. More than half of the questionnaire participants fit into these three categories.

I then sorted the data that was used to obtain the main codes for RQ 2 into categories for both the interview data and the questionnaire data. For each main code, different sets of categories were developed. For the main code, choose between two or three candidates, the following categories were found: trainability, capabilities, presentation of self, skill set, and dependent on job function. As to experience with accommodations, the categories included, eight reported to have provided accommodations in the past and four reported to have not provided accommodations in the past. When sorting the data for the difficulty in providing accommodations code, I found only one category: seven reported no difficulty in providing accommodations. The categories that developed from the data for the code, promotions are given to those who have, were found to be good performance, good attendance, ability, and experience. Lastly, the category that developed for the main code, protocol/process when hiring was employers that have protocol for any candidate.

As to the categories that were developed for the main codes identified for RQ 2 Questionnaire, it was clear that more were found due to the larger number of main codes for research question 2. Unlike for research question 1, there were three main codes that were developed from the data for the questionnaires. For the main code choice between equally qualified candidates, the following codes were developed: would not pick the AD candidate, would pick the AD candidate. The categories that were developed from the

data for the main code would not pick the AD candidate included: setting not conducive for handicap unable to perform job duties. Finally, the categories that I found when sorting the data for the main code, would pick the AD candidate, were the following: able to perform job duties, if no accommodations are needed.

I looked for themes across the categories, reflected similarities, differences, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and causation (Saldaña, 2009). Once categories were established, I looked to identify themes that emerge from such categories. Analytic memos, linked to the top-level nodes, were maintained and utilized during the coding process in order to document the coding process and my choices for the codes. Memos also assisted me in creating categories, subcategories, and themes from the data (see Appendices C-D).

Discrepant cases that were used in this study provided insight into the rationale that those individuals who have never hired, or are not able to hire, individuals with AD based on the nature of the business and the duties that would be required as an employee of said business. These cases were also in the consumer goods industry but required a level of physical exertion that could not be handled by individuals with AD. These cases were chosen with the knowledge that it would be unlikely that they would be willing or able to hire individuals with AD. I considered these cases in the analysis in order to discover whether their responses would be similar to those participants that have interviewed or employed individuals with AD, and to determine if the main factor for not hiring such individuals is the ability to do the work required. These cases did provide data

that was similar to those participants that have had experience interviewing or hiring individuals with AD.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, I took measures to demonstrate the credibility of this study such as prolonged engagement with the participants, persistent observation, referential adequacy, varied field experience, sampling, reflexivity, triangulation, member checking, peer examination, interview techniques, establishing authority of researcher, and structural coherence (Anney, 2014; Loh, 2013). Credibility was maintained in the study. Engagement with participants was direct, face-to-face, in their place of business. Sampling was done by criteria-based methods, designated specifically for interviews, or questionnaires. Interviews were semi-structured and face-to-face. During the interviews, there was opportunity for expansion on topics that arose during the interviews. There were two methods of data collection utilized: interviews and questionnaires. The two methods were used in order to triangulate data to demonstrate credibility. In order to triangulate the data, I obtained data from two different types of participants for each collection tool, and then that data were analyzed to see if saturation was reached through both methods and if the participants provided the same responses and rationales. For the interviews, participants were screened and those that met all of the participation criteria were invited to partake in the interview portion of the study. These participants needed to have businesses that had 15 or more employees, and less than 99 employees, they were involved in the hiring process

for the business, they were located in the selected county, and they needed to have experience hiring or interviewing an individual with an AD. In order to be selected for the questionnaire, the criteria were similar with exception being that these participants had no experience with interviewing or hiring an individual with an AD. By using these two different methods, I was able to obtain data from two different perspectives: from those with experience dealing with individuals with AD and those with no experience. Thus, ensuring that the data obtained would be triangulated, adding to the credibility of the results.

As described in Chapter 3, transferability, or generalization, is how the findings can be transferred to other contexts, using other participants (Anney, 2014). To achieve this, there were two methods that could be used: giving a thick description and by using purposeful sampling (Anney; Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). Thick descriptions refer to very detailed accounts of narratives, interviews with the participants, the researcher as an instrument, research context, and processes (Mills et al.). A main indicator of transferability is generalizability of the findings (Patton, 2015; Mills et al.). Generalizability is concerned with how the findings are applicable in other settings (Patton; Mills et al.). To show transferability, I used multiple settings for the interviews. Each interview took place at the employer's place of business. Using multiple settings provided results from different context, and from different employment types. In so doing, the findings of this study would be beneficial for different employment types and for different disabilities. For example, the findings of this study would not be limited

solely to the consumer goods industry, but could also be used by businesses within other industries, such as the hospitality industry. Additionally, these findings could be applied to other disabilities, such as cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis.

Taking into consideration what was described in Chapter 3, transferability was ensured while conducting this study. Sampling methods were derived using specific criteria to be eligible for the study. When screening participants, they were only found eligible for interviews if they were located in the selected county, were in the consumer goods industry, had prior experience interviewing or hiring an individual with an AD, and were a small business, having less than 99 employees. The interviews were conducted at each individual business location in the selected county. By utilizing multiple settings, the study will be able to apply to different contexts, employment types, and disabilities (see Patton, 2015; Mills et al., 2010).

Another concern regarding the quality of the results of this study was dependability of the findings. Dependability is related to the stability of the findings over time, researchers, and analysis methods (Anney, 2014). This was demonstrated through an audit trail, triangulation, and member checks (Anney, 2014). In this study, member checks were utilized to demonstrate dependability and credibility. The process of conducting member checks involves the participant clarifying responses to me in regard to the descriptions and interpretations of the information provided (Anney, 2014). These member checks included myself providing my interpretation of the information, obtained from the participants, to the participant for them to be able to clarify (see Birt, Scott,

Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016). A research audit trail was also utilized to demonstrate the dependability and credibility of the data. The process of the research audit trail includes the documentation of the decisions I made throughout the study and why I made these decisions (Birt et al.). For example, I documented why particular individuals were utilized for the interviews, the information from these interviews, and how that information related to the other information collected (Birt et al.).

Dependability of the study was maintained. Member checks were conducted in the form of follow up sessions. Once the interviews were conducted, the participant was provided with a transcript of the interview and a follow-up session was conducted to go over any discrepancies within the transcription. I also maintained a trail of my journey through the selection/screening of participants. I kept this document in a spreadsheet and documented why or why not a participant was selected, with each business that was screened. I documented this for interviews, as well as, questionnaires. I also documented dates transcripts were provided and their follow-up appointments. Triangulation is also a useful way to show dependability of a study. As mentioned above, triangulation was established in this study by use of both interviews and questionnaires to collect data from two differing participants. Through the use of triangulation, the data were shown to be dependable.

As described in Chapter 3, confirmability refers to the extent to which the results of the study can be confirmed by other researchers (Anney, 2014). To demonstrate confirmability, a researcher can use audit trails, reflexive journaling, and triangulation

(Anney, 2014). In this study, confirmability was demonstrated through the above referenced means, specifically reflexive journaling, audit trail and triangulation. Cope (2014) recommends journal writing for the researcher to gain a deeper insight to the problem or issue of study. Also, these journals or logs can serve as additional data to participant interviews (Cope). Journaling gives the writer the ability to engage in reflective practice and learn something from the experience (Cope). I did engage in journaling during the study and then reflected on my practices to see if my beliefs, opinions, and values had any effect on the research process (Anney). Additionally, as mentioned above, an audit trail was conducted regarding the data gathering stage, specifically, the screening portion of the study. Lastly, as previously mentioned above, triangulation of the data was also established. Through these means, confirmability of the data was established.

## **Results**

### **Research Question 1**

**Interviews.** Interview participants were asked what, if anything deters them from hiring or interviewing a potential candidate. The most common responses were lack of experience and inability to perform the job duties. Lack of experience was reflected among four interviewee responses. One participant said, when asked what deters from hiring or interviewing a candidate that “experience level does not match the levels for a prospective hire” (I07). Inconsistent job experience was mentioned by another participant (I14). “No knowledge” (I09) and “they have no experience” (I01) were other mentions of

such deterrents. When inability to perform the job duties was discussed as a deterrent, participant responses included “inability to perform the duty and the role and responsibility that we’re, you know, hiring for” (I07), “if they can’t complete the job 100 percent” (I09), “they couldn’t do it” (I02), and “that they wouldn’t be able to fulfill a job requirement because mostly you have to be here to work” (I13).

Lack of availability was another main deterrent from hiring or interviewing potential candidates. Participants expressed that they would be deterred from inviting candidates in for interviews or hiring if “they’re not available for Sundays at all” (I06), “they say I can’t work on Saturdays, I need to leave early” (I08), and based on “the availability of hours. Too much time off” (I03). A final deterrent was lack of interest in the job and having a negative attitude.

Deterrants to hiring a candidate were also discussed amongst participants. One participant said that they would be deterred to interview or hire if the candidate “didn’t seem to have much of an interest in reading or reviewing books, or dealing with customers directly” (I15). Another responded that they would be deterred if the candidate seemed to have a “negative attitude” (I12) regarding the position.

Participants reported that fellow employee reactions were positive. Responses included statements such as, “They liked him a lot” (I08), “no negative” (I01), “they thought that was great!”(I12), “they love it” (I03), and "they were very responsive" (I16). These responses clearly showed that, for the most part, fellow employees do not tend to view colleagues with AD as a negative part of the business. Fellow employees are willing



to work with individuals with AD and enjoy the experience they've had. Thus, such statements show that employee response is not a factor in the minimal hiring of individuals with AD.

Interview participants were also asked if they hired the ambulatory disabled candidate because they felt it was the right thing to do. Half of the participants expressed that, no, they did not hire due to such feeling. One participant stated "if I felt there was a need for that particular person in my organization then I would hire them" (I01). Another participant reported that they "didn't let the disability play a roll" (I04) when discussing their decision to hire a candidate with an AD. Such responses tend to indicate that an employer is willing to hire an individual with an AD if there is a belief that they can do the work that is required, despite their disability.

