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Social Capital Through Workplace Connections: Opportunities for Workers With Intellectual Disabilities

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RUNNING HEAD: Social capital

Social capital through workplace connections:
Opportunities for workers with intellectual disabilities

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Abstract

Using qualitative methods, this study examined the experiences of individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) in sheltered workshops and compared them to those in community employment. In particular, the study investigated how employment affects opportunities for the creation of social capital. Primary respondents were individuals with ID and secondary respondents were family members and employment services staff. Findings revealed that a form of social capital was created through workplace connections. Community employment did not increase social capital per se, but it did produce opportunities not available in the workshop. The role of family members emerged as critical in the support of community employment, and its potential for social capital development.

Social capital through workplace connections:

Opportunities for workers with intellectual disabilities

Disability researchers have explored the potential for relationships between people with disabilities and those without disabilities in great depth. The rhetoric, as it moves from ideology to the underpinnings of policy and practice, now emphasizes community participation, inclusion, and integration. Recent thinking has shifted from how people can be supported by formal service systems to how people can be supported by their communities. Yet, key aspects of this ideology are not reflected in the lived realities of many people with intellectual disabilities (ID).

Gardner (2002) notes that the vocabulary of social capital, specifically the importance of social ties, offers an alternative for discussion around “community inclusion.” With a clear focus on social capital, programs can increase the allies and supports of people with disabilities in a way that they may become independent of formalized services: “Social capital as an organizing construct goes beyond normalization, integration, or inclusion because it applies to everyone” (Gardner, 2002: p. 3). Recently, workplaces have been identified as emerging loci of community, where adults, including those with disabilities, can form networks and contribute to society.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences of individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) in sheltered workshops and compare them to those in community employment. In particular, this study investigated how employment affects opportunities for the creation of social capital. “Social capital” refers to relationships between individuals and benefits and resources that are mutually produced from those relationships.

Social Capital

Bourdieu (1985) defines social capital as the benefits to individuals that result from group participation and the purposeful construction of the group for this resource. Bourdieu’s

conception of social capital consists of relationships that produce resources and the quality of those resources (Portes, 1998). Coleman's (1988) depicts social capital as the value derived from social structures that enable individuals to serve their interests. Relationships themselves are a resource that can produce different outcomes for an individual than can be achieved on one's own. This is in contrast to traditional sociological views that consider social norms, rules, and obligations as driving behaviors. Alternatively, in the economic sphere, individual action is driven by personal self-interest.

Community inclusion is perceived as “wholly beneficial” (Portes & Landolt, 1996), and the disability service system has focused on increasing opportunities for people with ID to develop informal ties within their communities. Despite an increasing presence in communities, individuals with ID typically have small social networks (Abery, 1997; Abery & Fahnestock, 1994; Lunsky & Neely, 2002). Social isolation is common, with research consistently suggesting that the social networks of people with ID are comprised primarily of paid support staff, parents, and others with disabilities (Abery & Fahnestock, 1994; Lunsky & Neely, 2002; Knox & Hickson, 2001). Recently, some researchers have examined the implications of the networks of individuals with disabilities within a social capital framework (see Riddell, Baron, & Wilson, 1999; Potts, 2005; Condeluci, Ledbetter, Ortman, Fromknecht, & DeFries, 2008).

Employment, disability, and social networks

Social contacts arise out of opportunities and experiences, but those excluded from the world of work may lack these opportunities. Although several policies have been designed to foster community-based work for people with disabilities, data suggest that these policies have made only a minimal impact in moving individuals with ID into employment (e.g., Butterworth, Smith, Hall, Migliore, & Winsor, 2008; Metzel, Boeltzig, Butterworth, Sulewski, & Gilmore,

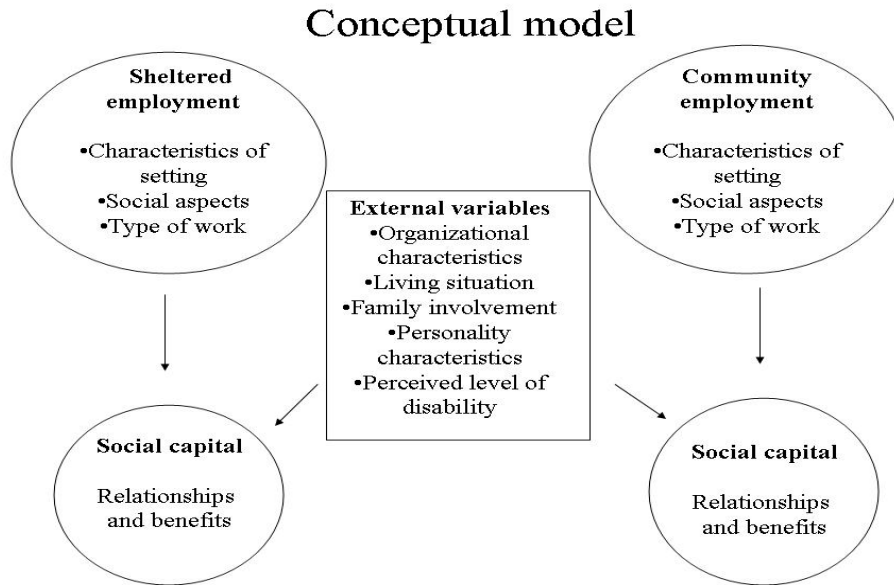
2007; Mank, Cioffi, & Yovanoff, 2003). While the number of individuals in community employment has grown since the 1980s (from 32,471 individuals in 1988 to 115,293 individuals in 2007), the vast majority of individuals continue to be served in segregated settings, such as sheltered workshops (Butterworth et al., 2008).

