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A Study of the Attitudes and Beliefs of Tidewater Area Businesses Regarding the Employment of the Trainable Mentally Retarded

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A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS
OF TIDEWATER AREA BUSINESSES REGARDING
THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE TRAINABLE MENTALLY RETARDED

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
of
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by
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Norfolk, Virginia
June, 1984

This research paper was prepared by Fred Hadley under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in VTE 636, Problems in Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The current trend in public education toward mentally retarded persons was to provide vocational education. By providing what it considered to be appropriate vocational training for special education students, particularly trainable mentally retarded (TMR) ones, the schools felt they had fulfilled their legal responsibilities. Meeting this legal responsibility (directed by Public Laws 94-142 and 94-482) did not necessarily mean that mentally retarded persons should be able to secure gainful employment after leaving the school environment. Although these mentally retarded individuals may have been trained vocationally, they must still enter the competitive job market greatly handicapped. In addition to being labeled as mentally handicapped, they may also have physical limitations or emotional disorders.

Apathy or even resistance by some members of the business community regarding the employment of these persons was one of the greatest handicaps they would face. Many persons speak favorably about employing retarded applicants, but in actual practice, a prospective employer

may call upon a multitude of reasons (excuses) for not hiring someone. Undoubtedly, employers have long felt that the employment of the mentally retarded population was desirable. In the eyes of society and from an economic standpoint, it was better for all concerned when handicapped persons were gainfully employed.

Too often, however, employers would rather let someone else do the hiring. The prevailing attitude encountered in casual conversation (off the record) was, "Yes, they should be employed, but not in my business," or "That's fine for someone else, but they couldn't do the work around here."

Currently, it seems that the schools were preparing TMR persons for a life of frustration, rather than a life of employment. Society does not seem to be willing to pick up where the schools leave off in the development of these persons.

Other than improving a business's public image, the benefits of employing retarded persons seemed to be unknown to most businesses. In addition to acquiring good workers, some tax incentives were also provided by the federal government. This seemed to provide employers with some motivation, but it was inadequate.

The basic problem seemed to be one of prevailing attitudes. These attitudes were the problem of this study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Throughout history, mentally retarded persons have been subjected to ill-treatment. They have been neglected, unjustly institutionalized, ridiculed, and even physically abused. Recent legislation has done much to guarantee the protection of these individuals and their rights. Legislation can direct, fund, mandate, and even set implementation dates. Changes in attitudes, however, cannot be legislated.

Our society's actions, attitudes, and philosophies toward mentally retarded persons have developed over hundreds of years. The problem of this study was to analyze the current attitudes of part of our society, specifically the Tidewater business community, toward employment of the mentally retarded. Unless these attitudes were known, the schools and other agencies involved in the vocational training of those individuals cannot hope to properly serve their needs. In order to clarify and assist in resolving this problem, two research goals were established.

RESEARCH GOALS

It was understood at the outset of this study that not all mentally retarded persons could succeed in the competitive job market. This was particularly true of TMR persons, those who were the primary objects of this study. Many could, however, if an opportunity and proper training were involved. It was also believed that many employers lacked the knowledge of the employment potential of TMR persons, either because of apathy or a lack of experience in dealing with them. Based on this latter statement, two research goals were established for this study. The research goals of this study were:

1. Accumulate and analyze data on the attitudes currently held by both prospective and actual employers regarding the employment of mentally retarded persons, and
2. Demonstrate a relationship between the attitudes of employers who had actually hired mentally retarded persons and those who had not.

With this information, schools, placement services, and other concerned agencies could modify their efforts in serving their clients. Training in some areas might

be de-emphasized, while others might require a more intensive effort. Further, this information could be used to adjust or improve public awareness efforts on behalf of the mentally retarded.

If gainful employment was to become a reality for the mentally retarded, the re-education of the business community must begin somewhere. It could begin with the attainment of these goals.

The goals of this study were better understood in the context of the history involved in this subject. The following section deals with the background and significance of this study.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

In recent years, society had demonstrated a continued and growing awareness of mentally retarded individuals. This had been primarily due to the impact of related federal legislation (particularly Public Law 93-112) on the general public. This new awareness had also been a result of numerous items in the media. Newspapers, radio, television, and a variety of periodicals frequently present information on the problems, lifestyles, and successes of TMR persons.

While the business community had employed some of these individuals, the numbers affected appeared to be minimal - a drop in the proverbial bucket. Attitudes and preconceived ideas held for years by employers seemed to be changing, but that change was insufficient to meet the employment needs of the TMR population. The problem of this study was to analyze the current attitudes of Tidewater area businesses and to identify some relationships between these attitudes and actual employment practices.

Generally, TMR persons who have been employed in the past have not achieved this through any organized effort on society's part. Successfully gaining employment has been more a matter of luck - knowing the right person,

incidentally encountering a sympathetic employer, having an active or influential family member, or some similar circumstance.

Beginning in 1980, Project Employability in Norfolk attempted to present an organized, systematic approach to meet this need. Clients served by Project Employability were virtually led by the hand through such requirements as job applications, social security forms, job interviews, transportation, on-the-job training, and maintaining proper employer-employee relationships. The professional staff of Project Employability contacted many businesses and kept records of the responses received regarding possible employment opportunities. Much of this information was utilized in this study.

Connie Lowe, Coordinator of Employment Activities for Project Employability in Norfolk, has stated, "...the greatest handicap in placing TMR individuals in employment is not the question of whether or not they can perform the tasks required, but overcoming the employer's preconceived ideas about retarded persons." In effect, these attitudes and ideas usually prevented a TMR person from securing employment. Lowe further stated, "...and once hired and trained through intervention techniques, TMR persons make excellent workers, have good safety records, experience only limited problems, have good time management practices,

and may generally be expected to perform as well or better than regular employees."

By guaranteeing successful job completion and providing an on-site trainer for up to 100 percent of the time if required, Project Employability was able to secure many positions that would otherwise have been unavailable. While this was certainly a step in the right direction, the number of clients served was abysmally small. This was due to the small staff of Project Employability, a budgetary constraint.

