

Making the employment interview work for a neurodiverse workforce: Perspectives of individuals on the autism spectrum, employers, and service providers

Hsiao-Ying Chang^{a,*}, Matthew C. Saleh^a, Susanne M. Bruyère^a and Timothy J. Vogus^b

^a*Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA*

^b*Owen Graduate School of Management, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA*

Received 30 September 2022

Revised 13 February 2023

Accepted 27 February 2023

Pre-press 3 June 2023

Abstract.

BACKGROUND: The traditional job interview process can pose numerous barriers which may disadvantage job seekers on the autism spectrum. Further research is needed to understand the specific dynamics of the interview process that pose the most significant challenges to hiring success and possible ways to remediate these challenges.

OBJECTIVE: This qualitative research examined the barriers to, and facilitators of, successful employment interviews from the perspectives of three stakeholder groups: people on the autism spectrum, employers, and service providers.

METHODS: We used qualitative content analysis to derive themes from interviews with 23 participants, including individuals on the autism spectrum with job interview experience, employers with experience in interviewing job candidates on the autism spectrum, and service providers who provide employment support to people on the autism spectrum.

RESULTS: Five themes emerged across stakeholder groups: (1) navigating unpredictability, (2) introducing flexibility and modifications, (3) relationship-building strategies, (4) importance of self-awareness and self-advocacy, and (5) nuances of Self-disclosure. Across the themes, participants described how to modify the interview process to be more inclusive of neurodiversity.

CONCLUSION: We conclude with how rehabilitation service providers can more effectively provide direct services to individuals on the autism spectrum and consult with employers on workplace policies and practices to enhance neurodiversity inclusion.

Keywords: Autism, employer, service provider, employment interview, qualitative research

1. Introduction

People on the autism spectrum¹ have higher levels of unemployment and underemployment than both

¹ “People on the autism spectrum” is used throughout the paper as prior research identified the term as the least polarizing and least offensive in the autism community compared to other terms (Bury et al., 2020; Bottema-Beutel et al., 2021).

*Address for correspondence: Hsiao-Ying (Vicki) Chang, 201 Dolgen Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853, USA. E-mail: vc337@cornell.edu.

people without disabilities and people with other types of disabilities, but there is an increase in the overall employment rate of people with disabilities (Hendricks, 2010; Newman et al., 2011; Roux et al., 2015; Lipscomb et al., 2017). Disparities in employment exist for people on the autism spectrum who are actively seeking work and even those who have above-average education and qualifications compared to the rest of the workforce (Baldwin et al., 2014; Christensen et al., 2016; Frank et al. 2018; Mai, 2018). Two studies found that young adults on the autism spectrum accrue work experiences between high school and early college at a far lower rate (58%) than young adults with other disabilities (Roux et al., 2015) and have lower post-secondary employment than their peers with other disabilities (37% versus 66%) and fewer paid work experiences (23% versus 40%) (Lipscomb et al., 2017). One known barrier to employment for people on the autism spectrum is successfully navigating employers' applicant screening, interviewing, and selection processes (Booth, 2016; Griffiths et al., 2016). In particular, the employment interview has been identified as a place where the hiring process often ends for applicants on the autism spectrum (Krzeminska et al., 2019; Whelpley et al., 2020).

People on the autism spectrum often bring many unique and valuable strengths to employers, including, but neither uniformly or limited to, accuracy, attention to detail, creativity, efficiency, honesty, and reliability (Cope & Remington, 2022; Russell et al., 2019). The employment interview may be particularly challenging for people on the autism spectrum due to unpredictable, unclear, and open-ended interview expectations and procedures (e.g., specific questions asked) (Maras et al., 2020) and an aversive, distracting, and typically novel sensory environment during the interview (Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004; Baldwin et al., 2014). Beyond navigating the employment process, employed individuals on the autism spectrum often continue to face challenges related to disability disclosure and accommodations (provided or not), and limited career development and organizational support often due to a fundamental lack of understanding of neurodiversity (Lindsay et al., 2019).

Job interviews are nuanced social interactions, wherein initial impressions are especially important (Ruben et al., 2015; Cortez et al., 2017). Although individuals on the autism spectrum present in distinct ways (Bury et al., 2019), the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.,

text rev, DSM-5-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2022) characterizes Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as "persistent deficits in social communication and social interactions across multiple contexts" and "restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities." In this paper, we use the term Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), as our conversations with select self-advocates on the autism spectrum indicated a preference for this term over the more medically-used term of ASD. All of these behaviors can be relevant during the high-pressure, complex social interactions of the traditional employment interview (Booth, 2016). The unique social, communication, and behavioral characteristics associated with the autism spectrum raise specific concerns regarding whether typical interview processes and selection criteria (Hendricks, 2010) merely reward neurotypical approaches to self-presentation and social skills that can be particularly challenging for people on the autism spectrum (Chen et al., 2015; Scott et al., 2019).

The employment interview remains one of the most widely used selection methods and is still the most popular employee selection tool across job types and levels (Frauendorfer & Mast, 2015). While the reliability and predictive validity of structured interviews for personnel selection has been widely studied and supported among nondisabled and neurotypical job candidates (e.g., Dixon et al., 2002; Millar & Tracey, 2018), the validity of existing selection procedures specifically for people with disabilities—and especially people with invisible disabilities—remains an open question (Posthuma, et al., 2002; Dalgin & Bellini, 2008; Gröschl, 2013). In other words, prior research overwhelmingly focuses on selection methods (and the validation of them) for neurotypical individuals, which creates a need for qualitatively exploring and understanding how such practices are implemented and experienced for job candidates on the autism spectrum, those supporting them (e.g., job coaches), and employers assessing them (Whelpley et al., 2020). Furthermore, given the observed disparities in interview success and employment outcomes for neurodivergent and neurotypical job candidates, there is a need for bolstering anecdotal evidence of employers interested in increasing the neurodiversity of their workforce (e.g., employees on the autism spectrum) rethinking their hiring and interview processes and practices (Austin & Pisano, 2017). Specifically, richer perspectives on what would make the hiring process more inclusive and supportive of neurodiversity.

Difficulties for job candidates on the autism spectrum are rooted in the basis for employer judgments of hireability. As such, the employment interview often blends assessments of job seekers' personal and behavioral characteristics (e.g., soft skills) and their technical skills for performing the essential features of a job (Huffcutt, 2011; Frauendorfer & Mast, 2015; Jones et al., 2017). Specifically, researchers have noted that employer and interviewer perceptions about demeanor, enthusiasm, listening skills, hygiene, posture, and other factors can be swayed by unconscious biases and normative expectations about what constitutes desirable attributes and how to appropriately display them (Dalgin & Bellini, 2008; Gröschl, 2013; Booth, 2016). For example, delayed response time to interview questions may be misinterpreted as disinterest or lack of preparation (Meena, 2016; Whitaker et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020).

