

# Conceptualizing and Measuring Workplace Accommodations

State-of-the-Science Conference: Advancing Evidence-Based Practices and Policies to  
Close the Employment Gap  
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# Overview

- Introduction
- History of workplace accommodations
- What is an accommodation?
- Methodology
- Accommodations in the literature
- In depth interviews
- Conceptualizing accommodations
- Challenges in measuring accommodations



# Workplace Accommodations

- Evidence based practice
- Cost effective
- Impact on labor force participation
- Unique to each individual and his/her job
- No consensus on what constitutes workplace accommodations
- Lack of national data on workplace accommodations
  
- **Purpose:** To identify current conceptualizations of workplace accommodations and challenges in measuring workplace accommodations
- **Long term goal:** Create and test a survey instrument to measure workplace accommodations



# History of Workplace Accommodations

- 1950s and 60s: promoting employment for PWD
- Worker's compensation Act
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Creation of the Job Accommodation Network (1984)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)
- Workforce Investment Act (1998)
- New Freedom Initiative/Executive Order (EO) 13217
- Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (2008)
- The role of EEOC



# What is Workplace Accommodation?

- Oxford dictionary defines the word “**accommodation**” as “a convenient arrangement; a settlement or compromise” or “the process of adapting or adjusting to someone or something”.
- “**Reasonable accommodation**” means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (UN Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities)



# What is Workplace Accommodation?

- ADA qualifies ***reasonable accommodations*** as something that is necessary to perform (1) essential job functions (as opposed to marginal job functions) and that (2) provision of such accommodation should not cause “undue hardship” to the employer.
- But not all accommodations provided in the workplace are under the purview of the ADA (reasonable accommodations)