For people with ID who do participate in community employment, outcome data suggest the positive change on individual lives. Case studies and other qualitative research indicate that the involvement with coworkers contributes to increased quality of life and higher levels of satisfaction for employees with ID (Mank, Cioffi, & Yovanoff, 1999). Additionally, research has shown that the lack of professional or work-related relationships may be associated with lower levels of job retention (Salzberg, Lignugaris-Kraft, & McCuller, 1988) and employment retention overall (Lignugaris-Kraft, Rule, Salzberg, & Stowitschek, 1986). While the benefits are numerous, the majority of individuals with ID who remain outside of the community labor force do not experience them.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model presented in Figure 1 provides a framework for understanding the relationships between social capital and type of employment setting. For this study, social capital was defined as (1) relationships and (2) the benefits derived from these relationships. The external variables that may also influence the creation of social capital (including organizational characteristics of the community rehabilitation provider, living situation, family involvement, personality characteristics, and perceived level of disability) were derived through an extensive literature review. A full discussion of the underpinnings of the conceptual model is beyond the scope of this paper and is available elsewhere (see Cohen, 2005).

Figure 1



Based on the conceptual model, this study addressed the following research questions:

- 1) What types of social networks exist in sheltered workshops and community employment settings?
- 2) What is the utility of these relationships for individuals with ID?
- 3) What are the effects of workplace structures on opportunities for social capital building?

Method

To address the research questions, qualitative structured interviews with three groups of participants were conducted to examine how social capital relates to the work experiences of individuals with ID. In addition to conducting interviews with participants with ID, family members, and employment support providers, observations were made at each participant's workplace. Data from the observation sessions were recorded as field notes.

Participants

The sampling strategy began with the researchers developing a relationship with three community rehabilitation providers (CRPs), often considered a gateway in accessing the perspectives of people with ID. Two CRPs operated sheltered workshops, and one CRP supported individuals in community employment. Eligibility for the study included: (1) between the ages of 22 and 64; (2) at least part-time employment in a sheltered workshop or community employment setting; (3) service recipient of one of the three community provider agencies; and (4) capacity to participate in and understand the purpose of the interview (as determined by the community rehabilitation provider). The last was an important criterion as it was essential that individuals be able to give an in-depth account of their experiences. After a pool of eligible individuals with ID was determined, variables such as gender, level of disability, and type of employment were considered. These individuals, and their legal guardians when appropriate, were asked to participate by agency staff members.

Twenty-nine individuals with ID participated in the study. Each respondent was asked to identify one family member and one employment staff person to participate in interviews. Twenty-three family members participated. Most family members were mothers, but in some cases, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles were identified. In six cases, more than one family member (e.g., both parents) participated in an interview. In three cases, family members were not available and residential staff persons participated in interviews. For seven of the individuals, there were no residential staff or family members available for interviews. Additionally, twenty-nine interviews were conducted with community rehabilitation provider staff who worked with participants in employment settings. The data from the interviews with family members and staff triangulated the information obtained from participating individuals

with ID by offering varying perspectives and confirming data collected on the quality and use of the individuals' social networks and social supports (Lunksy & Benson, 1999).

Demographic data for participants with ID were collected by administering a short questionnaire to community rehabilitation provider staff. Eighty-three percent of the sample was White (non-Hispanic or Latino), 59 percent was female, and the median age was 41.8 (see Table 1).

<Insert Table 1 here >

Individual interviews were conducted over the course of a two year period. In total, 85 interviews were conducted. On the entire sample, no individuals with ID or staff persons refused participation; five family members could not be reached and one declined participation. One participant refused to allow a family member to participate.

Procedure

Eighty-four interviews were conducted in-person, and one interview with a family member was conducted via telephone. The majority of interviews took place at the offices of the community rehabilitation providers, but family interviews typically took place in families' homes. Eighty-three interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed by a professional transcription agency. Two individuals declined to be recorded.

Interview instruments. This study used a semi-structured interview format. The researcher began each interview with a set of guiding questions, but allowed the topics to be explored in depth based on participants' responses. This allowed for control of the direction of the interview but provided the opportunity for follow-up on relevant leads (Bernard, 2002).

Four interview protocols were developed (see Appendix 1). One protocol was developed for family members, one for employment support staff, and one each for individuals in sheltered

workshops, and those in community employment. Four major domains across each protocol included (1) working, (2) spending time with friends, (3) participation in the community, and (4) goals for the future. When relevant, participants were also asked questions about their experiences with the transition from sheltered to community employment.