Despite important prior work on employment barriers for people on the autism spectrum, we lack a detailed processual accounting of the employment interview for job seekers on the autism spectrum (Booth, 2016; Maras et al., 2020) from the perspective of relevant stakeholders (i.e., people on the autism spectrum, employers, and service providers). This is limiting because absent a grounded depiction of these experiences, we incompletely understand how and why the employment interview is a locus of disadvantage (e.g., Griffiths et al., 2016; Lindsay et al., 2019; Whelpley et al., 2020) and potential strategies for remediating barriers (Paul et al., 2016; Griffiths et al., 2016). A multi-stakeholder perspective is necessary because prior research has primarily focused on individual interventions to improve interview preparation and strategies to increase success for job seekers on the autism spectrum in the interview process (e.g., Smith et al., 2015; Rosales & Whitlow, 2019) rather than more systemic interventions to modify the interview process itself. Consequently, we need more research describing *how and why* the employment interview is a significant barrier, to better equip job seekers on the autism spectrum with viable strategies and to provide employers and rehabilitation service providers guidance regarding potential accommodations, modifications, and strategies to ameliorate or eliminate these barriers.

Guided by a social model of disability (Oliver, 1990)—which acknowledges that environmental factors (e.g., organizational culture, workplace design) contribute to disabling experiences at work—our research explores the experiences and mechanisms

underlying that can help explain how and why interviews can be impediments to job entry for job seekers on the autism spectrum (Baldwin et al., 2014; Griffiths et al., 2016; Krzeminska et al., 2019; Lindsay et al., 2019; Whelpley et al., 2020). We address this important gap in understanding through a qualitative examination of stakeholder experiences and perspectives related to acquiring (e.g., job interviews) and sustaining employment. Emerging research suggests rehabilitation counselors can help job seekers on the autism spectrum navigate barriers in traditional hiring processes (Brooke et al., 2018; Flower et al., 2019). This study builds on this work to provide insights into specific interview barriers and strategies that people on the autism spectrum, service providers, and employers recommend for overcoming them.

In summary, our purpose is twofold: (1) to explore the lived experience of individuals on the autism spectrum in interviews and understand the perception of employers and service providers about the experience of individuals on the autism spectrum in the interviewing process; and (2) identify resulting barriers and facilitators, as well as ways to systematically address them. Our interviews with 23 participants asked them to reflect on their experiences with interview preparation, the interview itself, and the context in which the interview occurred (e.g., organizational factors, including the overall hiring process).

2. Method

2.1. Researchers

There are four researchers on the research team listed as authors. The researchers have extensive experience conducting qualitative research studies, including the content analysis approach and relevant knowledge contributing to this research topic. The first three authors specialize in employment and disability research. The fourth author is an expert in organizational research. Two of the researchers are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, one researcher is in employment policy, and another researcher is an Autism program director. The researchers worked collaboratively in developing and implementing the study, including conducting interviews and qualitative data analysis, and met regularly to discuss the interpretation of the data and meanings of the findings based on their different expertise.

2.2. Sampling

Participants were recruited from October to December 2019 using convenience sampling through professional networks in which the researchers have existing relationships through previous engagements and snowball sampling with recommendations from the participants. We shared recruitment materials, including electronic flyers, invitations, and informed consent, with the respective organizations and individuals as they supported our recruitment efforts. All recruitment materials were sent in the electronic format and included information about the purpose of the study, eligibility criteria, compensation, and the contact information of the researchers. Eligible individuals were invited to one-on-one interviews or focus groups based on individual participants' availability.

2.3. Participants

The study included three key stakeholder groups of (1) people on the autism spectrum who have job interview and employment experiences; (2) employers with experiences in hiring people on the autism spectrum; and (3) service providers who have experience with supporting people on the autism spectrum in the job search and employment process. In this study, *people on the autism spectrum* refer to participants on the autism spectrum who also have one or more job interview experiences (including internships and full-time employment). *Employer* participants included individuals who both hold managerial responsibilities and have experience hiring individuals on the autism spectrum. The job titles of eligible employer participants may vary with some being line managers or HR professionals. The employers who participated in the study all worked within companies with more than 500 employees and had more than five years of experience hiring and working with employees on the autism spectrum through their company's autism hiring program. *Service provider* participants included both community employment service providers (e.g., job coaches) and career counselors in post-secondary educational organizations. Employment service providers work to support the employment of individuals on the autism spectrum in the community. Career counselors provide career support to university students, including students on the autism spectrum.

There was a total of 23 participants across interviewee types. Participating people on the autism

spectrum ($n = 10$) reported an average of 6.56 years of work experience including four females and six males ranging from recent college graduates to seasoned professionals with experience in multiple industries. Employers ($n = 3$), two females and one male, reported an average of 9.67 years of work experience. Service providers ($n = 10$), eight females and two males, reported an average of 10.44 years of work supporting individuals with disabilities in employment. Individuals on the autism spectrum reportedly worked in various roles. All but two of the participants were currently working in educational settings; one was an independent consultant in the information and communication technology industry, and another is an owner of a firm providing professional consulting services. But several of the participants had also worked in other settings. All employer participants held managerial functions in their companies. Services providers were either in educational settings or the professional and technical services industry providing direct support to their clients on the autism spectrum. Table 1 provides a demographic overview of the participants.

2.4. Data collection

The current study used semi-structured individual and focus group interviews. Institutional Review Board approval was received for the current study. All participants received and agreed to the informed consent prior to participating in the interview. The interview protocol was tailored to each stakeholder group and included additional prompts and follow-up questions. The interview questions explored barriers and facilitators that influence individuals on the autism spectrum's job interview experience and evaluation of job interview performance from different stakeholder groups' perspectives. The researchers first developed the research interview questions to explore employment interview experiences. Before implementing these protocols, we shared the interview protocols with individuals who are part of the stakeholder groups (i.e., key informants, including individuals on the autism spectrum) for feedback and protocol refinement to ensure it used clear and understandable language. This produced wording changes and additional probing questions in our protocols. We learned that some open-ended interview questions might be too broad and vague for participants to answer, so we clarified the wording and added questions. For example, we added a question on the impact of receiving interview questions in advance to the

Table 1
Demographic Overview of the Participants

Overall	<i>n</i>			
Individual on the autism spectrum	10			
Employer	3			
Service Provider	10			
Gender				
Female				
Individual on the autism spectrum	4			
Employer	2			
Service Provider	8			
Male				
Individual on the autism spectrum	6			
Employer	1			
Service Provider	2			
Industry				
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1			
Educational Services	11			
Finance and Insurance	1			
Information and Communication Technology	3			
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	7			
Role				
Individual on the autism spectrum				
Educator	1			
Business Owner	1			
Consultant	1			
Coordinator	1			
Director	1			
Web Developer	1			
Assistant	1			
Peer Support	2			
Receptionist	1			
Employer				
Manager	2			
Coordinator	1			
Service provider				
Career Counselor	3			
Director	3			
Job Coach	3			
Manager	1			
Years of work experience	Mean (SD)	Median	Min	Max
Individual on the autism spectrum	6.56 (6.58)	6	1	20
Employer	9.67 (3.79)	8	7	14
Service provider	10.44 (8.93)	8	1	24

interview when we asked individuals on the autism spectrum to discuss their interview preparation experiences broadly.

