RESEARCH

Supported Employment and Social Inclusion – Experiences of Workers with Disabilities in Wage Subsidized Employment in Sweden

Johanna Gustafsson, Julia Peralta and Berth Danermark
The Swedish institute for disability research, School of health sciences, Örebro University, SE
Corresponding author: Johanna Gustafsson, Phd (johanna.gustafsson@oru.se)

Labour market policies targeting people with disabilities primarily focus on establishing a working life based on reaching and procuring employment. Less attention is directed towards the qualitative aspects of working conditions or opportunities to retain employment. This study seeks to examine how people with disabilities who, with the help of Supported Employment (SE) methods, are establishing themselves in the labour market, experience social inclusion at their workplaces and how their working conditions influence their experiences with social inclusion. Data were collected in semi-structured interviews. Two themes were prominent in the interviewees' experiences with social inclusion: the importance of being a valued worker and the sense of social belonging. Competence is important to feeling valued, as is working in fair working conditions. Disclosure of disability often helps to create fairness. The sense of social belonging arises from natural support and mattering to others. Important conditions that increase social inclusion are job-matching and natural support. The SE method can therefore contribute to the creation of social inclusion by ensuring that the matching process is well thought out and by utilizing strategies for inclusion, such as encouragement of natural support.

Keywords: Supported employment; Social inclusion; Wage subsidies employment; Disability; Employment

Introduction

The current Swedish national policies relating to issues pertaining to disability express a range of ambitions with regard to equality, full participation and each person's equal worth (Prop. 2013/14: 1). Social inclusion in the labour market is perceived as an important component of participation; simultaneously, many people, including people with disabilities and reduced work capacity, do not have access to the labour market (Statistics Sweden 2016). Attention has focused on the subject of social inclusion as a meaningful factor in ensuring employment (Gilbride et al. 2003) However, relatively few studies examine social inclusion more broadly, examining the qualitative aspects of working conditions for people with disabilities (Schur et al. 2009). In order to open up the labour market for people with disabilities it is of interest to understand how people with disabilities are establishing themselves in the labour market and how social inclusion is experienced by these workers as well as how their working conditions influence their experiences with social inclusion.

Supported employment

People with disabilities experience barriers to structural, organizational and individual access to employment (Hogan et al. 2012; Schur et al. 2009; Schur, Kruse & Blanck 2005). To attempt to address the barriers, various methods for supporting people with disabilities in their search for employment are used in the area of vocational rehabilitation. One of the methods that has become more prominent in the last 20 years in Sweden is Supported Employment (SE). This method centres on a "job coach" who provides individual, continual support to a person with a disability, to the person's employer and to the person's co-workers whilst the person with the disability becomes established in a working life (Wehman 2007). The support received should afford a person with a disability the opportunity to procure employment and to create conditions that allow that person to achieve social inclusion in the workplace of his or her choice. Continual support should, when required, be provided to increase the employee's chances of retaining employment. This method has proven to be successful in obtaining jobs for people with disabilities, not only in Sweden (Germundsson et al. 2012) but also in other countries (Burns et al. 2007; Bond, Drake & Becker 2008). Although successful, the method is limited to providing change in labour market status on the individual level; barriers to employment remain for

Gustafsson et al: Supported Employment and Social Inclusion – Experiences
of Workers with Disabilities in Wage Subsidized Employment in Sweden

27

people with disabilities on both organizational and structural levels. In particular, job tenure is a difficult aspect of this method (Mak, Tsang & Cheung 2006). Studies show that job tenure variance is influenced by a variety of individual and environmental factors, such as severity of symptoms (Catty et al. 2008), person-environment fit (Kukla & Bond 2012) and employment specialist competencies (Corbiére & Lanctot 2011). An important aspect of job tenure is workplace conditions, such as work accommodations and support, which are significantly related to job tenure for people in SE programs (Corbiére et al. 2014). SE methods are based on the assumption that social inclusion can be achieved by the co-operative efforts of the job coach and the employer, creating a fertile environment for natural support to take root and then grow (Nisbeth & Hagner 1988; Test & Wood 1996; Wehman et al. 2007). Natural support, as a concept, is defined differently in the literature (Cimera 2001). Natural support has been characterized as a strategy that facilitates positive employment outcomes, a philosophy to promote social integration, or both: a philosophically based training strategy. In this study, natural support is perceived as a support strategy that encourages co-workers to introduce supported employees to the work environment and provide support in the workplace. Natural support is presumed to stimulate personal relationships between co-workers and thus create greater possibilities for social inclusion in the place of employment. Social capital (Portes 1998; Putnam 2000) may increase with personal relationships stimulated by natural support. This increase in social capital results from an expansion of the social sphere and because conditions for the creation of trust and reciprocation occur within relationships that are formed in the workplace.