Because many researchers have struggled with ensuring reliability and validity of responses of individuals with ID, Dattilo and colleagues (1996) created a set of guidelines that can be applied to qualitative questionnaire design. Some of these include having a broad range of items that focus on the salient issues to be addressed, providing visual cues when appropriate, having experts evaluate the questions for clarity, and piloting the instrument (Dattilo, Hoge, & Malley, 1996). Thus, the interview protocols were reviewed by colleagues who have considerable experience in workplace supports for individuals with ID. After making revisions based on this feedback, the protocol was piloted with two individuals at the first site. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher revised the questionnaire. Continual revisions were made to the questionnaires to allow more in depth exploration of emerging themes from the research.

Direct observations. To yield further insight into individuals' employment situations and how they may impact social capital, direct observations were conducted at work sites. Biklen and Moseley (1988) note that this method is widely accepted as a successful way to ascertain an individual's world view. Further, direct observations helped obtain a sense of the types of relationships that exist with coworkers, employers, and employment agency staff. These relationships were discussed during the interviews, but observation of interactions provided an additional layer of understanding and helped to triangulate findings from the interviews.

Direct observations were conducted at the two sheltered workshops. Observations were minimally intrusive because the workshops were closed sites where individuals were accustomed to the presence of outside professionals. Eight observation sessions were conducted at the two workshops. Each session lasted from one to three hours. All observation sessions were documented with extensive field notes.

The community employment observations presented some methodological challenges in that it was sometimes difficult to maintain researcher distance because of the variable environment. Each situation required some creativity to effectively observe interactions while remaining as unobtrusive as possible. In total, eight observation sessions were conducted at work sites, typically lasting from one to two hours.

Analysis. Data analysis followed the stages identified by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction was accomplished by coding text using grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Coding was used to continually label, assign, and update meaning to the interview data as themes emerged. Memo writing throughout the interviewing process was used to organize themes from the data and served to inform the presentation of the findings. Data display was done through developing a pictorial conceptual model to understand the relationships that were emerging through the data. A visual model of the themes is displayed in Figure 1 on page 6 to help interpret and illustrate the relationships between the themes. Lastly, verification was accomplished through continuous revisiting of field notes and cross-verification with a second coder as well as colleagues familiar with the project.

Findings

Approximately one third of participants with ID had jobs in the community, such as a kitchen aide at a school cafeteria and stocking and customer support person in retail stores. The remaining two-thirds worked in sheltered workshops, operated by community rehabilitation providers, where they spent the majority of their time doing piece-rate work alongside of others with disabilities and agency staff. The findings highlight the culture of the two sheltered workshops and several community employment settings, and compare the potential of these environments for fostering social capital. The important role of the family in supporting or hindering community employment is also discussed

Sheltered Employment

Cultural aspects of sheltered work. Participants with ID from one of the sheltered workshops (Northeast) took on different roles among their peers. These roles emerged from individual personalities, capabilities, and other contextual factors. For instance, Joan noted how her peers came to her with their problems:

They tell me different things every day. I said, "You're supposed to be talking to the supervisors, not to me every day"... Like I was taking the bus home, and everybody is talking to me all at once. I'm only one person. I say, "Guys, give me a break. I'm not your supervisor."

Another individual was an important member of the workshop community. Previously, Joe had worked outside of the workshop, but has always returned to the workshop setting. Discernable both through observations and interviews, the workshop community was a place where he felt important, listened to, and valued. Joe's role was different than others in the workshop, as he worked in shipping as opposed to doing the bench or contract work. This allowed him freedom to move around, interact with people, and earned him greater status. This status was also based on longevity, although not everyone in the workshop with long tenures had greater status than others. The workshop seemed to be Joe's primary source for connectivity to others, as he was

comparatively isolated in other areas of his life, with a residential staff member who knew him well describing him as a “loner.” While outside of the workshop this may have been the case, inside the culture for him was full of connections, networks, and relationships.

Informally, individuals attained a higher status in the workshop when they also had a job in the community. Those in community work uniforms stood out in a way that informed others that they earned more money and worked successfully “on the outside.” Working in the community garnered pride. Two staff persons explained:

I would say that the initial move--she was very proud--very, very proud to have-- a vest and a hat and it certainly is a status symbol here when people are working in the community.

Yeah, I don't think they're shy about saying, 'Just came back from (group community employment site),' you know or 'payday!'"

This prestige is not only observed by staff, but felt by those who work in the community. Louis said:

We got to see that check--oh, everybody's going to see that check that (I) worked out(side) Wednesdays and Fridays. My friends see all the work I do to get it.

Within the other sheltered workshop, different roles were apparent as well, although in some cases they were more formalized through a promotion or specialized job tasks. Several in the sample had special jobs in the workshop including materials handler, receptionist, switchboard operator, clerk, and shipping.

A materials handler position held prestige, as well as a pay increase, and some level of power over one's coworkers. The responsibilities were often diverse and more complex compared to a typical sheltered workshop participant. The uniqueness of this position manifested in work tasks and in the attitude about one's role. For instance, during an observation session, a worker called for a staff person and Laura, a materials handler, called out: “What do you need?”

When a staff entered the workshop to deliver a phone message, out of dozens of people in the workshop, Laura pointed out the person who should receive the message. During the observation, her body language suggested that she had authority. The manner in which she put her arm around others and bent down to talk modeled the behavior of management staff that walked through the workshop and interacted with individuals.