Participants could choose to participate in a 45- to 60-minutes one-on-one individual interview or a 90- to 120-minutes group interview with other members of the same stakeholder group (e.g., individuals on the autism spectrum) based on their availability and preferences. Most of the interview sessions were conducted online, except for one service provider focus group and an employer interview took were conducted in person at an Autism at Work conference. The researchers hosted meetings in their private offices except for one focus group with four ser-

vice providers in a private conference room. At least two researchers participated in each interview session, with one researcher being the primary facilitator and another researcher taking session notes, capturing observations and thoughts. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

2.5. Data analysis

Data analysis was performed with qualitative content analysis using an inductive category application approach to identify commonalities within the texts and between interviews (Mayring, 2004). Three researchers were involved in data analysis

using *Dedoose 4.12* qualitative coding software. The researchers began by reading the transcripts and session notes and writing memos. The coding process first involved the researchers' understanding of text content and the application of codes to meaning units. Coding by units of meaning refers to coding words, sentences, paragraphs, or pages that contain meaning or perspective rather than coding by a given parameter of the text (Campbell et al., 2013). Since each researcher has different coding habits and preferences, it is important to establish the coding unit and develop a consensus on appropriate code labels. Therefore, three researchers independently coded the same transcript and then three researchers compared their respective coding units, codes, and code labeling to assess consistency of the approach. After this review, the researchers decided that a coding unit may include sentences or paragraphs instead of words to capture the contextual meaning of the content. We also discussed code labeling structure; for example, all three researchers agreed that one of the first-level codes was *ASC Barriers_hypothetical questions*, which depicted the challenges job seekers on the autism spectrum had in responding to interview questions based on hypothetical situations. All other transcripts were coded and reviewed by at least two researchers. The first researcher read and coded transcripts with first-level coding, with the second researcher checking for consistency. Each code represents the smallest idea. The next step was to reduce the codes and determine categories; codes with similar ideas were sorted into the same category. The researchers reviewed and refined the categories that were generated. The researchers searched for common categories among employers, individuals on the autism spectrum, and service providers and examined consistency and differences in concepts across the three stakeholder groups, followed by making connections of different categories. Themes were identified through analyzing and interpreting how categories, codes and narratives are related to each other and how the relationship can help us understand the nuances of employment interview process for the neurodiverse workforce. Data saturation is reached when there is no new information as the researchers identified similar comments from the participants resulting in the same themes.

2.6. Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the research findings is established through multiple strategies during the

data collection and data analysis phase. To strengthen the credibility of our data collection, we involved key stakeholders in our protocol development and conducted pre-interviews. We asked our expert participants to help us ask the "right questions" in the "right way" that are pertinent to an individual's experience (Pyett, 2003) and recognize the neurodiversity of our participants. To ensure finding consistency, we engaged in a stepwise replication process in that researchers split and analyzed data separately and compared the results. We also performed tested inter-coder reliability to ensure coding accuracy. Inter-coder agreements were calculated for main categories using Cohen's Kappa coefficient. The resulting Kappa Score generated ranged from 0.54 to 1.00 yielding a fair-to-excellent agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The discrepancies were resolved through discussion. We conducted researcher triangulation by the researchers discussing codes and themes and summarizing findings while staying aware of how our professional and personal background might impact our interpretation of the findings.

3. Results

The analysis identified five major themes as participants discussed barriers and facilitators to successful interviews. These overarching themes were identified among all three stakeholder groups. Where there were differing emphases within a theme by different stakeholder groups, subthemes were created. Individuals on the autism spectrum described barriers experienced, and strategies used during the employment interview. Employers described characteristics that they observed from candidates on the autism spectrum and employees who were successful at interviews and strategies adopted by their companies to support job seekers on the autism spectrum. Service providers described their role and strategies for supporting the needs of people on the autism spectrum and employers. When presenting quotes, we use ASC for quotes from participants on the autism spectrum, SP for service providers, and E for employers. Table 2 provides descriptions of the themes and subthemes.

3.1. Navigating unpredictability

The first theme was that success in navigating the interview process relied on awareness and under-

Table 2
Descriptions of the themes and categories

Theme and category	Description
Navigating unpredictability	Acknowledging there are many uncertain situations in the employment process
Knowing what to expect in advance	Understanding of the interview process, environmental/physical spaces, and workplace expectations
Interpreting questions and comments	Ability to make inferences regarding vague questions, directions, or comments
Introducing flexibility and modifications	Changes made to the structure of interviews
Relationship building strategies	Promoting neurodiversity awareness and developing positive and meaningful relationships
Masking as a strategy	Performing fit by emulating the seemingly desired behaviors of neurotypical individuals
Importance of self-awareness and self-advocacy	Awareness of support needs and ability to speak up for oneself to receive them
Nuances of self-disclosure	Decision-making regarding disability disclosure and impact on workplace experiences

standing of employers' expectations and reducing ambiguity. All stakeholder groups highlighted that the challenges of navigating unfamiliar situations and physical environments could, in turn, lead to unpredictable encounters that disadvantage candidates on the autism spectrum. On the other hand, ambiguity in the selection processes can lead to challenges unrelated to actual ability preventing successful interview performance and hiring. Thus, creating familiarity and predictability with processes, environments, and expectations (both related to interpersonal and job requirements) was an important facilitator for interview and employment success. Two categories pertain to navigating and mitigating unpredictability in the selection process were: (1) knowing what to expect in advance and (2) interpreting questions and comments during the interview process.

3.1.1. *Knowing what to expect in advance*

This category highlights people on the autism spectrum's experiences navigating unfamiliar or unpredictable environments, processes, and employer expectations. Participants on the autism spectrum indicated that positive employment experiences resulted from having a clear understanding of the interview process and expectations but consistently stated that both are rarely known in advance. Employment challenges for individuals on the autism spectrum arose when they frequently did not know what to expect during the employment interview. One participant on the autism spectrum (ASC1) suggested that when an interview process "reduces the hidden curriculum, [and] gets into talking about the job faster" make the process more effective for people on the autism spectrum. Multiple participants on the autism spectrum shared that being structure-

and rule-oriented does not mean that they cannot work with changes and unpredictability. They can adapt to changes when prepared and have expectations communicated to them. Learning by experience was frequently mentioned as a strategy to approach unpredictability in interviews. Participants from all three stakeholder groups noted that preparation and previously having interviews, internships, and work experiences were important facilitators to successful interviews. Multiple participants on the autism spectrum reported that they were currently finding success in handling different interview situations, but that this was achieved through trial-and-error experiences and learning on their own over time.