Social inclusion

In social policy, the concept of social inclusion is primarily interpreted as independence and full employment. However, studies have shown that the concept is more complex than such a narrow interpretation can explain. In a meta-analysis of how people with disabilities perceived social inclusion, Hall (2009) identified six factors that were critical to the perception of social inclusion: (1) to be accepted and recognized as an individual beyond one's disability; (2) to have personal relationships with family, friends and acquaintances; (3) to be involved in social activities during one's free-time; (4) to live in reasonable living conditions; (5) to be employed; and (6) to have sufficient formal and informal support. Both structural and subjective dimensions require those factors to be in place to allow people with disabilities to experience social inclusion. Lysaght et al. (2012), in a literary overview of studies pertaining to social inclusion in places of employment concerning people with disabilities, showed that the focus of these studies is primarily on social integration and is gauged by objective measurements such as job attainment and reimbursement outcomes. Those authors claimed that to be able to gauge social inclusion, subjective dimensions such as the perception of participation and a sense of belonging are required.

Central to the concept of social inclusion in the workplace is the psycho-social work environment. Studies have shown that workplace experiences for employees with disabilities are affected by corporate culture (Schur, Kruse & Blanck 2005; Schur et al. 2009). Workplace experiences can, for example, be affected by a perceived sense of justice and fairness amongst the employees at their place of work. Li and Cropanzano (2009) found that experiences in a just work climate and intra-unit fairness are useful predictors of work attitudes and behaviour. A work climate can affect the actions of an employee in the workplace, and Liao & Rupp (2005) found that a just work climate was an important predictor of individual criteria, such as helping behaviours. Respectful treatment from workmates, so-called interactional justice, can influence the work effort because interactional justice is related to job satisfaction (Cropanzano, Prehar & Chen 2002). Schur et al. (2009) found that employees with disabilities who perceived being treated with disrespect and a lack of fairness felt much less job satisfaction and a reduced sense of loyalty to the company.

Aim

The aim of this study is to examine how people with disabilities, with the help of the Supported Employment methods, are establishing themselves in the labour market. The study also examines how these workers experience social inclusion in their workplaces and how their working conditions influence their experiences with social inclusion. We specifically address three major questions:

1. How does an employee who establishes him/herself in a working life within an SE context perceive his or her work situation when the situation is examined, primarily with a focus on social inclusion?
2. What are the important conditions of social inclusion in this context?
3. How can SE methods influence the individual experience of social inclusion?

Method

Between 2007 and 2010, a research project called Sustainable Work was conducted at Örebro University in cooperation with three organizations working with SE. The organizations differed from one another in several manners. One of the organizations was private and primarily supported people with intellectual or neuropsychiatric disabilities. The other organizations were state-owned or financed by the local municipality and county council and supported people with various types of disabilities. The purpose of the project was to identify key components that can ensure a sustainable work situation for people with disabilities. Primary sources of data were registered data and open-ended interviews. The study reported in this article is a component of that project.

Selection of interviewees

The inclusion criteria for interviewees in this study were having received help with employment from a SE organization and being employed for at least six (6) months prior to the interview. A total of 300 people, 100 from each of three different SE organizations, were identified as potential informants. The selection criteria were (1) that they have received support from a SE-organization, (2) personal characteristics (gender, disability) and (3) workplace characteristics (sector, company size, type of business). The rationale for sampling interviewees with various work experience was to determine whether as employees, these interviewees differed in their perceptions based on the details and characteristics of their experiences.

Ethics

The job coaches who had been responsible for helping a particular person procure employment contacted that person as a potential interviewee, presented the planned study and asked if the person would be willing to participate in an interview. Those people who agreed were contacted by one of the study researchers, who provided information regarding the purpose of the study. The information that was presented at that time adhered to the ethical research principles of humanistic and socio-scientific research (http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFR.pdf), which specify that their rights, the procedures to be followed, and the potential risks and benefits of participation were made clear to all potential interviewees. Of the 20 interviewees who were initially contacted to participate in the study, 19 willingly agreed to do so. The person who declined to participate cited lack of time as the reason for non-participation.