Similar to the other sheltered workshop, the Southeast workshop had some distinct positions that had high status, and thus afforded participants unique opportunities. For instance, Laura had a significant relationship with a staff person with whom she worked closely. This relationship had examples of reciprocal exchanges, which was largely absent from other staff/individual relationships. One shared characteristic of these unique positions in both workshops was the level of movement and freedom they allowed. Others who did bench work typically asked permission or told staff when they left their seat and where they were going. Few moved freely between “staff areas” like the office, and “consumer areas” such as the workshop floor. Thus, positive working relationships with staff resulted in increased autonomy and freedom in the workshop.

Tying these findings with social capital, it was evident that the hierarchy within sheltered workshops produced different social roles that were important for status, connections, and relationships. Those with high status roles like Joe and Laura garnered more movement, freedom, and some level of autonomy in the workshop. Those with special jobs seemed to feel positively about the workshop, probably because these jobs resulted in “perks” largely unavailable to others. Social capital in the workshop was found amongst individuals, and as a result of relationships between individuals and staff. The relationships that had the most observable benefits were those with staff, as they enabled greater freedom and autonomy within

the workshop. These benefits are important within the walls of the workshop, but their utility outside of the workshop is more of a question.

The underlying goals of the workshop: Work or socialization? Two primary rooms were for work in the Southeast workshop. Upstairs, individuals were busy completing contracts, and several supervisors oversaw each area. There was an identifiable emphasis on work and staying on task. In the downstairs workshop, where contract work only seemed to come once the upstairs room was engaged, the culture was more informal. Individuals played cards or engaged in independent “seat work.” There was friendly banter among individuals and between the staff. Those perceived as less “work-ready” were assigned or moved to this room. Beth described her transition to the downstairs room:

I: How come they moved you?

B: Because I couldn't handle it up here.

I: What do you mean?

B: Got myself in trouble. Can't get myself in trouble.

I: So then you were moved to another area?

B: Yeah.

I: Is it better [downstairs]?

B: Yeah. Much quieter down there now.

Individuals from the downstairs workshop took breaks and ate lunch in the same room where they worked, unlike those who worked in the upstairs workshop. When asked about this, Beth replied that the “clients are in the cafeteria and they don't want us in there, too.” In the sample, four individuals were in the downstairs room, and five were upstairs. The downstairs environment was more conducive to relationship building because there was less work and more time for interaction.

Individuals moved more fluidly between the workshop and the community in the Northeast workshop. Individuals moved between community jobs or to community-based non

work activities such as volunteering, swimming, or shopping. At the Southeast workshop, participants were not observed leaving the workshop during the day, but participated in social groups within the workshop. Participation in these groups was seen as detrimental by some staff, who felt that time spent in these groups took away from production hours. A staff person said of Laura, who was also a materials handler:

Because if I expect her to work all day and she's got a meeting at 1:00, and she goes off to this meeting and I don't see her until 2:30, 3:00, my afternoon is gone, her afternoon is gone...or (for) awhile there, she had backed off 'cause I told her – “you're either going to be my material handler or you're going to be a social butterfly” because it was to the point I wasn't seeing her at all in the afternoon.

Another example illustrated the emphasis on work and is from an observation conducted at the upstairs workshop:

An administrator walks through the workshop and looks around. She speaks with a staff person and points to Ruth, who is sitting at her table but not working (others are busy with contract work, slipping CD covers into plastic cases). The staff person approaches Ruth after a brief conversation. She somewhat apologetically brings work to her and takes Ruth's knitting needles out of her hands. Ruth sits quietly waiting for further direction.

The societal expectation that work is the most appropriate option for individuals did not seem to be true across both workshops. For many in the study, work was not an observable priority, but one factor specifically was the availability of work in the workshop. “Tell me about your job” was a very different question than “tell me what you do during the day.” For some of the workshop group, contract work was a percentage of how they spent their time in between van rides to and from the workshop. Although “down time” was regarded as negative, in some cases it encouraged natural opportunities for exchange.

Regarding the goal of the workshops, elements at both sites suggest different organizational priorities. In the upstairs Southeast workshop, respondents reported such occurrences as being moved to another room or table because “she kept turning around and

trying to see her boyfriend.” Downstairs at the same workshop, socialization was more encouraged, but this was in part because there was less work. At the Northeast workshop, staff members consistently encouraged socialization. When Craig was asked about his day at the workshop, he mentioned breaks and lunch, saying that in between breaks he “relaxes with friends, talks to them.” Craig’s overarching feeling about the workshop was that it was a place he socialized. Evidence suggested that vocational training as the primary goal competed with other goals of fulfilling contracts, socialization, and community inclusion. Data suggested that the workshop with implicit goals around socialization and community participation were better able to foster strong relationships among individuals working in the workshop.