In terms of environmental and processual factors, making the employment interview process more predictable was also often mentioned as a strategy employed by service providers. Service provider participants described steps such as providing workshops, seminars, or individual coaching, for both job seekers on the autism spectrum and employers, to mitigate barriers related to unpredictability in the employment interview. Another factor discussed was the unpredictability of the physical environment of the employment interview. Individuals on the autism spectrum noted several challenges related to sensory overload due to environmental distractions, including temperature (too hot or cold), sound (noise of people eating or cars on the street), or visuals (lighting or people passing by). To address this, one service provider (SP2) noted that "[it is about] predictability, such as being mindful of the space. We try to get into the employment setting beforehand to do an environmental assessment and prepare the individual to be placed on the job." A career counselor, who worked with college students on job preparation, shared,

The willingness to accept feedback, be able to use that feedback in a meaningful and actionable way [is critical], so coaching throughout the student's four years really prepares a student to be able to do that in the workplace because they're accustomed to getting that feedback and kind of planning. (SP7)

Employer participants also described processes used to minimize uncertainty and sensory overload through clear expectations and familiarizing neurodivergent candidates with the both the physical environment and hiring and interview process. Although not every employer described the same strategies, examples included providing interview questions in advance, walking candidates through the interview process at the beginning of the interview, and introducing the candidate to the work environment before the day of the interview to facilitate familiarity with the space where the interview will be held.

3.1.2. *Interpreting questions and comments*

Challenges in comprehending interviewer comments and questions during the employment interview have contributed to difficulties in navigating unfamiliar situations, in turn impacting performances. All stakeholder groups described the difficulties posed by asking vague interview questions with respect to neurodivergent job applicants. Vagueness was characterized as meaning open-ended and hypothetical/situational questions. Examples provided of open-ended interview questions included "tell me about yourself" or "what are your strengths?" Examples provided of a hypothetical question included "What would you do if you experienced conflict at work?" Participants on the autism spectrum and service provider participants indicated that behavioral response questions could be perceived as hypothetical by candidates on the autism spectrum, because they might not have encountered those scenarios, and might find it challenging to ascertain what the question is trying to elicit. As one individual on the autism spectrum explained,

The question, "Tell me about a time that you didn't get along with a co-worker?" is challenging because, often I don't recognize I had a problem with a co-worker. Then when they ask, "How did you solve the problem with a co-worker?" I think the correct answer is how you need to go to somebody that was a little higher up in the chain to help you work through the details because you could

not work it out yourself, but that is not what is going to come into my mind. What's going to come into my mind is something like "I don't know." (ASC2)

Multiple participants on the autism spectrum noted that they are better at responding to questions on job skills with clearer, less open-ended, expectations for responding. Service providers described recommending technical skills and task assessments, rather than overly relying on question-and-answer formats during interviews to employers to improve fairness in evaluating candidates on the autism spectrum. Employer participants also acknowledged incorporating these assessments to more-directly examine the skills needed to perform a job rather than prioritizing "soft skills" that might be less directly related to job success, particularly in jobs where teamwork and interpersonal skills are less important. Challenges in interpreting comments can also occur elsewhere in the early stages of the hiring process, for instance when candidates are reading the job descriptions and deciding whether to apply for the job. Service providers noted that ambiguities in wording can lead to candidates on the autism spectrum ruling or selecting themselves out of a job elsewhere in the application stage, with one commenting that,

People with autism read the job descriptions in a literal way. If it said two years of experience required, even if they had some experience, they then thought, 'Well, I'm not fit for this and I'm not going to apply.' (SP8)

3.1.3. *Introducing flexibility and modifications*

Participants in each stakeholder group described the need to have a flexible hiring process and provided specific ideas about how flexibility can be achieved and implemented by employers. Service providers noted that the traditional interview process was often seen as ineffective in identifying neurodivergent talent because of the rigid job interview methods, settings, and criteria where non-job specific attributes of candidates (eye contact, body language, "unusual" behavior) are often the focus rather than job skills. Introducing flexibility into the interview was a major consideration among participants from all stakeholder groups. Participants on the autism spectrum emphasized that because everyone on the autism spectrum has different needs, allowing flexibility in determining the preferred interview setting was important, where some people perform better at one-on-one in-person interviews, others will prefer a

phone interview, and others will prefer interacting in small groups.

Another way to introduce flexibility into the employment interview, described by both people on the autism spectrum and service providers, was allowing more time to sit with questions and prepare answers to account for different ways of processing information. One service provider noted that they encourage employers to send interview questions in advance to help ensure higher quality responses more reflective of underlying skills. This service provider also accompanies job seekers on the autism spectrum to interviews and will assist by offering prompts if the individual does not understand a question.

Most employers' descriptions of implementing flexibility focused on the employment interview protocol, such as modifying interview questions, letting candidates pick where they would like to sit during an interview, or avoiding using a panel interview with multiple questioners, but noted more systematic changes take time and are often difficult because of habits surrounding traditional selection methods. As one employer (E2) shared, "A fundamental disconnect has always been the extent to which an organization is actually flexible and wants to pursue more innovative and integrative [hiring]."

All suggestions for a flexible interview process highlight the core understanding that individual differences necessitate modifications to create a comfortable space that accommodates different needs and allows candidates to perform at their best and demonstrate their true skills. Among service providers, overcoming some rigidities in the employment interview was described as often being achieved through the employer's willingness to design neurodiversity-specific internship programs, or to engage with service providers during the recruitment process to facilitate a flexible and accommodating process and environment. One service provider (SP6) noted that the internship hiring approach provides one alternative, giving individuals on the autism spectrum "opportunities to work and demonstrate what they are able to do" and to receive timely feedback from personnel trained to understand neurodivergent needs. This provider noted, however, that few employers use this approach because they view it as a time-consuming evaluation process.

3.2. *Relationship building strategies*

The third theme involved relationship-building strategies for individuals on the autism spectrum

to facilitate the hiring (i.e., applying, interviewing) process. All three stakeholder groups identified challenges for people on the autism spectrum in understanding social norms and building networks to facilitate job search efforts. For example, one service provider (SP10) noted that small social networks can limit guidance and feedback in ways that affect "[a person with autism's] ability to confidently go into the job search because [they don't have] peer networking and referrals and [are therefore] unable to practice interviews with peers." Across stakeholder groups, there was a focus on neurodiversity awareness to aid belonging, openness, and meaningful interpersonal relationships and collaboration. As we discuss in the next section, when awareness was lacking, candidates and employees felt pressure to "mask" their autism to appear more neurotypical, during the employment interview.