Sheltered workshop environments, such as the Louise B. Eggleston Center in Norfolk, have also sought to meet the employment needs of the mentally retarded. The staff there was sympathetic to and knowledgeable of the needs of the clients they served. Although this effort aided the client, it did little to change the attitudes of the local business community. On the contrary, businesses felt that the Center was productive, but was not directed toward the eventual placement of its clients in the competitive job market. This type of employment for normal employees would be considered a dead-end job.

In light of both past and current attempts to secure gainful employment for mentally retarded persons and to properly assess current business attitudes toward such employment, it was necessary to define the limitations within which this study was conducted. These limitations identified the boundaries for the study of businesses' attitudes.

LIMITATIONS

During the course of this study it was necessary to define the limitations of it. The following list defined the parameters within which this study was conducted:

1. The study was limited to businesses located in the Tidewater area cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, and Portsmouth, Virginia.
2. The study was concerned only with those persons whose primary handicapping condition was mental retardation. It was recognized that other handicapping conditions might also be present in these individuals.

Following the identification of these limitations, several assumptions were made.

ASSUMPTIONS

The purpose of this study was to analyze business attitudes in the Tidewater area of Virginia regarding employment of persons who were mentally retarded. Several assumptions were initially made upon which this study was based. The assumptive factors for this study were:

1. Businesses that had never employed mentally retarded persons were reluctant to do so.
2. Businesses that had employed mentally retarded persons had more positive attitudes toward them.
3. Employment positions were more limited for mentally retarded persons than for "normal" persons because of a lack of knowledge on the part of the business community.
4. The tax incentive credit provided by the federal government was not a sufficient motivator for larger businesses.

The efforts of the local business community in alleviating some of the employment problems of the mentally retarded population seemed to be minimal. The act of employing one TMR person on a staff of from fifty to seventy-five appeared to be only a token gesture. This

may have seemed adequate to the employer in that he was doing about as much as anyone else.

Beginning with the limitations previously defined, and with the assumptions listed in this section, procedures were established for conducting this study. These procedures were the subject of the following section.

PROCEDURES

In order to facilitate accumulation and analyzation of a representative sample of data for this study, procedures were established in the early stages. Since the problem of this study was to analyze data on the attitudes of the Tidewater area business community toward employment of TMR persons, the following procedures were designed and adopted.

The method used for attaining appropriate data was two-fold. First, a survey was mailed to several businesses in the Tidewater area. This survey contained questions relevant to this study such as: previous employment of TMR persons, understanding of TMR persons, successes and/or failures of TMR persons employed, numbers of TMR persons employed in the past and at the time of this survey, expectations of the employer, and other questions.

Secondly, the data contained in the records of the Norfolk office of Project Employability were used extensively. These records contained addresses, some employer responses, personal observations of the Project staff, and other information. Much of the survey information requested (listed in previous paragraph) was readily available when an employer had been previously contacted.

After the data was accumulated for this study, it was organized and tabulated. The information gathered indicated how many respondents had or had not employed the

mentally retarded, what their past and present feelings about such employment were, their expectations of such employees, and their general beliefs about the mentally retarded in this area.

This information was important to facilitate the modification of existing programs or the design of new programs and curricula for the vocational training of mentally retarded persons. If employment was to be a reality for these individuals, the type of trained employees sought by employers must have been provided.

Several terms significant to this study were frequently encountered. Both special needs and other types of professionals who deal with mentally retarded individuals employed many confusing and ambiguous terms. For the sake of clarity, these terms were defined in the next section of this study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following were key terms that were encountered in the course of this study. These terms were defined to provide a clearer understanding of the sections which contain them.

1. Project Employability in Norfolk: a program, operated under a federal grant with the cooperation of Virginia Commonwealth University and the Norfolk Public Schools, to serve handicapped persons. Its goals were to seek out employment opportunities for the handicapped, assist clients in securing employment, fully training these clients, provide follow-up services and act as a liaison between their clients and employers who hired them.
2. Public Law 93-112: commonly known as The Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This was essentially a civil rights law for handicapped persons intended to eliminate discriminative practices based on handicap.
3. Public Law 94-142: a federal mandate providing for a free and appropriate educational experience for all handicapped children. It provided that a student be integrated

(mainstreamed) into regular classes or at least provided an educational experience in the least restrictive environment.

4. Public Law 94-482: commonly known as The Education Acts of 1976. This was federal legislation requiring vocational programs in which handicapped students were enrolled. It provided that these programs were planned and coordinated in conformity with and as a part of each student's Individual Education Plan.
5. Tax Incentive Program: a tax credit incentive program by the federal government for employers of the handicapped allowing them to deduct a percentage of wages paid to them from their income taxes.
6. Trainable Mentally Retarded: commonly called TMR. A primary classification given to individuals possessing I.Q.'s ranging from twenty-five to fifty. Other handicapping conditions may also have been present.

With an understanding of these key terms, it was then possible to proceed with the study. The next section of this chapter very briefly describes what is to follow in the succeeding chapters, as well as giving a short summary of this one.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The problem of this study was to analyze the attitudes of the Tidewater area business community toward hiring the mentally retarded. After examining the problem, its background and current significance, the procedures used, the limitations, assumptions, and key terms involved, a review of literature was required. This was placed in Chapter II.

Following the review of literature, other chapters included a more detailed explanation of the methods and procedures used (Chapter III), the findings of this study (Chapter IV), and a summary of the entire study (Chapter V). The final chapter also included the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

This study attempted to gather data on the attitudes encountered regarding the employment of mentally retarded individuals, primarily those classified as TMR. This information may now be used to implement new training, modify existing programs, and/or place new or different emphasis on the information presented by all forms of the media. Positive data may be re-enforced, while information of a negative nature may be used to provide new direction in the employment of the mentally retarded. The changing of long standing attitudes will be a long and slow process. It is also a difficult process. It was hoped that this study would provide the impetus to initiate these changes.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this review of published materials, several topics were considered. The problem of this study was to analyze the attitudes of the local business community regarding the employment of mentally retarded individuals. This problem was considered in light of the existing literature. In the review of literature which followed, these topics were examined: (1) history, (2) legislation, (3) incentives and limitations, and (4) current trends and attitudes.