Integrated Employment

Job sites within the community employment settings included a pharmacy, wholesale club, discount department store, camera store, video store, private school, home goods store, and a YMCA. One group from the Northeast workshop was a building cleaning crew on a military base. All respondents in the community employment sample said that they preferred working in the community compared to the workshop. More than half of the individuals in community work said that what they liked the most was the paycheck: *“I like the money. I like to get my checks out there. And I like to be independent.”*

The literature states that one of the foremost desired outcomes of community employment is social integration. Bearing this in mind, data addressed whether this view was shared by employment staff, individuals, and those at work sites. It seemed that staff sometimes inadvertently assumed the role of mediators of socialization. For example, Eric worked briefly in a local coffee shop. He consistently interacted with “regulars” at the store each morning, and maintained a friendly banter while they were served. However, Eric’s job coach would

reprimand the customers, saying that the employee was there to do a job and needed few distractions. Examples existed in the group community employment as well. Karen noted that, with respect to non-disabled co-workers: “We don't--talk to them that much. We just say, ‘Hi, how are you,’ and then we continue on with our work.” This was an issue that supervisors discussed directly with the crew because they felt that socialization could compromise their work.

Interactions at work. Social roles emerged for members in community employment settings with other supported employees. This was the case for those in group community employment, and in a more individualized situations, where there was more than one employee at the site. Ron, who worked at a pharmacy with another person supported by the agency took it upon himself to oversee her tasks and provided assistance when necessary. This relationship could be perceived as somewhat reciprocal. While one individual was providing help to another, based on Ron's desire to help, he gained from the exchange as well.

Roles were pronounced among the community employment participants. Nora was referred to as “the lead” because of her strengths and abilities, and had established herself as the point person for communication with a store manager. Although not financially compensated for this role, she “gives the impression to the new person that she is kind of the boss.” These roles are similar to ones that were observed within the workshop sample.

Many in the community employment sample spoke positively of the interaction they had at work, suggesting that there were more positive opportunities compared to the workshop. This was often unsolicited during the interviews, when responding to the question: “What do you like about your job?” Several respondents said that they liked to meet new people. Community

employment fostered opportunities to create new friendships and establish new networks.

Gabrielle said:

The best part of the job is you get to see people out in the community, talk with them, see how they're doing, and see what they need.

Workplace factors that foster relationships. Data showed that there were elements present in community work sites that had moderate to high levels of social integration among employees with and without disabilities. Employers' organizational commitment was evident at some of the sites. Data suggests that CRPs became aware of companies that had a reputation for supporting individuals with disabilities as valued employees. A case manager described this sense of organizational commitment and the importance of leadership:

They're committed to her; they're committed to the idea of having people with disabilities work there. She's not the only person. Her immediate supervisor is very committed to just keeping an extra eye on her and I think that comes from the top--not from a personal thing on her part.

A common element among work sites was the presence of uniforms among employees. Uniforms helped individuals to feel that they were part of a shared workplace culture or part of a team. Individuals were proud of their uniforms, which were also perceived as a status symbol, especially when worn within the workshop. While uniforms demonstrated a shared culture, so did mutual engagement in tasks that benefited the workplace. Jordan, who worked in a small store, helped other employees paint the shop on a day that it was closed to the public.

The visibility of positions seemed to affect level of social integration. Open environments where individuals were visible to the public included shelving movies at a video store, replacing returned items in a store, and cleaning the front area at a YMCA during business hours. These tasks were conducive to interaction, both with customers and coworkers. Closed work

environments where individuals did not interact with the public or customers were a warehouse at a department store, the backroom of a home furnishings store, the parking lot of a pharmacy, and the kitchen of a private school. It was not the open or closed nature of the positions that was important, but whether other employees experienced the workplace similarly. For instance, Gabrielle worked in the back room of the home furnishings store, but so did many other retail and delivery staff, all of whom moved seamlessly from back room to store front. What indicated a negative social experience was when the employee was isolated from the public *and* other employees, like Marcus, who worked outside alone doing trash removal.

Natural support is the participation of supervisors and coworkers in hiring, training, and supervising individuals with disabilities (Mank, Cioffi, & Yovanoff, 1997). In one case when a job began, a job coach was onsite to train the individual. The coworkers felt it was important to provide the training themselves. This set the tone for accountability and their involvement in the success of Anna's employment, where she has now worked for a number of years. This work setting is an example of natural supports that have evolved into relationships that extend beyond work. Linking this to social capital formation, data suggest a directional quality between natural supports and relationships. Natural supports appeared to be both a precursor and a foundation for the development of social capital.

Opportunities developed through work. Besides opportunities for socialization with coworkers, at a few of the community work sites, other opportunities emerged as well. For instance, Gabrielle, who worked at a mall, had become friendly with other mall store employees and has filled out applications at several different stores. Because of her time spent in the mall on her way to and from work and breaks, her access to other environments and opportunities increased.

In another case, an individual who was working at a group employment site was offered an individualized position working directly for the employer. Her job coach lamented that while that would have been ideal, it was not a viable option because of transportation issues. This offer is significant because it is one of the few concrete examples from the data of an opportunity created through a relationship that an individual formed through community employment. What seemed important about the nature of relationships formed through community employment were their immediate benefits as identified in the data and new opportunities. Social capital is important in terms of active trading, but also as a latent reserve, to be stored for future use.

Family support of community employment - Help or hindrance?