One of the barriers is the lack of autism and neurodiversity awareness during employment interviews (i.e., with interviewers). Both service providers and employers described the value of having hiring managers and supervisors with more experience and understanding of autism to promote neurodiversity inclusion in employment. Service providers and individuals on the autism spectrum recommended similar strategies to build an inclusive workplace, including awareness training and mentorship support to build personal familiarity. Among employer participants, a common organizational approach was to provide sensitivity training to HR professionals, supervisors, and hiring managers – either general training on autism and neurodiversity or preparation for a particular team member (e.g., when a person on the autism spectrum joins a team or requests an accommodation). According to employers, either approach to training should also focus on pervasive generalizations and myths about the capabilities of neurodivergent individuals, ideally to rethink screening and hiring standards and HR policies that do not explicitly consider neurodiversity. However, employers with experience in autism-hiring initiatives also noted that there are potential limitations to sensitivity training that is too general to guide decision-making. For example, one employer (E3) shared, "I personally struggle with the generalization of working with individuals that are neurodiverse. I think [the training] could help from an awareness perspective," but the employer was concerned that the general understanding of neurodiversity might reinforce stereotypes. Similarly, a participant on the autism spectrum emphasized some of the limitations of making gener-

alizations about candidates on the autism spectrum, stating,

It is important for people to understand the struggles and differences in the Autistic community. Don't try to stick us in a box. One of us can be extremely technically minded; it doesn't mean we're all tech geniuses. One of us could have difficulty stringing a complete sentence; it doesn't mean we all stumble. Stress the fact that there are some neurological differences [that] can make things different. (ASC9)

Furthermore, employer participants indicated that sensitivity training alone may not be enough. Many managers continue to need support even after being trained, and sometimes training efforts do not adequately incorporate hiring professionals. Multiple employers also noted that well-trained or experienced supervisors (e.g., HR professionals and supervisors), who can have a more-nuanced understanding of the needs of applicants on the autism spectrum, may not always be present to support neurodiverse job applicants or influence hiring decisions.

3.2.1. *Masking as a strategy*

The use of masking as a strategy to navigate challenging situations and meet social demands were identified as a category of demonstrating relationship building. Masking refers to changing personal behaviors to assimilate the behaviors of others who are present in the same social context (Robinson et al., 2020). Multiple accounts of using masking as a strategy in social situations were salient in the comments of people on the autism spectrum. For instance, one participant on the autism spectrum explained that,

Missing some of the fundamental communication tools means [interactions] can be very baffling and confusing. When I'm mimicking and doing the appropriate thing at the right time, I'm kind of becoming part of the group; like somebody will say something and everybody starts nodding and giving each other [a look] and then I'm nodding my head and [do the same thing]. Half the time I don't have the first clue why this person said that or why this person responded that way. (ASC9)

Multiple participants on the autism spectrum indicated that these practices and experiences did not necessarily contribute to a sense of belonging. In fact, feelings of inauthenticity and stress were shared as people described masking. Individuals on the autism spectrum generally were aware of the moments

when they used the strategy and described both its social benefits and mental costs. For example, one participant on the autism spectrum stated, "There's something bizarrely satisfying about that when [masking] works, but when it doesn't, they [neurotypical colleagues] don't understand why you all of a sudden don't look like them and you don't understand what you did to upset everyone." (ASC5) The constant self-monitoring was described as psychologically stressful. Another individual on the autism spectrum shared,

It always seems like I have a different mask to put on for every social situation when none of them are actually true. It is just me trying to cater to things that I'm not really sure about, and that feels a little exhausting. Or completely exhausted. (ASC8)

Although employers and service providers did not explicitly address this subtheme, all three stakeholder groups acknowledged that many interview processes and the work environments are constructed with neurotypical assumptions about body language (e.g., head nodding, eye contact, vocal pitch). As one service provider (SP6) noted, many companies need guidance to ensure a "psychologically safe environment for people to be [their] authentic self."

3.3. *Importance of self-awareness and self-advocacy*

Another major theme, present across all stakeholder groups, involved the importance of knowing personal traits, needs, strengths, and skills (i.e., self-awareness) and the ability to self-advocate using that knowledge during the employment interview. Self-advocacy refers to seeking out help and communicating personal needs in workplace settings. Individuals on the autism spectrum discussed how awareness of their strengths, skills, and neurodivergent traits coupled with the ability to communicate those strengths and traits clearly, was helpful for both getting and retaining jobs. One participant on the autism spectrum shared their experience in negotiating accommodations, noting the importance of identifying not only what their accommodation needs were, but also being open that they were engaging in a process of advocating for those needs. The participant noted, "I point out to them part of what [I am] doing is advocacy," (ASC9) and the employer later agreed to be flexible and accommodating. This also overlapped with the roles that service providers described, both in

developing job seekers on the autism spectrum' self-advocacy skills (e.g., through advocacy guides and worksheets, role-playing exercises), and bridging that training with employers to facilitate awareness and flexibility, as well as valuable feedback from supervisors and hiring personnel. As one service provider shared,

The ability to advocate for themselves for sure during the interview process. If you do have an individual that is nonverbal or is not as quick to speak up, it is harder for them to get a job because the employer might see it as a major challenge. (SP1)

On the employer side, all participants noted that it is valuable when candidates and employees on the autism spectrum articulate their needs, acknowledging that there is often a lack of neurodiversity awareness in the workplace, and open communication may need to be a two-way learning experience for employees and employers.

3.4. Nuances of self-disclosure

Participants discussed the issues of self-disclosure and how disclosure intersects with self-advocacy. First, there are several reasons for disclosure. For example, employers seek to identify individuals on the autism spectrum as their organizations actively recruit neurodiverse candidates. Therefore, their hiring process encourages individuals to self-identify. They also often recruit through referrals from service providers, in which case the individuals are pre-identified as people on the autism spectrum. Employers noted that one of the benefits of disclosure is that it promotes awareness within an organization and facilitates conversation at work that goes beyond generalizations about neurodiversity. One employer (E2) shared, "By disclosing to the team, getting autism awareness to the team, they're able to be humanized, for example, if they had a tough day," and that "gives other colleagues opportunities to accommodate."

However, all three stakeholder groups noted that disclosure is complicated and does not always benefit the employee. These instances usually occur when the hiring team does not have neurodiversity awareness or experience, and disclosure leads to discomfort for the person on the autism spectrum without noticeably activating accommodations or improving communications (e.g., clear expectations) or workplace conditions (e.g., physical environment).

Service providers generally advise disclosure when requesting accommodations but noted that this general advice might be complex and is not applicable for some candidates on the autism spectrum. For example, social or communication challenges are not always obviously translated into a specific accommodation, especially when the hiring and supervisory personnel lack understanding or experience with neurodiversity. Most participants on the autism spectrum shared that they do not disclose immediately, but rather decide to disclose when they need specific accommodations or are applying through an autism hiring program. Many individuals on the autism spectrum learn when and how to disclose over time, as the decision to disclose is a learning process. Some participants on the autism spectrum noted the benefits of early disclosure during the hiring process and its alignment with self-advocacy. For example, one participant on the autism spectrum explained how disclosure before an interview can help a hiring professional be prepared and understand "why sometimes there is no eye contact." Two participants on the autism spectrum shared that they always disclose to grow awareness of neurodiversity among employers and exercise self-advocacy.