Characteristics of the interviewees

A total of 19 people (12 men and 7 women) participated in the study. The distribution of gender within the study was directly relative to the composition and distribution of gender within the Sustainable Work project as a whole. The informants had varying disabilities, such as deafness, somatic disabilities, intellectual disabilities, Asperger's syndrome, dyslexia, mental illness, sight impairment, physical pain and traumatic brain injury. The majority of the interviewees, fifteen people, worked within the private sector. Three people worked in the public sector. One person worked in the social sector.

Nine people worked at smaller places of employment, nine others at a mid-sized place of employment and one person worked at a large place of employment. The types of businesses represented were educational services, industry, restaurant/large housekeeping, bakery, transport, services, national citizens' movement, warehousing, handcrafts and IT. The employees interviewed were employed in wage-subsidized positions. Wage subsidies are a form of financial assistance provided to employers who employ people with reduced workability and are often used in SE programs in Sweden. The employers receive a wage subsidy which only partially compensate them for the wages paid. The wage levels are at competitive levels and determined by the employer in accordance with the Swedish labour laws. Before a wage-subsidized placement, there is often an extensive introduction and training period in the form of an internship. However, when the wage-subsidized employment begins, the employee is considered a regular worker.

Data collection

Data were collected in semi-structured interviews. The interviews occurred during the autumn of 2007. An interview protocol was used when the interviews were conducted. The interview protocol was based upon earlier research relating to people with disabilities in employment situations and addressed various aspects of being employed: work assignments, well-being, relations with co-workers and employers, possible needs for accommodations relating to the work situation and opportunities for further development in the workplace. Each interview lasted between 45 and 120 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

A qualitative content analysis based upon guidelines from Graneheim & Lundman (2004) was conducted during the data-analysis. The goal of this procedure was to identify central themes, which were interpreted with reference to social inclusion. The data analysis was conducted in the following sequence: (1) All interviews were transcribed, read and re-read to develop an overall sense of content. (2) Items in the text were then identified as meaningful units. The criterion for determining that units were meaningful was that the units addressed social inclusion. (3) The units were organized into various categories and sub-categories. The categories were coded deductively, moving from categories to text. (4) The meaning units were condensed into shorter descriptions that were as true as possible to the original text. (5) An interpretation of the underlying meaning of the condensed units was developed with the goal of deepening understanding of the significance of these units with regard to social inclusion in the workplace. (6) The meaning units and their alternative interpretations were discussed by the authors of this article, whereby consensus was reached as to how the meaning units should be interpreted. (7) The meaning units that described characteristic features of the interviewees' perceptions of social inclusion were sorted into the themes. (8) The themes were analysed and reflected upon, with reference to existing literature that addressed factors related to social inclusion. The analysis sought contextual factors that could yield a more thorough understanding of the components of social inclusion. All

Gustafsson et al: Supported Employment and Social Inclusion – Experiences
of Workers with Disabilities in Wage Subsidized Employment in Sweden

29

members of the research group were involved in the steps of the analysis to strengthen the trustworthiness of the interpretations. The material and the analysis were also presented to and discussed with persons with disabilities, including experiences with being employed in wage-subsidized employment. The data analysis was written in Swedish and later translated into English by a professional translator.

Central Findings

The interviewees presented varying individual circumstances that influenced their experiences: their experiences with different disabilities and working in various sectors of the labour market in different types of businesses. Despite their differing circumstances, two themes were prominent in the interviewees' experiences with social inclusion: the importance of being a valued worker and the sense of social belonging. The informants in the study identified some conditions to be important for social inclusion in their work situations. To experience value in work-role competence emerged as important, as did working in fair working conditions. Disclosing one's disability often helps to create fairness. The sense of social belonging concerns natural support and being someone to others.

Being a valued worker

Competence

Competence was described by the interviewees as something that could contribute to the experience of value at work. A small number of interviewees had the formal competence necessary to perform their tasks at their places of employment. These interviewees perceived that their jobs met personal expectations and requirements, and these workers considered their jobs to be both meaningful and stimulating, jobs in which employees are allowed to utilize their competence in the completion of their tasks. Interviewees shared a common interest with their co-workers and knowledge relating to the area of work. This common interest enabled the interviewees to feel a part of a wider fellowship. Approximately one-third of all interviewees reported having "hit the target" with regard to the type of job these interviewees wanted compared with the job the interviewees in fact had. These interviewees felt contented at their places of employment, quite simply because these workers were allowed to utilize their competence in a manner that was both stimulating for the worker and deemed valuable to other members of the workplace. To be needed and to have a meaningful position within the workplace are also about being personally responsible for certain tasks, which indicates that a person is not easy to replace. An interviewee who was personally responsible for an on-site computer system displayed more than a little pride when stating the following:

> "Yes, my friend, [laugh] there is always someone who tries to, how can I put it… tries to fix it and get things up and running again, but it's never the same! I suppose one could say that the company loses out a lot when I am not here" (Machine operator, working full-time).