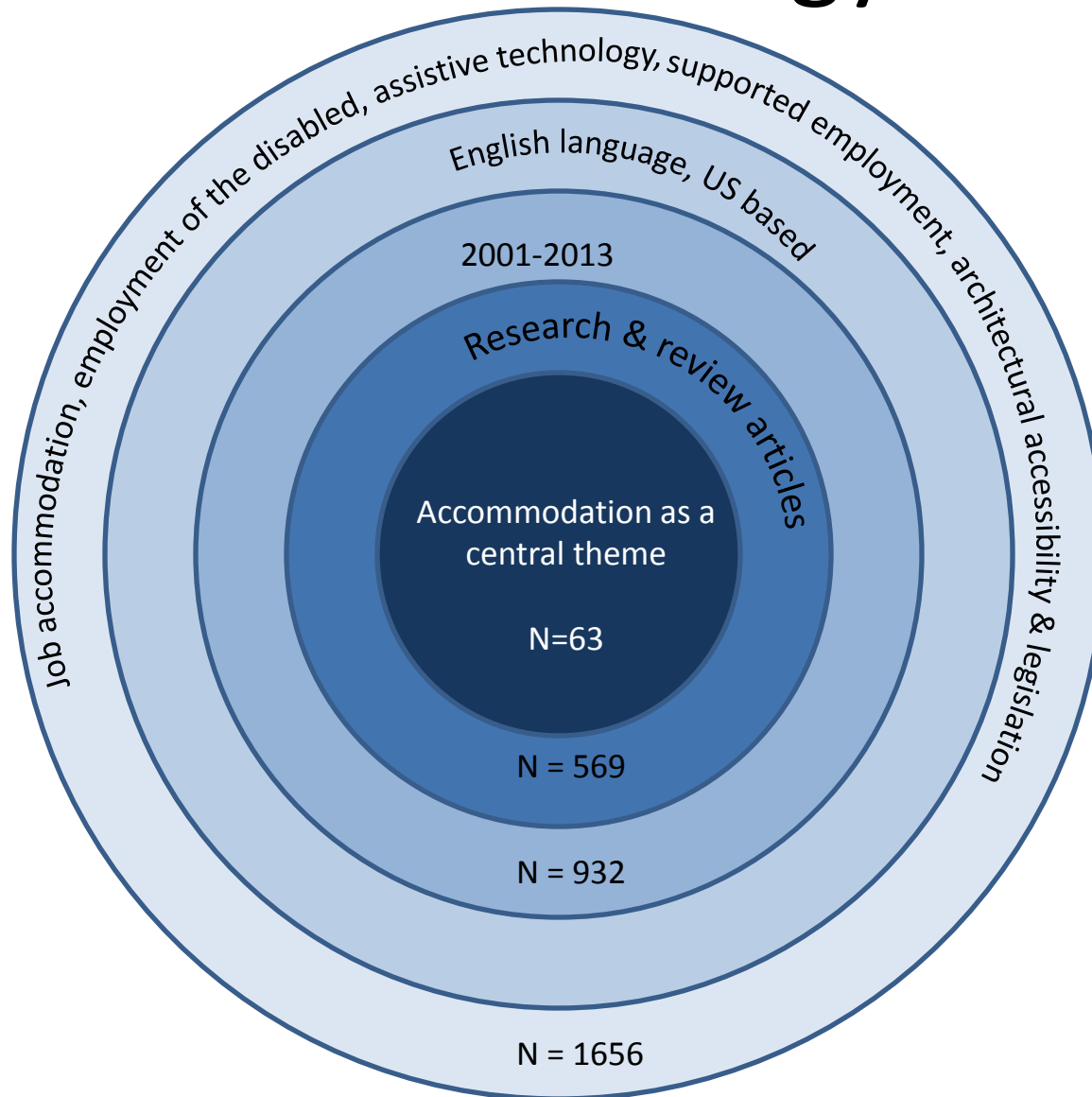


# Methodology

- **Phase I**
- Review of research literature between 1990-2013
  - “job accommodation”, “employment of the disabled”, “assistive technology”, “supported employment”, “architectural accessibility” and “legislation”
  - EBSCOhost, Medline, CINAHL, Google scholar
- **Phase II**
  - 38 In-depth interviews of employees with disabilities and/or family members
  - Semi-structured questionnaire
  - Qualitative analysis

