



Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Alajuela, Costa Rica and Illinois, United States; A Cross-Cultural Comparison

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Abstract

This research study aimed to identify the employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Illinois, United States and serve as a cross-cultural comparison to Alajuela, Costa Rica. Insufficient existing research about such opportunities makes it prudent to understand the perspectives of people with disabilities and those who work with them in job training settings. Interviews about employment opportunities were conducted in the state of Illinois, the United States and the providence of Alajuela, Costa Rica. Participants interviewed included attendees and staff members at the institutions. The previous literature on this

theme is not extensive but does make clear that opportunities for employment are not currently sufficient. The cross-cultural comparison results agree with the claim that there are insufficient employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the United States and Costa Rica. Differences found cross-culturally include the number of participants currently working, perception of social stigma, government support, and more. More participants and the perspective of employers are needed for future research.

Keywords: People with disabilities, employment, Costa Rica, opportunities, Illinois

This study seeks to benefit people with disabilities, their families, and those who work with this population by highlighting their perspectives regarding their own employment opportunities. Historically, people with intellectual disabilities have had higher unemployment rates and face greater challenges when seeking out employment (Petner-Arrey, Howell-Moneta, & Lysaght, 2016). There is benefit in seeing how a developed nation such as the United States and a less developed nation such as Costa Rica compare regarding employment opportunities for those with disabilities because it shows where room for development is in both nations. Hopefully, this study will initiate further research to inspire different approaches to engaging those with disabilities in the workforce. Three human rights reasons highlight the need for equal access to employment. First, according to laws in the United States and Costa Rica, all people should have equal opportunities in every part of life, including employment (Lizano, 2015). Second, it is crucial that people with disabilities feel a sense of purpose in their lives. There are many benefits that come with having a job, such as socialization, income, and activity outside of the house (Schur, 2003). Third, the impact of caring for an adult with disabilities on the families cannot be understated. A job can relieve the families of constant caregiving and give them peace of mind about the future of their family member (Sen & Yurtsever, 2007). Not only are there individual and family benefits to employing people with disabilities, but businesses also benefit. The first benefit to a company is employees with disabilities diversify a staff, thus the staff better reflects the community in which they work. Different skills and abilities can be highlighted in a business that has a more diverse staff. According to the Australian Government's Department of Job Access, there are cost savings in hiring people of this population because people with disabilities statistically have lower turnover rates and take fewer sick days ("Benefits," 2017). The Chicago Lighthouse echoes these claims by stating that people with disabilities are reliable. This population is also statistically less likely to be involved in work-related accidents. Businesses can also receive credits with taxes and other bonuses for hiring employees with a disability. Finally, having people with disabilities represented in a staff has shown to improve staff morale ("Top," 2016). These findings all point to the fact that employment for people with disabilities needs to be a higher priority.

At the moment, the definition of a disability highlights four different

types. These are sensory, cognitive, physical, and psychosocial. Participants in this study all have an intellectual disability, which includes all of the above types with the exception of physical. People who have limitations in their ability to function in problem-solving, learning, and reasoning would be considered to have an intellectual disability. People usually are not considered to be intellectually disabled until they are at the age of 18, due to the fact they are past the developmental age (“Frequently,” 2017).

Despite laws being passed in favor of equal rights for people with disabilities and increased awareness and acceptance of disabilities in both the United States (U.S.) and Costa Rica (C.R.), there still remain barriers in both nations for people with disabilities (Cooney, Jahoda, Gumley, & Knott, 2006, and Ministerio de Educacion Pública de Costa Rica, 2017). For example, in the United States, the U.S. government has not allocated adequate funds toward agencies that provide education and opportunities for this population of people (Litvinov, 2016). In addition, there is still a strong social stigma in the U.S. towards people with disabilities (Cooney, Jahoda, Gumley, & Knott, 2006). Similar barriers exist in Costa Rica as well (Litvinov, 2016). Because of inadequate funding and social stigmas, people with disabilities are still fighting for true equality in the job force and other parts of life. This study does a cross-cultural comparison to see how adults with disabilities and the people who work with them in Costa Rica and the United States define employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The goal is to identify how similar or different the definitions of employment opportunities are between the two countries.

As of 2015, there are 452,849 people with disabilities in Costa Rica. This is 10.5% of the population; however, only 42% of these people between the ages of 15-35 (the most productive age group in the workforce) are employed (MTSS, MEP, & INA, 2014). In the United States, there are 56.7 million people who have a disability, which is 19% of the population. Of these, 749,130 people are Illinois residents (“Local,” 2017). Additionally, 35.4% of Illinois residents with a disability are currently employed, while 10.1% are not currently working, but actively seeking employment (“Local,” 2017).

The most relevant government program in Costa Rica is the Ministerio de Educación Pública (MEP), with a branch titled Centros de Atención Integral para Personas Adultas con Discapacidad (CAIPAD). This branch works directly to educate people with disabilities over the age of 21, developing labor skills and employability (Ministerio de Educacion Pública de Costa Rica, 2017). Similarly, the state of Illinois in the United States has the Illinois Department of Human Services. This department works on implementing equal rights for people with disabilities in regards to jobs, independent living, education, and financial benefits (“Disability,” 2017).

Laws in Costa Rica pertaining to people with disabilities have existed since 1957, with one of the most notable being law #8661, passed in 2008. This law states people with disabilities can participate fully in society, meaning they

have equal opportunities for employment (Asamblea Legislativa de Costa Rica, 2008). The United States laws include the comprehensive The Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990. This Act set the precedent for the #8661 law in Costa Rica as well, as it works to protect the rights of this population in regard to equal opportunities. It states that discrimination of living, working, or education opportunities for people with disabilities is prohibited (“The Americans,” 2017).

Despite laws guaranteeing equal rights for people with disabilities and increased awareness and acceptance of disabilities, many barriers still remain. The government of Costa Rica has not allocated adequate funds toward agencies that provide education and opportunities for this population of people (Litvinov, 2016). In addition, there is still a strong social stigma resulting in prejudice for people with disabilities. This has been found particularly in public school systems, where negative treatment of students with intellectual disabilities exists and emotional well-being of these individuals is not promoted (Cooney, Jahoda, Gumley, & Knott, 2006). Because of these issues, people with disabilities are still fighting for true equality in the job force and other parts of life.

The research surrounding employment opportunities for people with disabilities is vaster in the United States than Latin America. Regardless, as previously mentioned, research in this realm is sorely lacking. Most of the literature that does exist is at least ten years old at this point and leaves out the voices of people with disabilities, despite the importance of their opinions (Shier, Graham, & Jones, 2009). A 1998 study for the Department of Education and Employment found that people with a disability often have a positive outlook on their chances of finding a job, but are not likely to work in anything other than manual and entry-level/low-skill jobs (Meager, Bates, Dench, Honey, & Williams, 1998). As one of the very few studies found to incorporate the opinions of people with disabilities, this study by Meager, et. al, shared the actual perceptions of people with disabilities regarding their employment chances. Another study from the University of Texas gives additional support by stating that people with disabilities have significantly more learned positive attitudes pertaining to many aspects of their lives (Brillhart, Jay, & Wyers, 1990).

Shier and colleagues (2009) reported that the biggest impact on employment opportunities was public attitudes toward people with disabilities (Shier, Graham, & Jones, 2009). Related to this, Ravaud and colleagues (1992) found that those without a disability were 1.78 times more likely to be called back for a job interview versus a person with a disability, a demonstration of significant discrimination (Ravaud, Madiot, & Ville, 1992). A decade later, Schur (2003) supported these findings by showing that workers with a disability have double the chances of working in part-time and contingent jobs versus non-disabled persons. These jobs offer less pay than other jobs, but still allow for employment (Schur, 2003). Contrary to the majority of research findings on this topic, another article from *Sage Journals* found that employers rated applicants with disabilities higher in a characteristics test than able-bodied ones, showing there were positive

attitudes toward this population (Christman & Slaten, 1991). Despite some positive attitudes, the majority of research states people with disabilities still face a greater struggle to become employed.

The overall objective of this exploratory study was to highlight the perspectives of those with intellectual disabilities in regard to their employment opportunities in Costa Rica and the United States. Therefore, the employment opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities at the Fundación Servio Flores Arroyo (FSFA) in Alajuela, Costa Rica, Achievement Industries (AI) in Monmouth, Illinois, and the Northern Illinois Special Recreation Association (NISRA) in Crystal Lake, Illinois, were investigated. Employment opportunities can be defined for the purpose of this study as the existence of jobs for which people with disabilities are qualified, employers who are willing to hire qualified applicants with disabilities, and possibilities for advancement into higher-level positions. The specific objectives of this study were to identify the similarities and differences between Costa Rica and the United States in regard to perceived labor skills the attendees of both institutes can learn, identifying their employment opportunities, and identifying the barriers they face. It was expected that the skills adults are able to learn would be equal between the countries, but that there would be more employment positions and, therefore, opportunities for the U.S. convenience sample. In addition, it was hypothesized there would be fewer barriers to employment in the United States sample. These hypotheses are based strictly in observations made by the researcher during her time in Costa Rica and working with the population in the United States, as there is no cross-cultural evidence to be found regarding this topic.

Method

Participants

The overall sample was 43 voluntary participants: 12 adults with a disability at FSFA in Costa Rica and 14 at either AI or NISRA in Illinois, and then 8 staff members from FSFA and 9 from either AI or NISRA. Each participant was associated with FSFA, AI, or NISRA and was selected by the prospective directors for interviews. All participants were treated in accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA) and Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) ethical guidelines (#17-30).

Measures

In order to complete this study, two measures were used: a survey for the staff members to fill out and an interview for the adults with disabilities in which to participate (Appendix A). Questions in both the interview and survey included open-ended questions, Yes/No questions, Likert Scale questions (using a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “low” and 5 being “high”), as well as a space for commentary.

Each interview/survey also included a demographics section with the variables of age, gender, residence, time with the institute, and occupation if applicable. A printed copy of the purpose of the study and the informed consent were given to each participant (Appendix A).

Procedures

All participants were given a printed copy of the purpose of the study and the informed consent; their rights were explained to them as necessary before interviews began. For the adult participants, permission was obtained from each staff member, and then the adult was pulled individually from class at FSFA, work at AI, or activities at NISRA for a 10-20 minute individual interview with the researcher. The staff members were given surveys to answer since they could not leave classes or work to participate in interviews. All the interviews from Costa Rica were conducted in Spanish and then translated to English. After all data collection was completed, participants knew that the researcher was available to answer any follow-up questions and were notified of the presentation of the findings.

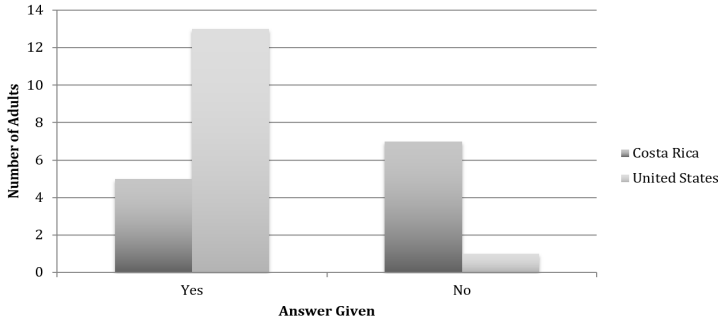
Results

The purpose of this study was to identify and compare the employment opportunities for people with disabilities between the Alajuela providence in Costa Rica and Midwestern Illinois in the United States. Chi-square tests of independence were used to compare all of the Yes/No questions on the surveys between Costa Rica adults and United States adults, and then Costa Rica and United States staff. Exploratory correlations were also conducted. However, it must be understood that the number of participants in this study was not enough to produce generalizable statistical evidence. The statistical analyses were run for the sake of creating a jumping-off point for cross-cultural comparisons on the topic; larger studies are needed to produce reliable statistics. The following results are sufficient for an exploratory approach in a new realm of research.

Quantitative Results

Chi-square analysis, which is a statistical test to test relationships between variables that are categorical, indicated that significantly fewer adult participants in Costa Rica (41.6%) were currently working than adult participants in the United States (92.8%), $X^2(2, N=25) = 7.95, p = 0.003$, see Figure 1. Another chi-square analysis indicated that 58.3% of adult participants in Costa Rica perceived they had the same job opportunities as everybody else in their country, where 64.3% of adult participants in the United States reported the same sentiment; the differences between these perceptions were not significant, $X^2(2, N=25) = 0.10, p = 0.756$. Comments supporting these sentiments include, “there are opportunities, but there are different opportunities. It is more difficult for people with disabilities” from

"Are you Currently Working?" Interview Question Results



Costa Rica and “Yes; I know if I want a job, I can get one” from the United States. See Table 1 for additional comments. All of the adult participants from both Costa Rica and the United States indicated they did want to work.

Figure 1. Answers recorded by adult participants regarding the interview question, “are you currently working”.

Table 1. Comments from adult participants regarding their perceptions of equality in job opportunities.

U.S. Adults	C.R. Adults
-“Yes; it is because it should be equal for everybody”. -“Because of my disability, people may not want to hire me”. -“No, because people without disabilities get something different; I do not know if it is more nerve or more education, but they have an advantage”.	-“Yes, everyone is equal in Costa Rica”. -“People with disabilities do not have as many opportunities to make money. People do not like to work with people with disabilities. We need a different type of support sometimes”.

In order to determine why the above differences in job opportunities and perceptions of job opportunities exist between Costa Rica and the United States, additional chi-square analyses were conducted. Findings indicated that significantly more adult participants in Costa Rica (91.6%) than in the United States (21.4%) felt public transportation was accessible, $X^2(2, N=25) = 12.83, p = 0.000$, see Figure 2. A biserial correlation analysis was run between the variables of currently working (yes/no) and the accessibility of public transportation (yes/no). While there was no strong correlation found between the Costa Rica adults and these variables, the adults in the United States did have a nearly significant and moderately negative correlation, $r(14) = -0.53, p = 0.051$.

"Can you use Public Transportation?" Interview Question Results

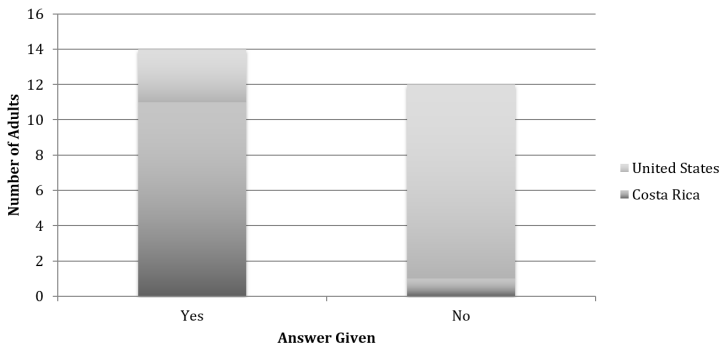


Figure 2. Answers recorded by adult participants regarding the interview question, “can you use public transportation to get to a job”?

Furthermore, 87.5% of the staff participants in Costa Rica felt their government provided support for people with disabilities, while 44.4% of staff participants in the United States felt the same for the U.S. government; the difference of these perceptions was nearly significant, $X^2(2, N=16) = 3.44, p = 0.055$. Comments regarding this perception include, “I do not think they have done a good job handling money. Many programs exist designated for helping but there is not proper follow up” from Costa Rica and “they might try, but they fall short” from the United States. See additional comments in Table 2.

Table 2. Comments from staff participants in regards to how supportive they feel the government is of people with disabilities.

U.S. Staff	C.R. Staff
-“Hell no. They do the least that they can get away with. The waiting list of people needing services is as long as the number of people receiving services. It’s all about money”. -“Yes, but more (support) is needed to get full support for people with disabilities”. -“No, they make it difficult to manage accounts in regards to making sure income doesn’t affect ability to receive benefits like Medicare/Medicaid. Plus most programs cost a lot more than fund given to families which can be used for job training and transportation”.	-“There is already a range of possibilities to help students via CONAPDIS. This aids people with disabilities in poverty in paying for basic expenses, and sometimes pensions”. -“It provides support, but often times there is little supervision. These aids become barriers for people with disabilities because they (the parents) prefer to continue receiving benefits of the state before their child can develop skills and independence”.

While not significant, results also indicated that 75.0% of staff participants in Costa Rica felt public transportation was accessible, while 44.4%

of staff participants in the United States felt the same, $X^2(2, N=16) = 1.63, p = 0.196$. Finally, 50.0% of staff participants in Costa Rica perceived a strong negative social stigma toward people with disabilities, while 77.8% of the United States staff participants felt the same; the difference in these perceptions was also not significant, $X^2(2, N=16) = 1.43, p = 0.232$. Comments on this stigma include, “acceptance in society and the label that people with disabilities are seen as people with no capacity to perform in society is the worst part of the social stigmas” from Costa Rica and “insults and fear of lack of understanding is the worst part of social stigmas” from the United States. See Table 3 for additional comments.

Table 3. Comments from staff participants on the worst part of the social stigma toward people with disabilities.

U.S. Staff	C.R.Staff
-“Insults and fear of lack of understanding is the worst part of social stigmas”. -“Making fun of challenged individuals seems to be a problem. In some cases, though not nearly as much as in past decades, companies do not want to hire individuals who they perceive cannot handle a situation or perform a job because the individual has a disability”. -“I have never witnessed comments or looks when I have been with them on the community outings. Yet, they may be judged by some when they are wanting to work a job in the community”.	-“Acceptance in society and the label that people with disabilities are seen as people with no capacity to perform in society is the worst part of the social stigmas”. -“The lack of inclusion”. -“I think the worst stigma is that people with disabilities are seen as ‘eternal children’”. -“People think this population is poor people who cannot make decisions, understand how things work, and sadly in these occasions the employers do not believe in the skills of a person with an intellectual disability. To believe that these people cannot do anything”.

Qualitative Results

First, a higher number of the United States sample was currently employed versus the Costa Rica sample. Every participant employed in the United States was working a minimum wage job with no benefits and low flexibility via Achievement Industries (AI). At AI, various companies have a contract with the institute and send work for the workers to do, including cutting sketch boards in the workshop for an art supply company, Dick Blick. Each worker is paid for how many widgets they make, as opposed to being paid for their time. The jobs all require manual skills, such as cleaning and woodworking. Participants ranked cleaning, woodworking, and efficiency as the most useful skills they had learned at AI. In addition, each participant did note that they feel they are being paid fairly for their work. There is an aura of gratitude that appeared in the interviews for the work that AI is doing for their population.

In Costa Rica, the few participants who were currently working were working outside of the Fundación Servio Flores Arroyo (FSFA), as this institute does not pay employees. The director of this institute reported that it is incredibly challenging to find businesses willing to pair with the institute in order to pay

people with disabilities for their work at FSFA or allow them to work in their businesses (M.A. Kika, personal communication, March 4, 2017). Students attending FSFA do create goods that the institute then sells during fairs and door-to-door in local neighborhoods, but the students do not see this small profit. The point of selling the items is to teach the students money skills. Less than half of the participants are working from this sample, but the jobs they do have are also low paying and require manual labor. Taco Bell was the company noted the most commonly for creating job positions for FSFA students. This sample reported cleaning, cooking, and computation as the most useful skills they were learning at FSFA.

While the sample in Illinois are working significantly more than the adults from Alajuela, the current employment opportunities for people with disabilities living in Illinois are far poorer now than they had been ten years ago. The director at AI discussed the challenges they have faced in funding their programs. Illinois' budget has continuously decreased the amount of money given to job coaching since 2008, which is necessary for most people with disabilities to have in order to learn how to do a job outside of a specialized institute. There is a lottery system for who gets funding to attend institutes such as AI; the waiting list for this service is as long as the people who are already receiving services (B. Huyser, personal communication, October 12, 2017). Just as FSFA has trouble finding companies to partner with, AI is also having this same issue. Due to many jobs now being automated, it is increasingly difficult for AI to find companies that want to help by sending them work.

The adults with disabilities sample from Costa Rica reported significantly higher access to public transportation than the adults in the United States. While it should be noted that Alajuela is an urban area near the country's capital, while Monmouth, Illinois, is a small rural town distant from cities, the confidence in the participants' ability to take a bus or train if need be is vastly different. All but one of the participants in Costa Rica reported being able to take a bus, train, or taxi confidently. The students of FSFA arrive to school either through train, public bus, private bus, walking, or their parents bringing them. There are a variety of transportation options. On the other hand, the workers at AI arrive through a private bus provided by the institute. When asked if there are other options to get to work, many said there were none besides asking someone for a ride.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that between the convenience samples of adults with disabilities and staff in Alajuela, Costa Rica and Illinois, United States, there are very few significant differences that exist regarding employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Overall, in the nearly twenty years since the *Department of Education Employment* published their findings regarding this topic, there appears to have been little change. Their decades-old findings are consistent with what this study's

samples have shown: people with disabilities are more likely to work in manual, low-level jobs (Meager, Bates, Dench, Honey, & Williams, 1998). In addition, the study from *Industrial Researchers* notes over half the jobs held by people with disabilities are entry-level positions (Schur, 2003); thus, finding living-wage jobs is an additional challenge. This study can shed light on the challenges institutes in two different countries are facing with finding employment for their participants. In Costa Rica, the sample is having a difficult time even finding job positions, whereas in Illinois the number of jobs that are available are decreasing and are still low-level positions. While there is a significant difference between the samples regarding the number of participants working, it is clear that the challenges the institutes are facing are vast and not completely dissimilar.

No correlation was found between Costa Rica participants currently working and accessibility to public transit variables, but a moderately negative correlation was found in the Illinois sample. This is interesting because it indicates that the more people who were currently working, the less they felt they had access to public transportation. This result was most likely skewed due to the fact that the workers at AI are provided private buses. More participants in the future would be able to more accurately portray the correlation between these, and other, variables. Undoubtedly, had this study been conducted in two rural or two urban areas, perhaps a less significant difference would have been found between the samples. However, this finding is still important since even the students from Costa Rica who arrived via their parents taking them to the institute still reported feeling confident in being able to take a bus or train. It is observable on all buses and trains in Costa Rica that there are wheelchair ramps and specific seating for people with disabilities, as it is a law to have this publicly available and clearly labeled (Lizano, 2015). While a similar law does exist in the United States, it is noticeable that these areas are not always as clearly labeled on buses and trains in Illinois (Cooney, Jahoda, Gumley, & Knott, 2006). Perhaps this solely observational difference in labeling leads to a difference in how confident people with disabilities feel in their abilities to take public transportation. There was no significant difference between the reports of staff members from either country regarding public transportation for people with disabilities, but the adult participants between the two countries did report a difference. This may demonstrate the discrepancy between public understanding of accessibility for this population versus the opinions of people with disabilities.

The fact that so few significant differences were found between the variables of this study itself is crucial to note, as there may be preconceived expectations that a developed country would provide higher quality opportunities for people with disabilities than would a less developed nation; however, the only differences found here involve the number of people with a disability working and public transportation. There is value in this study to review the insignificant results found because these mean that the variables being discussed are not as different as one might assume they would be between a developed and less developed nation.

One must remember, however, that the methodology for this study does not allow for generalization; the findings of this study are still profound despite the limited number of participants.

Almost the same number of participants from Costa Rica and the United States stated that they feel they have the same job opportunities as everybody else in their respective countries. This points to the possibility that the ideologies the two countries are highlighting in social discourse are similar. There may be a sentiment shared that everybody is equal, as many participants stated. However, when the participants from the United States were asked to identify their dream job, the majority of them had no answer. Many said they had never been asked this question before. The students in Costa Rica almost all had answers for this question immediately, ranging from a teacher to a chef, which may show a difference in how much hope is instilled in a person with a disability in each country. However, the perspectives found in this study regarding equal opportunities seem to align with the previous finding that people with disabilities have a positive outlook for their employment opportunities (Meager, Bates, Dench, Honey, & Williams, 1998).

The government support variable was touched on previously in the analysis, but is worth exploring further due to the fact there was nearly a significant difference between the Costa Rica staffs' perception of their government versus the United States staffs' perception. Most of the staff in Costa Rica felt that the government has enough programs in place and that the necessary laws are in the books, but that the government may fall short in enforcing what already exists. Perhaps enough organizations, such as Centros de Atención Integral para Personas Adultas con Discapacidad CAIPAD, do exist within the government, but their work needs to be more efficient and impactful. The money available for people with disabilities to receive funding to attend institutes like FSFA seemed adequate according to their interviews. The staff in Illinois was negative in their reviews of the Illinois government. While laws exist in Illinois as well, the state budget is not allocating the fair amount of money toward people with disabilities. The director of AI did state that people with disabilities in Illinois are not receiving the fair amount of money due to them because the Illinois government is allocating those funds from the federal government elsewhere. Other staff in the Illinois sample also noted that the biggest issue is money.

Lastly, the strength of the social stigma toward people with disabilities was not rated significantly different between Alajuela and Illinois. Both countries did, overall, rank this social stigma as relatively strong. Comments from Costa Rica implied more that the issue is that people with disabilities are seen as helpless, whereas comments from Illinois focused more on insults and bullying. Both countries' groups of participants shared a sentiment that the social stigma is strong enough in either country to deter employers from hiring people with disabilities. Previous literature has shown that a social stigma does exist (e.g., Cooney, Jahoda, Gumley, & Knott, 2006), and this study shows that some people with disabilities

do believe this stigma is impacting their employment opportunities.

A few limitations to this study must be clearly stated. The first limitation was the language barrier between the researcher and participants in Costa Rica, with the researcher not being fluent in Spanish, but proficient. Additionally, the researcher may have had interviewer bias by being the one to conduct the interviews. Second, the cognitive abilities of some of the students occasionally made it difficult for them to understand and adequately answer all of the questions. Finally, since there were only two months to complete this project in Costa Rica, there was not enough time to talk with other relevant populations, particularly employers. As previously stated, the number of participants was small; the qualitative analyses pulled from the interviews are strong, and the quantitative statistical tests were run simply to see if they might corroborate the qualitative findings.

Regardless of these limitations, this study still is one of the first to highlight the actual perspectives of people with disabilities and those who work with them. There is value in seeing how a developed nation and an underdeveloped nation compare between two samples regarding employment opportunities for the population at hand. Future research should include the perspectives of employers and lay people, as their perspectives would aid in better defining why there are challenges with employment opportunities. It would prove interesting to replicate this study in more countries or other states. Analyzing how another developed country provides these opportunities would undoubtedly give the United States examples to consider; the same would apply to examining other Latin American countries in comparison to Costa Rica. While limited, this study shows that as of now, the current opportunities for individuals with disabilities are insufficient, according to their own perceptions. Much more can be done to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities in both the United States and Costa Rica.

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Appendix A

Instruments of the Study
Monmouth College
Sophia Slocum
Achievement Industries

Interview for Adults with Disabilities

The following interview for adults with disabilities who work at Achievement Industries is for the specific use of research through Monmouth College. The data collected will be kept confidential and is solely for the purpose of the following research project: Employment opportunities for adults with disabilities at Achievement Industries in central Illinois.

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Time with Achievement: _____

Residence: _____

1. Are you currently working? Yes/ No, where?
2. How many jobs have you had in the past? Where? For how long?
3. Would you like a job that would pay you by the hour? If yes, how much per hour? If no, explain.

4. Do you feel you have the same opportunities as everybody to find work? Yes/ No, explain.
5. Could you use public transportation to travel to a job? Yes/ No, explain
6. What skills have you learned either at school, NISRA, or another program that you could use in a job?
7. What is your dream job?
8. Would you like to work? Yes/No, explain.
9. What are the major problems you face when trying to find a job?
10. In your opinion, what should schools and organizations similar to NISRA be doing to improve your employment opportunities?

Monmouth College
Sophia Slocum
Achievement Industries

Survey for Employees

The following interview for the employees at Achievement Industries is for the specific use of research through the Monmouth College. The data collected will be kept confidential and is solely for the purpose of the following research project: Employment opportunities for adults with disabilities in Alajuela, Costa Rica and Illinois, United States.

Time with Achievement Industries: _____

1. What is your job title and description at Achievement Industries?
2. What skills can the participants at Achievement Industries learn? Which are the most useful for finding work?
3. In your opinion, how can Achievement Industries improve in helping their attendees be properly trained for work and find jobs?
4. What are the most beneficial characteristics for a family with a person with disabilities to have in order to help their child find work?
5. How strong are the social stigmas towards people with disabilities? Choose a number on the scale below.

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
Weak _____ Strong

6. Please explain what part of these social stigmas are the worst (i.e. insults, public transportation problems, etc.). You may share an example.

7. Do you believe the negative social stigmas towards people with disabilities affect their ability to find work? Yes/ No, explain

8. What are the main barriers Achievement Industries has in the process of finding work for their attendees?

9. What are the principal barriers your attendees have with finding work? Types of barriers include attitude, communication, and environment. Which category has the most barriers and why?

10. Do you feel the government provides financial and social support for people with disabilities and their families? Yes/ No, explain.

11. Is public transportation easily accessible for people with disabilities? Could your attendees use public transit to travel to work?

13. There are three main forms of support for a person with disabilities: assistance from other people, service animals, and physical products. Please identify which of these support systems is the most beneficial for your attendees to find work?

14. If Achievement Industries did not exist, what could your attendees be doing in this moment?

Additional Comments:

Informed Consent

Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities

I consent to serve as a participant in the research investigation titled “Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities” being conducted by Sophia Slocum as a part of a research project for the Accredited Colleges of the Midwest and the Psychology department at Monmouth College.

I understand that this study is investigating the employment opportunities available

for adults with disabilities who attend programs at Achievement Industries. As a participant in this study, I will be asked to answer a set of 14 questions in a survey pertaining to the research question. This study will be completed by December 16th, 2017.

I understand the potential benefits of this study to participants are being able to help identify opportunities for employment and inspire more research to be done in this area in order to create more opportunities. The potential risks in this study to participants are having to use approximately 20 minutes to respond to the questions. I understand that the information I provide is confidential and my identity will not be revealed. The demographics and answers collected in this study will only be reviewed by researchers and professors helping with the study.

I understand that my participation in voluntary and that I am free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I have any questions about this On the basis of the above statements, I agree to participate in this project.

Signature: _____

Name (print): _____

Date: _____