The majority of interviewees performed relatively basic, non-specialized tasks during the initial stages of employment, tasks that were learned directly on site. However, interviewees reported that in cases in which the workers with disabilities lacked formal competence or were not afforded the opportunity to develop their competence in the workplace, that lack of competence could be a barrier to developing better work skills. Several interviewees described how and why they continued to perform the unskilled tasks although the interviewees wanted to do more skilled work. This situation may be because of a lack of competence on their part or the perception from people on the periphery who believed that an interviewee did not have the ability to perform any other tasks. Interviewees in such situations reported how this situation led to their becoming unhappy with their jobs; such workers tended to consider the job "a necessary evil", a job performed only for the basic reason of earning a salary.

The majority of interviewees revealed that their jobs did not correspond to their choices or expectations. These workers had other dreams and plans for the future in jobs that provide the chance to utilize their talents and capabilities, jobs in which one not only fills a social role as an employee but in which the job becomes a component of one's personality, a manner in which to identify oneself. One of the interviewees described future dreams in the following manner:

> "Other dreams in the distance are… real-estate company… then I can be responsible for planning my own hours and doing things that I am good at and think are fun to do… like working with my hands" (Assistant, real estate, working half-time).

Several interviewees reported not having the opportunity to utilize their self-assessed, highly valued competence, personal knowledge, or abilities at their place of employment. Some of the interviewees also noted that their disability became more apparent while performing work practices in which the required tasks are perceived to "clash" with personal abilities:

> "… I am not that kind of person who…and I believe it's because of my autism… I'm not the kind of person that I …
> I can sort of feel that I'm not the person you think that you see … and I start to think that I'm not really suited for

this job, if I am supposed to behave in a certain way as well…" (Woman working with culture in a home for people with dementia, working 60% of full-time).

A large number of interviewees reported difficulties in coming to terms with the fact that the job one is employed to perform is so far removed from the job one would like to do. Interviewees considered quitting their jobs, but to quit and then find themselves on the unemployment line was not an option for any of these interviewees. Instead, the interviewees tried to apply for other jobs or seek further education while simultaneously continuing working. To "merely" be employed is not sufficient for these workers. A job should offer challenges and opportunities for development.

Work environment

Several interviewees described their employers' and co-workers' clear and concrete expectations and requirements. Limitations in workability were discussed, and the work was adapted to fit the interviewee. Disclosure of the disability was described as an important factor in an accepting work environment. An open and kind reception, with particular reference to attitudes towards disabilities, is a deciding factor for many interviewees wanting to and then choosing to work at a particular place of employment. This interviewee recalled:

> *"What got me hooked on this job from the beginning was how kind they were to me. Despite my disability at that time… the broken-down person I was psychologically… their attitude was to welcome me with open arms" (Assistant/secretary, working 75% of full-time).*

Some of the interviewees, however, had difficulty meeting the expectations and requirements outlined by employers. These expectations and requirements were occasionally set too high but more often were set too low, which led to the job being perceived as either difficult or meaningless. Several interviewees reported that their work comprised conducting lonely and monotonous tasks in the workplace. Some of these workers questioned their employers regarding the work situation, which in certain cases led to some changes.

Other interviewees revealed that to change work-related tasks is difficult. This situation may be because of the size and scale of the workplace, in which there may or may not be other tasks to accomplish. It is perhaps because of the interviewee's disability or the terms and conditions of his or her subsidized employment that the employee is unable or unqualified to be assigned and/or conduct other tasks. In particular cases, the barriers arise because of a lack of flexibility and time. The majority of the interviewees worked part-time, which partially contributed to limiting the number of tasks these workers are able to perform in the workplace. Working hours are a central theme in interviewees' accounts of their work situations. Part-time employment is for some people a pre-requisite that enables people with disabilities to work although a number of interviewees are well aware that part-time employment is by its nature an exception with regard to the expectations placed upon the social role of a full-time employee. This was explained by one interviewee in the following statement:

> *"A lot of my co-workers have asked me if I am going to put in some more hours, but at the moment I am quite satisfied with the way things are and I don't want to mess it up by taking on too much. Still… I would like to work a little more than I do now, because it's a little step toward becoming more normal" (Construction worker, working half-time).*