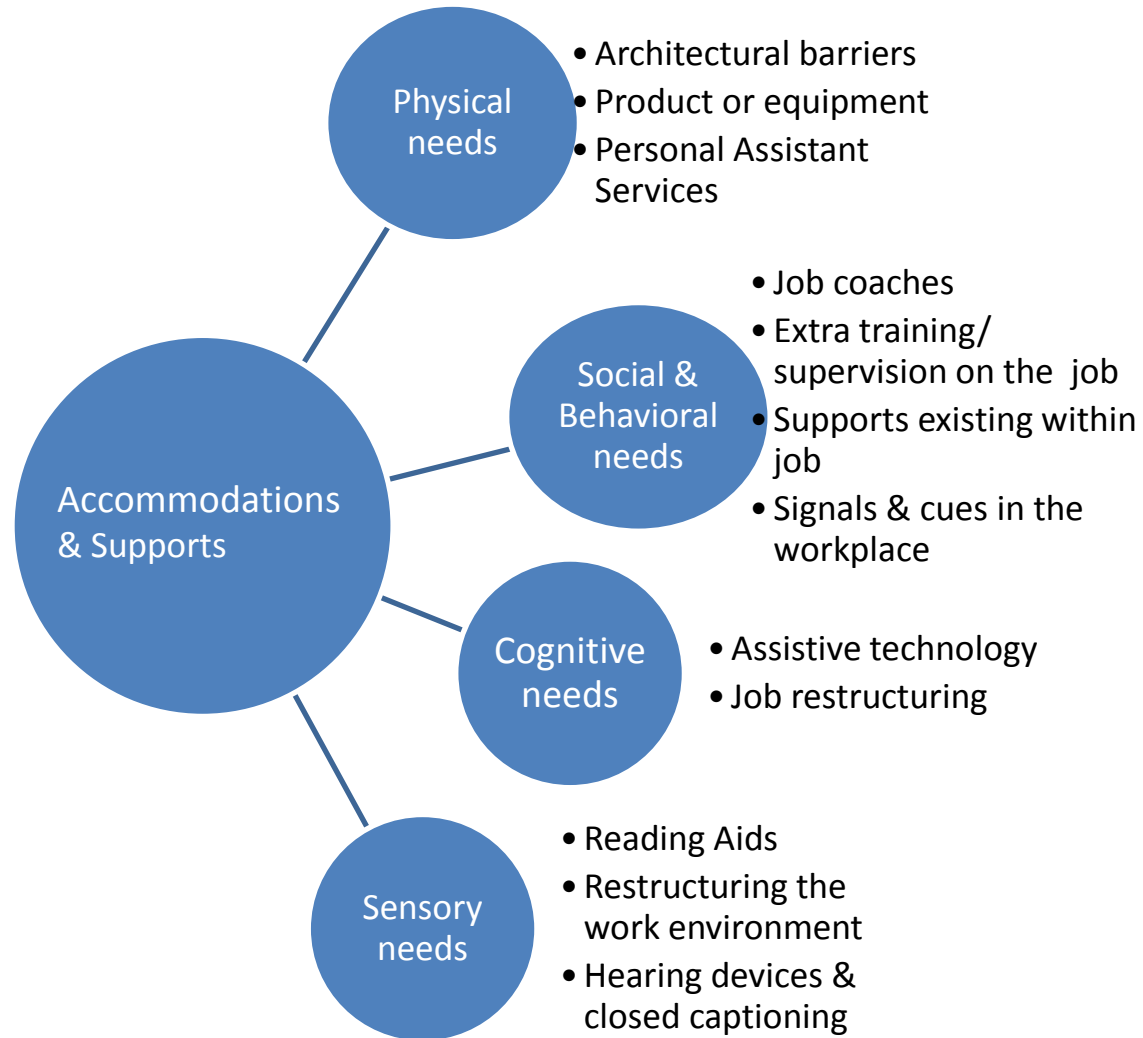


# Search Strategy





# Accommodations in the literature



# Phase II: In-Depth Interviews

- IRB approval
- Semi structured interviews, 1-3 hours
- Conducted at home or in the workplace
- Participants
  - Employees with a disability
  - Proxy respondents
    - Family members
    - Job coach



# Participant Characteristics

	N = 38
Age	39 yrs (22-59)
Gender (Male)	11
Disability	
Physical	21
Cognitive	15
Psychiatric	3
Sensory	3
Multiple	11
Education	
Less than HS	5
HS completed	7
Some college	4
Bachelors	10
Masters or above	7
Employment Status	
Part time	32
Full time	6
Proxy Respondent	5



# Types of Accommodations

- In addition to reasonable accommodations, respondents used
  - Job coaches for hiring and placement
  - Creative strategies at work
  - Assistance from co-workers
  - Assistance from job coach
  - Existing features in the building/equipment
  - Personal assistive devices and
  - Swapped job tasks
- Employers and supervisors were generally supportive of their employee's needs
  - Passive accommodations



# Conceptualizing Workplace Accommodations and Supports

Supported employment/Customized employment & Natural Supports

Reasonable accommodation

Workplace policies

Leave

Restructuring the job

Flex time

Social environment

Quieter workspace

Supervisory practices

Physical environment

Assistive devices

Modifications to built environment

Self-disclosure

Hiring

Personal Assistive Devices or Strategies

Passive Accommodations

Universal Design Principles

Non-disclosure



# Framework to Measure Accommodations

## Screening

Disability  
Current employment status  
Cognitive & communication difficulties

## Stemming pattern

Difficulties  
Job tasks

## Accommodation modules

Physical	Hearing
Cognitive	Social & Behavioral (?)
Vision	



# Challenges in Measuring Accommodations

- Accommodations are unique to each individual & their job
- Respondent's awareness
  - Workplace policies
  - Social and behavioral accommodations
- Proxy respondents
  - Family members vs staff person
  - Reliability
  - Access to proxy respondents



# Questions & Comments

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