HISTORY

The first topic reviewed was the history of the employment or non-employment of the mentally retarded. Martin Luther, regarded by many as one of the greatest religious leaders ever born, believed the feeble-minded (the retarded) were godless and referred to them as just a mass of flesh, having no soul. When questioned about one such individual, his response was to suggest the person be thrown into the river (Kanner, 1964, p.7).

Reviewing the history of the mentally retarded, Thacher has stated, "Just ten years ago, the severe and profoundly retarded either lived at home, exhausting their devoted, but overwhelmed parents, or vegetated in crowded institutions, virtual prisoners of a society that wanted them tucked safely out of sight (Thacher, 1978, p.32).

In his historical study of society's attitudes toward the mentally retarded, Wolfensberger indicated that there was a period when we saw them as objects of pity. This did not last long, however, and soon the feelings turned to loathing as the mentally retarded began to be perceived as a menace to society (Wolfensberger, 1969,p.99).

Responding to the issue of recent history, Wehman has indicated that in the past, severely mentally handicapped persons have been put out of public school vocational programs, sheltered workshops, and even some community based activities under the rationale that they could not make any progress (Wehman and others, 1979, p.276).

Even the federal government has recognized the inequities in Americans' attitudes toward the mentally retarded. Examining our free society's attitudes toward handicapped persons, particularly those whose conditions were readily apparent, the Department of Labor has said these persons have traditionally faced discrimination and hostility. They have been the objects of fear, superstition, contempt, and aversion. They have faced particular isolation in America, where so much emphasis was placed on youth, vigor, and attractiveness (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1976, p.4).

The history of education for mentally handicapped individuals has recently become based on federal and state legislation. Although an abundance of recent congressional action has been directed toward the handicapped, only that

which was particularly significant to the severely mentally retarded was reviewed.

LEGISLATION

Legislation has affected both the employment and the public's awareness of the mentally retarded. A number of recent laws have established a national commitment to provide services and resources to the handicapped.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Amendments of 1974, profoundly affected the mentally retarded and their employment opportunities. These provided extended funding and services for these individuals. The Act targeted the severely handicapped as a group for special concern. Provisions of the Act stated that these persons were to be given first consideration for vocational rehabilitation services. It also provided for an affirmative action plan to review the hiring, placement, and advancement practices with respect to severely handicapped persons within each department, agency, or instrumentality in the executive branch of the government. Section 504 of the Act stated, "No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States...shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1976, p.12).

Since the ultimate goal of vocational education was employment, Public Law 94-142, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975, was of special importance. It spelled out the priorities and goals for the delivery of services to handicapped persons from three to twenty-one years of age. Taken together with Public Law 94-482, the Education Amendments of 1976, these acts assured that public education would provide an accessible, appropriate education for all mentally retarded persons in the least restrictive environment.

These significant legislative efforts helped to further the public's awareness of the mentally retarded. Businesses as well as the general populace began to see that there was potential and benefit from social interaction with the severely handicapped.

INCENTIVES AND LIMITATIONS

Incentives and possible limitations involved in employment of the severely mentally retarded were considered from the perspectives of society, employers, and individuals. The literature reviewed indicated both positive and negative aspects in the employment of the mentally retarded.

The Internal Revenue Service provided employers with an incentive to hire the severely mentally retarded, as well as several other populations, in a program entitled the

Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC). This provided a tax break in the form of credits which could be subtracted from the amount of federal income tax an employer owed. The amount (fifty percent of the first six thousand dollars an employee earned) was significant enough to encourage employers to hire the severely mentally retarded. The Internal Revenue Service stipulated that the employees be selected from one of nine targeted groups. The severely mentally retarded were included in one or more of these (Virginia Employment Commission, 1982, p.1).

In their paper on the cost benefits of employment of the severely handicapped, Hill and Wehman said there were several factors worthy of consideration. One of the major benefits to the tax payer of the employment of severely handicapped persons was the resultant reduction in expensive day care programming which did not lead directly to competitive remuneration (Hill and Wehman, 1982, p.41).

In another paper, Wehman discussed possible government subsidies for those employers inclined to employ the severely mentally retarded. He said that such subsidies might be temporarily directed toward sympathetic employers to motivate them in TMR employment (Wehman, 1976, p.236). The difficulty in securing dependable employees has been experienced by many employers. A national publication said that many employers still had trouble finding anyone to take a position considered boring or menial. Some restaurateurs

were hiring the mentally retarded because they were the only people willing to try - and take some pride in - mopping floors and washing dishes (Time, 1970, p.77). In this regard, a government study indicated the retarded were capable of doing a wide variety of tasks. This study showed that a significant percentage of jobs in the following areas could be performed by mentally retarded persons: service, unskilled, semi-skilled, clerical, family worker, agriculture, and skilled (The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, 1963).

In addressing possible disincentives or limitations in the employment of the severely retarded, Wehman said some were evident, particularly in the individual's family relationships. The most frequently cited obstacle to job placement was the fear of losing the individual's Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The author indicated that the problem was more one of confusion and not understanding the government's regulations, than one of actually losing the income (Wehman, Hill, and Koehler, 1979, p.277). Loss of eligibility to receive SSI payments actually occurred only after the recipient's income exceeded the financial benefits obtained. The Supplemental Security Income program was administered by the Social Security Administration to provide a regular income to the families of qualifying handicapped and disadvantaged individuals (U.S. Dept. of

Labor, 1976, p.69). Once the previously stated objections were overcome, the employment picture for a mentally retarded person seemed considerably brighter and a more positive outlook emerged.