The support of family members underpinned community employment. Parents' support played a role in whether a person worked in the community and the number of hours an individual worked. Parents were also concerned with the impact of employment on other supports that their son or daughter received. For instance, all parents had concerns about the effect of earnings on their family members' Supplemental Security Income and other public benefits. Families became gatekeepers to full-time community employment and its potentially positive effects. Concerns about benefits were widespread and directly limited the number of hours most worked in the community. The intense fear around loss of benefits led some parents to suggest that individuals should work without getting paid. For instance, Tim's mother said:

It would be interesting if you could negotiate as the guardian with the employer... so as to preclude the possibility of it happening, just shut it off at some point, work free for a couple months a year to [avoid]... getting yourself messed up with Social Security.

This concern over benefits also affected participants who had jobs. For instance, Ron's mother discouraged an employer from giving him a raise because she felt that increase would jeopardize his benefits:

Because I had said to [his supervisor] don't pay him much now because I don't want to go over that limit, and go through that again....and [his job coach] did say he can't make too much money...But instead of giving him raises [to avoid earning too much], they used to give him awards, and he used to get thrilled. She would make a plaque up [about]...the achievements that he made during that year and...he was happy as anything with that.

In one case a service coordinator stressed the importance of working a limited number of hours per week. Without knowledge of benefits planning and work incentives, community employment became viewed as a threat to benefits rather than an opportunity to build social capital. As one mother said:

I guess what they have to do is pay the minimum wage; they can't lower that in any way...but it wasn't for [the employer's] reason. It was done because our coordinator had requested, please don't give him too much money, because we don't want to go over the limit.... We had to reduce his hours...to just five hours a day.

Parents were also concerned about the safety of their children working in the community. Susan's parents went through lengthy negotiations with staff before they felt comfortable allowing her to work in the community. In Marcus's case, one parent was aware that he was working, while the other parent was not because it was felt that he would object. Any reference to the job was avoided, and any support that his parents could have provided for him to maintain relationships at work was unavailable.

Overall, data showed that a form of social capital was created through workplace connections (predominantly in the workshop). In a small number of cases, community employment resulted in significant relationships. Community employment did not increase social

capital per se, but it did produce opportunities not available in the workshop. The role of family members emerged as critical in the support of community employment, and its potential for social capital development.

Discussion

Through its reciprocal interdependence, social capital may make community supports a more effective alternative to traditional formalized supports for people with ID. Interdependence of community members reduces the need for complex and regimented “systems.” To build social capital, however, is to take risks. The payoffs (i.e., community employment) may outweigh the risks. Policies that encourage people with ID the “dignity of risk” may help provide more opportunities for people with ID to build social capital.

Regarding public policy, McKnight calls for “a rigorous examination of public investments so that we can distinguish between services that lead people out of community and into dependency and those activities that support people in community life” (McKnight, 1995: 123). He goes on to note that these are the “policy paths to inclusion.” The following section discusses the limitations of formal service systems in terms of providing opportunities to build social capital. That section is followed by a practical application of a social capital framework to address the issues identified that impeded greater access to, as well as the social benefits of, community employment.

System level limits, such as inadequate access to transportation and competing goals and priorities around work and socialization, constrained the ability of individuals with ID to participate in community employment, thus curtailing opportunities to create relationships through work. Families could also limit community employment opportunities.

While several families supported the idea of community employment, there were many limits to the risk they were willing to take to support it. Many families of individuals in the workshop supported the idea of group community employment, or enclaves, where they would be assured of adequate formal staff support and supervision. Families concerns were also because of perceived financial risk. The concern of families regarding loss of cash assistance due to increased wages significantly limited the hours that an individual worked per week. This fear was paramount as families went to great lengths, including having their family members work for free and forgoing earned raises, to avoid the possibility of a change in benefit status. That families were thus willing to forgo a key aspect of employment, earning an income, for the possibility of inclusion of the social benefits suggests that families were aware of the social importance of community employment.

Lastly, limits were also identified regarding the nature of the community employment setting itself. While the discussion focuses on the opportunities available to workers with ID, one must also consider opportunities available to typical workers in that setting. At some of the employment sites, coworkers had low status, minimum wage, part-time positions that experienced high turnover - multitude of factors that may be inhospitable to social capital development. As suggested elsewhere (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003; Schnorr, 1990), the part-time nature of the work did seem to affect an individual's ability to benefit from these relationships. People were more likely to form relationships with individuals they see more frequently, and full-time workers are more likely than others to be involved in "occupational communities."

While community employment may lead to paths for informal network building, it was not the only path. Informal network building also occurred within the sheltered workshops. Within the workshops among individuals with ID, meaningful ties grew, often organically.

Because individuals with ID valued their workshop ties, many individuals worked part-time in the community so that these ties could be maintained. Researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners should work together with employers to understand how to provide the critical support elements more typically associated with formal services and adapt them to support people in community employment. The goal and the challenge is for community employment environments to foster reciprocal, mutually beneficial friendships where each relationship member can meaningfully contribute and receive while still providing the consistent support often provided in formalized services. Similar to workshops, community-based workplaces also often have their own “subcultures,” with workers playing distinct and valued roles. Workers with disabilities need time and the consistency typically associated with support from the workshop to be fully part of the culture of their workplaces and have their individual contributions recognized, appreciated, and respected. By doing so, individuals with ID will have opportunities to grow and adapt in ways that are less likely in a closed workshop setting. One such way that community employment may have distinct benefits over workshop employment is that it facilitates more opportunities to bridge connections to external members of the community while still allowing for close bonding with one’s fellow workers.