4. Discussion

The goal of this research was to richly depict barriers to and facilitators of job candidates on the autism spectrum navigating employment interviews successfully. We focused on interviewing because prior research has identified it as especially challenging for people on the autism spectrum. The findings suggest that people on the autism spectrum, employers, and service providers are consistent in acknowledging aspects of the hiring process and specifically the way in which interviewing is conducted that can disadvantage qualified applicants on the autism spectrum.

4.1. Recommendations for employers

The findings suggest possible interventions for redesigning interview processes that are consistent with, but offer more process richness than, prior work (e.g., Booth, 2016). First, employers can alter their interview process by making it easier to navigate for job candidates on the autism spectrum by (1) providing candidates with more knowledge of what to expect prior to the interview (including specific questions), and (2) taking steps to reduce sensory

distractions in the interview and allow candidates to preview the environment prior to the interview. Second, employers can adapt how they conduct their interviews by: (1) modifying or removing open-ended and hypothetical questions in favor of questions or tasks that assess specific, job-relevant skills, (2) exercising flexibility around the speed of responses (e.g., more time to respond), interview format (e.g., group size, remote/in-person), and expectations regarding body language (e.g., eye contact, facial expressions), and (3) providing more explicit guidance (e.g., prompts and follow-ups) and feedback during the interview. Third, employers can engage in approaches that make expectations and requirements clearer and more precise for candidates on the autism spectrum (e.g., providing more detailed expectations, more frequent and specific feedback, see Maras et al., 2019 for an approach to question asking).

In addition to interview adaptations, employers should implement neurodiversity training, but in a more holistic way. Training should be a starting point, and managers and hiring personnel who receive the training should be the ones conducting interviews and helping to (re)design and modify interview practices or developing alternative approaches (e.g., internships). One takeaway that cut across the major themes was that workplace culture can affect the openness and self-advocacy experiences of candidates on the autism spectrum (see also Romualdez et al., 2021). While all stakeholder groups indicated that self-advocacy could increase employer understanding and willingness to accommodate, most employers admitted that often neurodiversity awareness is lacking in organizations, and participants on the autism spectrum described feeling pressure and anxiety to “mask,” or exhibit socially expected behaviors in work settings. The experience of masking during the employment interview, and the anxiety around doing so described by participants on the autism spectrum, may be of particular interest in guiding service providers and employers. The training could potentially focus on educating hiring professionals and employers about popular heuristics used in employment interviews (speed of response, eye contact, vocal tone were examples mentioned) that may unwittingly bias against people with neurodivergent traits and provide alternate approaches that make candidates feel more comfortable and psychologically safe (Romualdez et al., 2021). This points to a key issue outlined elsewhere in the literature: the lack of validation for applicant evaluation practices with neurodivergent individuals, and the need for more

research exploring ways to mitigate bias in selection processes (Gröschl, 2013; Whelpley et al., 2020). Because the issue of disclosure was described as complex by our participants on the autism spectrum as well as across related literature (e.g., Romualdez et al., 2021; Johnson & Joshi, 2016) job candidates are forced to weigh the benefits of disclosure in terms of receiving necessary accommodations and supports and perhaps greater understanding (from the interviewer and organization) with the potential costs of discrimination and stigma. This difficult cost-benefit analysis candidates are forced to make reaffirms the importance of creating a neurodiversity-inclusive work environment that includes making modifications to organizational processes like alternative pathways to employment and more flexible hiring practices.

Correcting misperceptions about the capability of neurodivergent individuals and modify human resource policies to be more neurodiversity-inclusive may also be helpful. For instance, proactively partnering with service providers to ensure a supportive job coaching and support system is in place to foster greater inclusion and interview and employment success.

4.2. *Implications for vocational rehabilitation counseling practice and client services*

Service providers often play the role of bridging information and communication gaps between employers and job seekers with disabilities, including people on the autism spectrum (Martin et al., 2022). Study findings have significant implications for rehabilitation counselor practice both in the provision of services to clients, as well as in facilitating stronger partnerships with and providing consultation services to employers. Participants on the autism spectrum in this study emphasized the importance of having employment support, such as pre-interview training and coaching regarding self-advocacy. This suggests that it is crucial for rehabilitation counseling service providers to be engaged in job development through career development. Many of the service providers interviewed noted that having a mentor-mentee program has been an especially effective strategy to support both employers and people on the autism spectrum. Building such an infrastructure could expedite the learning of people on the autism spectrum who have primarily relied on their personal (and often unguided) trial-and-error learning.

Service providers can also assist clients on the autism spectrum in preparing for interviews that many find challenging through training programs or one-on-one support. Based on our findings, this should include role-playing different situations (e.g., responding to interview questions, team-based work), developing a portfolio of employment materials (e.g., creating a video résumé, completing a job application), and pre-site visits to companies to familiarize the candidate with the physical environment of the job interview. Additionally, service providers can help make sense of job descriptions such that candidates on the autism spectrum do not select themselves out of jobs unnecessarily (e.g., due to a long and confusing job description).

Our findings also reveal the importance of service provider and employer relationships to gain a deeper understanding of job requirements and employer needs. Doing so provides a foundation for preparing the employers on how to communicate with employees on the autism spectrum in advance of the interview and how to set clear expectations. Better relationships can also create the opportunity for setting up a pre-interview day visit, which can help reduce anxiety and stress and provide an occasion for the candidate to work or complete tasks before a formal interview. High-quality service provider-employer relationships also ease obtaining interview questions in advance to structure preparation and enhance candidates' interview performance. Overall, these tailored interventions can better assure an appropriate matching of candidates to jobs.

Although service providers broadly encourage disclosure, our participants also note that this should be done with some caution. Especially where the person being asked to disclose has multiply marginalized identities. One of the female participants on the autism spectrum elaborated, "Autistic women have different presentations and different needs than Autistic men, [because] there is a gendered social standard," which influences their struggles on whether to disclose or not. In fact, women on the autism spectrum are less likely than men to disclose because of work-related reasons (e.g., to get others to take their ideas and work seriously, to aid collaborative work with classmates or colleagues) (Cage & Troxell-Whitman, 2019). Therefore, intersectional lenses in providing guidance on disclosure is an important recommendation for service providers considering people with multiple marginalized identities.