Employers who had experience in hiring the mentally retarded contributed to this more positive outlook. A study by Baltimore (Maryland) Goodwill Industries concluded that the majority of employers who had previously employed the severely mentally retarded gave positive responses to their survey on employer attitudes. The study covered a broad spectrum of employment opportunities in the Baltimore area. Their data indicated the most viable employment areas were clerical, food services, custodial, service stations, and upholstery. The majority of employers surveyed said they were more interested in positive work attitudes and motivation than technical competence (Stewart, 1977, p.31).

Absenteeism was not considered to be a significant problem for employers of the retarded in the Richmond (Virginia) area. The rate of absenteeism was very low among those responding to a survey (Goodall, Hill, and Hill, 1980, p.67). Malingering was not a significant problem with this population. The Virginia Employment Commission reported that in an evaluation of workers in similar jobs, the non-handicapped workers exhibited higher

tendencies toward absenteeism and malingering (Virginia Employment Commission, 1981).

Wehman and others involved with Project Employability studies reported that fears concerning retarded employees and co-workers were largely unfounded. The overwhelming attitude of these co-workers was essentially one of indifference as long as the retarded employee performed acceptably. Employer's attitudes seemed to favor employee competence and dependability. This, coupled with positive feedback from other employees and supervisors, caused most employers to give positive responses in their study (Wehman and others, 1982, p.12).

The responses to various studies and surveys, as well as numerous publications, served to point up a definite change in the American public's attitudes toward the severely mentally retarded and their employment. These attitudes as well as current trends were the next topic to be reviewed.

CURRENT TRENDS AND ATTITUDES

The final topic reviewed was the most promising and interesting. The current trends and attitudes were definite indicators of a brighter future for mentally retarded persons.

This review of literature illustrated contemporary society's changing views of the mentally retarded in this country. Rather than being cloistered at home or in some de-humanizing institution, these individuals were now being

encouraged and trained to take the normal risks of everyday life. The typical over-protection of the mentally retarded has denied them the human dignity and the daily life experiences of risk taking so essential for human growth and development (Perske, 1972, p.1).

Over the past five years, few trends have been so clear, have received so much national support, and been so pervasive as the move to involve handicapped persons as fully functional members of society. Thacher has stated that now only a handful of the estimated six million mentally handicapped people in the United States still live in institutions.

Reporting on the lack of educational opportunities and employment settings previously available for this population, he said we had erroneously assumed that these persons could not learn. In fact, the basic problem was that we did not know how to teach (Thacher, 1978, p.32).

Presenting a more negative stance, Wehman discussed possible problems to be encountered in the placement of severely retarded individuals in competitive employment. Compared with the difficulty encountered in placing even mildly retarded persons into competitive employment, we faced an even more difficult task when placing, or seeking to place, severely mentally retarded individuals. He felt there was a reluctance on the part of employers to hire the severely retarded (Wehman, 1976, p.236).

SUMMARY

Several of the authors and the literature reviewed indicated a definite growing public awareness and concern for the severely mentally retarded. Recent legislation has placed emphasis on providing more positive actions on behalf of these persons. The majority of employers with experience in hiring the mentally retarded had responded positively to other studies and investigations.

Upon completion of this review of literature, methods were developed. These were discussed in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study was designed to examine the attitudes and beliefs of Tidewater area businesses regarding the employment of the local mentally retarded population. It dealt with both the past and present experiences of these businesses. The study sought to use the data accumulated to form a consensus of the attitudes of local business persons. This information was to be used to improve the employment prospects for the mentally retarded. In this chapter the following methods and procedures were discussed: (1) Population of the Study, (2) Data Gathering Instruments and Collection, (3) Treatment of the Data, and (4) a Summary.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population for this study was selected in a random manner from three listings: (1) the directory of members of the Norfolk (Virginia) Chamber of Commerce, (2) the records of Project Employability in Norfolk, and (3) the consumer yellow pages of the Chesapeake and Potomac telephone directory. The sample population of one hundred businesses resulted in both large and small firms being contacted. Some of those contacted employed large numbers of persons, while others employed only a few. The data obtained represented a comprehensive sample of the

total business community.

DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS AND COLLECTION

The potential significance of the data gathered during this study was evident to the author through his own employment with Project Employability and the present assignment as TMR Vocational Program Leader at Jacox Elementary School in Norfolk. In the accomplishment of duties in both of these settings, TMR persons were the exclusive clientele. The ultimate goal of both of these assignments was the eventual successful employment of TMR individuals in as independent a setting as possible.

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent to all businesses selected in order to accumulate the data for this study. Information pertaining to the following general areas was solicited: (1) Actual Employment, (2) Job Performance and Work Habits, (3) Managerial Considerations, (4) Personal Experience With the Mentally Retarded, and (5) Community and Government Matters.

In addition to identifying the areas of employment, the questionnaire contained twenty items requiring yes/no/not applicable responses. An opportunity for the respondent's personal comments was afforded at the end of the question section. The data was compiled and tabulated. Using the resulting tables, several conclusions were made. These conclusions were analyzed and then used to make the recommendations of this study.

SUMMARY

The data accumulated for this study was supplied by the Tidewater business community. Some of the information was already a matter of record, such as that found in the files of Project Employability. The information gathered provided the basis for the findings of this study found in chapter four and the conclusions and recommendations located in chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter contained the statistical results for this study. A survey was mailed to one hundred Tidewater area employers. The purpose of the survey was to secure data from these employers regarding the employment of the mentally retarded. Of the one hundred employers contacted, sixty-nine responded to the survey. The response was significantly high in the following areas of employment: services, manufacturing, restaurants, hotel/motel, and merchandising. Several employers indicated multiple areas of employment.

The goals for this study have been:

1. Accumulate and analyze data on the attitudes and beliefs currently held by both prospective and actual employers of the mentally retarded, and
2. demonstrate a relationship between the attitudes and beliefs of employers who had actual experience with the mentally retarded and those who had not.