Bridging and Bonding Social Capital

Relationships that were formed through work can be described within this article in two veins. There are relationships and networks that “bond” and support members within a group, and there are resources that one can access that “bridge” its members to the wider community (Putnam, 2000). Within this study, work relationships provided both bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding and bridging social capital can be thought of in terms of “getting by” and “getting ahead” respectively (Leonard & Onyx, 2003). Other research (e.g. Putnam and

Feldstein, 2003) as well as the present research, confirm that bridging connections are harder to build than bonding ones. In other words, it is harder to connect with individuals who are not immediately or outwardly identified as sharing important characteristics. The challenge is for community employment settings to foster relationships through more diverse shared identities- instead of “individual with a disability” as the identity, the shared identity becomes “co-worker.”

In the present study, social capital among individuals with ID produces bonds by promoting links within member groups to shared networks. On the other hand, bridging social capital connects us to people, places, and ideas that otherwise would not be as readily accessible. O’Brien, Philips, and Patsiorkovsky (2005) note that bonding social capital can be so insular that it blocks pathways to more inclusive bridging social capital. Others have noted that bonding social capital may have limited value in terms of promoting social mobility or reducing inequality (Morgan & Sorenson, 1999).

Support bridging among families who are experienced in facilitating community connections. Many parents, in this study and in others (e.g. Migliore, 2006) expressed concerns about community employment. Migliore’s study found that the top concerns of family members about community employment related to transportation, long-term placement, safety, work hours, and SSI benefits. To address these concerns, professionals can connect families with other families who have had success in supporting individuals with ID to work in the community. Families whose sons or daughters had prior paid-work experience were more often in favor of individual employment than families of individuals who have not worked in the community (Migliore, 2006). By sharing their stories through community forums, family advocacy group meetings, and other avenues, parents and siblings may become more comfortable with the idea of community employment, including its potential risks and benefits.

Foster bridging with other professionals in the field. Families have uneven knowledge about supports and opportunities for employment. One of the most frequently cited concerns of parents of those already working in the community, as well as parents of workshop participants, was the effect that working could have on jeopardizing public assistance benefits. Parents did not seem to be aware of the potential of the increase in earnings from community employment to offset the loss of assistance from public benefits. Moreover, if individuals were employed more hours, they would have greater access to private, employer-based health coverage. Family members, individuals with ID, and their staff need to have accurate information in order to make informed decisions. Additionally, staff and families seemed to pass on information they have on SSI benefits and earnings ceilings to employers, thus planting seeds for employers to believe that individuals with disabilities cannot work full-time.

Social workers can provide knowledge to families that will help them to understand the importance of community membership and resources to encourage it. These include linkages to other formalized services, such as community employment providers, local Vocational Rehabilitation offices that support individuals in going to work, and benefits planning counselors who can help families understand how public benefits and other supports may be affected by employment. By connecting families with different resources, social workers themselves serve a bridging function between families and employment opportunities.

Conclusion

A social capital framework is a useful tool for understanding the relationships of people with ID that develop through work. While important ties were formed within the sheltered workshop, both among individuals and their staff, many opportunities for social capital building within the community employment sample were curtailed by a variety of factors. There is a

continuing need for professionals to provide support and resources for families and individuals to nurture external relationships that can help individuals with ID become more fully embedded within the folds of local communities.

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Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample

Demographics	Northeast		Southeast		Northeast		Overall	
	sheltered workshop		sheltered workshop		community employment		sample	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>								
White (non Hispanic or Latino)	10	83%	5	62.5%	9	100%	24	83 %
Black (non-Hispanic or Latino)	0	0%	3	37.5%	0	0%	3	10%
White (Hispanic or Latino)	2	17%	0	0%	0	0%	2	7%
<i>Sex</i>								
Male	5	42%	2	25%	5	56%	12	41%
Female	7	58%	6	75%	4	44%	17	59%
<i>Age</i>								
Mean age	37.4		44		44		41.8	

Appendix 1: Interview Guides
Individual Protocol (Sheltered Workshop Sample)

Domain 1: Working

Please tell me about your job or what you do during the day.

What do you like about it?

What don't you like about it?

Do you have staff that help you there?

(if yes) how do you feel about them?

If you didn't work there, what would you rather do?

Where else have you worked besides here? Can you tell me about those experiences?

Domain 2: Spending time with friends

Tell me about the people who you work with, or your friends at work.

What about friends outside of work?

What do you like about your friends?

What do your friends do for you? What do you do for them?

What do you like to do when you're not working? What do you do for fun?

Domain 3: Participation in the community

Are you part of any groups, organizations, or clubs? (e.g. self-advocacy groups, sports teams, other recreational groups) If so, can you tell me about them?

Do you ever go to church or synagogue, or other religious places? (if yes) how often do you go?

Who do you go with?

Do you ever do any volunteer work (work in the community that you do not get paid for)?

Has anyone ever talked to you about voting in elections? Have you ever gone to a voting booth and voted for a candidate?

Domain 4: Living

Tell me about where you live. Who do you live with? Do you like it there?

Domain 5: Goals for the future

What do you want for your life in the future?

Do you want a different type of job?