The interviewees presented various descriptions of poor work environments. These perceptions may have been the results of attitudes of employers or co-workers or because the interviewees believed that their assigned tasks were detrimental to their health. A salary that was lower than co-workers' salaries created dissatisfaction in many cases. The primary reason that the interviewees stayed in the job, despite their unhappiness with their work environment, was the belief that the chances of finding a new job were small, partially because these workers require a work situation in which accommodations must be made to suit their requirements. The need for a manageable work situation was considered more important than choices or expectations, which was why employees applied themselves to the work situation despite not liking some aspects of their jobs. This interviewee described such a situation:

> *"I have difficulty in dealing with a stressful job...that I maybe need to take a break, walk away for a little while… so that kind of* [stressful] *situation is never acceptable… I would rather shoot myself… that's why I prefer to be here, despite the low salary… but at least it's free from stress…that about sums it up for me…" (Assistant in metal industry, worked 75% of full-time).*

Despite bad circumstances at work, the interviewees continued to work because being a worker is perceived as an important social role. All of the interviewees described how being identified as an employee was something that all of these workers had longed for because being employed creates the feeling of "being someone". Being someone and doing something are consequential, as one of the interviewees described:

> *"This is big, you know, for my self-esteem and stuff. I'm like… really someone now. I'm doing something and without that… I sort of… wouldn't be much of anything at all" (Worker in catering department, worked 75% of full-time).*

Gustafsson et al: Supported Employment and Social Inclusion – Experiences
of Workers with Disabilities in Wage Subsidized Employment in Sweden

31

Sense of social belonging

Natural support

The manner in which interviewees were introduced to their new workplaces was quite important, providing the opportunity to learn what the job was all about and build relationships with their co-workers. The interviewees who felt included in the workplace were people who were introduced to the fellowship by an "insider" and not by a support person from the outside. In cases in which interviewees utilized the natural support structure of the workplace, visits from the external support person were distracting. It was, as one interviewee recalled, more natural for new employees to be introduced to the workplace by their co-workers:

> "I, just like everyone else at the job, learned what I needed to do, by working side by side with someone else!" (Worker in wooden industry, worked full-time).

Contact with one's co-workers was quite important for all interviewees, particularly with the co-worker who was responsible for providing extra support during on-the-job training. This "on-the-job trainer" was quite often the first person the interviewee had contact with, and it was this person, particularly during the initial stages of employment, to whom the interviewee became attached. This person, by the process of natural support, functioned as "a tool" for the interviewee during his or her introduction to work practices and even social structures. One interviewee reported why it was so reassuring to have an understanding person by one's side:

> " … Then, I got to meet Helge. I explained to him just who I was and he understood. It felt really good that I could talk to him about things, how life was and such… and then it sort of became where he and I were doing lots of small jobs all over the place. The first two years it was Helge and me almost all the time (Real estate assistant, worked half-time).

The support received at their place of employment was described by all of the interviewees as vital. Many of these workers described a sense of security with regard to their employers. Those employers who were conscious of their employees' situations and who accepted their employees for who they were led to the development of such a sense of security:

> "The boss is such a good person to talk to. I can talk to him about absolutely anything. If things are not so good at home, or if I am just feeling a little down, I just tell him. He just deals with the matter immediately and tries to find a solution there and then" (Machine operator, full-time).

In several cases, a work supervisor or team leader occupied the same role as an employer in the workplace. Such supervisors were there to provide instruction and guidance but could also be co-workers. The relationship between supervisor and interviewee often had its origins in the initial information and guidance process and subsequently developed into a friendship. The supervisor often tended to be aware of the interviewee's potential and limitations, something that many interviewees perceived to be both safe and reassuring:

> "He is the one person who knows so much about me. He has a lot of experience in working with people who have disabilities. That's why he knows so much that can be of help to me in my situation" (Warehouse worker, worked 75% of full-time).

Being someone to others

Several interviewees reported having formed, or being in the process of forming, close relations with employers and co-workers. Interviewees expressed in most definitive terms seeing themselves as "part of the gang" and socializing both at work and away from the work environment. A person becoming someone or something in relation to others is what creates a sense of belonging. This experience was important to several interviewees, particularly considering that these workers had seldom experienced a sense of belonging during earlier activities in the labour market. One interviewee reported:

> "What makes this company so unique is its humanity, its drive and enthusiasm, its joy in making things work. The way people talk to me, the way they take notice of me here, is something I have never experienced anywhere else. They are a fantastic group of people at this place" (Economy assistant, worked 75% of full time).