SURVEY RESULTS

The questionnaire used to secure the survey results encompassed several areas of concern. The topics covered were: 1) types of employment, 2) actual employment experiences, 3) job performance and work habits, 4) managerial considerations, 5) employer's personal experiences, 6) community and government matters, and 7) a personal opinion and a personal definition of mental retardation. At the conclusion of the survey, an opportunity was given for the respondent to offer any comment or personal observation he might wish to have considered during the course of this study. The following tables and data indicated the various employer's responses to this survey.

In the first section of the survey, the employer was asked to indicate the business areas in which he had employees. Table 1 shows the numbers and percentages of respondents by employment areas.

TABLE 1
EMPLOYMENT AREAS

	<u>Number Responding</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Response</u>
Services	46	66
Manufacturing	19	28
Restaurants	12	17
Hotel/Motel	11	16
Merchandising	16	23

In Table 1, forty-six of the sixty-nine respondents indicated they employed persons in the services area. This was sixty-six percent of the total response for this item. Nineteen employers, or twenty-eight percent, said their employees were in the field of manufacturing. Restaurant businesses comprised seventeen percent of the total with twelve responses. Eleven responses were received from those who said their employees worked in hotel/motel environments. These represented sixteen percent of the total response. Finally, twenty-three percent said they employed people in merchandising. Sixteen firms indicated this.

Because several respondents indicated more than one area of employment by their firms, the total responses for the combined areas was one hundred-four, rather than sixty-nine. This latter figure was the actual number of surveys returned.

The next four items on the survey (2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D) related to the employer's actual employment of mentally retarded individuals. Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 show the number and percentage of responses by business area to each of these four items.

TABLE 2

Have you ever employed mentally retarded persons?

Area of Employment	Number Responding	Yes	No	N/A
		#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	46	23/50	23/50	-
Manufacturing	19	7/37	12/63	-
Restaurant	12	9/75	3/25	-
Hotel/Motel	11	10/91	1/9	-
Merchandising	16	10/63	6/38	-

In response to this question, one half the employers in the services area gave a positive answer. Of the nineteen manufacturing responses, seven (thirty-seven percent) said they had employed them. Nine of the twelve restaurant employers responded positively to this item. This represented seventy-five percent of the total response for that area. Ten of the eleven employers in the hotel/motel area said that they had employed mentally retarded persons. That was ninety-one percent of that area's total. Of the sixteen responses from persons engaged in merchandising, ten said they had hired mentally retarded people. This was sixty-three percent of the total response for that area.

TABLE 3

Do you presently employ one or more retarded persons?

<u>Area of Employment</u>	<u>Yes #/%</u>	<u>No #/%</u>	<u>N/A #/%</u>
Services	18/39	23/50	-
Manufacturing	3/16	12/63	-
Restaurant	9/75	3/25	-
Hotel/Motel	7/64	4/36	-
Merchandising	10/63	3/19	-

Fifty percent of the employers who responded to the survey whose employees were engaged in services activities said they did not presently employ any retarded persons. Sixty-three percent of those engaged in manufacturing said they did not. Nine out of twelve, seventy-five percent, of the restaurant businesses indicated that they do employ these people, while sixty-four percent of the hotel/motel respondents also answered positively. Similarly, sixty-three percent of those engaged in merchandising said they did.

TABLE 4

If you have employed such persons, was or is the experience a satisfactory one?

<u>Area of Employment</u>	<u>Yes #/%</u>	<u>No #/%</u>	<u>N/A #/%</u>
Services	19/41	4/9	23/50
Manufacturing	6/32	1/5	5/26
Restaurant	9/75	-	3/25

TABLE 4 (cont'd)

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Hotel/Motel	7/64	-	4/36
Merchandising	13/81	-	3/19

In response to the question regarding the satisfaction involved in the past or present employment of the mentally retarded, nineteen employers in services said yes. This represented forty-one percent of the response from that area. Only nine percent, or four employers said no, while the remainder indicated that this did not apply to them. Thirty-two percent, six employers, in manufacturing said it was a good experience and five percent said it was not. The remaining twenty-six percent of the manufacturers said the item was not applicable. No one in the restaurant area said it was less than satisfactory, although three firms, twenty-five percent of the area's total, said the item did not apply to them. The positive response for the restaurant area was seventy-five percent. Similar positive responses were received from both the hotel/motel group and the merchandising businesses.

TABLE 5

Would you employ mentally retarded persons in the future?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	33/72	6/13	4/9
Manufacturing	9/47	7/37	3/16
Restaurant	12/100	-	-
Hotel/Motel	6/55	3/27	-
Merchandising	12/75	3/19	-

Regarding the future employment of mentally retarded persons, seventy-two percent of services area businesses gave positive responses. Less than half of those in manufacturing said they would hire these persons in the future. Nine firms gave this positive indication. Thirty-seven percent said they would not, and sixteen percent said the item did not apply. One hundred percent of the restaurant group said they would hire the mentally retarded in the future. Positive indications of fifty-five percent and seventy-five percent were received from the hotel/motel and merchandising groups respectively.

The next five questions on the survey (2E, 2F, 2G, 2H, and 2I) related to job performance. Tables 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 show the number and percentage of responses to each of these five items by business area.

TABLE 6

Are these persons capable of succeeding in your employment setting?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	28/64	11/24	7/15
Manufacturing	10/53	5/26	4/21
Restaurant	10/83	2/17	-
Hotel/Motel	7/64	4/36	-
Merchandising	13/81	3/19	-

When asked whether or not they believed the mentally retarded could succeed in their employment settings, more than fifty-three percent in all groups responded positively. The highest negative percentage came from the hotel/motel group. Their negative reply represented thirty-six percent of that area's total.

TABLE 7

Can these persons function safely in your employment setting?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	32/69	11/24	3/7
Manufacturing	10/53	7/37	2/11
Restaurant	9/75	3/25	-
Hotel/Motel	10/91	1/9	-
Merchandising	13/81	3/19	-

The results of employer responses indicated that the majority of firms in all groups believed that the mentally retarded could function safely in their settings. The lowest favorable percentage of fifty-three came from the manufacturing group. This percentage represented ten employers.