Current employee status was discussed during the interviews with participants. It was reported that most of the employees with disabilities are still employed at the business. Those that were disabled that were terminated without an ambulatory were let go because "it was emotionally too stressful for her to work in an office environment and found herself crying in the bathroom upwards of 1 to 2 hours per day during the work day...So she was let go" (I11). Another participant shared that they "...eased him out. But that was more because he couldn't maintain any kind of consistent work schedule" (I02). One participant shared that those employees who left or resigned with an AD did "because of their disability there wasn't much they could do" (I15).

Participants were asked what their explanation was when they have chosen to not hire a candidate with an AD. Most participants reported that they were honest, and explained that it would not be a good fit due to the candidate's inability to fulfill the duties of the specific job applied for. For example, one participant shared that

There were instances where, unfortunately speaking, as much as you qualified for maybe a position that relatively looks like this position, this position requires an extensive amount of manual labor, or certain things that are not feasible if someone has a particular condition. (I07)

When participants were asked if they were aware of incentives for hiring candidates with AD, a majority of them reported that they were not aware of any. Participant I10 revealed having "no clue" (I10) of any incentives given for hiring candidates with AD, while Participant I04 responded "Not that I'm aware of" (I04) when asked if he/she had any knowledge of incentives given for hiring candidates with AD. Additionally, other participants provided similar responses when this question was discussed. Answers included "I'm really not aware" (I02), "I don't think any" (I05). Furthermore, when asked whether they were aware of any incentives for hiring individuals with AD, some participants responded that they had the belief that there should not be any incentives for hiring individuals with AD. Specifically, Participant I09 stated that there were "no incentives for us," and Interview Participant 14 stated "I don't think there should be any different incentives."

Some of the interview participants, however, reported that hiring such candidates

provided an internal and emotional incentive, and elicited a feeling of doing something good, making someone happy, giving opportunity, and provide sense of self-worth. One participant shared this feeling regarding incentives to hire: “You get a good feeling that you’re doing something good. You’re making someone happy. You’re giving someone the opportunity to be employed. That’s more internal stuff” (I08). Another participant mentioned in discussion that “we can put them in a work environment that is friendly, positive, and we would work with them. And there are things that they could do where they would have self-worth” (I12). Lastly, another participant shared that “the incentive mainly is just making us feel better to tell you the truth” (I03). Also stating “They love their job, they are very reliable” (I03), adding to the incentive to hire the candidate.

While some interview participants found internal or emotional incentives, there was indication that participants were aware of other types of incentives that were available. Tax incentives were identified by the participants as being reasons for potentially hiring individuals with AD. However, it was also shared that while being aware of government or tax incentives, participants were not utilizing them. This was evident in the following statements: “we’ve looked into exploring into programs, but right now we don’t work any particular incentives from a company perspective” (I07); “I know the government gives you some type of tax credit” (I08); “most business owners would look at the tax credit” (I16). Tax incentives did not appear to play a major role in the participants’ decision as to whether to hire or not hire an individual with an AD.

When asked, what disabilities were preferred in the workplace, physical was the most commonly reported. Six interview participants indicated that physical or AD were preferable: “Physical.” (I06), “limp or something like that,” (I09); “ambulatory” (I15), “wheelchair bound” (I12), “physical disability” (I14), “physical” (I11). These participants showed that physical disabilities were easier to work with. These participants believed that finding tasks for the physically disabled was much more accomplishable than find work for other disabilities. Additionally, certain participants believed individuals with AD would be able to work in their business if they possessed a skill that would benefit the business. Thus, an ability to walk could be overlooked, and employers were willing to provide accommodations in order to acquire the talent needed for the business.

Motivation to invite a candidate in for an interview stems from four main factors: availability, experience, skills, and abilities. Participants stated they are motivated if the candidate "can work nights and weekends" (I04), is “willing to work on weekends” (I08), their “availability” (I16), and “they want to work a lot of hours” (I03). With regards to experience, participants reported that they are motivated when a candidate has “prior experiences” (I11), has “experience and trainability” (I13), and if they have “experience and how long they’ve had experience” (I01). Four participants stated experience was a main motivating factor when considering whether to invite a candidate in for an interview (I04, I07, I09, I08). Employers are motivated to interview candidates that have a “history of relevant skills” (I02), or if “somebody has mastered a skill. Um, and they had to learn

something new over the course of a year or 2. Has learned some type of a skill set” (I13). In addition, employers tend to invite candidates in for an interview based on their abilities. One employer stated that they would invite a candidate for an interview if they had “good ability to work in groups and work individually” (I11). Another employer stated they would invite them in for an interview if they had “you know the skill, that’s what I’m looking for, the ability to do the job”(I02).

Participants were asked what interview and application questions and/or topics were discussed. It was reported by multiple participants that experience, employment history, education, availability, skills, and background were main topics. One participant reported that “experience is the main thing” (I09). Another shared that they “usually ask them what sort of experience they’ve had before” (I15). Additionally, another participant mentioned:

If that job dealt with customer service. How much time they have after school to work in our store. I ask them what sort of things they like to read. How long they’ve been reading for. What their interest lie in. If they have any artistic experience that’s always very helpful. (I15)

Employment history was another main topic discussed on an application and interview. “Name, address, phone number that they can be contacted at. Social security number, job history, references, hours preferred, Sunday availability” (I06) was shared by one participant when asked what was discussed during the application/interview process. Another participant stated that questions regarding “former employment” (I05) were

always asked. Additionally, availability was stressed by many participants to be an important topic on the application and during interviews. As referenced previously, “Sunday availability” (I06) was important to one participant. It was stated by another participant that “flexibility of time” (I01) was asked on their application. Another participant shared that the following was asked on the application: “Your name, your address, your previous employer. References, salary that you’re looking for, and availability as far as times and days.” (I14)

Scheduling was also identified as an important topic on the application. One participant indicated that they would find a way to provide a schedule that would benefit both the candidate and the business, stating “what works for them for scheduling so that it would be a benefit for both us” (I13). Education/Training was also reported to be a topic of discussion in an interview or on an application. Participants shared that “basic education” (I04), “schooling background” (I05), “education level” (I11), and being “proficient in math”(I04) were important when considering a candidate. In addition, skills were also a focal point of applications and interviews. One participant observed potential candidates to determine their skill set, as evidenced in the following statement: “couple of hours where I watch them work”(I02). Some skills that were shared that one participant looked for were “multitask, communicate with others. Be neat, be clean and keep an open mind” (I16). Background information was also asked, including name, address, phone number, social security number, job history, available hours, age, references, criminal history, and desired salary (I06, I05, I14, I03).

**Questionnaires.** Job application questions were reported to consist of main topics such as experience, questions relative to the job being applied for, and skill sets of the candidates. Experience was a focal point as evidenced by the following quote shared by a participant: “experience related to the type and description of work to be preferred” (Q03). Another participant shared that they ask about the candidate’s “business experience pertaining specifically to the position” (Q28) when discussing experience. The participants demonstrated that they value those candidates who come in looking for a position that have prior experience related to the business. Two participants indicated that experience and skills that would coincide with their particular business would be preferable when considering whether to hire a potential candidate. Participant Q24 stated that preferable skills included the ability to “make flower arrangements, all aspects of business and customer service” (Q24), and Participant Q93 stated that “Previous retail experience. Level of organization skills/attention to detail. Availability during busy months April-June” (Q93) was preferred. Furthermore, education and skills were deemed important by participants with participants stating the following: “education, availability, experience” (Q02); “job experience, ambitions, ability to get to our location in a timely manner” (Q20); “age, driving experience, retail experience, customer service relations experience.” (Q49); “experience, school education, training, skills” (Q13).

Questions relative to the job being applied for are discussed during the interview and on the initial application. Participants shared that they ask questions such as, “Have you done the job you are applying for? What are your strengths and weaknesses. What

computer programs have you worked with? Have you ever worked in a medical office setting before?” (Q46)

Questions also asked included “how many years in the business, have you ever run work, ability to read blueprints, ability to run conduit, have you ever did fire alarm work?”(Q30) Participants want to be sure that the potential candidate understands the position they are applying for and also, like to see how versed they are when discussing such position.

An example of skills that were sought on applications and interviews include “experience, school education, training, skills” (Q13) and “ability to drive and operate equipment” (Q08). Participants also shared that during interviews they are “looking to know background, skills, and desired for future relating to employment” (Q25). Similar to the responses given by the interview participants, employers that responded to the questionnaire viewed experience and training as important factors to discuss during the interview or application process. They are interested in knowing whether a potential employee is capable of handling the work for which they are interviewing. This shows that these participants value these qualities over any deficiencies that could be posed by the candidate’s disability.

## **Research Question 2**

**Interviews.** When choosing between two or three candidates to hire, participants highlighted trainability, capabilities, presentation of self, and skill set as main



determinants. They also mentioned that specific details relevant to the position also were a factor. One participant shared that they would choose

"whoever is trainable. A lot of our job requires multitasking and memory. So, whoever is easier to train and be coached and then be on their own, regardless of their disability, that's most of the time how I make my decision" (I16).

With regard to capabilities it was shared that:

They're to be a production based employee they have to be able to lift at least 50 lbs. They have to have certain health requirements. Those sort of things, you know, those are just basic needs. So those would be somewhat of a I guess discriminating factor from one person to another. (I07)

Another participant shared that they determine their decision by discussing "no no, this person was capable of this, this person is capable of this" (I11) with their business partner.

How the candidate presented themselves was a determining factor in choosing, as well. One participant shared that they narrowed down their choice: By seeing who really wanted the job, and who really was ready to buckle down and give me actually a full day of work that I know they would be committed to growing with the company. (I12)

In addition, physical appearance and how articulate the candidates were contributed to the decision. For one participant, it was reported that "their dress, their facial demeanor, their personality when they speak" (I14) impacted their decision.