To be welcomed as a meaningful and valuable person affected the workers' sense of belonging. The interviewees who described such a reception at their place of employment were the workers who were extremely satisfied with their work

situation. These interviewees also enjoyed good and open communication with employers and co-workers. This open communication was particularly prevalent with regard to questions concerning disabilities.

Some interviewees, however, reported feeling no sense of belonging in their place of employment. Some of them worked alone nearly all of the time. Because the interviewees were separated from their co-workers, these workers did not feel a sense of belonging in the same manner as a person who enjoys the fellowship of being part of a work-team. These workers did not share tasks with co-workers and were not always a part of the group or included in social activities, as would "normally" be the case at break times or at other natural meeting points on the job. This situation was largely a result of how their work was designed for them and what possibilities were available for interaction with their co-workers. This situation was also a question of communication. If disabilities and barriers in the workplace were not discussed openly within the work team, the interviewees tended to perceive that more problems could arise because of a lack of understanding.

Discussion
Limitations of the study
The methods chosen for data collection and analysis have implications. Because the employment situation and treatment from employer and colleagues can be a sensitive topic, it is possible that the interviewees chose not to fully disclose their experiences. However, as shown, the interviewees reported both good and bad experiences. Furthermore, there is a risk of bias in content analysis and that the analysis is governed by the principal investigators 'conceptions of the phenomenon. To counteract this risk all authors involved in the article took part in the analytic process but no formal inter-reliability test was performed.

Two primary themes emanated from interviewee accounts, both of which prominently concern social inclusion: doing something of value and being someone valuable. Doing something of value encompasses both a physical affiliation and an acceptance: to be at a place of employment and perform one's job productively while simultaneously being recognized and perceived as a person who is important to the production process. Social inclusion is not, however, simply about having a social role to fill, but is about having a sense of social belonging, to have a trust-based fellowship with co-workers and employers and being looked upon as a person beyond one's disability. Social inclusion can be affected by strategies for inclusion and matching, based on the SE method. SE can, using this method, contribute to creating conditions for people with disabilities, which lead to the establishment of prerequisites that ensure social inclusion during one's working life.

Being a valued worker
Job matching
During the process of searching for an appropriate place of employment, one of the fundamental principles of SE is to base the search on the prospective employee's own preferences, expectations and requirements (Wehman 2007). This principle is important from the perspective of participation but can also create other positive effects. Research has shown that job matching based upon preferences leads to better job satisfaction and job tenure (Mueser, Becker & Wolfe 2001). This result is consistent with what the interviewees in this study described. Those workers who had a job that was consistent with their preferences more often described their jobs as meaningful and enjoyable. These workers also perceived a greater sense of social inclusion in the workplace, which is consistent with the findings of Lysaght et al. (2012), that a self-chosen social role is an important component of social inclusion. The interviewees in this study who did not believe that their jobs were compatible with their preferences reported other reasons for working in that job. The primary reason was that it was possible to make certain accommodations in the pending work situation. The need for an adjusted work situation can thus "force the issue" and outweigh the interviewee's hopes and dreams. Studies have shown that people with disabilities are drawn to workplaces that the workers perceive can meet their needs for adjustment (Hogan et al. 2012) which also seemed to be the case for the workers in this study.

Competence
Competence can render social inclusion at the workplace somewhat easier. The interviewees in the study who were assigned tasks for which these workers felt competent expressed job satisfaction and the desire for job tenure. This competence can be coupled with self-efficacy (Bandura 1997) and social inclusion. Interviewees who perceived themselves to be competent and who were recognized by others as being competent had an increased belief in their ability to conduct and complete a specific task and achieve a certain result. To be recognized and trusted in one's social role is important in attaining social inclusion (Lysaght et al. 2012). Competence has thereby become synonymous with a sense of value in the workplace, resulting from the knowledge that the person becomes aware that one's specific competence is a source of value in the production process. Competence is therefore important during the matching process in SE; workers and counselors should identify places of employment in which the interviewee is provided conditions where he or she may utilize or acquire the competence required to conduct the required tasks. Such matching of job and worker can in turn create conditions for increased self-efficacy as well as job satisfaction and social inclusion.