Do you want a more money from your job?

Do you want to have more relationships/friends/fun things to do when you're not working?

Individual Protocol (Community Employment Sample)

Domain 1: Working

Please tell me about your job or what you do during the day.

What do you like about it?

What don't you like about it?

Do you have staff that help you there?

(if yes) how do you feel about him/her?

Tell me about your co-workers

Tell me about your supervisor

If you didn't work there, what would you rather do?

How involved were you in deciding where you would work? Did people listen to what you had to say? Did you end up working where you wanted?

Anything you would change about your job?

Where else have you worked besides here? Can you tell me about those experiences?

Domain 2: Spending time with friends

Tell me about the people who you work with, or your friends at work.

What about friends outside of work?

What do you like about your friends?

What do your friends do for you? What do you do for them?

What do you like to do when you're not working? What do you do for fun?

Domain 3: Participation in the community

Are you part of any groups, organizations, or clubs? (e.g. self-advocacy groups, sports teams, other recreational groups) If so, can you tell me about them?

Do you ever go to church or synagogue, or other religious places? (if yes) how often do you go?

Who do you go with?

Do you ever do any volunteer work (work in the community that you do not get paid for)?

Has anyone ever talked to you about voting in elections? Have you ever gone to a voting booth and voted for a candidate?

Domain 4: Living

Tell me about where you live. Who do you live with? Do you like it there?

Domain 5: Goals for the future

What do you want for your life in the future?

Do you want a different type of job?

Do you want a more money from your job?

Do you want to have more relationships/friends/fun things to do when you're not working?

Domain 6: The workshop experience and the community experiences (if relevant)

What was it been like moving (from the workshop) to your job in the community? Do you like your job in the community better than working in the workshop—or did you like the workshop

better? Do you miss anything about the workshop? If so, what? Do you ever see your friends from the workshop? How and how often?

Has working in the community been like you thought it would be?

Working in the community- how has it affected your life? Is your life any different now that it was before? (e.g. how much money you can make, how that affects your lifestyle; do you have more/less, or different friends; more to do in your free time, less to do in your free time)

Has it affected your life in any other ways we haven't talked about yet?

Is there anything else you think we haven't covered related to your job and how it might affect the other parts of your life?

Family Protocol (Sheltered Workshop and Community Employment Sample)

Domain 1: Current work and work history

How long has X been at his current place of employment? What does he do there?

Do you have a sense about how s(he) feels about working there? Likes/ dislikes about it? (if in a workshop) Has X ever tried out, or looked for a job in the community? If so, what happened?

Can you talk about previous jobs X has had?

Have you talked to X about where (s)he might rather work? What about where (s)he would want to work in the future?

Domain 2: Friends/Home life

Who does X spend time with at work? Who are his/her friends/ co-workers?

Who does X spend time with outside of work?

What does (s)he like to do for fun?

What is X's living situation like?

Domain 3: Participation in the community

Is X part of any groups, organizations, or clubs? (e.g. self-advocacy groups, sports teams, other recreational groups) If so, can you tell me about them?

Does X ever go to church or synagogue, or other religious places? (if yes) how often? With whom does X go?

Does X ever do any volunteer work (unpaid work in the community)?

Has anyone ever talked to X about voting in elections? Has X ever gone to a voting booth and voted for a candidate?

Domain 4: Goals

Have you talked with X about his/her career goals? If so, what are they?

Any steps taken to reach these goals? If yes, what?

Do you have a sense about X's other goals, beyond work? If so, what are they?

Domain 5: The workshop experience and the community experiences (if relevant)

What has it been like moving (from the workshop) for X to move to a job in the community?

Which did X seem to prefer? Is there anything X misses about the workshop? Does X see friends from the workshop?

Has working in the community been like you thought it would be?

Working in the community- how has it affected X's life? Any different now that it was before? (e.g. wages, how that affects lifestyle; more/less, or different friends; more/less to do in free time)

Has it affected X's life in any other ways we haven't talked about yet?

Staff Protocol (Sheltered Workshop and Community Employment Sample)***Domain 1: Current work and work history***

How long has X worked at his current job? What are his/her responsibilities?

Do you have a sense about how X feels about working his work? If so, from your perspective, how does (s)he feel about it?

(if in the workshop) Have there been any attempts to find X a job in the community in the past? If so, what happened?

What other/previous jobs has X had?

Have you talked to X about where (s)he might rather be working now?

Domain 2: Spending times with friends/family

Who does X spend time with at work? (e.g if in workshop, staff/ co-workers?)

Do you know who X spends time with outside of work?

What do you know about X's living situation?

Domain 3: Participation in the community

Is X part of any groups, organizations, or clubs? (e.g. self-advocacy groups, sports teams, other recreational groups) If so, can you tell me about them?

Do you know if X ever go to church or synagogue, or other religious places? (if yes) how often?

With whom does X go?

Does X ever do any volunteer work (unpaid work in the community)?

Do you know if anyone ever talked to X about voting in elections? Has X ever gone to a voting booth and voted for a candidate?

Domain 4: Goals

Have you talked with X about his future goals for employment? If so, what are they?

What steps has (s)he taken to reach these goals?

Do you have a sense about X's other goals, beyond employment? If so, what are they?