4.3. Limitations and future directions

Findings from the current study should be interpreted within the context of study limitations. First, the employers we interviewed all worked at organizations with an autism hiring program. These employers generally have more extensive experience and organizational support for hiring people on the autism spectrum compared to employers at organizations without an autism hiring program. As such, their experiences cannot be generalized to represent the perspective of all employers. It would be useful for future research to include employers without autism hiring programs and smaller organizations to explore how they support job seekers on the autism spectrum during an interview. Despite being model employers, our employer participants continued to experience organizational and attitudinal barriers. It is believed that most employers also face these challenges, if not to a greater extent. While our employer sample is limited to larger companies, the finding highlights the importance for all sizes of employers to partner with vocational rehabilitation service providers when hiring people on the autism spectrum as the vocational rehabilitation service providers play a critical role in guiding inclusive hiring and retention practice (Rashid, Thompson-Hodgetts & Nicholas, 2018; Scott et al., 2017). Secondly, although mentioned by one of our participants, this study did not explore how different personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, race, co-occurring disabilities) shape the employment experiences of people on the autism spectrum. Therefore, future studies should explore how people on the autism spectrum and other marginalized identities may experience employment challenges differently. Moreover, future research should also examine how service providers can most effectively mediate between the needed support for individuals on the autism spectrum to flourish at work and addressing the constraints and concerns of supervisors. In so doing, can we build a workplace that not only contributes to improved inclusion for people on the autism spectrum, but for the workforce as a whole.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study provide themes that illustrate how the traditional interview process influences the successful employment experience from the perspectives of people on the autism spectrum, service providers, and employers. The findings demonstrated

the critical need to design workplace inclusion strategies which; (1) foster employment process predictability, such as pre-interview preparation for people on the autism spectrum, (2) build relationships between employees and employers, (3) encourage self-advocacy and self-disclosure, (4) introduce flexibility, and allow modifications during the interview process, and (5) support safe disclosure. As we continue to understand the needs of both job seekers on the autism spectrum and employers, it will be critical that we also identify how rehabilitation counselors can best contribute as an intermediary in this process to heighten the likelihood of long-term success.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Funding

The study was supported by Track B-1 (AI and Future Jobs) Empowering Neurodiverse Populations for Employment through National Science Foundation (NSF) Inclusion AI and Innovation Science (B-6970), RAISE C-Accel Phase I Grant funded to Vanderbilt University, Frist Center for Autism and Innovation, Nashville, TN, USA and PTE Federal Award No. 1936970, Subaward No. UNIV61108 awarded to K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. at Cornell University, ILR School, Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, Ithaca, NY, USA.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to extend their gratitude to all participating employers, individuals on the autism spectrum, and service providers for taking the time to share their valuable experiences on the employment interview process. They also want to thank all staff from the Yang-Tan Institute and First Center for Autism and Innovation for their assistance in distributing information and recruitment.

Ethics statement

The research obtained ethical approval from Cornell University's Institutional Review Board for Human Participants (Protocol ID #1909009069).

Informed consent

All participants received and reviewed informed consent information from the researchers and provided verbal consent before participating in the study.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2022). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed. text rev.).
- Austin, R. D., & Pisano, G. P. (2017). Neurodiversity as a competitive advantage. *Harvard Business Review*, 95(3), 96-103.
- Baldwin, S., Costley, D., & Warren, A. (2014). Employment activities and experiences of adults with high-functioning Autism and Asperger's Disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44, 2440-2449. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-0142112-z>
- Booth, J. (2016). *Autism equality in the workplace: Removing barriers and challenging discrimination*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Bottema-Beutel, K., Kapp, S. K., Lester, J. N., Sasson, N. J., & Hand, B. N. (2021). Avoiding ableist language: Suggestions for autism researchers. *Autism in Adulthood*, 3(1), 18-29.
- Brooke, V., Brooke, A. M., Schall, C., Wehman, P., McDonough, J., Thompson, K., & Smith, J. (2018). Employees with autism spectrum disorder achieving long-term employment success: A retrospective review of employment retention and intervention. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 43(3), 181-193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796918783202>
- Brown, L. X. Z., Shetty, R., & Richardson, M. (2020). *Algorithm-driven hiring tools: Innovative recruitment or expedited disability discrimination?* Center for Democracy and Technology. <https://cdt.org/insights/report-algorithm-driven-hiring-tools-innovative-recruitment-or-expedited-disability-discrimination/>
- Bury, S. M., Hedley, D., Uljarević, M., Dissanayake, C., & Gal, E. (2019). If you've employed one person with Autism: An individual difference approach to the autism advantage at work. *Autism*, 23(6), 1607-1608.
- Bury, S. M., Jellet, R., Spoor, J. R., & Hedley, D. (2020). "It defines who I am" or "It's something I have": What language do [autistic] Australian adults [on the autism spectrum] prefer? *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1-11.
- Cage, E., & Troxell-Whitman, Z. (2019). Understanding the reasons, contexts and costs of camouflaging for autistic adults. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 49(5), 1899-1911.
- Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., & Pedersen, O. K. (2013). Coding in-depth semistructured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 42(3), 294-320.
- Chen, J. L., Leader, G., Sung, C., & Leahy, M. (2015). Trends in employment for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder: a review of the research literature. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 2, 115-127. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-014-0041-6>
- Christensen, D. L., Baio, J., Braun, K. V., Bilder, D., Charles, J., Constantino, J. N., & Zahorodny, W. (2016). Preva-