Another participant indicated that they "narrowed it down by seeing how they conduct

themselves in interview” (I01) before making a decision as to which candidate to choose. Participant I15 stated that they were “more interested in their ability to deal one on one with customers. How quickly they were picking up tasks. How interested they were in giving recommendations. That would certainly factor more heavily than their ability to move around quickly” (I15).

Skill set, another contributing factor when choosing between two or three candidates, was reported by many participants to be important. One participant said that they “chose him specifically for his talent” (I06). This indicates that regardless of what impairments one may have, if the talent was demonstrated, employers are open to hiring. This is further evidenced by another statement indicating that choosing between two candidates was based on “the skill set that they have” (I13). It was clear that skill played a major role in an employer’s decision to hire or not hire an individual with an AD.

It was also mentioned that the decision was also made based on the position being considered for. Employers indicated a willingness to hire individuals with AD if they had a position that could be filled by such an individual. One employer went as far as to indicate that when an employee was hired for such a position, they were assets to the business. It was stated that “hiring of a disability there’s only certain job functions we’ll look at for hiring those people, and truthfully they have all worked out very very well” (I03). Additionally, one participant stated that their decision was based on whether a suitable position was available, stating “is dependent upon the position” (I07).

Fifty percent of participants reported to have experience with providing accommodations. Such accommodations included, providing a chair in the front of the store, having a ramp to access the building, providing frequent breaks, limiting strenuous work, and providing transportation. One participant stated that they would “put up a chair up front” (I05) for an employee who could not spend much time on their feet. Another participant indicated they “have a ramp on the side” (I05) to assist individuals with AD enter the premises. When discussing what other accommodations could be provided for individuals with AD, one participant stated that they “had to give him more breaks and not give him strenuous work” (I08). Whereas another indicated that they “supply somebody else that can move heavy boxes so they don’t have to do it” (I14). In addition to these examples, one participant provided information as to how they dealt with an employee who had an MS diagnosis, whose mobility continued to deteriorate. This participant stated, “once again it was the girl that had gotten an MS diagnosis. And once she had started trouble driving, I brought her in to work within the company and not on the road anymore”(I13). Furthermore, one participant shared that the premises themselves would be accessible by anyone with a disability, stating “Everything in the shop is all ADA compliant” (I11). When it came to discussing whether participants could find employment for a candidate with an AD, it seemed that participants were willing to find work for those individuals if they were willing to perform the tasks required. One participant highlighted this sentiment by stating “walking impairments is limited in manufacturing job responsibilities. Those can be worked around” (I07).

When discussing the difficulty in providing accommodations, participants reported little to no difficulty. During the interviews, participants were not resistant to providing accommodations when needed. This is evident in the statement made by Participant I03, “just once we have a conversation about it then it’s all good. I need people to just be upfront. Just tell me what you need and we can work around it.” Additionally, Participant I03 further indicated that there would be no difficulty accommodating an individual with an AD due to the fact that the building was accessible, stating “little difficulty because most of the building is accessible from a wheelchair.” Other participants also provided that there would be no difficulty in providing accommodations: “It wasn’t difficult” (I08), “there would be no difficulty” (I16), “It wasn’t difficult at all” (I13).

Promotions were given to those employees who had good performance, good attendance, ability to do the job, and experience. A participant shared that they would give a promotion after “seeing how they worked in the workforce, they got along with the operations guy, how interacted with the customers” (I01). Another shared that the employee was “promoted based completely on performance” (I13). According to one participant, promotions were reported to be based on “attendance, abilities, work ethic” (I04). Two participants shared that promotions are based solely on experience, as evidenced in the following statements: “based purely upon experience” (I11); “based on age and experience” (I15).

Many participants had a protocol or process when hiring a candidate for employment. None of the participants reported to have a different protocol or process when hiring a candidate with an AD. One participant shared that their process consisted of:

Reviewing resumes, reviewing just general information that we learn about the people that are applying for the position. Whether it's the initial interview or during the main interview. We determine collectively if that person would be a good fit based upon their accolades and their prior experience. (I11)

Another participant shared that

We qualify everyone on paper. Then, after we qualify everyone on paper we do phone interviews. That's probably usually a first element of everything. After we qualify employees by phone, we call, we first interview the most qualified applicants. Then we usually limit it down to two or three potential applicants. (I07)

A commonality among shared protocols and processes was checking references and background, as evidenced in this statement: "look at their background, and I also make sure that I call and do a background check" (I12). Additionally, some participants hold a trial period for new hires where they work and then are reviewed after a period of time. Participant I13 stated that the trial period required the employment candidate:

to come in to work for a period of 90 days. And then review in 90 days to see if everything is working out for us and the person that is here. I believe strongly in a

90 day review after employment starts.

Other participants also shared that they required some sort of training or probationary period: “3 month probationary period of training”(I16); “I do a background check. Or if they would have to give me three references, then I would check. But I do tell them they have a 2 to 3 week evaluation process after that too.” (I08); “just the standard paperwork and all that kind of stuff, but as far as other stuff it would just be training.” (I09);

...interview process. Then after that they go through an orientation. Then after the orientation they go through a computer based training. Then after the computer based training of a day or so then they do the training with another individual (I03).

**Questionnaires.** Most questionnaire participants have had no experience hiring or interviewing a candidate with an AD. Three of the participants reported they did have employees with an AD. When asked why they were hired, one participant shared that “the person was hired because they were the best candidate for the job” (Q05). Although not all participants had experience with hiring or interviewing a candidate with an AD, there were candidates that have had experience hiring or interviewing an individual with a different type of disability, and having a positive experience. Participant Q75 reported that the disabled employees who were visually impaired were always good workers, stating “In our business many piano tuners are visually impaired. They have always been good workers, talented tuners, and very independent” (Q75).

When asked how participants would choose between equally qualified candidates, more than half reported that they would pick the candidate with the AD. One shared that “If equal I would hire the disabled. Think that they would work harder” (Q10). Another participant shared that “a person with disabilities would be welcome to join and as a leader and trainer I would be happy to train them” (Q62). Experience with individuals with disabilities in the past may influence the employer’s choice when hiring, as expressed by one questionnaire participant,

Besides the ADA I would hire the person with the disability. I have been involved with my friend’s brother and sister for many years both have suffered severely from muscular dystrophy. Both have had full-time positions for many years in corporation and state agencies (Q38).

One participant seemed on the fence about which candidate they would choose, and elaborated with the following statement:

Assuming both are equally qualified and there are no other objective or subjective criteria, then I would hire the one with no disabilities. This would be to allow most flexibility with future responsibilities. However differences in attitude drive, and work ethic are very important. If the candidate with the AD had more energy, drive, and intangible advantages, I would hire them. (Q13)

Participants shared that they would choose the candidate with an AD if they were able to perform the job duties, if no accommodations are needed, and if they are the best candidate for the job. It was shared by a participant that “In our business an AD is not a

disadvantage, based that they are qualified in the first place” (Q25). Another participant shared that they may hire both candidates and not choose one over the other. They reported that:

There are less physical tasks that are perfectly doable by an individual with an AD if both candidates were of equal qualifications I would attempt to utilize both in different departments which require different types of labor both physical and not physical. (Q93)

Another participant shared the same sentiment, “there are a range of tasks that we hire for and we may be able to accommodate both candidates”(Q93). In addition, basing decisions on criteria other than being ambulatory or not was mentioned by another participant in the following statement:

My decision would be based on other criteria personally. Fitness level (other than ambulatory status) and ability to maneuver around my office some of the spaces are tight and may be difficult to handle. Transportation to and from office and ability to accommodate office hours. (Q46)

Many participants shared that they would hire the candidate with the AD if there were no accommodations needed. One participant shared that

I currently rent office space with no ADA compliant bathroom facilities and building alterations are not possible. If the individual could prove this would not be an obstacle for them personally or in performing their day to day duties, Would be inclined to hire the individual with the handicap. (Q28)



Participants were open to choosing the candidate with an AD, however, their decision would be impacted by the need for accommodations. One participant reported that if they had a “large office building with easy access and I would have had no problem hiring a disabled person” (Q04). It was also shared that “If the ambulatory candidate can equally perform job duties, and office accommodations would not have to be compromised I would hire that person” (Q03).

If the candidate with an AD is the best candidate, participants reported that they would hire them. Participant Q25 stated, “If both candidates are truly equal you must go with intuition, who wants the job more, and who fits in best. A disability as it has been defined would not deter me from hiring.” Additionally, Participant Q29 indicated that “I would hire the best candidate.” Lastly, adding to the belief employers would hire a candidate with an AD if they were the best candidate, Participant Q30 stated that

it would depend on the disability. if I were to hire an estimator or an office position and both people were equally qualified I would hire the person that was most personable while at the same time the one I feel would be the best fit. (Q30)

Those participants that would not choose the candidate with the AD expressed concerns that would influence their decision. These concerns included setting not being accessible for handicapped individuals, and lack of ability to perform job duties. The workplace setting lacking accessibility for those who have a handicap posed as a recurring concern for participants, with one stating “Our retail location is not set up to

accommodate a handicapped individual” (Q01). This is further evidenced in the following statement made by a participant:

It is my believe that a person with an AD might not be able to work with ease on our building floor or in our production department staircases narrowed working spaces frequent running from the front of the store to the back may prove prohibited for said individual we are not set up for ADA accessibility. (Q93)

One participant's responses almost seemed to reflect frustration that they would not be able to hire a candidate with an AD due to the business set up:

Based on my specific store layout and limitations I would be forced to hire the ambulatory candidate. The space behind the cash desk precludes anyone who cannot walk and stand to use the P.O.S. Also merchandise is shelved and hung from floor to ceiling and the person would have to be able to reach at the 6-7 ft. level and down to the floor. Also our wrap desk at the rest of the store is counter height and the ribbons are hung above. The stock area is an adjoining basement down a steep flight of stairs. (Q02)

Safety was expressed as a concern with regard to the lack of accommodations in the work environment. A participant shared that:

We work in an environment that includes wastes on the floor we are constantly sweeping- use sharp utensils and heavy buckets of water- If someone with a disability would not be in harm's way, there would be no reason not the hire them- safety first. (Q24)

With regard to the candidate with an AD being unable to perform the job duties, participants expressed that would be a deterrent when choosing whom to hire. One participant shared that:

Because of the duties required of our employees such as making deliveries carrying out packages for customers stocking shelves bringing up merchandise from the basement etc. it is unlikely that an ambulatory disabled person would be qualified for a job here. (Q49)

This feeling is further expressed in the following statement made by a participant

They are not equally qualified for the job. The job requires driving a forklift; moving 1000 lb. pallets using a pallet jack; packing, lifting and moving cartons to new locations, operating equipment that requires long standing and moving around the machine. (Q20)

### **Discrepant Cases**

Discrepant cases were also sought during the course of this study in order to ensure that I did not select participants solely because they would provide information deemed amenable to establishing that employers would be willing to employ individuals with AD. I sought three cases knowing it would be unlikely that these establishments would hire individuals with AD due to the nature of the business and what would possibly be required of an employee. The belief was that these businesses would not hire individuals with AD because these individuals would not be able to perform the duties required. This belief was justified when speaking to these businesses. Each business

indicated that they would not hire or interview an individual with an AD because such individuals would not be able to perform the tasks required of the business because it would involve a level of physicality that an individual with a walking disability would not be able to accomplish. One business indicated that an employee would be required to carry heavy packages and stock shelves, as well as, maneuver throughout the building. Another employer indicated that, similarly, a position within their business required lifting and carrying heavy packages which could not be done by an individual with an AD. And lastly, the final business indicated that an employee would be required to lift at least 100 lbs which is something an individual with an AD could not do.

Despite these businesses indicating that they did not have positions for individuals with AD, there was a common element among them. These employers did indicate that they had nothing against hiring individuals with AD and, in fact, would be willing to hire them if they had positions available that would allow this individual to contribute and be an asset to the business. However, since their business did not provide such positions, they could not hire individuals with AD. Although I was aware that these businesses would most likely not be willing to hire or interview an individual with an AD due to the nature of the business, the discrepant cases provided similar data as those businesses that did have prior experience with individuals with AD or those participants from the questionnaires that indicated they would hire an individual with an AD mentioned above. That similarity was that so long as the individual could perform the task required by the job, these businesses would be willing to hire them. With the discrepant cases,

individuals with AD would not be able to perform the tasks of the job, and therefore would not be eligible for employment.

### **Summary**

At the onset of the study, the data were obtained using the methods described above. After this aspect was completed, codes were created and used for the analysis of the data. Once these codes were created, I was able to see the answers to both research questions. When it came to understanding why an employer decides to hire or not hire an individual with an AD and how they describe their rationale for such a decision, it was clear that an overarching theme was present. That theme was that employers are willing to hire individuals with AD so long as they are able to perform the tasks required for the position they are seeking.

When answering Research Question 1, the responses provided by the participants showed that experience, availability, and ability to do the work was a main factor in their decision to hire or not hire an individual with an AD. The participants showed that they would be willing to hire individuals with AD so long as the tasks for which they were hired could be accomplished. Employers were willing to provide accommodations to these individuals if needed, and indicated a willingness to hire individuals with AD simply because it was the right thing to do and it provided a sense of emotional satisfaction to the employer. Additionally, employers that had experience with individuals with AD indicated that when they were employed by their business, they turned out to be incredible workers who were accepted by other employees in the

business. These responses provided the basis for why owners decide to hire or not hire individuals with AD. Even those businesses that were opposed to hiring individuals with AD made it clear that the sole reason for such a decision was the fact that said individuals could not physically perform the tasks that were required, or the business was not suited to handle the needs of individuals with such disabilities. Discrepant cases that were analyzed as part of this study were chosen because it was believed that they would not hire individuals with AD due to the nature of the business or the design of the facilities. It was believed that such locations would not allow individuals with AD to complete the tasks required. This was confirmed by these businesses, when they indicated they would not be able to hire such individuals due to the fact that physicality was required to perform the tasks that an individual with AD could not provide. Such data only strengthened the position that employers are willing to hire individuals with AD if they can do the required work. Some businesses were better suited to handle employing these individuals. Other businesses were willing to find a way to employ them. Ultimately, it was clear that employers were not opposed to hiring individuals with AD if it was shown that they could do the work that was required.

In answering Research Question 1, it was clear that employers would decide to hire or not hire individuals with AD based on their belief that the employee could handle the work the business required. Most participants indicated that those employees with AD that were hired proved to be dedicated, hard workers. As indicated, these employees tended to take more pride in their work. Based on the responses provided by the

participants, it was clear that employers would decide to hire or not hire these individuals so long as their disability did not prevent them from doing the job that was required, and they believed these individuals would be good workers.

Research Question 2 intended to identify and describe the rationale used by employers when making their decision on whether to hire an individual with an AD. Based on their responses, it was clear that their prior experience played a significant role in their decision on whether to hire or not hire an individual with an AD. The majority of the participants indicated a positive experience with such individuals. Some participants indicated that employees with AD were hard workers and took much pride in the work they did. This left a positive impression with the participants. When discussing the criteria considered when promoting individuals within the business, participants indicated that the disability played no role in their decision. Rather the decision was based on the merits of the employee, and at times, the experience of the employee. A majority of the participants indicated that accommodations wouldn't be an issue and played no part in their decision to hire an individual with an AD. In addressing Research Question 2, you could see that a positive prior experience with individuals with an AD played a major part in whether they would decide to hire an individual with an AD.

In addition to interviews, questionnaires were sent to participants who did not fit the criteria needed to participate in an interview. The main criteria that a majority of the questionnaire participants lacked was prior experience hiring or interviewing and individual with an AD. As such, these participants were asked to answer a hypothetical

question regarding whether if all things considered were equal, would they hire an individual with an AD over an individual with no such disability? Responses to this questionnaire provided insight into the thought process of individuals from a class different from those in the interview portion of the study. Specifically, it provided insight into how employers, who have had no experience with individuals with AD, would handle a situation in which they were interviewing or deciding to hire an individual with said disability. This provided the study with data triangulation. I was able to obtain the viewpoints of different employer types and compare them to see if there was any major difference in their responses. Surprisingly, participants in the questionnaire portion of the study did not think too differently from participants in the interview portion of the study. Questionnaire participants believed that if the employee had the requisite skill and experience for the position, then, all things being equal, they would hire the individual with an AD. Similar to the responses provided by the interview participants, the questionnaire participants indicated that they would hire individuals with AD if they could do the job they were being hired for. Additionally, these participants indicated that if all things were equal between an employee with an AD and an employee without a disability then they would hire the employee with an AD because of the belief that those individuals would work harder. However, there were some participants who indicated they would not hire individuals with AD.

These participants indicated that some reasons for not hiring individuals with ambulatory included work not being conducive to the disability; the building could not



accommodate an individual with an AD; and flexibility of assigning tasks to individuals that did not have a disability. Participants believed that these limitations would not allow individuals with AD to perform the tasks for which they were hired. They also believed that their business did not have a position where they could be of use. Despite the negative inference from these responses, it was clear that if they believed the individual with the AD could perform the job required then they would not have an issue hiring said individual. As such, it was shown through the questionnaires, as well, that a main determining factor is whether the individual can do the job. If the individual with an AD was able to handle the required work, then employers would not be opposed to hiring them.

The results, as presented above, clearly indicate a willingness to hire individuals with AD if such an employee can perform the required duties of employment. Thus, these findings must be analyzed in order to discover how this phenomenon can be reversed, and increase the number of employed individuals that have AD. With these findings, this study will be able to provide guidance to employers on what to expect when hiring or interviewing an individual with an AD. It will also provide some guidance to potential employees with said disabilities to make them more appealing to prospective employers. The recommendations and future implications discussed in the following chapter can be used a guide to employers and employees, alike, on what can be done to increase the employment of individuals with AD.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

At the onset of this study, I indicated that the purpose was to gain an understanding of the decision-making process small business owners in a selected county in N.J. go through when deciding whether to hire an individual with an AD. My hope with this study was to ultimately develop an understanding of the employers' rationale relative to their experiences and interactions with employees that have AD. I believed that by gaining this understanding, the information could assist in assessing whether those experiences played a role in the employer's thought process when deciding whether to hire those individuals. In order to obtain this understanding, I used a multiple case study approach. I hoped to uncover what caused the phenomenon of the minimal hiring of individuals with AD and, ultimately, ways to mitigate its occurrence.

Using the case study method, I conducted interviews with 16 participants and reviewed the 22 questionnaires that were returned, comparing the rationales given by the participants of each to see if patterns were formed. The multiple case study approach allowed me to gather information from multiple employers in different settings, providing a different perspective on the same topic and giving me a greater understanding of this phenomenon in the real-world context. Each interview was conducted at the participant's place of business, which allowed me to employ an embedded approach. Using the embedded approach allowed me to consider additional factors during the interviews, such as business size, business type, skills required, etc. I believed that the results of this study

would reveal the factors employers considered when deciding whether to hire an individual with an AD and how these factors contributed to the minimal hiring of these individuals. However, the results of this study showed completely different results than I anticipated.

Ultimately, the findings of this study revealed that employers are willing to hire individuals with AD if they are capable of performing the tasks required by the position for which they are applying. Employers indicated that employees with AD would not be treated differently than those employees without disabilities and would be willing to provide the necessary accommodations required to assist these individuals with performing their duties. The participants indicated that if they saw the employee with an AD as an asset to their business, then they would do whatever was necessary to make them comfortable at their jobs. Participants stated that other employees had positive attitudes towards the hiring of individuals with disabilities and that such employees took great pride in their work and were deemed very capable workers. Based on this study, it was clear that an employer's willingness to hire was not a major factor in the cause of this phenomenon; therefore, it must be assumed that there is another factor which must be understood if this phenomenon is to be mitigated.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

In Chapter 2, I focused on an extensive review of existing literature prior to conducting this study. When interpreting the findings of the study, I applied them to areas of the literature review. Findings of the study either confirmed, disconfirmed, or extended

major areas of the literature review. These major highlights include workplace accommodations, employment barriers, attitudinal factors to employment, intentions and subjective norms, VR services, employment across disability types, and policy. Each participant, in responding to the questions presented to them, provided an answer that touched upon these major highlights.