TABLE 8

Might these persons function well in other employment settings, if not yours?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	39/85	4/9	3/7
Manufacturing	19/100	-	-
Restaurant	10/83	2/17	-
Hotel/Motel	11/100	-	-
Merchandising	15/94	1/6	-

A large majority of all employers in all groups felt the mentally retarded could function well in other settings. Percentages of positive responses to this item were significantly large, ranging from a high of one hundred down to eighty-three.

TABLE 9

Are mentally retarded individuals capable of performing only simple or menial tasks?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	27/59	13/28	6/13
Manufacturing	9/47	9/47	-
Restaurant	10/83	2/17	-
Hotel/Motel	9/82	2/18	-
Merchandising	6/37	10/63	-

Fifty-nine percent of the firms in the services area believed that the mentally retarded were capable of performing only simple or menial tasks. Forty-seven percent of the manufacturing group responded similarly, while forty-seven percent also responded negatively. Eighty-three percent of the restaurant people answered positively and eighty-two percent of the hotel/motel people felt the same way. The lowest percentage of those who felt the mentally retarded could perform only simple or menial tasks was in the merchandising area. Sixty-three percent of this group believed the subject population to be capable of more.

TABLE 10

Are these persons generally dependable employees?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	34/74	-	12/26
Manufacturing	15/79	1/5	3/16
Restaurant	9/75	3/25	-
Hotel/Motel	9/82	2/18	-
Merchandising	12/75	4/25	-

Employers both want and need dependable employees.

When they were asked whether or not they believed the mentally retarded were generally dependable, more than seventy-four percent in all groups said yes.

The next group of questions on the survey related to managerial considerations. These were questions 2J, 2K, 2L, and 2M. The data for the responses received for these items was included in tables 11, 12, 13, and 14.

TABLE 11

Should mentally retarded persons be paid the same wages as other employees?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	45/98	1/2	-
Manufacturing	16/84	3/16	-
Restaurant	10/83	2/17	-
Hotel/Motel	8/73	3/27	-
Merchandising	14/88	2/13	-

Seventy-three percent or more of employers in all groups felt that mentally retarded persons should be paid the same wages as other employees. The lowest percentage indicated, seventy-three, was from the hotel/motel firms. Ninety-eight, the highest, came from the services group.

TABLE 12

Does your firm have a policy regarding employment of the mentally retarded?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	5/11	41/89	-
Manufacturing	16/84	3/16	-
Restaurant	5/42	6/50	-
Hotel/Motel	2/18	9/82	-
Merchandising	4/25	11/69	-

Only in the manufacturing group of employers did the majority indicate that their firms had a policy regarding the employment of the mentally retarded. In that group, eighty-four percent, or sixteen employers, said they did. The majorities of the remaining groups said they had no policy in this regard. No item was included in the survey to indicate the actual type of employment policy as it was believed that no business would openly state that it had any type of negative employment guidelines.

TABLE 13

Do these persons place an extra burden on supervisory personnel?

Area of Employment	Yes #/%	No #/%	N/A #/%
Services	22/48	19/41	5/11
Manufacturing	9/47	7/37	-
Restaurant	7/58	5/42	-
Hotel/Motel	7/64	4/36	-
Merchandising	4/25	12/75	-

When employers were asked whether or not they believed mentally retarded persons placed an additional burden on supervisors, the results were mixed. Forty-eight percent, twenty-two firms, in the services group felt that they were, while forty-one percent responded negatively. In the manufacturing group, forty-seven percent said they believed they were an extra burden. Thirty-seven percent did not think so. Restaurant businesses indicated by fifty-eight percent against forty-two percent that they were. The data from the hotel/motel people gave a similar indication, with sixty-four percent saying yes and thirty-six percent saying no. Only in the merchandising area did the majority not believe the mentally retarded to be an additional burden for supervisors. This was shown when seventy-five percent, twelve employers, said they did not think so.

TABLE 14

Would your other employees feel threatened by these persons?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	6/13	40/87	-
Manufacturing	15/79	4/21	-
Restaurant	9/75	3/25	-
Hotel/Motel	-	-	11/100
Merchandising	3/19	13/81	-

More than eighty percent of the respondents in the services and merchandising groups did not think their other employees would feel threatened by mentally retarded persons. Seventy-five percent or more of the employers in the in manufacturing and restaurant businesses believed their other employees would feel threatened. The hotel/motel group gave a unanimous response when they all said the item was not applicable to them.

The next question (2N) dealt with the employer's personal experience with the mentally retarded. Table 15 shows the number and percentages of responses by business areas to this item.

TABLE 15

Did you have any experience with the mentally retarded prior to their employment by your firm?

Area of Employment	Yes	No	N/A
	#/%	#/%	#/%
Services	24/58	13/22	9/20
Manufacturing	4/21	12/63	3/16
Restaurant	2/17	10/83	-
Hotel/Motel	2/18	9/82	-
Merchandising	4/25	11/69	1/6

Fifty-eight percent of the persons in the services area said they had prior experiences with the mentally retarded. Twenty-two percent said they had not. Sixty-three percent or more of the replies in all the other groups indicated that they had no previous experiences with the subject population.

The following three survey questions (20, 2P, and 2Q) related to community and government matters. Tables 16, 17, and 18 show the number and percentages of responses by business area for each of these items.

TABLE 16

Do the public schools and other agencies provide the proper training and guidance for these persons regarding employment?

<u>Area of Employment</u>	<u>Yes #/%</u>	<u>No #/%</u>	<u>N/A #/%</u>
Services	3/7	10/22	33/72
Manufacturing	7/37	6/32	6/32
Restaurant	2/17	7/58	-
Hotel/Motel	1/9	6/55	4/36
Merchandising	3/19	9/56	4/25

In responding to this item, thirty-three employers, or seventy-two percent, of the services group felt this item was not applicable to them. Twenty-two percent in this group believed the proper training and guidance had not been provided. Within the manufacturing group, percentages were fairly well divided among the yes, no, and n/a choices with thirty-seven percent, thirty-two percent, and thirty-two percent respectively. Fifty-eight percent of the firms in the restaurant group felt negatively on this item, with only seventeen percent giving positive responses. The hotel/motel area's answers were fifty-five percent negative. Thirty-six percent of this group did not feel the item was applicable. In merchandising, fifty-six percent of the employers responded negatively, with twenty-five percent indicating the item was not applicable. Only nineteen percent, three employers, felt positively on this subject.