- lence and characteristics of autism spectrum disorder among children aged 8 years—Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 11 sites, United States, 2012. *CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 65, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6503a1>
- Cope, R., & Remington, A. (2022). The strengths and abilities of autistic people in the workplace. *Autism in Adulthood*, 4(1), 22-31.
- Cortez, R., Marshall, D., Yang, C., & Luong, L. (2017). First impressions, cultural assimilation, and hireability in job interviews: Examining body language and facial expressions' impact on employer's perceptions of applicants. *Concordia Journal of Communication Research*, 4(1), 4.
- Dalgin, R. S. & Bellini, J. (2008). Invisible disability disclosure in an employment interview: Impact on employers' hiring decisions and views of employability. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 52(1), 6-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034355207311311>
- Dixon, M., Wang, S., Calvin, J., Dineen, B., & Tomlinson, E. (2002). The panel interview: A review of empirical research and guidelines for practice. *Public Personnel Management*, 31(3), 397-428. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009102600203100310>
- Flower, R. L., Hedley, D., Spoor, J. R., & Dissanayake, C. (2019). An alternative pathway to employment for autistic job-seekers: A case study of a training and assessment program targeted to autistic job candidates. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 71(3), 407-428.
- Frank, F., Jablonschkin, M., Arthen, T., Riedel, A., Fangmeier, T., Hölzel, L. P., & Tabertz van Elst, L. (2018). Education and employment status of adults with autism spectrum disorders in Germany – a cross-sectional-survey. *BMC Psychiatry*, 18: 75, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-018-1645-7>
- Fraundorfer, D., & Mast, M. S. (2015). The impact of non-verbal behavior in the job interview. In A. Kostić & D. Chadee, *The Social Psychology of Nonverbal Behavior in the Job Interview*, 220-247. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137345868>
- Griffiths, A.-J., Giannantonio, C. M., Hurley-Hanson, A. E., & Cardinal, D. N. (2016). Autism in the workplace: Accessing the transition needs of young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of Business and Management*, 22(1), 5-22. [https://doi.org/10.6347/JBM.201601_22\(1\).0001](https://doi.org/10.6347/JBM.201601_22(1).0001)
- Gröschl, S. (2013). Presumed incapable: Exploring the validity of negative judgments about persons with disabilities and their employability in hotel operations. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 54(2), 114-123. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965512453082>
- Hendricks, D. (2010). Employment and adults with autism spectrum disorders: Challenges and strategies for success. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 32(2), 125-134.
- Huffcutt, A. I. (2011). An empirical review of the employment interview construct literature. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 19(1), 62-81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2389.2010.00535.x>
- Hurlbutt, K., & Chalmers, L. (2004). Employment and adults with Asperger syndrome. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 19(4), 215-222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10883576040190040301>
- Jones, M., Baldi, C., Phillips, C., & Waikar, A. (2017). The hard truth about soft skills: What recruiters look for in business graduates. *College Student Journal*, 50(3), 422-428.
- Johnson, T. D., & Joshi, A. (2016). Dark clouds or silver linings? A stigma threat perspective on the implications of an autism diagnosis for workplace well-being. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 101(3), 430-449.
- Krzeminska, A., Austin, R. D., Bruyère, S. M., & Hedley, D. (2019). The advantages and challenges of neurodiversity employment in organizations. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 25(4), 453-463.
- Lipscomb, S., Haimson, J., Liu, A.Y., Burghardt, J., Johnson, D.R., & Thurlow, M.L. (2017). *Preparing for life after high school: The characteristics and experiences of youth in special education. Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study 2012. Volume 2: Comparisons across disability groups*: Full report (NCEE 2017-4018). US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.
- Lindsay, S., Osten, V., Rezai, M., & Bui, S. (2019). Disclosure and workplace accommodations for people with autism: A systematic review. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 43(5), 597-610. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2019.1635658>
- Mai, A. M. (2018). Beliefs influencing hiring agents' selection of qualified autistic candidates [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University School of Social and Behavioral Sciences]. ProQuest. (Order No. 10751686).
- Maras, K., Norris, J. E., Nicholson, J., Heasman, B., Remington, A., & Crane, L. (2020). Ameliorating the disadvantage of job seekers with autism: An initial evaluation of adapted employment interview questions. *Autism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320981319>
- Martin, V., Flanagan, T. D., Vogus, T. J., & Chênevert, D. (2022). Sustainable employment depends on quality relationships between supervisors and their employees on the autism spectrum. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1-12.
- Mayring, P. (2004). Qualitative content analysis. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2), 1-11.
- Meena, K. (2016). Blind recruitment: The new hiring buzz for diversity inclusion. *International Journal of Business and General Management*, 5(5), 25-28.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. sage.
- Millar, R., & Tracey, A. (2018). The employment interview. In O. Hargie (Ed.), *The Handbook of Communication Skills*, 4th Edition, 477-510. Routledge.
- Newman, L., Wagner, M., Knokey, A. M., Marder, C., Nagle, K., Shaver, D., & Schwarting, M. (2011). *The post-high school outcomes of young adults with disabilities up to 8 years after high school. A report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)*. National Center for Special Education Research: Institute of Education Sciences. http://www.nlts2.org/reports/2011_09_02/nlts2_report_2011_09_02_complete.pdf
- Oliver, M. (1990). *The politics of disablement: A sociological approach*. Macmillan.
- Paul, J. B., Laird, M. D., & Tune, S. (2016). Autism at work: Calvin's journey of living and working with autism. *Journal of Business and Management*, 21(2), 103-115. [https://doi.org/10.6347/JBM.201601_22\(1\).0006](https://doi.org/10.6347/JBM.201601_22(1).0006)
- Pyett, P. M. (2003). Validation of qualitative research in the "real world". *Qualitative health research*, 13(8), 1170-1179.
- Posthuma, R. A., Morgeson, F. P., & Campion, M. A. (2002). Beyond employment interview validity: A comprehensive nar-

- rative review of recent research and trends over time. *Personnel Psychology*, 55(1), 1-81. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2002.tb00103.x>
- Rashid, M., Thompson-Hodgetts, S., & Nicholas, D. (2018). Building employers' capacity to support vocational opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities: A synthesis review of grey literature. *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*, 23(3), 31-45.
- Ruben, M. A., Hall, J. A., & Schmid Mast, M. (2015). Smiling in a job interview: When less is more. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 155(2), 107-126. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.cornell.edu/10.1080/00224545.2014.972312>
- Robinson, E., Hull, L., & Petrides, K. V. (2020). Big five model and trait emotional intelligence in camouflaging behaviours in autism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109565>
- Romualdez, A. M., Heasman, B., Walker, Z., Davies, J., & Remington, A. (2021). "People might understand me better": Diagnostic disclosure experiences of autistic individuals in the workplace. *Autism in Adulthood*, 3(2), 157-167.
- Roux, A., Shattuck, P., Rast, J., Rava, J., Anderson, K. (2015). *National Autism Indicators Report: Transition into Young Adulthood*. Life course Outcomes Research Program. A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, Drexel University.
- Rosales, R., & Whitlow, H. (2019). A component analysis of job interview training for young adults with autism spectrum disorder. *Behavioral Interventions*, 34(2), 147-162. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bin.1658>
- Russell, G., Kapp, S. K., Elliott, D., Elphick, C., Gwernan-Jones, R., & Owens, C. (2019). Mapping the autistic advantage from the accounts of adults diagnosed with autism: A qualitative study. *Autism in Adulthood*, 1(2), 124-133.
- Scott, M., Milbourn, B., Falkmer, M., Black, M., Bölte, S., Halladay, A., Girdler, S. (2019). Factors impacting employment for people with autism spectrum disorder: A scoping review. *Autism*, 23, 869-901. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361318787789>
- Scott, M., Jacob, A., Hendrie, D., Parsons, R., Girdler, S., Falkmer, T., & Falkmer, M. (2017). Employers' perception of the costs and the benefits of hiring individuals with autism spectrum disorder in open employment in Australia. *PloS one*, 12(5), e0177607.
- Smith, M.J., Fleming, M.F., Wright, M.S., Losh, M., Boteler Humm, L., Olsen, D. & Bell, M.D. (2015). Brief Report: Vocational outcomes for young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders at six months after virtual reality job interview training. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45, 3364-3369.
- Strickland, D. C., Coles, C. D., & Southern, L. B. (2013). JobTIPS: A transition to employment program for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 43, 2472-2483. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-013-1800-4>
- Whelpley, C. E., Banks, G. B., Bochantin, J., & Sandoval, R. (2020). Tensions on the spectrum: An inductive investigation of employee and manager experiences of autism. *Journal of Business and Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-019-09676-1>