### **Interpretation and the Literature Review**

The prior studies that I reviewed in Chapter 2 included studies that were conducted to determine whether there were factors that affected the employment of individuals with disabilities. Previous studies included factors such as workplace accommodations, employment barriers, attitudinal factors and employment, intention and subjective norms, and VR services. Additionally, I focused on the employment of individuals across different disabilities with a focus on MS and CP in the literature review. Lastly, in Chapter 2, I discussed the policy that was currently in place for individuals who are seeking employment that have disabilities and how those policies have assisted those individuals. Through these studies, I discovered how such factors affected the hiring of individuals with disabilities.

The data obtained in this study confirmed some studies that I reviewed in in Chapter 2, disconfirmed some studies, and extended others. Specifically, when it came to the factors that affected an employer's decision to hire an individual with a disability, a majority of the cases in my study confirmed these studies. For example, regarding workplace accommodations, a majority of the responses confirmed that employers would

be willing to provide accommodations for their employers in order to help them better perform the tasks for which they were hired (Hasim & Wok, 2013; Telwatte et al., 2017; Schur et al., 2014; Miller et. al., 2014)). Participants in this study showed that if a candidate for employment possessed the skills required to complete the task for which they were hired or showed that they possessed skills that would make them an asset to the business, then the small business owner would find ways to assist them maneuver in the business or perform the work required. As to employment barriers, the study I conducted showed that employees with AD faced barriers within the businesses, but employers would be willing to modify the job duties and provide accommodations. Those who participated confirmed that having a positive attitude towards individuals with AD would have a positive effect on whether they would consider hiring such individuals in the future. In considering all the responses provided by the participants, it was clear to see that positive attitudes towards individuals with AD would lead to the hiring of these individuals and the providing of necessary accommodations. While not all the responses from the participants confirmed the findings of prior studies, it appears that a majority of the responses did confirm the positive results with regards to hiring individuals with disabilities within the prior studies.

### **Interpretation and Theoretical Framework**

The TPB can be utilized to make predictions and provide explanations as to why an individual may engage in a behavior (Cornally, 2014). The four components of the TPB include attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral

intention (Cornally). According to Cornally, a person's behavior is influenced by their attitudes, and attitudes are influenced by subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Cornally). In this study, I applied the TPB to provide an explanation for and understanding of the reasoning behind an employer's decision to hire or not hire an individual with an AD. In addition, the TPB was used in this study to gain an understanding as to the reasoning used by employers to determine whether to provide or not provide the necessary accommodations for individuals with AD.

Based on the responses I obtained from the participants in my study, it appears that the data aligns with the TPB. While not all responses from every participant were the same, the majority of the participants indicated having an interest in hiring individuals with AD so long as they were capable of carrying out the job requirements. Employers indicated they would even provide the necessary accommodations, if they were required to, to assist employees with AD (I05, I08, I12, I03, I02, I14, I13, I11, & I07). Additionally, the participants showed a positive emotional response to hiring individuals with AD (I08, I12, & I03). The subjective norms that were identified in this study correlated with the idea that doing the right thing was all that was needed in order to hire individuals with AD. This subjective norm went towards the idea participants had that employers would routinely not hire such individuals unless they received some incentive to do so, but a sense of moral goodness would be enough incentive to hire such individuals. Participants also believed that hiring such individuals was based on their ability to perform the duties required and that the disability played no role in their

decision to hire or not hire such individuals. This was a similar belief that was held when it came to giving promotions within the business. The participants discussed that such promotions would be merit based and would not take into consideration whether someone was disabled or not. Those who participated also stated that individuals with AD proved to be exemplary workers who took great pride in their job. Such responses indicated that the participants believed their control over hiring such individuals was made easier because the employees made themselves good employees and the employers' decision was based on merit.

Taking all the above factors for the TPB together, it could be said that the participants in this study would have a stronger intention to hire individuals with AD. In fact, a majority of the participants indicated that such employees worked well for their businesses and proved to be great additions to their staff. These responses showed that if given the opportunity to do so, these participants would have a strong intention to hire individuals with AD. As such, it is clear that the scope of this study would fall into the main focus of the TPB: providing a prediction and explanation as to why a behavior would occur. Attitudes exhibited by the participants as to hiring individuals with AD, the subjective norms exhibited by this study, and the perceived behavioral control lead to the prediction that employers of small businesses within the consumer goods industry would have a stronger intention of hiring individuals with AD. Therefore, the findings of this study aligned with how the TPB is used to interpret the individual's intention to perform the hiring behavior.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In Chapter 1, I contemplated the occurrence of certain limitations in this study. I believed that, due to the nature of the study, truthful answers would be provided by the participants, but there was no way to guarantee that this would occur. The reason why such a guarantee could not be made was because there was a possibility that participants may not want anyone to know if they discriminated, broke the law, or committed any other possible violations of their company's human resource mandates or violations of the rights of any individuals that have sought employment. It was believed that although the identity of the participants would remain confidential, they would still feel compelled to provide false information regarding their hiring practices to avoid any possible judgment that would arise from their responses. Additionally, I also considered other limitations not relating to the participants, such as ambiguities in the analysis of the data, lack of ability to generalize the findings, the time-consuming nature of data collection and analysis, and a small sample size (see Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Another limitation was that the results may have been influenced by my personal biases and opinions (see Mullane & Williams, 2013).

While I could not guarantee that all responses to the questions would be truthful, I took every precaution to avoid invoking any desire from the participants to either provide false information, or minimize their contribution to the study by giving answers that they believed I wanted to hear, or providing responses that were tailored to favor a positive aspect of the study. When conducting the study, I assumed that participants provided



truthful answers. However, this cannot be guaranteed. Participants may want to hide any discrimination practices regarding employment of individuals with AD. My role as the interviewer in the study had to be carried out with caution. As the interviewer, I was able to view the participants as they gave their answers to my questions. I was able to view their demeanor and their mannerisms. Each participant seemed at ease and calm when giving their responses. No participant seemed agitated or embarrassed by any of the responses they gave. Each participant was willing to provide detail when requested, and they took their time when responding. They corrected mistakes in their memory and told stories of hiring that did not end in a positive manner. Being able to view these participants in person allowed me to observe whether they were providing any false information, limiting their ability to be untruthful. As for the questionnaire participants, the anonymity of the questionnaire provided a level of security that would allow those participants to freely express their feelings with regards to the questions. In fact, some of the responses to the questionnaires clearly indicated that they would not hire individuals with AD over a nondisabled person because it was believed that the non-disabled would be better suited to handle the work (Q13). Also, other participants indicated that their business was not up to ADA standards (Q01, Q02, Q24, Q93, Q49). These open answers demonstrate that the participants were willing to provide truthful answers without fear of any repercussions.

Furthermore, during data collection I adhered to the protocol set forth by the proposal. I did not deviate from the interview questions and utilized the interviews, as

well as questionnaires, as my data collection instruments. In addition, field testing the data collection instruments assisted in my ability to ask appropriate questions to elicit responses that would answer the research questions. Clear definitions of inclusionary criteria and the screening protocol ensured that participants selected for the study would provide data that would answer the research questions. Each participant was aware of what was required in terms of the responses I was seeking. Also, the participants were aware of how their responses would be used and how those responses were significant to the study.

Content validity was demonstrated in two ways: my subjective position in the collection of the data; and having clearly defined the cases under study. As the collector of data, I ensured that the questions used during the interview, as well as the questionnaires, obtained the data necessary to answer the research questions posed in this study. Through the use of field tests, it was ensured that all instruments reached this objective. Additionally, having clearly defined the cases to be used in the study, the data provided by the cases answered the research questions, as those selected to participate in the study had met the requirements needed to provide the data required to answer the said questions.

Transferability, or generalization, which is how the findings can be transferred to other contexts using other participants, was also obtained in this study (Anney, 2014). Purposeful sampling was used in order to obtain transferability, as well as, thick descriptions (Anney; Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). Generalizability, which is

concerned with how the findings are applicable in other settings, is the main indicator of transferability (Patton, 2015; Mills et al., 2010). In order to demonstrate the transferability in this study, I utilized multiple settings for each interview. The interviews took place at the employer's place of business, and the questionnaires were sent to multiple varying businesses in the consumer goods industry. By using multiple settings, the results of this study could be deemed beneficial in a different context, such as for different employment types, as well as, different disabilities. As indicated previously, the findings of this study would not be limited to the consumer goods industry, but could be used by businesses within the hospitality industry and other industries. Also, these findings could also relate to other disabilities, such as cerebral palsy or multiple sclerosis.

Although researcher bias could have influenced the results of the study due to my experience with individuals with disabilities, I bracketed my personal feelings and beliefs regarding such individuals, the business, and their practices. Each interview was approached with a neutral mindset. When conducting the interviews, I adhered to the interview protocol, only deviating when clarification, or expansion on a response, was needed. I remained conscious of my behavior during the interviews and ensured that my own beliefs and feelings were not interjected into the conversation. Having worked with individuals with disabilities throughout my career, one could assume that I would have certain biases that would have influenced the outcome of the study. One such bias is my affinity for such individuals based on my career long experience with them. Such a bias could have led to me asking leading questions, which would have required the

participants to give me an answer that I expected rather than an answer that was honest and true based on their experience. Additionally, I may have exhibited more favorable treatment to those businesses that have employed or currently employ individuals with disabilities. The comfort level of participants who do not employ individuals with AD could have been influenced by such conduct. This could have led to a potential hostile interview environment. It is possible that the participants would not have been willing to provide truthful and accurate data if placed in such a position. Thus, leading to a taint in the study. Therefore, I made it a priority to focus on the questioning and obtaining of the data; making a conscious effort not to interject my own beliefs or feelings regarding the subject into the interview.