TABLE 17

Are you familiar with Project Employability and the services it provides?

<u>Area of Employment</u>	<u>Yes #/%</u>	<u>No #/%</u>	<u>N/A #/%</u>
Services	8/17	31/67	7/15
Manufacturing	5/26	14/74	-
Restaurant	8/66	4/33	-
Hotel/Motel	7/64	4/36	-
Merchandising	3/19	13/81	-

The response regarding an employer's familiarity with Project Employability was mixed. In the services group, sixty-seven percent, thirty-one employers, were not familiar with it, while seventeen percent, eight employers, said they were. Seven firms said the item was not applicable to them. Three quarters of the manufacturing group responded negatively. Eighty-one percent of the merchandisers also answered negatively. Only in the restaurant and hotel/motel groups were the majority of the responses positive. They were sixty-six percent and sixty-four percent respectively.

TABLE 18

Are you familiar with the government's Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC) program?

<u>Area of Employment</u>	<u>Total Responses</u>	<u>Yes #/%</u>	<u>No #/%</u>	<u>N/A #/%</u>
All	69	61/88	9/12	-

Eighty-eight percent of the employers in the five areas considered in this study responded positively to this item. An opportunity was also given in the survey at this point to enable the employers to secure additional information on Project Employability and the TJTC program. No employers responded to this option.

The next question (2R) related to the employer's having more information on mental retardation. Table 19 shows the number and percentages of responses by all survey participants to this item. Many employers gave no response at all to this question.

TABLE 19

Would you be more apt to hire these persons if you knew more about mental retardation?

<u>Area of</u> <u>Employment</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>Participants</u>	<u>No</u> <u>Response</u>	<u>Yes</u> <u>#/%</u>	<u>No</u> <u>#/%</u>	<u>N/A</u> <u>#/%</u>
All	69	46/66%	9/39	8/35	6/26

Forty-six employers, sixty-six percent of the total survey participants, gave no response for this item. Of the twenty-three who did supply an answer, only nine indicated they would probably hire more if they had more information. Eight said they would not and six said this did not apply to them.

The next section of the survey (3) asked employers to briefly state their definition of mental retardation. Of the sixty-nine employers, fifty-eight responded. Table 20

shows the number and percentages for the responses given.

TABLE 20

Employers' definition of mental retardation

<u>Definition</u>	<u>Number of Occurrences</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Low I.Q.	6	10
Limited mental capacity	30	52
Slowed or delayed mental development	9	16
Short attention span	4	7
Mental growth less than physical growth	3	5
Mental condition requiring special training	<u>6</u>	<u>10</u>
Total	58	100

Of the six general definitions given, only one indicated a consensus. Thirty respondents, or fifty-two percent, said that mental retardation was a condition that limited the mental capacity of an individual. The remaining five definitions given each represented less than sixteen percent of the total response received for this item.

The final section (4) of the survey gave employers an opportunity to make any comments or observations they might wish to have considered in this study. Only one response was received. This was primarily a narrative of the employer's personal dealings with mentally retarded persons he had employed.

SUMMARY

The findings of this study documented the responses of Tidewater area employers related to the employment of the mentally retarded. Sixty-nine of the employers who were mailed the initial survey responded. One hundred were originally sent out. The statistics resulting from their responses were tabulated in this chapter. These findings were used in the next chapter to arrive at conclusions. These conclusions were examined and from them recommendations were made. A summary of the entire study was also included in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

This study was conducted to analyze the information collected from one hundred Tidewater area businesses to determine their present attitudes and beliefs regarding the employment of the mentally retarded. Following the introduction where background material was presented, the problem was stated.

Briefly, the problem was that although legislation could direct changes in the employment and treatment of the mentally retarded, it could not change attitudes. In order to change improper attitudes, if indeed they were incorrect or based on faulty information, an examination of the current beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of those who did the actual hiring of the mentally retarded was in order.

In the review of literature, professionals in the field of special needs education and other concerned individuals stated repeatedly that mentally retarded persons have, could, and do succeed in a wide variety of employment settings. Again and again, the literature indicated the potential that exists for a dependable labor force

with mentally retarded persons.

Since it was and is the actual employer who ultimately determines whether or not these mentally retarded persons secure employment, the research goals for this study were designed toward the employer. Other studies of a similar nature have usually been directed at the mentally retarded and the agencies dealing with them. The research goals for this study were twofold:

1. Accumulate and analyze data on the attitudes currently held by both prospective and actual employers regarding the employment of mentally retarded persons, and
2. Demonstrate a relationship between the attitudes of employers who had hired the mentally retarded and those who had not.

A survey instrument was designed to secure the data necessary to conduct this study. This survey was mailed to one hundred Tidewater area businesses. The results of this survey provided data for the findings of the study. From these findings, several conclusions were drawn.

CONCLUSIONS

The first section of the survey asked employers to indicate the areas in which they employed personnel.

Although a wide variety of the business sector was sur-

veyed, only five areas produced any significant response. These five areas were services, manufacturing, restaurants, hotel/motel, and merchandising. Other areas contacted, but which produced only an insignificant or no response, were transportation, communication, fast foods, and construction. The conclusion was drawn from these responses that only the five areas listed formerly employ, have employed, or exhibited a potential for employing, mentally retarded persons.

In the second section, the majority of the respondents indicated that 1) they had employed mentally retarded persons, 2) they were presently doing so, 3) the experience was a good one, and 4) they would do so in the future. The conclusion from this data was that when mentally retarded persons were employed, it was generally a good experience for all concerned. Therefore, they can succeed in the world of work.