Gustafsson et al: Supported Employment and Social Inclusion – Experiences
of Workers with Disabilities in Wage Subsidized Employment in Sweden

33

Disclosure of disability

Disclosure of disability may also ease social inclusion. To be open regarding one's disability at an early stage of the recruitment process can lead to the employer's developing a better picture of the applicant than if the prospective employee chose to avoid disclosure (Roberts & Macan 2006). Because the matching process in SE should be based on finding a work situation in which the fewest possible barriers may occur, perhaps the level of openness regarding a disability may be greater than in a situation in which the job-seeker applied for a job in a more traditional manner. Many of the interviewees who were open regarding their disabilities received, despite their own expectations, a surprisingly positive response from employers and co-workers. These workers found security in the fact that their employers and co-workers knew of their disabilities, which allowed the interviewees the scope to work according to appropriate conditions. Studies have shown that people with visible disabilities believe that explicitly acknowledging their situations can ease relationships at work (Munir, Leka & Griffiths 2005), which was also described by the workers who were interviewed for this study. An open climate with regard to a disability can thus ease the establishing of pre-conditions for receiving both formal and informal support, which is a factor that both Lysaght et a. (2012) and Hall (2009) considered important in achieving social inclusion. Those interviewees who did not communicate their requirements to their employer or were in situations in which the employer did not fulfil interviewee requirements found themselves in less advantageous work situations. These workers felt misunderstood by their co-workers and were not happy with their jobs. It appears reasonable, therefore, to posit that trust-based communication and openness regarding disabilities can lead to better work conditions whereas the avoidance of disclosure may create negative consequences for the interviewee. This is consistent with what Charmaz (2010) observed during a study of the types of dilemmas that workers with chronic illnesses faced regarding disclosure of disability, that fearing and avoiding disclosure can have negative consequences. That co-workers and employers showed acceptance and provided support so that the interviewee could work according to his or her own abilities was a notable and recurring theme stemming from interviewees who were open regarding their disabilities. A just and fair work environment appears, therefore, to improve conditions for social support, which Lysaght et al. (2012) and Hall (2009) noted as an important component of the perception of social inclusion.

Those interviewees who did not perceive experiencing justice and fairness in the workplace claimed that the lack of procedural justice, which is concerned with equal working conditions, and distributive justice, which is concerned with fair allocation of resources, such as salaries, created unfair conditions of employment. The interviewees reported lonely work environments and occasionally performing hazardous, low-paid work. In these jobs, the pertaining working conditions were considered unreasonable. The perception of unreasonable living conditions can hinder social inclusion (Hall 2009), and it is possible that the same can be said of unreasonable working conditions. Interviewees who had to work in conditions that were perceived to be unreasonable believed that they were being treated differently from their co-workers, which consequently led these workers to feel less socially included in the workplace. This situation led to a growing awareness of the concept of distributive justice because people who experience a lack of interactional justice are more likely to feel a lack of fairness with regard to distributive justice (Cropanzano, Prehar & Chen 2002). The use of wage-subsidized employment in Sweden may influence the interviewees' experiences with social inclusion. Working in wage-subsidized employment may be perceived as problematic because investigations of the wage subsidies system identified problems with the circumstances in which people with subsidized wages work (Swedish Ministry of Employment 2003; Swedish National Audit Office 2007). There is reason, therefore, to more closely examine both the psycho-social and physical work environments as well as salary levels during the matching process in SE. These factors should be considered because the perception of justice and fairness can affect the conditions of social inclusion.

One question, from the SE perspective, is whether a match should be made with a job in which the conditions for social inclusion are poor. It is unquestionably important to identify a work situation in which the fewest possible barriers may arise; however, social inclusion in the workplace is another important principle of the SE method. Research on employer perspectives regarding how SE has helped such workers shows that the SE-organization focuses largely on meeting employer needs during the process of establishing a working life (Gustafsson, Peralta & Danermark 2013); however, questions remain regarding whether the same focus is placed on the worker's needs. If so, does such a situation lead to employment or social inclusion? This important question should be asked of SE; outcome studies within SE tend more often to be quantitative, measuring the number of employees and job tenure, rather than qualitative measurements relating to social inclusion, despite the fact that the over-arching goal for the SE method is both employment and social inclusion.

Sense of social belonging

Natural support

The majority of the interviewees in this study described being introduced to the workplace by an instructor or a co-worker. This process enabled these workers to learn work practices and become a part of the fellowship in their places of employment. A person's being afforded the opportunity to learn by observing "role models" in his/her workplace can increase self-efficacy (Bandura 1997) and is thus an important strategy within SE: to allow an instructor or co-worker and not the job coach to oversee the prospective employee's introduction to the workplace. To allow an "insider" to be responsible for that introduction may also open up possibilities for the development of social relations.

The composition of such inter-employee relations may be the difference between physical integration and social inclusion. According to interviewee accounts, social inclusion is based primarily on forming bonds with others, by getting to know one another on a more personal level in so-called bonding relationships (Putnam 2000). Bonding relationships can be the catalyst to a more qualitative social network in the workplace. To be a part of a social network in which the possibility of receiving social support exists is an important aspect affecting the perception of social inclusion (Lysaght et al. 2012; Hall 2009) and can also contribute to the attainment of greater social capital (Putnam 2000; Portes 1998).

To be introduced into the fellowship during the process of inclusion by a person who is already at ease within the formal and informal norm-systems of the workplace is a factor that can reasonably be considered to a sign of success in itself. However, Kulkarni (2013) observed that support from a manager could lead to a situation in which the level of support from co-workers dropped slightly. Thus, it may be important to stimulate relationships with co-workers, a so-called "natural support", in the event that the initial support the employee received is, or had been, the responsibility of an instructor or manager. The best conditions for natural support appear to be created when the person has been introduced to the job by co-workers. Social support is important to social inclusion (Hall 2009; Lysaght et al. 2012), and inclusion strategies that stimulate natural support can therefore be an important component of SE in creating conditions that lead to social inclusion.

Being someone to others
The interviewees reported that workplaces that lacked relationships led to an increased risk of a lack of understanding, allowing one to feel mistreated by co-workers. Two interviewees who felt mistreated in the workplace stated that the reason for this lack of understanding was that their co-workers did not know anything about them or have any sense of understanding of their situation. It appears, therefore, that the process of getting to know one another and creating bonding relationships is important in enhancing perceptions regarding a welcoming reception and a climate of understanding in the workplace. Otherwise, there is a risk, based on stereotypical attitudes towards disabilities, that people with disabilities will be harshly judged and their behaviour misinterpreted. Getting to know and learn about one another can contribute to a scenario in which an employee is not then judged by a particular disability, but is instead perceived as a person in his or her own right (Colella et al. 2004). Several interviewees reported being accepted just as they are in the workplace, welcomed simply as a person, "a face in the crowd", so to speak, and not as "the disabled one". This acceptance had a positive effect on their perception of social inclusion. These workers were accepted and recognized as individuals beyond their disabilities, which Hall (2009) showed to be an important factor in achieving social inclusion.

Conclusion
This study highlights a number of factors that the interviewees considered important with regard to their own perceptions of social inclusion. With regard to the two first questions; (how employees perceive their work situation, with a primarily focus on social inclusion, and what the important conditions of social inclusion are in this context) the study shows that communication is important when striving to create conditions for a satisfactory work environment. Especially communication with regard to a person's disability must be particularly open as well as during discussions with an employer when negotiating possible accommodations to tasks or work practices.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the process of social inclusion becomes easier when an individual's social role in the workplace is aligned with his or her personal preferences and the person is provided with opportunities that enable the worker with disabilities to develop and utilize his or her competence when conducting assigned tasks. Other important factors relating to the work environment are reasonable terms of employment and relationships in the workplace. Perceiving distributive, procedural and interactional injustice and unfairness can render social inclusion more difficult. Some of the interviewees perceived that social inclusion was affected by unreasonable working conditions such as low salaries and hazardous work practices. Reasonable working conditions, just corporate culture and particularly justice and fairness are thus factors that encompass social inclusion.

The employee becoming recognized by his or her social role and being valued by others at the workplace can create advantageous conditions for social inclusion. According to this study, the stimulation of a sense of social belonging can be developed by natural support, which occurs by utilizing formal and informal support people in the workplace, people who assume early responsibility for first introducing and then working together with workers with disabilities in their new working environments. This process of natural support created conditions that formed bonding relationships, which subsequently affected interviewees' perceptions of belonging in the workplace. Another important prerequisite of the interviewees' perception of social inclusion was being recognized and accepted as people beyond their disabilities.

Regarding the third question; (how SE methods can influence the individual experience of social inclusion) the important conditions that can be influenced are job matching and natural support. If strategies in SE focus on job matching according to individual choice and stimulating natural support at the workplace, the success rate of sustainable work may further increase. The SE method can therefore contribute to the creation of social inclusion by ensuring that the matching process is well thought out and utilizing inclusion strategies, such as the encouragement of natural support, to create greater opportunities for social inclusion.

Gustafsson et al: Supported Employment and Social Inclusion – Experiences
of Workers with Disabilities in Wage Subsidized Employment in Sweden

35

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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