In order to accurately record the data, which can be a limitation when conducting interviews, audio recorders were used. I purchased two audio recorders and had both recording during each interview. This enabled me to transcribe the interviews afterwards, verbatim, and provide an accurate transcription for participant review. Participant review was essential in verifying that the data collected was an accurate account of what their responses were to the interview questions. Using the recorder also allowed me to devote my full attention to the interviewee, and not having to write down numerous notes, which may have posed as a distraction.

### **Recommendations**

Prior researchers recommended that the focus of future research be on how hiring practices are affected by employer preferences, which includes a demand for soft skills,

pliable workers, and aesthetic labor (Lindsay et al., 2014). The possible effects that an individual's responses given during job interviews may have on an employer's decision to hire the individual was discussed (Lindsay & DePape, 2015). Responses given by a candidate with a disability that tend to cause concern are those that may indicate limited interpersonal skills, as well as, any discussion of personal weaknesses (Lindsay & DePape; Lindsay et al.). It was additionally discussed by Lindsay and DePape that certain hiring decisions made by employers have the potential to have negative effects on the company. Some effects consist of a decrease in available financial resources, reduction in positive employee morale, and potential harm to the reputation of the company (Lindsay & DePape). Based on this information, this study sought to understand what responses from potential candidates with AD would have an effect on the hiring decision of employers.

While certain aspects of this study were similar to previously conducted studies, such as the fact that response given by candidates during an interview can have an effect on whether they are hired, one difference was found. That difference was related to the negative effect of hiring individuals with AD has on other employees within the company. Lindsay et al. (2014) previously conducted a study and found that there was a negative morale and hard to the reputation of the company, however, this study found that other employees within the participant's business have positive reactions to the hiring of individuals with AD. They found it to be a great idea or saw it as a positive for morale. Additionally, participants indicated that they received positive publicity as a

result of hiring an individual with a disability. Based on this information, it is recommended that any future research conducted in the area of disabilities in the workplace should either focus on, or give some attention to, the impact that these hires have on other employees and the business as a whole. Due to such conflicting information obtained from this study and the prior study, it is recommended that data be obtained to determine whether the negative or positive feelings towards hiring an individual with a disability is based solely on the nature of the disability or the nature of the business; or if there are other factors that influence the feelings of other employees towards those employees with disabilities.

Implications from this study that need to be further studied include the following: discovering the need to prepare service providers for addressing accommodations, as well as, understanding how different stakeholders, such as employers, educators, individuals with disabilities, siblings, and employment support workers, view the process of providing such accommodations (Friedman & Owen, 2017; Gewurtz et al., 2016; Telwatte et al., 2017). Friedman and Owen conducted a study on siblings of individuals with disabilities and their understanding of disabilities. The findings of this study showed that 83% of participants favored non-disabled individuals and were found to have a negative understanding and definition of disabilities (Friendman & Owen). Participants also expressed that societal views and beliefs affected how disabilities were defined (Friendman & Owen). Furthermore, Gewurtz et al. and Telwatte et al. explained other factors that influence the hiring decision are the lack of education and support for

employers. The only stakeholder that was used in this study were employers. I obtained information regarding each employer's feelings with regards to providing accommodations and their rationale for providing those accommodations. Participants indicated a willingness to provide accommodations for employees with AD. They stated that their locations were accessible for individuals with AD, and if they were not, they believed that it was possible to work around any issues that may arise. These participants showed a knowledge of the disabilities that they had experience with, and indicated having a knowledge of how to provide accommodations if required. However, future studies should expand the research done in this case to other stakeholders, such as family members and community members. As prior research has indicated, siblings of individuals with disabilities seem to lack an understanding of the disabilities their family members have, or held a negative understanding of said disability. Future research should focus on why these understandings are caused and discover ways to improve such understanding.

Future research should also seek to breakdown the types of disabilities within the industries (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013; Kulper, Bakker & van der Klink, 2016). Employers tend to view different disabilities in different ways (Jasper & Waldhart; Nota et al., 2013). Nota et al. proved in their study that type of disability can have an effect on an individual's attitude. It was found that an individual with a disability was less likely to be accepted if the attitude is negative (Nota et al.). Such views could affect the hiring decisions of employers when it comes to individuals with AD. In the present study,

participants indicated having a positive experience with an individual with AD. While not explicitly stated, it appeared that, as a result of this prior experience, these participants would be willing to hire individuals with AD in the future. Therefore, future research needs to be conducted to discover if employer views of those with AD play a role in their decision making.

Another area that should be considered for future research is in employers hiring decisions in different size companies (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013). As discussed in a study conducted by Jasper and Waldhart, there exists willingness in hiring individuals with disabilities in larger companies. Thus, a correlation can be drawn between employer size and attitudes towards individuals with AD. This study focused on small businesses and their hiring practices in regard to individuals with AD. It was discovered that if a candidate with an AD could perform the tasks required of the position they were applying to, or if the business had work that such an individual could perform, then employers were willing to hire individuals with AD. In expanding this study, it is recommended that companies of different sizes be used as the setting. Doing so, will allow for the obtaining of information as to whether varying companies of different sizes would employ individuals with AD, and what they would require from such candidates in order to consider them for employment.

Additionally, the findings of this study should be generalized in future research so that it could be expanded to large nonprofit and profit sectors, and also the mission of the company (Rimmerman et al., 2013). It was discussed by Rimmerman et al. that as a



result of their mission of positive social contributions, nonprofits were open to hiring individuals with disabilities. However, it was discovered that market conditions, and the effect on company performance, played a role on whether profit organizations would hire individuals with disabilities (Rimmerman et al., 2012). In addition, there is a need to explore the employer's hiring decision in the nonprofit and profit sectors with regard to specific types of disabilities, such as ambulatory. Ju et al. (2013), conducted a study where it was found that there was a need for future research regarding employer rationales related to employing individuals with disabilities. A literature review was conducted and it was found that employers had positive attitudes towards disabilities, however, these attitudes would differ based on types of disabilities (Ju et al.). However, the types of disabilities studied were limited to physical and psychological (Ju et al.). Considering that this present study focused on AD, which is a physical disability, research should be conducted which focuses on employer attitudes towards other disabilities, such as emotional, mental, and cognitive.

Employer experience and perspective, specifically with regards to incentives to hire individuals with disabilities, should also be a focal point of future research (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014). In the Lengnick-Hall et al. study, six factors were identified that may affect the employment status of individuals with disabilities. These factors included lack of employer knowledge, accommodation costs, stereotypes, fear of litigation, negative coworker and customer behavior, and financial incentives (Lengnick-Hall et al.). The study I conducted showed that participants are aware of incentives that

are provided for hiring individuals with disabilities, such as tax incentives. However, a majority of the participants indicated that they did not take part in those incentives, with some indicating that hiring an individual with a disability to obtain an incentive would not be appropriate. Further research should be conducted into those businesses that have hired individuals with disabilities with obtaining incentives being a primary motivating factor. Future research in this area can uncover whether these hires proved beneficial and whether the employers would have hired these individuals if the incentive did not exist. This would provide some insight into whether employers are not taking advantage of the incentives available to them for improper reasons, such as pride.

### **Implications**

#### **Positive Social Change**

This research study contributes an understanding about the decision process employers engage in when reaching their rationale of whether to hire an individual with an AD to previous research. Due to the lack of employment for individuals with AD (5% of the total employed individuals with disabilities (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016), the information provided within this study can be important to provide an understanding of an employer's rationale when it comes to making a determination as to potential employees (Bualar, 2014). Such an understanding can prove valuable to discovering why there is such a minimal hiring of individuals with AD in the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016). By acquiring this information, others will be able to gain an understanding of the causes

and rationale underlying employers' decision to hire, or not hire, individuals with such disabilities. As previously mentioned, this study is important for any business owner or manager, and also, employees seeking employment that have AD.

It is believed that this study will provide information that will allow small businesses to broaden their candidates for employment, and eliminate any potential human resource issues. Doing so can address any factors that affect the decision process related to the reluctance to hire disabled employees. Through this study, it is hoped that employment of these individuals will increase, which will increase the percentage of productive members of society that have AD, and decrease the number of individuals that rely on some form of government assistance (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

Additionally, those individuals that have AD will be able to find employment and gain a feeling of independence. Thus, allowing these individuals to rely on themselves more so than before.

This study can also provide society with a better understanding of how to equitably employ individuals with an AD. The information obtained from this study can serve as a guide to employers when considering applications submitted by individuals with AD. Also, if the employers already employ individuals with AD, they will have a guide for how to best provide accommodations for those individuals. Additionally, employers can develop training that would assist other employees to understand the best method for interacting with those with AD. Lastly, the information obtained from this study will allow others to understand the causes and rationale underlying employers'

decision to hire, or not hire, individuals with AD, and to provide the proper accommodations for same.

This study is important for any business owner or manager, as well as, any individual seeking employment that has an AD. It is also important for individuals that seek to gain a better understanding of the rationale employers use when deciding whether to hire or accommodate for employees with AD. These individuals are likely to benefit from the results of this study in different ways. Business owners and managers will have a guide to assist them when dealing with individuals that have AD. Individuals seeking employment will enjoy the benefit of having potential employers that have a better knowledge of how to best provide accommodations for their disability, and have a stronger willingness to hire individuals with AD.

From this study, businesses may be able to broaden their candidates for employment, eliminate human resource issues, and provide appropriate and necessary accommodations to employees with AD. Employment of these individuals will increase, thus increasing the percentage of productive members of society that have AD. Individuals with AD will feel independent as a result of being able to find employment. These individuals will be able to rely on themselves more so than before. Lastly, individuals with AD may no longer be stigmatized, and limited in what they are capable of doing because of their disability.

**Societal.** This study has focused on a societal issue within our society in need of attention. That issue is the low rate of employment of individuals with AD (U.S.

Department of Labor, 2016). All components of the ecological model for both the family and the individual with the disability are affected by this issue (Adler Graduate School, 2016; Algood, Harris & Hong, 2013). There are different levels which have been affected by this issue that must be considered: micro, meso, and macro (Algood et al.). First, at the microsystem level, individuals with AD may be viewed as stressors with regards to the financial, emotional, and physical aspects of life for both family and friends (Algood et al.). The meso-system level, which consists of marital relations and religious social support of family members of those individuals with AD, may also be affected by this issue (Algood et al.). Social norms and policies, which makes up the macrosystems level, affects the individual and all involved in a negative manner, since the culture in our society tends to be intolerant and discriminatory against individuals with disabilities (Autism Society, 2016). The information acquired in this study will provide an understanding of the causes and rationale underlying an employer's decisions to hire, or not hire, individuals with AD. This information can be used to increase the likelihood of employment for these individuals in the future which would relieve the financial stress and responsibility that is placed on the family and friends of these individuals. Also, it will alleviate the financial reliance on the government, which affects all tax paying citizens. Additionally, through the information obtained from this study, individuals with AD will be equipped with the tools needed to obtain employment. If these individuals can obtain employment, it will provide them with a sense of pride and independence.

In order to explore the societal issue of discrimination of individuals with disabilities, critical research methods can be utilized (Harvey, 1990; Revenson et al., 2002). Also, these research methods can be used to explore how employers make their hiring decisions regarding such individuals (Harvey; Revenson et al.). A large contributing factor to cultivating positive social change is awareness of the issue. This study was able to bring into light the rationale and attitudes held by employers with regards to hiring individuals with AD. In so doing, an understanding was developed as to what employers look for when considering such individuals for employment. There are different approaches that can be used to address this issue. First, an ameliorative approach can be used, which would require the exploration of the emotional well-being of unemployed individuals with AD, and then targeting treatment at the source of their discomfort and/or unhappiness (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Another approach that can be taken with the findings of this study is transformative. A main focus of this approach may be to decrease oppression of individuals with AD, which could lead to a greater change in the societal view of such individuals (Nelson & Prilleltensky). Also, different levels of interventions can be implemented using the information obtained from this study. These interventions include individual, small group, organizational, and community level interventions.

**Individual.** On the individual intervention level, focus may be on strategies on how to accept individuals with AD into society, as well as, how to support their personal growth (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). This study obtained information from different

employers as to what they expect when interviewing an individual with an AD. Through this study, it was learned that employers are willing to hire individuals with AD so long as they feel that those individuals can handle the tasks required by such employment. Also, employers are willing to provide the required accommodations so long as they believe that the employee will provide a skill that is needed by the business. As such, one such strategy that could help with individual intervention is providing training for individuals with AD so that they gain the skills needed by particular employers. That training could be tailored to a particular type of skill so that they become attractive employees to a particular business. For example, one participant indicated that if a candidate had a skill in the area of making floral arrangements then they would do whatever was necessary to assist that employee<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, one strategy to assist the individual would be to train them how to specifically perform tasks that would be beneficial to particular businesses.

The goals of small group level intervention may be similar to those at the individual level, however these interventions would take place in community centers and/or health facilities in order to promote a social change (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). One strategy that could be implemented, as a result of this study, which can be done in conjunction with the strategy for individuals, is that community centers and other similar type locations can provide training seminars for individuals with AD. Whether for a price or for free, these seminars could be geared towards showing individuals with AD specific skills so that they could work in a particular industry. Using the prior example of

the floral arrangements, community centers could offer training to these individuals with regards to creating floral arrangements and different skills that would be beneficial to that industry. Training would not need to be limited to the floral industry. It could be expanded to include training for all types of industries, such as sales or manufacturing of leather goods.

**Organizational.** The organizational level intervention focuses on spreading knowledge to volunteer organizations, clubs, businesses, and religious organizations about the human rights of individuals with AD and the struggle they have with obtaining gainful employment (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Through this study, it was learned that individuals with AD have difficulty finding employment. It was discovered, based on participant responses, that employers are willing to employ individuals with AD so long as they can accomplish the tasks that they are required to do based on their employment. Results of the study also included that most employers had a positive experience with hiring individuals with AD, and they proved to be assets to their businesses. Therefore, it can be inferred that the lack of hiring of these individuals cannot be attributed to employer unwillingness to hire said individuals. I can infer that individuals with AD are not being hired for other reasons, such as lack of attempts to seek employment, inability to provide the skills needed for employment being sought, or a negative feeling towards being able to find employment. On the organizational level, this study will provide information to local volunteer organizations, clubs, businesses, etc., regarding employers' willingness to hire individuals with AD and will then potentially provide them with



information that will lead them to develop programs to inspire individuals with AD to seek employment and also provide them with the training they need to obtain their desired position.

**Community.** On the community level of interventions, organizing groups that expand on community knowledge about such disabilities and the issues both them and their employers face when working together may occur (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). As a result of this study, as was stated in a previous chapter, the information obtained can be spread to the community, and other related studies may be conducted in the future and can also ignite conversations, and/or support groups, for both the individuals with AD, as well as, employers (Krishnaswamy, 2003). The results of this study will be transferable and will be usable for studies conducted on varying business industries, as well as, varying types of disabilities. Thus, the results of this study will be beneficial across a wide spectrum of disabilities, helping those individuals gain employment and increasing the percentage of employed individuals. Such an increase will alleviate the need for government assistance, which will help the tax paying citizens.

Additionally, with the cooperation of the community, prevention programs can also be developed (Stith et al., 2006). Findings from the study will provide insight into what actions can be taken in a proactive manner to increase the likelihood of employers hiring individuals with AD. It is believed that the information obtained in this study will assist small businesses broaden their candidates for employment by providing an understanding of how individuals with AD can be an asset to their business. This

information can help increase the employment of these individuals due to the elimination of any preconceived notion of their ability to work. Such information would lead to the increase in the percentage of productive members of society that have AD, thus decreasing the number of individuals that rely on some form of government assistance (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

### **Methodological Implications**

This qualitative study utilized a multiple case study approach. Case study method was defined by Yin (2014) as more than one case that are then analyzed to identify any common principals from the information. It is appropriate to use this approach when attempting to seek understanding of the phenomenon (Yin). I utilized this approach to answer research questions set forth in Chapter 1 to understand why a lack of hiring individuals with AD exists. I wanted to do this without any controlling or manipulation of variables. To do this, I obtained information through interviews with employers in relation to their experience with interviewing or hiring a candidate with an AD. By doing so, the rationale employers use when they decide to hire, or not hire, and individual with an AD in realistic life settings would be uncovered (see Yin).

Using case studies, you can expand on the cases to be studied in other industries such as, construction, service, manufacturing, computer, education, etc. Additionally, the methodology used in this study can also be used to study the varying disabilities that could be found in the workplace. The interviews used in this study allowed me to obtain full and descriptive data, providing me with anecdotes of experiences they had with

individuals with AD, as well as, other disabilities, which allowed me to relate to each participant's experience. By doing so, I was able to gain an understanding as to why these participants made their decision with regards to candidates with these disabilities. I could see from their perspective what they looked for, and how they felt about these candidates. The case study method provided the backdrop to gain this experience which allowed for a more detailed analysis of the data. As such, other studies could benefit from the case study method in a similar fashion. Using the case study method in different settings, for different disabilities, would allow the prospective researcher to obtain data in a similar fashion as I did in this study. This would allow future researchers the same opportunity to gain a more detailed experience regarding the subject they are studying which can provide for greater results.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The theory of planned behavior was used as a guide for obtaining data in this study. As previously mentioned, TPB consists of the following factors: attitudinal factors, subjective norms, behavioral control and behavioral intentions (Cornally, 2014). Through the TPB lens, I was able to determine whether the participants had a positive or negative attitude towards hiring individuals with AD, whether there were any subjective norms that influenced their decision, whether they believed they had control in making the decision to hire or not hire an individual with an AD, and whether or not these factors would lead the participants to engage in the behavior. Based on the results of this study, it was shown that the TPB could predict a particular behavior if all the elements aligned in

a particular manner. Therefore, it can be inferred that any future research that also uses the TPB will find that it will also provide a good predictor of whether a behavior will be engaged in. Using the TPB in future research will allow the researcher to have a guide that will assist in determining whether the behavior under study will occur, similar to how it did so in this study.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

From this study, certain recommendations should be considered by future researches, individuals with AD, and small businesses. First, future research should look to expand this study to different disabilities. Only 17.5% of individuals with disabilities are employed (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). That is still a very low percentage of the employable population to be hired. Based on the results of this study, it is clear that employers are open to hiring individuals with disabilities. Future research should look to see what employers are looking for in order to hire individuals with different disabilities. By doing so, they could lower the number of those potential employees, thus lowering the number of unemployed individuals relying on others for assistance. Second, individuals with AD should seek out employment and do research on the business for which they are applying. They need to be aware of what is required by those employers and be sure they can provide the skills needed. This study showed that employers are willing to hire individuals with AD and will provide the required accommodations if these employees are deemed assets to the company. Additionally, it was shown that employers have found that employees with these disabilities are hard workers who take pride in the work they

do. As such, they are more willing to hire them if the opportunity to do so arises. Therefore, it is clear that individuals with AD can find employment, but need to do what is required in order to be employable. These individuals should work to obtain the skills necessary to be employable and look for the work that will accentuate the abilities that they have. Lastly, small businesses should use the results of this study to see that individuals with AD can prove to be assets to their companies and that other businesses that have hired these individuals have found them to be great workers and proved beneficial to the company. The benefits that these individuals provide is bringing a strong work ethic and taking in pride in the work they do. Company morale is elevated due to the fact that other employees applaud the decision to hire individuals with disabilities. Finally, these businesses are celebrated by the community for giving opportunities to individuals that have disabilities (I03).

### **Conclusion**

At the inception of this study, I set out to understand employer rationale with regard to hiring or not hiring individuals with AD, and why there was a minimal hiring of these individuals, and also, to develop ways by which this phenomenon could be reversed or mitigated. This study took a different approach than previous studies. Whereas prior research focused on the perspective of the employees with disabilities, this study wanted to understand the employers' rationale when it came to hiring or not hiring individuals with AD. Thus, this qualitative study was designed to obtain this understanding. The case study method was chosen for the purpose of conducting this research. It was determined

that through the case study method I could obtain data from multiple participants, and gain multiple varying perspectives on the topic under study. Once the qualitative method was chosen, the setting was selected. For this study, I chose to have one county located in N.J. as the location of the settings from which participants would be drawn. Small businesses within the consumer goods industry were chosen as the setting due to the different job opportunities that would be available and the fact that small businesses normally have one individual that handles their hiring practices. Once the setting and research method were established, I was able to create the research questions that would need to be answered in order to understand why the phenomenon occurred. Those research questions were:

Research Question 1: Why do owners of small businesses in New Jersey decide to hire or not hire an individual with AD?

Research Question 2: How do owners of small businesses in New Jersey describe their rationale when making such decisions?

Interviews would be used as the primary form of data collection, with questionnaires serving as a secondary tool, and to establish triangulation of the data. Armed with these tools, this study began.

All participants were screened to determine whether they had the necessary qualities that would benefit this research. If the participants fit the established criteria described in this study, then they would be asked to participate in the interviews. Those individuals that did not meet the criteria to participate in an interview were asked to

complete a questionnaire. When this study was conceptualized, I had preconceived notions as to what the participants would indicate were their reasons for hiring or not hiring individuals with AD. Such beliefs included that these individuals would not provide any benefit to the business, or providing accommodations would be too burdensome and not worth the trouble that would come from such hirings. Another belief I had prior to conducting the study was that the participants would provide many excuses as to why they could not hire individuals with AD, and that opportunities would be severely limited for such individuals. However, once all participants were obtained, and the interviews were held, questionnaires returned, and analysis completed, the data revealed a completely different picture of this phenomenon.

This study showed that employers are willing to hire individuals with AD so long as they can handle the tasks that the position requires. There is no bias, or preferential treatment given to employees with or without disabilities. Employers treat their employees in a similar fashion and base their decision on whether a candidate for employment can do the work that is required. Promotions are determined based on merit. The participants in this study revealed that, for a majority of the employers, the disability played no role in whether they would hire an individual with an AD, but focused more so on whether they would be able to perform the tasks. If an employer believed that an individual with an AD could do the work, then they would have no issue hiring them. Additionally, employers revealed that they have no problem providing accommodations that the employee may need to assist them in performing the work, thus eliminating the

belief that providing accommodations could be a deterrent to hiring individuals with these disabilities. As a result, this study showed that employers found these individuals to be assets and showed pride in the work that they did. Employers indicated that hiring individuals with AD provided a positive sense to the business and tended to boost the morale of other employees. A majority of the participants in this study indicated that other employees were happy with the decision to hire individuals with disabilities and welcomed the idea of doing so. It was clear that the participants had favorable experiences with hiring individuals with AD and would not be opposed to hiring them again if the opportunity arose. Even participants who had no experience with employing or interviewing an individual with an AD indicated that they would have no issue hiring said individual if they proved to be the most qualified employee.

It was clear that, based on this study, employers are willing to hire individuals with AD, and have no trouble providing the required accommodations for them. If these individuals proved to be assets, like any other employee, the employer would do whatever was necessary to ensure that the employee with a disability could perform his/her duties. The existence of this phenomenon came into question when the findings revealed that employers are willing to hire individuals with AD, and willing to provide accommodations as needed. This study revealed that employers decide to hire individuals with AD if they believe they can perform the work required by the position. Therefore, the reason why this phenomenon occurs, the minimal hiring of individuals with AD, can be due to potential candidates with AD not applying for these positions.



The minimal hiring can be attributed to other factors that are not based on an employer's desire not to hire these individuals. Whether it is a lack of knowledge as to what is being sought by employers on the part of the candidates, or a fear of being denied employment simply because of their disability, these factors could be the reason why these individuals are being deterred from applying for employment. Future research should focus on whether individuals with AD are not seeking employment because of any preconceived notions about their chances to be hired. Such information could further reveal the causes that contribute to minimal hiring of individuals with AD. However, one thing is clear following this study, the reason for this phenomenon is not the employers, as it is clear that employers are more than willing to hire individuals with AD, and often times find them to be assets to their business.

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## Appendix A: Interview Participant Demographics

Table A1

*Interview Participant Demographics*

Business Code	Years Experience	Business Specialty	Prior Experience Interviewing/Hiring Candidate with AD	Consult with Anyone Else in Business Prior to Hiring	Role in Interview/Hiring Process
I 01	28	Cleaning Supplies	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 02	12	Leather Goods	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 03	28	Prepackaged Food/Beverage	Y	Y	Interview and hire
I 04	34	Hardware Supply	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 05	20	Gift/Flower Shop	Y	Y	Interview and hire
I 06	30	Gift/Flower Shop	Y	Y	Interview and hire
I 07	15	Prepackaged Food/Beverage	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 08	35	Perfume Shop	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 09	11	Recreational Auto	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 10	20	Recreational Auto	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 11	2	Sporting Goods Shop	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 12	20	Glass Shop	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 13	44	Piano Shop	Y	N	Interview and hire
I 14	6	Gift/Flower Shop	Y	Y	Interview and hire
I 15	4	Book Store	Y	Y	Interview and hire
I 16	4	Prepackaged Food/Beverage	Y	Y	Interview and hire

## Appendix B: Questionnaire Participant Demographics

Table B1

*Questionnaire Participant Demographics*

Business Code	Years Experience	Role in Interview/Hiring Process	Prior Experience Interviewing/Hiring Candidate with AD
Q 02	25	Interview and hire	N
Q 01	48	Interview, train, hire	N
Q 29	10	Interview and hire	N
Q 03	20	Interview and hire	N
Q 04	30	Has not hired anyone	N
Q 05	10	Interview and hire	Y
Q 08	20	Interview and hire	Y
Q 10	18	Interview and hire	N
Q 17	24	Has not hired anyone	N
Q 24	39	Interview and hire	N
Q 28	43	Interview and hire	N
Q 13	5	Interview and hire	N
Q 25	3	Interview and hire	N
Q 30	10	Interview and hire	N
Q 38	40	Final decision maker- hire	N
Q 20	50	Interview and hire	N
Q 75	23	Interview and hire	Y
Q 81	10	Interview and hire	N
Q 46	22.5	Hire and fire	N
Q 93	20	Interview and hire	N
Q 62	8	Interview and hire	N
Q 49	40	Oversees manager who does the hiring	N

## Appendix C: Research Question 1 Codes

Table C1

*Research Question 1 Interview Codes*

Main Code	Category	Frequency of Reference	Percentage
Deter from hire	Lack of availability	3	18.75%
	Lack of experience	4	25.00%
	Inability to perform job duties	4	25.00%
	Lack of interest/negative attitude	2	12.50%
Employee reaction to hire	positive	5	31.25%
Feel the need to hire AD because right thing to do	No	6	37.50%
Explanation given when have not hired candidate with AD	Honest and explain it is not a good fit due to inability to fulfill job duties	3	18.75%
	Not aware of any incentives	9	56.25%
Incentives for hiring	Internal/emotional incentive	3	18.75%
	Aware but not utilizing	3	18.75%
	Performance history of such hires	1	6.25%
	Physical was the most reported preferred disability	6	37.50%
Preferred disabilities	31 employees with disabilities are still employed	6	37.50%
	7 without AD were terminated due to their disability	5	31.25%
Employee status	0 with AD were terminated due to their disability	2	12.50%
	9 left or resigned without AD	4	25.00%
	8 left or resigned with AD	4	25.00%
	Experience	9	56.25%
Interview/Applications topics	Employment history	2	12.50%
	Availability	10	62.50%\$

	Education/Training	4	25.00%
			<i>(table continues)</i>
	Skills	3	18.75%
	Background Info	4	25.00%
Motivates for interview	Availability	4	25.00%
	Experience	8	50%
	Skills	4	25.00%
	Abilities	4	25.00%

Table C2

*Research Question 1 Questionnaire Codes*

Main Code	Category	Frequency of Reference	Percentage
Job application questions	Experience	12	54.54%
	Questions relative to the job being applied for	2	9.09%
	Skills	3	13.63%

## Appendix D: Research Question 2 Codes

Table D1

*Research Question 2 Interview Codes*

Main Code	Category	Frequency of Reference	Percentage
Choose between 2 or 3 candidates	Trainability	1	6.25%
	Capabilities	3	18.75%
	Presentation of self	4	25.00%
	Skill set	2	12.50%
	Dependent on job function	2	12.50%
Experience with accommodations	8 reported to have provided accommodations in the past	12	75.00%
	4 reported to have not provided accommodations in the past	3	18.75%
	7 reported no difficulty in providing accommodations	5	31.25%
Promotions are given to those who have	Good performance	3	18.75%
	Good attendance	1	6.25%
	Ability	1	6.25%
	Experience	2	12.50%
Protocol/Process when hiring	Employers that have protocol for any candidate	12	75%

Table D2

*Research Question 2 Questionnaire Codes*

Main Code	Category	Frequency of Reference	Percentage
Choice between equally qualified candidates	Would not pick the AD candidate (7)	1	4.54%
	Would pick the AD candidate (13)	2	9.09%

*(table  
continues)*

Would not pick the AD candidate (7)	Setting not conducive for handicap	5	22.72%
	Unable to perform job duties	1	4.54%
Would pick the AD candidate (13)	Able to perform job duties	3	13.63%
	If no accommodations are needed	3	13.63%

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