
Special Issue: Corporate Culture and Disability

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Researchers, policymakers, business leaders, and the disability community must engage in meaningful dialogue about the examination of disability rights law and policy in general, and the implications of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 for persons with disabilities and their families and employers in particular. In June of 2004, a Blue Ribbon Panel meeting was convened to help address these issues. The meeting was hosted by Merrill Lynch, at their world headquarters in New York City, and co-sponsored by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Workforce Investment and Employment Policy for Persons with Disabilities, at the Law, Health Policy and Disability Center of the University of Iowa College of Law.² The purpose of the symposium was twofold:

- (1) to increase dialogue among corporations, persons with disabilities, policy-makers, and researchers; and
- (2) to enhance study of corporate culture and the employment of persons with disabilities.

Included in the symposium round-table discussions were experts on corporate culture and disability studies, corporate leaders, government representatives, and members of the disability community and their families. Peter Blanck moderated the symposium discussion. Papers were prepared for the symposium from leading experts and distributed to the panel and audience to focus the discussion. Those papers form the core of this special issue.

Understanding the impact of civil rights legislation such as the ADA on the corporate culture and business practice is critical to employers and policymakers, as well as employees with disabilities (Blanck, Hill, Siegal, & Waterstone, 2003). Similar to other diversity issues that corporations have addressed to their benefit, employment of persons with disabilities is an important issue to many stakeholders. Researchers have studied a continuum of employment settings for persons with disabilities, from

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²To review the proceedings, see Law, Health Policy, and Disability Center, 2003.

micro-enterprise and self-employment to employment in large corporations, as well as the effect of civil rights legislation on employment in these settings. This special issue continues that dialogue and advances understanding of research methods in the area.

The articles presented in this issue include examination of disability and corporate culture concepts (Schur, Kruse, & Blanck, 2005; Spataro, 2005), applied study (Klein, Schmeling, & Blanck, 2005; Sandler & Blanck, 2005), organizational approaches and responses (Ball, Monaco, Schmeling, Scharzt, & Blanck, 2005; Wooten & James, 2005), and related learning for policymakers and workplace integration strategies (Silverstein & Julnes, 2005; Ward & Baker, 2005). The edited symposium proceedings are presented on the LHPOC website, including perspectives from experts in economics, law, human resources practices, regulatory compliance and reporting, corporate anthropology, employment of persons with disabilities, and disability studies and policy. The participants engage to formulate a blueprint for the study of disability and corporate culture.

We hope this special issue enhances understanding of corporate culture and disability toward the goal of inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment and their subsequent economic independence. We believe this special issue and the symposium proceedings will raise awareness of the positive effects of inclusion and the relation among environmental access, employment, and disability rights policy. This new knowledge should inform key stakeholders—including business leaders, researchers, NIDRR,³ policymakers, and persons with disabilities—that inclusion in the workforce of persons with disabilities will add value to businesses' bottom-lines.

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