The second section of the survey also covered job performance, work habits, and employer expectations. The data indicated the majority of employers believed that these persons could perform dependably and function safely in most employment settings. The respondents were divided as to whether or not these persons were capable of performing only simple or menial tasks. The conclusion was that most employers felt mentally retarded persons would make good employees, but in some cases, depending on the

nature of the work, were capable of performing only the simpler parts of the job.

The next topic in the second section dealt with managerial considerations. Based on the data provided, it was concluded that all employers would deal with mentally retarded employees in the same manner as with others, except that in the majority of settings, they required more supervision.

The following part of the second section dealt with an employer's personal experience with mentally retarded persons prior to their being employed by his firm. Except for the services area, prior personal experience was limited. The conclusion drawn from this data was that prior personal experience with this population was not a prerequisite to a successful employer-employee relationship.

In the section dealing with community and government matters, the majority of the respondents indicated that the public schools and the government were either not providing the proper training and guidance for employment or that this did not apply to their particular employment setting. The conclusion here was that most firms felt they had to provide their own training for employees. Few employers knew about Project Employability and the services it provided. Since the task of Project Employability was to unite employers and handicapped workers, the conclusion was made that Project Employability's public information

program was inadequate. On the other hand, the federal Targeted Jobs Tax Credit program was very well known and the conclusion was that the public had sufficient information on the subject.

When asked in the next section if they would do more hiring of this population if they knew more about them and their condition, very few employers even responded. The conclusion was made that either employers didn't want to know more or didn't think they needed to. The lack of any significant response to this item led to the additional conclusion that most employers didn't want to really get too involved in the problems of the mentally retarded, except as they directly effected their own businesses.

The third major section of the survey instrument required employers to to give a brief definition of mental retardation. The majority of employers indicated at least some degree of understanding. The conclusion of this study was that most employers knew enough about mental retardation to realize it was a handicapping condition, but not so severe as to prevent employment.

The almost total lack of response to the final section of the survey which afforded the employer an opportunity to make any additional comment or observations led to one final conclusion. The final conclusion was that employers were busy people, content to leave the analysis and solutions to the problems of the mentally retarded in the hands of others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The information that has been documented in this study supports the following recommendations:

1. Persons and agencies involved in securing employment for the mentally retarded should place their greatest efforts in the following areas: services, manufacturing, restaurants, hotel/motels, and merchandising.
2. A public information effort utilizing satisfied employers of the mentally retarded should be made, possibly through area chambers of commerce, to educate others in the business community about the positive aspects of such employment.
3. Public schools and other concerned agencies should initiate dialogue with area employers regarding the training of mentally retarded persons for employment to ascertain the business community's real needs.
4. Project Employability should initiate a vigorous and intensive awareness program to educate employers about the many services it provides.

The potential employment pool that existed within the mentally retarded population group in the Tidewater area was largely untapped at the time of this study. This study has examined and documented area employer attitudes and beliefs regarding this part of the labor force. This study has accomplished its purpose.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A - Sample Survey with Cover Letter



JACOX ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

1300 Marshall Ave.
Norfolk, Va. 23504

March 28, 1983

Dear Tidewater Area Employer:

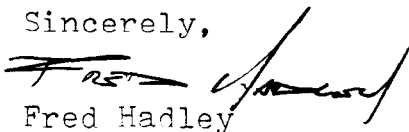
The employment of mentally retarded persons is a matter of concern in our community. Productive employment of these persons can provide them with a sense of dignity while they make a worthwhile contribution to society. Rather than being a burden for other taxpayers to support, they can become contributing members of society.

I am conducting a research study titled, "A Study of the Attitudes of Tidewater Area Businesses Toward Hiring the Mentally Retarded". The data and results of this study will enable area teachers of the mentally retarded and agencies dealing with them to better address their present and future employment needs.

The attached questionnaire is essential to the data necessary for this research. Your completion and return of this questionnaire in the enclosed envelope by April 11, 1983, will be both valuable and appreciated. No names will be used in the resulting study and the information gathered will be confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Fred Hadley

Vocational Production Laboratory
Jacox Trainable Mentally Retarded Program

Questionnaire

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1. Please indicate the areas in which your firm employs persons:

<input type="checkbox"/> Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction
<input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/> Fast foods	<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/motel
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant	<input type="checkbox"/> Merchandising
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (indicate): _____		

2. Please respond to the following questions with a check mark:

	Yes	No	N/A
A. Have you ever employed mentally retarded persons?	___	___	___
B. Do you presently employ one or more retarded persons?	___	___	___
C. If you have employed such persons, was or is the experience a satisfactory one?	___	___	___
D. Would you employ mentally retarded persons in the future?	___	___	___
E. Are these persons capable of succeeding in your employment setting?	___	___	___
F. Can these persons function safely in your employment setting?	___	___	___
G. Might these persons function well in other employment settings, if not yours?	___	___	___
H. Are mentally retarded individuals capable of performing only simple or menial tasks?	___	___	___
I. Are these persons generally dependable employees?	___	___	___
J. Should mentally retarded persons be paid the same wages as other employees?	___	___	___
K. Does your firm have a policy regarding employment of the mentally retarded?	___	___	___
L. Do these persons place an extra burden on supervisory personnel?	___	___	___
M. Would your other employees feel threatened by these persons?	___	___	___
N. Did you have any experience with mentally retarded persons prior to their employment by your firm?	___	___	___
O. Do the public schools and other agencies provide the proper training and guidance for these persons regarding employment?	___	___	___
P. Are you familiar with Project Employability and the services it provides?	___	___	___

Q. Are you familiar with the government's Targeted
Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC) program? — — —

(If you would like information on either
Project Employability or the Targeted Jobs
Tax Credit program, please enclose a busi-
ness card or place your address on the rev-
erse side of this questionnaire.)

R. Would you be more apt to hire these persons if
you knew more about mental retardation? — — —

3. Very briefly state what your understanding of mental retard-
ation is: _____

4. Please list below any comments or observations you may wish
to have considered in this study: