Charity-Oriented Versus Human Resource-Oriented Perspectives: Investigating Staff Understandings of Employment Practices for Persons With Disabilities

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The purpose of this case study investigation is to understand how staff from a large multisite organization with demonstrated excellence in supporting persons with disabilities (PWDs) construct their understanding of disability and hiring practices related to PWDs. Better understanding how individual employees internalize organizational practices regarding PWDs is essential to facilitate expanded employment opportunities, enhanced organizational functioning, and more supportive work environments for PWDs. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior, in this investigation we have sought to better understand how employees internalize (or do not) the organizational commitment to hire PWDs, and how individual employee understandings of PWDs negotiate (mis)alignments between their perspectives and organizational practices and values. Overall, we found fundamental differences in the under-standings, motivations, rationales, support strategies, and concerns of participants related to

the employment of PWDs. Even though participants in this study were recruited because of their direct involvement in supporting PWDs in the workplace, they articulate different definitions of disability, perceptions of organizational commitments, and investments in employment practices related to PWDs. We found that virtually each participant in this study is mission-driven, articulating a rationale for hiring and supporting PWDs that is connected to their perception of the organizational investment in the same. However, participants negotiate two very different rationales in articulating their perspectives—with one extreme being charity-oriented and the other human resource oriented. While some participants seemed to embody the elements of one extreme consistently, many incorporated elements of both in discussing their understandings.

T he lack of employment for persons with disabilities (PWDs) continues to be a dire problem in today's society, with an employment rate of 20.8% for PWDs compared to 69.2% of those without disabilities (Department of Labor, 2019). In fact, the unemployment of PWDs has become a more serious problem in the last decade, as the U.S. recession had a disproportionate impact on workers with disabilities, with the number of employed workers with disabilities having declined at a rate more than three times that of workers without disabilities (Fogg, Harrington, & McMahon, 2010). Lack of meaningful employment for PWDs causes negative effects in a variety of domains, including reducing their sense of connection to the community, limiting upward mobility, and negatively impacting their quality of life and well-being (Tansey, Dutta, Kundu, & Chan, 2016).

A body of vocational rehabilitation (VR) literature has emerged examining the personal, social, and environmental barriers that limit PWDs from entering the workforce and maintaining long-term, meaningful employment (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2015). While the VR literature has tended historically to focus on providing services and training to PWDs to increase their likelihood of being employed, there has been a dearth of researched focused on understanding how employers make meaning of employing PWDs. Research focused on examining the practices of employers to increase the hiring and retention of PWDs is a critical research need (Chan, Strauser, Gervey, & Lee, 2010).

To address this critical research gap, the purpose of this article is to understand how staff from across a large multisite organization with demonstrated excellence in hiring and supporting PWDs construct their understanding of disability and hiring practices related to PWDs. Better understanding of how individual employees internalize organizational practices regarding PWDs is essential to facilitate expanded employment opportunities, enhanced organizational functioning, and more supportive work environments for PWDs.

UTILIZING THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR TO EXAMINE HIRING PWDS

In a previous in-depth case study investigation (under review), we identified structural and attitudinal supports that contributed to one organization's excellence in hiring and supporting PWD's. However, in conducting analyses for study, we were struck by differences in

how employees seemed to understand and value their organization's commitment to hiring PWDs. In this investigation, we have sought to better understand how employees internalize (or do not) the organizational commitment to hire PWDs, and how individual employee understandings of PWDs negotiate (mis)alignments between their perspectives and organizational practices and values.

Here, we draw on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as conceptual context for supporting our understanding of how employee actions and attitudes about employing PWDs are influenced by their self-understanding. TPB is one of the most researched social psychological theories used to predict a wide variety of deliberative behaviors (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010). According to the TPB, a person's behavior is most strongly predicted by their intention to engage in that behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). These behavioral intentions, in turn, are thought to be a function of a person's attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985, 1991).

The TPB has been previously used to understand employer's intentions of hiring qualified workers with disabilities (Fraser, Ajzen, Johnson, Hebert, & Chan, 2011). Fraser et al. (2011) found that all three predictors in the theory—attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—were significant predictors of intentions to hire PWDs, altogether accounting for 67% of the variance in behavioral intentions, with subjective norms as the most substantial individual predictor ($B = .48$). While the TPB is often used in quantitative data sets, this study will utilize the TPB has a framework for understanding themes that emerged in qualitative data obtained in a large hospital system that implemented hiring practices aimed at hiring and retaining PWDs. Specifically, we will examine the qualitative data through the lens of the three predictors of behavioral intentions and, in turn, behavior of hiring and retaining PWDs: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

Attitudes Toward Hiring PWDs and Related Expectations

According to the TPB, a major factor influencing behavioral intentions is *attitudes,* which are defined as one's positive or negative feelings about performing the behavior of interest (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). The TPB utilizes a relatively narrow definition of attitudes as affective reactions to a behavior. According to the theory, attitudes are influenced by *expectations regarding perceived outcomes* of engaging in a behavior of interest—with expectations of positive outcomes leading to more positive attitudes and expectations of negative outcomes leading to more negative attitudes (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). To understand the behavioral intentions with regard to hiring of PWDs, it is important to examine general attitudes toward PWDs in the work force as well as beliefs about potential positive or negative outcomes.

Employers' negative attitudes and reservations about hiring PWDs tends to be one of the most substantial barriers to companies hiring PWDs (Siperstein, Romano, Mohler, & Parker, 2006). A large body of existing research has shown that PWDs are judged more harshly in general than people without disabilities, and that people with intellectual and psychiatric disabilities are judged more harshly than people with physical or sensory disabilities (Hernandez, Keys, & Balcazar, 2000). Research on employer attitudes and hiring patterns suggest that employers as a whole tend to be willing to endorse hiring employees with disabilities and express positive global attitudes toward PWDs, but that hiring patterns show that they are more likely to hire someone without disabilities (Hernandez et al., 2000).

Attitudes toward hiring PWDs are likely to be affected by the perceived outcomes of hiring PWDs, and research suggests that employers tend to hold multiple negative expectations about

hiring PWDs. For example, employers report concerns about negative impacts on organizational culture and climate, financial outcomes, and performance and productivity outcomes (Fraser et al., 2011; Hartnett, Stuart, Thurman, Loy, & Batiste, 2011; Kaye, Jans, & Jones, 2011; Siperstein et al., 2006). More specifically, employer concerns about hiring a person with disabilities include safety concerns, fear of not being able to terminate the person with disabilities after hiring, costs of needed accommodations, and concerns that the person with disabilities will not be able to perform the required duties of the job (Hernandez et al., 2000; Peck & Kirkbride, 2001; Siperstein et al., 2006). Employers also report fears of breaking the laws that ensure the equal treatment of PWDs such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA; Hartnett et al., 2011; Siperstein et al., 2006). Despite research showing that accommodations are actually inexpensive and employees with disabilities more than make up for it with productivity and reliability, employers worry that providing accommodations will become an expensive burden (Kaye et al., 2011).

Subjective Norms Regarding Hiring of PWDs

According to the TPB, the second major factor influencing behavioral intentions is *subjective norms,* which are individuals' perceptions of whether people important to them think the behavior should be performed (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). Because subjective norms influence behavioral intentions, which ultimately influence the behavior of interest, changes in subjective norms can lead to changes in behavior. In their study of employer intentions to hire PWDs, Fraser et al. (2011) found that subjective norms, compared to attitudes or perceived behavioral control, were the most substantial predictor of intentions to hire PWDs. In examining the current behavior of interest—hiring PWDs—the subjective norms of interest are people's beliefs of the degree to which others support the hiring initiative, which incudes the degree to which a coworker believes that his or her colleagues, other businesses, and society in general support hiring PWDs

In a workplace, an important subjective norm is one's perception of whether coworkers and employers are supportive of hiring PWDs. One of the most substantial barriers to companies hiring PWDs is the lack of support and negative attitudes of employers (Siperstein et al., 2006). Houtenville and Kalargyrou (2012) found that 75% of people in large companies said they were influenced by information from senior executives and human resources (HR) managers. Further, it has been shown that intentions of business professionals to support the hiring of PWDs was highly correlated with normative beliefs regarding the stance of the CEO, human recourse professionals, senior management, supervisors, and coworkers at their company (Fraser et al., 2011).

Subjective norms also include beliefs of whether or not consumers of the business support the hiring of PWDs. A common concern of companies when hiring PWDs is that customers or consumers may express negative attitudes (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012). However, in a national survey of consumer attitudes, consumers show strong beliefs about the benefit and value of hiring PWDs, with 87% of participants expressing a preference to give their business to companies that hire PWDs (Siperstein et al., 2006).

Subjective norms also include beliefs about other businesses' behaviors, or lack thereof, in hiring PWDs (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012). Past studies have shown that a majority of employees in large companies say they are influenced by information from other nationally-recognized companies (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012).

Perceived Behavioral Control

According to the TPB, *perceived behavioral control* is the person's perception of the difficulty of performing a behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). A person's perceptions of the difficulty of performing a behavior can be influenced by his or her own abilities, the complexity of the behavior itself, and perceptions of situational barriers. Fraser et al. (2011) found that perceived behavioral control was a significant predictor of intentions to hire PWDs.

Perceived behavioral control with respect to employing PWDs is likely to be influenced by employers' beliefs about the feasibility of hiring and retaining workers with disabilities, including perceived challenges associated with making accommodations. Many employers believe that accommodating PWDs would be costly and time-consuming, or that they are not capable of making appropriate accommodations due to lack of knowledge about disabilities (Fraser et al., 2011; Hartnett et al., 2011; Kaye et al., 2011; Siperstein et al., 2006). Lack of knowledge about disabilities may also decrease confidence in one's competence due to not knowing how to make accommodations, concerns about interacting with the person with a disability, or concerns about effective supervision.

Lack of confidence in the VR system can also lower perceived behavior control if employers and coworkers feel supports are not available or that available supports will be ineffective in helping them meet the needs of employees with disabilities (Hartnett et al., 2011; Siperstein et al., 2006). Employers' perceptions that they cannot meet the needs of people with autism may also stem from an employers' expectation that PWDs will not have the competence to complete the tasks required for their jobs (Hartnett et al., 2011; Kaye et al., 2011; Siperstein et al., 2006). Fear of litigation from not understanding and following the ADA is another commonly expressed employer concern that might affect perception of being able to implement and support a hiring initiative (Hartnett et al., 2011; Siperstein et al., 2006).

METHODS

In a previous in-depth case study investigation (under review), we identified structural and attitudinal supports that contributed to one organization's excellence in hiring and supporting PWD's. However, in conducting analyses for this research study, we were struck by differences in how employees seemed to both understand and value their organization's commitment to hiring PWDs. The purpose of this study is to understand how staff from across a large multi-site organization with demonstrated excellence in hiring and supporting PWDs construct their understanding of disability and hiring practices related to PWDs. This research was guided by the following overarching research question: How do individual staff members in this organization understand disability and hiring practices related to PWDs?

Given the formative nature of these investigations, we used an inductive qualitative approach to better capture the complexity of individual perspectives. This inductive qualitative research design (Maxwell, 2008) allowed exploration of the complex issues that emerged during conversations with participants by encouraging a robust articulation of their perspectives. Given the exploratory nature of these investigations and that we anticipated that employee perspectives would be constructed through multidimensional influences, a qualitative approach was necessary (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Participants

Participants were recruited from a large, multisite healthcare organization with demonstrated excellence in hiring PWDs. This healthcare system owns, manages, or joint ventures 19 acute-care hospitals, 1 psychiatric hospital, 5 nursing care facilities, 4 assisted living facilities, and 14 home care and hospice services with more than 22,000 employees on the East Coast. We selected this organization a research site because: (a) healthcare in the United States accounts for almost 19% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and is one of the fastest growing areas of employment; (b) hospitals are "small cities" representing multiple types of businesses. Within this organization, for example, there are clinical and nonclinical departments including patient care and nonpatient services reflective of many diverse businesses; (c) this organization was recently recognized as 1 of the top 10 healthcare providers in diversity practices by *DiversityInc.* magazine; and (d) perhaps most important, our research team has a relationship with this organization that allowed for unprecedented access to all levels of management and staff.

We conducted in-depth interviews with 63 key informants across four hospitals in the system (see Table 1). Within each site, we recruited participants from multiple levels of the organization (e.g., department managers and staff, HR, and employment specialists) to understand the complexity of employment practices. Interviews were conducted between July 2017 to May 2018. Participation was voluntary and we assured all informants that every effort would be made to protect their anonymity.

We used a semistructured format to conduct interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994), addressing participants' perceptions of PWDs, their roles and responsibilities in supporting PWDs, and their experience of the organization more generally. Follow-up questions were used by us to further clarify and/or elicit participant experiences. Each lasting between 45–60 minutes, we conducted interviews in a private setting at the research site and used audio taping to capture participant responses. Prior to data collection, we asked participants to sign a consent form and reminded them of their confidentiality rights.

Analyses

Following data collection, we transcribed interviews verbatim and cross-checked them for accuracy. We wrote analytic memos (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) throughout data analysis to capture insight and to facilitate data analysis and interpretation. We used both open and theoretical codes to reduce and organize transcript data. We categorized codes to facilitate data analysis. We crafted profiles and narrative summaries throughout to capture emergent themes and to develop analytic questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We utilized the following analytic questions to guide analysis and to ensure that findings aligned with the project goals and conceptual framework:

- Analytic Question 1: How do participant attitudes about PWDs influence their understanding of employment practices for PWDs?
- Analytic Question 2: How do participant perceptions of subjective norms influence their understanding of employment practices for PWDs?
- Analytic Question 3: How do participants' perceived behavioral control influence their understandings of employment practices for PWDs?

We used matrices to facilitate cross-case analysis and to help link emerging themes with theoretical frameworks and concepts (Seidman, 2006). We shared data with participants, cross-checked codes, and generated alternative interpretations of interview data with researchers

TABLE 1.   Study Participants

Hospital	Position	Number of Participants Interviewed
HS 1	Employment specialist	2
	Department staff	9
	Department manager	4
	HR staff: talent acquisition	2
HS 2	Employment specialist	2
	Department staff	8
	Department manager	4
	HR director	1
HS 3	Employment specialist	3
	Department staff	4
	Department manager	2
	HR director	1
HS 4	Employment specialist	3
	Employee wellness	2
	HR staff	2
	Department staff	9
	Department manager	4

trained in qualitative analytic strategies to guard against validity threats and to increase the trustworthiness of findings (Merriam, 2009). We have used pseudonyms throughout to protect the identity of participants.

FINDINGS

Overall, we found fundamental differences in the understandings, motivations, rationales, support strategies, and concerns of participants related to the employment of PWDs. Even though participants in this study were recruited because of their direct involvement in supporting PWDs in the workplace, they articulate different definitions of disability, perceptions of organizational commitments, and investments in employment practices related to PWDs. We found that virtually each participant in this study is mission-driven, articulating a rationale for hiring and supporting PWDs that is connected to their perception of the organizational investment in the same. However, participants negotiate two very different poles in articulating their perspectives—with one extreme being charity-oriented and the other human resource oriented (Table 2). Interestingly, while some participants seemed to embody the elements of

TABLE 2. Conceptual Framework

Charity Oriented	Human-Resource Oriented
PWDs viewed as "other"	PWDs viewed as liked
Focus on equality	Focus on equity
We have something to give PWDs	"Everyone should have what they need to be successful"
"Helping is the right thing to do" / Faith-based	"Hiring is the smart thing to do" / Asset-based
PWDs are employees with special needs	PWDs are employees with special resources
We hire PWDs despite the bottom line	PWDs strengthen our bottom line

Note. PWDs = persons with disabilities.

one extreme consistently, many incorporated elements of both in discussing their understandings. Following, we will detail findings for both perspectives.

Charity-Oriented Perspective

PWDs as "Other." One key aspect of the charity-oriented perspective that emerged in the data involves an overall "othering" of PWDs. Without seeing PWDs as inherently different from employees without disabilities, this charitable orientation would not exist. One common form of othering emerged in employees reporting how much they enjoy working with PWDs more than working with employees without disabilities. One participant shared,

> I actually enjoy working more with persons with disabilities than working with people without disabilities. It goes back to their mentality, their love, compassion. They're honest. Their truthfulness. They're just amazing individuals on a whole and it's just a blessing too to see a different side.

This was a recurrent theme, with employees describing what they liked about PWDs, how they were different and, often times, "better," than employees without disabilities, and the personal and team benefits the individual saw in themselves and others as a result of working with PWDs.

A less charitable but still wholly othering subtheme of this perspective is concerns over the balance of common sense and compassion, as one participant stated,

> Well, I did have someone tell me, you know, there has to come a time when common sense outweighs compassion... I think you look for what people can contribute. And if what they can contribute meets your need, then you really should be able to look past that stuff.

Some comments were less pragmatic and verged on intolerant and prejudiced. Typically, these types of comments were reported secondhand—interviewees described how they responded to a colleague who made discriminatory statements. One participant shared that, for the most part, Bon Secours (BS) seeks to employ and retain PWDs, however "I will say that same expectation is not always shared by people who are not at an executive or managerial

level. I've had at least one person specifically say to me that those kinds of people don't belong here."

From these and similar statements, some employees of the BS hospital system appear to see PWDs as "nonsensical" employees, while others see PWDs as contributing members of the organization. This divide may lead to conflict between department managers and department staff, depending on who endorses which of these two viewpoints.

Focus on Equality. Several employees extensively described their own and the organizations' commitment to equal treatment of all employees, including PWDs. This theme that emerged repeatedly in the findings is best represented by one participant, who shared,

> The BS expectation is that we treat everybody the same, that we wouldn't treat anybody different and that in a way we shouldn't even see them as having a disability... you should follow the BS values with everybody you interact with.

The potential problem with this point of view is the difference between equality and equity —equal treatment of PWDs may not be equitable considering both their unique contributions and unique needs within a healthcare system. Equal treatment assumes equal starting points, which would legitimize the concept of, "we treat everyone the same" (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983). Contrastingly, equity acknowledges different starting points and inputs and how those contribute to different outcomes. By expounding on how they treat everyone the same, interviewees in this study fail to consider the varying inputs, backgrounds, strengths, and challenges of the various employees with whom they interact. In another interview, a participant stated,

> I don't feel like the expectations are any different with persons with disabilities versus my regular coworkers. Everybody is treated with respect and dignity. It might take them a little longer to process things through but... the expectation is you treat everybody the same.

If this were truly the case, that all employees were treated in an objectively equal way, this would result in unequitable treatment for PWDs. Considering PWDs may or may not require different accommodations based on the role they fulfill, equal treatment would necessarily result in diverse, nonequal outcomes.

At the further end of this spectrum is an overt acknowledgment of the differences between PWDs and persons without disabilities from a deficit-focused perspective. This also emerged across departments and levels, with some interviewees reporting how PWDs are different and, in some ways, lacking, while still insisting that they treat PWDs "equally" despite these deficits. In a particularly contradictory statement, one participant shared,

> So anyone with disabilities, we don't look at them with a disability. They are one of us. They are our family. We take them in and if they are struggling, we figure out what's wrong with them and move forward from there.

Focusing on equality can only be considered an effort toward distributive justice if the inputs and outcomes are equal across groups (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983). In the case of employer practices, for both PWDs and persons without disabilities, each individual brings idiosyncratic strengths as well as deficits or growth edges. Therefore, "treating everyone equally" may not be possible without first considering ways to treat everyone equitably.

"We Have Something to Give." Congruent with the charity-oriented perspective, several interviewees discussed ways they, their department, or their organization had something to give to PWDs employed in their hospital. Beyond simply having something to offer, these employees seemed to believe they had some higher purpose to fulfill by providing something —employment, acceptance, validation, and so forth—to PWDs. Rather than seeing PWDs as

providing the service of labor to the hospital, some participants saw the hospital as providing the service of being able to work to PWDs. One participant shared, "I would like to you know, have somebody who—with disabilities to you know, provide them with an opportunity."

Other participants were more cognizant of the reciprocal nature of employing PWDs, in that the hospital benefits from PWDs' services and PWDs benefit from the fulfillment of employment. However, even in commenting in this way, many of these assertions were couched in a charitable point of view. One interviewee placed the labor provided by the PWD as secondary in importance to the job provided to the PWD by the hospital in saying, "[working with PWDs] gives us a sense of a group of folks in our community that not only we can work with but we often can serve." Another participant reiterated this symbiotic perception of "helping," in sharing, "To me it's kind of interesting. It brightens up my day knowing I can help someone. And it also helps me."

At the opposite far end, certain participants saw the BS hospital system providing jobs to PWDs as more than reciprocal and more than helpful—some described PWDs as individuals who not only would benefit from employment with BS, but who were inherently in need of the help offered by BS's offer of employment. In responding to a question about the expectations BS has for hiring and retaining PWDs as employees, one interviewee shared,

> The way the organization is structured as far as... those things that we believe in; integrity and stewardship... I think it encourages all of us to give back, to appreciate the diversity in all of us and to find options and opportunities for people who may have developmental or other issues that would take them out of what you would consider the normal if you will.

This subtheme is the core of the charitable perspective, as participants shared their view of themselves and their organization as providing PWDs the charity of employment, income, and the prototypical satisfaction of a job well done. This is perhaps best represented by one participant reporting, "And my daily thing was how can I help this person... because if I was in their shoes, I would want somebody to be patient and kind and understanding even though I may make mistakes."

Helping Is the "Right Thing to Do" / Faith Based. One emerging motivation underlying the charity-oriented perspective on hiring and supporting PWDs is the idea that it is "the right thing to do." Many participants reported that their primary reason for hiring PWDs was to accept, help, and provide opportunities for PWDs, with some never even mentioning that PWDs contribute something to the workplace. In some ways this served as a community-building perspective for the department and contributed to a positive organizational culture, as one participant shared:

> And it gives us visible daily evidence that we can impact somebody in a positive way. You know, it's not just the benefit of our employees, but that individual who comes to work every day knowing that they're going to be accepted for who they are, they're valued for who they are and the work that they do. And, that is gratifying from the stuff that makes them feel like what they're doing makes a difference.

This culture and climate seemed to reflect the organization's value system as a Catholic organization, with some participants commenting on doing the right thing to galvanize the organization's reputation as a "community mission-based hospital." Others appeared to authentically believe in the mission and values of BS, and commented on their own identification with the Catholic faith. One participant described seeing managers accommodating PWDs above and beyond what was expected of them, explaining,

> There is so much compassion and they see an employee who, although they have become in some way disabled, they don't want to see the person go without work anymore because of the value and the gift and that is all tied up in the Catholic teaching as well that work is a right.

Catholicism, for some participants in this study, delivered the message that all people regardless of ability status have worth. Another participant embodied this concept in remarking, "Every individual has value. Every individual has their gifts and talents and we strongly believe that as a Catholic mission."

As with other well-intentioned elements of the charity-oriented perspective, there are points at which the individual participant's understanding of a Catholic mission and values can lead to somewhat ableist conceptualizations of PWDs, as particularly evidenced by this and a few other participants:

> I think more than anything else it really boils down to the fact that it's a faith-based organization. I think that while certainly everybody has their own spirituality and that type of thing... I think there's potentially more tolerance in any instance if you look across the entire spectrum of employees. I think there's that faith based want to give back and serve the community in all aspects... And just looking at folks again in a different light from the perspective of *neither one of these guys asked for this. This is the way God produced them.*

PWDs Are Employees With Special Needs. Fundamental to all other subthemes of the charity-oriented perspective is the idea that the chief difference between PWDs and other employees is that PWDs have special needs and are thus more "challenging." This perspective appeared to directly fuel a deficit-based mentality:

> So I guess it's because I'm looking at a person with disabilities as somebody who is broken in some way. And to me he is not broken. He just didn't grow. You know, when I think of somebody with disabilities, it's like you have a broken arm. You have a broken leg. You are a little slow, like autistic, you know, people with MS or MD because they are broke in a way.

This conceptualization as PWDs as having more or different needs than any other employee inspired a certain amount of seemingly overzealous trepidation. One participant commented:

> I may not know everything they can do... I use the one that makes the noise a lot –the black – the black young man that makes that noise... I don't know what I could trust him with. I would definitely have to ask a whole lot more with him than I would probably with [another PWD]. But just so we're on the same page, I don't want to give them anything that's out of their scope of practice.

Again, even for those attempting to take a charity-oriented, protective, and helping stance, some of these perspectives still embody a prejudicial othering of PWDs even when born of the best of intentions:

> Even in our families we have weak links. Do we throw them out because they seem to be the weakest one of our team or do we think outside of the box and figure out a way?...[An]instrument didn't get to the lab on time because somebody... took the wrong elevator and got lost in the maze of the hospital. But... can we find a way, draw it to him so that next time he doesn't take the wrong elevator rather than saying, oh, okay, I think something is wrong with you. You are my weak link. Let's get rid of you.

While the majority of participants who work alongside PWDs in their hospitals seemed earnest in their intention to value, want to protect, and feel compassion for PWDs, the language and rhetoric surrounding these well-intentioned predispositions at-times appeared to be lacking when framed through the charity-oriented perspective.

We Hire PWDs Despite the Bottom Line. Finally, the charity-oriented perspective funneled into the ultimate decision that hiring and retaining PWDs is an act of good faith, despite the overall cost of such a practice to the organization. Rather than focusing on the unique benefits gained by BS, charitable-minded participants fixated on the sacrifice made by themselves, their department, and the hospital in order to do the "right thing" by hiring PWDs. In describing the perception that PWDs are more liable to make mistakes than other employees, an HR director stated:

> You know, I think people that don't understand or you know, that haven't had that interaction are often afraid, you know, afraid I'm not going to meet my productivity goal. Afraid I'm going to –if I bring this person in, then I'm going to get sued because I'm going to make a mistake along the way.

While some participants described such a "sacrifice" in terms of the time, resources, and efforts of other staff in the department working alongside and accommodating PWDs, some focused more on the financial bottom line of the organization. One participant stated:

> The changes in health care, the fact that hospitals in general are being asked to do more with very little. Reimbursement is different... Leaders sometimes feel squeezed. These are my metrics that I need to meet. I think this is my weak link. It would be a lot easier for me if I could replace this person to make sure that I have a full team.

Additionally, the topic of "Red Tape" came up several times, without anyone offering an actual description of what this red tape looked like or who bore responsibility for it. From this emerged the curiosity about "red tape" or obstacles in the BS system: are there truly legitimate corporate-level obstacles to hiring PWDs, in BS or elsewhere, or is this a perception shared amongst HR and other staff that serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy? One employment specialist described challenges in the hiring process for PWDs by saying:

> In my years as a job coach, I can't name anything specific, but I can certainly talk to you about frustrations of trying to get through corporate red tape, as I like to call it. You apply online, application goes into a void, trying to follow up and are not able to. That's not specific to necessarily just BS. That's just the corporate world in general. It certainly applies here as well.

Human Resource-Oriented Perspective

PWDs Are Liked. Contrasting with the fundamental view in the charity-oriented perspective that PWDs are different and thus in need of charity, a human resource-oriented perspective also emerged from the data. This perspective began with a general agreement that PWDs are well liked throughout the hospitals in which they work. At a department level, interviewees sharing the HR oriented perspective described PWDs as not only accepted in their units, but integral to them. One participant reported:

> I think they really embrace when we have the Project SEARCH people up here. And we really do miss when they're not here... We get to know them and get to love them as a member of our [Department] family. I think our culture is just really one of openness and acceptance of everybody and meeting those people at their skill levels where they're at.

When one department embraces and sees the potential of their PWD colleagues, the effects are far-reaching. The HR director of one hospital shared the experience of having other department managers seek out PWDs for their teams, stating,

> It's become more organic now. I'll have managers seek me out and say how do I get somebody? I want somebody like that. I think my unit would really benefit from having them or my employees would really like to see that.

When PWDs are seen as a valuable asset to the team, they live up to that potential and contribute to a culture of departmental diversity in both their identities and their skill sets.

Focus on Equity. Unlike the focus on equality described in the charity-oriented perspective, participants describing the HR view focused instead on equity. Unlike equality, equity is grounded in promoting equal treatment and outcomes while acknowledging the difference in social, cultural, and economic factors that impact an individual's available opportunities and how they are able to engage with them (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983). One employee took an equity-focused perspective in describing the value of inclusion in their department, stating, "And inclusion means everybody's voices count. So, when we think that way, we look at who we hire differently. We look at people's input differently. We have respect as one of our values for every individual, every human being."

While the equity focus serves to support the success of all employees regardless of the varying accommodations they may need to be successful, this viewpoint also considers the benefit of these employees when they are provided with the tools they need. Some participants described PWDs as exceptionally valuable contributors to the department when provided with support and acceptance. One interviewee described working with a PWD in their department:

> He's task-oriented. He does what he's got to do in order. We try not to ruffle his feathers with that, trying to change it... you tend to probably get him more nervous... If he needs to be redirected or something, you talk to him... management understands, and just follows through on it. So, really, disability doesn't really have a whole lot to do with it. He's better behaved than most of the employees.

The equity focus is not about slowing down or reducing productivity—rather, it is about supporting people in different ways to meet individual needs. Moreover, equity does not align with the "I don't see disability" idea that some employees endorsed. Instead, equity finds value in employees based on their specialized contributions whether or not they needed accommodations to best make those contributions. In describing their experience working with a PWD on their unit, another participant reported:

> He has done exceptionally well. We've all welcomed him. We've all tried to be there to encourage him. Whatever he needs we want to help him with. We want him to be happy and we want him to love his job so we do reach out to him and make him feel comfortable and we want to keep him.

"Everyone Should Have What They Need to Be Successful." In line with the focus on equity, human resource-oriented employees believed that all employees should have what they need to be successful, even if these needs may vary. Participants who shared this view acknowledged that PWDs may come into the department with a different set of skills and that departments are most successful when they both capitalize on those diverse skills and provide accommodations for certain capabilities PWDs may not have upon first starting a job. A participant described this well in saying:

> Yeah, so working with the departments to make sure there is consistency and that sometimes the approach that would be taken for an employee without a disability might need to be modified a little bit for the individual with a disability to allow them to be successful and highlight their strengths which I think over time really improved within the BS setting.

Consistent with an appreciation for a differentiated approach is the idea of "meeting people where they are." This came up regularly in interviews, with participants reporting the need for compassion and acceptance in figuring out what a PWD or any employee needs to be successful, providing that support, and then benefitting as a community from what the employee is then able to produce as a result of being supported. When employees are treated in this way, there was agreement that unique talents and skills can more easily be highlighted. In describing their experience working with different PWDs employed at the same hospital, one participant stated,

> They are very skillful in their own way... So the expectation is that we train them. We do everything we can to keep them successful and sometimes it does take a lot of retraining and reminding but I think we expected that so that's just part of our work.

"Hiring is the Smart Thing to Do": An Asset-Based Perspective. When PWDs are valued and provided with the supports they need to be successful, participants in this study described hiring PWDs as the smart move for the organization. Initially, some of the benefits to hiring PWDs may have been considered in light of funding that allowed for hiring and retaining PWDs. In describing the organization's decision to prioritize hiring PWDs through an internship program focused on creating pathways to employment for PWDs, one employee reported:

> When [the intern program] came on that one of our top executives said this is going to happen and just –and I don't know what he did or how he got the support because I wasn't here, but took it to whoever needed it and we still have today a budget of –I forget the exact number – $300,000 that just pays for the payroll of these individuals which was a great way to get started. Now different departments are hiring the graduates on their own.

Although this report appears to illustrate how one individual at a high level within the organization made the decision to begin prioritizing and funding hiring PWDs, once this practice began, various departments saw the benefits to hiring PWDs and sought out these employees on their own.

Contrasting with the charity-oriented perspective, employees who see hiring PWDs as a strength in the company acknowledge the symbiotic nature of retaining PWDs as employees. One employee shared, "They're very good at some of the tasks assigned, they provide a return. It's not just finding a job for someone." Many employees commented on the high-quality work provided by PWDs and ways the entire organization benefits.

PWDs Have Special Resources. Naturally, for participants to view hiring PWDs as the "smart thing to do," they must acknowledge the special resources PWDs bring to the organization. More than just being able to perform adequately at the tasks they are assigned, many interviewees shared their impressions of PWDs as having unique skills and talents from which the hospital system benefits. This idea of reciprocity, learning from, and being inspired by each other came up frequently, as one participant shared:

> Working with folks with disabilities because they can actually encourage me to do to do a better job. And number one, being on time. Number two, their personality. Number three, their work ethics. You know, you can learn a lot from them. As long as –you know they're learning from

you but you're definitely –I'm learning from them. Someone will come up with good ideas in performing their job and also they ask me a lot of questions, so they are very inquisitive of what their work functions or work responsibilities would be.

As some individuals noted the unique benefits to working with PWDs, they also commented on how some of the talent seems to be underutilized. One participant felt that the skills and talents of PWDs were not fully appreciated in a hospital setting in sharing:

They're so, so smart. I just feel like sometimes... what they're doing in the hospital is wasted... I feel like they should be employed in higher positions. I feel like the hospital and other places should do more to employ people with I guess it depends on certain disabilities but I guess that suit them better.

As mentioned in this statement, the primary gift identified in PWDs by interviewees in this study were intellectual gifts. Another employee reiterated this sentiment, "So many persons with disabilities⋯are so, so smart and I just feel like⋯they should just be employed in something like math related or like science related, something where they can be using all that brain power."

Connected to this idea that PWDs have unique strengths that should be highlighted beyond what is possible in the hospital system, some participants lamented general frustrations with not everyone in the organization recognizing the strengths of PWDs. At times, this understanding of PWDs was influenced by some of the same Catholic values seen the charity-oriented perspective, but applied differently in recognizing individual differences and strengths. One participant shared, "I would say, honestly, people don't realize how much richer we are by being inclusive because, like I said, spend some time with disabled people; they do have gifts. Everybody has a God-given gift." For some, this frustration extended to a societal level as well. Another participant commented:

Our society needs to look at that; these people are different. How do we help them to be part of society contributing, benefiting, so on and so forth? Because like I said they have very unique skills, things that they do that we don't do or don't have time to do and we need to appreciate that.

"PWDs Strengthen Our Bottom Line." Sentiments inherent to the human resource-oriented perspective can best be encapsulated by the recognition that working with PWDs strengthens the organization's bottom line. Although hiring and retaining PWDs may take more investment in training and accommodating up front, the return on these investments is more than worth it. For some, this bottom line is strengthened because hiring PWDs is congruent with the mission and values of BS, as one participant commented,

It helps us to meet our diversity and inclusion plan, which is part of our SQP or strategic quality plan. And it also helps us serve people who were often marginalized, which is part of our mission as an organization.

For others, strength comes from acknowledging the symbiotic nature of hiring PWDs where both the employee and the organization are able to mutually benefit. Another interviewee stated,

You know, it's not just the benefit of our employees, but that individual who comes to work every day knowing that they're going to be accepted for who they are, they're valued for who they are and the work that they do.

Seeing PWDs in this way, as integral to the structure, function, and success of the organization as a whole, completely alters the organizational culture so that PWDs are not seen as auxiliary, but as essential. On hiring PWDs, one participant commented, "And we get the privilege because we are ministry [sic] doing things that other healthcare organizations, perhaps, would say, we can't afford to do that. And we would probably say we can't afford not to do that."

DISCUSSION

The TPB suggests behavior is most strongly predicted by an individual's intention to engage in that behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). As one might expect in an organization with demonstrated excellence in employing PWDs, we found that supportive intentions for employing PWDs were abundant across individuals and departments in the healthcare system. However, in expanding on the TPB, we found that among this group of participants with similar attitudes about the importance of employing PWDs, there were fundamental differences in the motivations and rationales underlying their attitudes. Based on participant data, we have categorized these differences in attitudinal orientation as being charity-oriented or human-resource oriented with regards to employment practices for PWDs. Generally speaking, those with a charity-oriented perspective tended to focus on how hiring PWDs benefited the person with a disability, while those with a human resource-oriented perspective tended to focus more on the benefits the organization received from the employment of PWDs.

In the TPB, attitudes are thought to be determined in large part by the expectations the individual has for a particular course of action (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). Previous findings indicate one of the largest barriers to the hiring of PWDs is negative attitudes held by employers about PWDs and their capabilities as potential employees (Hernandez et al., 2000; Siperstein et al., 2006). Our findings suggest a fundamental difference in expectations for PWDs—regarding employability, capability, equity, and bottom-line outcomes—between those with charity-oriented and human-resource oriented perspectives. This suggests that efforts to facilitate greater support for employing PWDs might focus on challenging/expanding the expectations of employers and co-workers with charity-oriented perspectives.

In this study, we found that organizational leaders influenced employee perspectives of PWDs. Drawing on TPB, this might be understood as the importance of subjective norms, or the perception of whether valued others believe the behavior should or should not be performed (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). For example, participants indicated that their actions and perceptions were positively influenced by one of the hospital CEOs who provided overwhelming support for an internship program focused on hiring PWDs. However, as with attitudes, while all participants indicated the influence of subjective norms on their perspectives, they differed considerably with regards to how they understood the norm's importance based on their attitudinal orientation. For example, those operating from a charity-oriented perspective endorsed the subjective norm of providing an internship program for PWDs because they viewed it as an opportunity to give back (provide jobs) to those less fortunate (PWDs). In contrast, those understanding the organizational norm through a human resource-oriented perspective viewed the decision as an opportunity to recruit new employees with fresh outlooks and diverse skill sets to amplify their productivity as a team.

Lastly, as would have been hypothesized by TPB, behavioral control emerged as a constituent element of participants' understandings of PWDs. Perceived behavioral control is the

evaluation of how difficult it will be to perform the behavior in question (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). As with attitudes and subjective norms, one's perception of difficulty was differentiated by one's attitudinal orientation. Those with a charity-oriented perspective questioned the capabilities of PWDs, how they might impact productivity, and the viability of retaining employees with different resources and needs. In contrast, those with a human-resource orientation questioned if they could be successful without PWDs, naming their unique resources, skills, and positive attitudes. that so fortified the department's output. While those with each orientation recognized difficulties associated with hiring PWDs, they differed with regards to where they located the difficulties in the organization and society and calculated the costs and benefits of employing (or not) PWDs using different standards.

Implications

Charity-Oriented Perspective. A primary implication of the charity-oriented perspective is viewing PWDs through a deficit lens—without an individual having a deficit of some kind, there would be no need to provide charity. At the extreme end, this point of view gave rise to a form of able saviorism/ benevolent ableism, which has been described in the literature as receiving unwanted help from others, being lauded for completing daily tasks, invalidation, paternalism, and objectification (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Nario-Redmond, Kemerling, & Silverman, 2019). This position may be well-intentioned, but remains prejudicial. An example of this is described by a participant who reported:

> The only feedback I've gotten, you know, I've been in a couple of patients' rooms where they might say something like that child was really cute or they're really sweet or something... Like when [PWD] comes and he's taking down somebody for discharge and everybody is like, hey, [PWD], and we're all making a big fuss over him, they get excited, like, hey, we've got a little celebrity here taking us out. It's fun.

The issue in treating PWDs differently—even as if they are "celebrities"—is that it can undermine efforts toward equitable treatment and acceptance. Further, the problem with seeing yourself as providing charity implies seeing the recipient as needing that charity. Taking this perspective allows employees working alongside PWDs to see themselves as the philanthropists in the situation, as benefitting from the fact that they are compassionate enough to be accepting of PWDs, as one participant shared, "There are a few that don't even say proper words. They just express sounds in weird ways you know, and I feel fine around them and they do their work and they seem to do a good job of it. So, I mean, I feel pretty good about the whole situation in general."

The charitable orientation and benevolent ableist perspective perpetuate othering and oppression for PWDs by casting them in the light being "in need." However, this same viewpoint may provide an impetus for the creation of more opportunities for this population, regardless of the motivation behind this creation. This illuminates the difference between intent and outcome—the well-meaning, though prejudicial, benevolent ableists limit their perspectives of PWDs by failing to consider them as unique contributors to department teams. At the same time, those who hold this perspective may be the ones seeking out funding and programing to provide opportunities for this population who they see as needing this help.

An attempted reaction against overt othering is the notion of "We don't see disabilities." This pervasive rhetoric comes off as reminiscent of "colorblindness," in that claiming not to see disability replaces overt prejudice with the prejudice of ignorance (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). Claiming not to "see" disabilities is disingenuous in the same way that "colorblindness"

is—it serves to explain away any covert forms of discrimination by attempting to present one-self as immune to implicit, societal, and/or cultural biases. This claim fails to acknowledge the fundamental diversity that makes us human. And truthfully, not all people want to be treated the same way because they are not all the same people. Without acknowledging and embracing diversity, needs can be missed and delegitimized, which further oppresses individuals who are already suffering at the hands of colorblind (and disability-blind) ideology.

Another subtheme of the charitable perspective is the idea of reciprocity—department staff and managers see themselves as providing PWDs with a job, and see PWDs teaching themselves and their departments patience and tolerance. Viewing employers and employees as members of a mutually beneficial system is a progressive stance on hiring practices. However, seeing PWDs as responsible for teaching patience and tolerance implies they may naturally elicit impatience and intolerance from others. This again echoes the deficit-based lens which casts PWDs as individuals who are traditionally perceived negatively. One employee shared,

> They're always positive no matter what so you look at them and you think why can't I be that way so they're kind of like a role model for us to really look at the world differently. They teach me more patience because sometimes you do need to slow down and talk with them differently or listen with them differently.

Seeing PWDs as teachers and reformers is one well-intended impression of the benefits of hiring PWDs. A second beneficial impression aligns with the organization's Catholic mission and values, as many participants touched on the idea that "we are all God's creation" and, thus, all have value. This emerged consistently in the findings, and is repeated in the following participant's statement that:

> Who we are... as a faith-based organization who truly cares about individuals. They don't look at whether a person has a disability or not. They look at the person as a whole. It's the spiritual part of it... They look at your whole body to say are you able to do this job...We don't stereotype or categorize individuals based on a disability. It's something of all the jobs and facilities within this entire ministry there's a job that someone can do... there's a job for every person.

Ultimately, the charitable perspective requires a consideration of PWDs as fundamentally different from persons without disabilities. This othering is prejudicial, in that PWDs are seen as contributing less—rather than contributing differently—than other employees. As one participant described their experience working with PWDs:

> What I coached the leader was meet with her, sit down with her, not in one spot. Have quick conversations with her, get to know her, and then figure out what works with her because she was freaking out. When she arranges –*you know how autistic people are*. She arranges her stuff this way on her desk and then somebody comes quickly filling something and moves this here, she comes there and she gets very upset.

Human Resource-Oriented Perspective. Being liked activates reward systems in the brain and makes people feel good (Davey, Allen, Harrison, Dwyer, & Yücel, 2010). In particular, being liked by one's in-group (such as coworkers) is related to higher self-esteem and more positive emotions (Ellemers, Doosje, & Spears, 2004). When people experience more positive emotions and higher self-esteem in the workplace, this leads to higher productivity and creativity, increased motivation, lower rates of turnover, and increased success of the organization as a whole (Fisher, 2010). These existing findings suggest that when people are liked and accepted at work they want to do well and are often successful. From our findings with interview participants, it appears that employees who are given the supports that they need are

also able to be successful. Human resource-oriented participants believed that an initial invest-ment of resources, time, and accommodations for PWDs to optimally perform in their roles ultimately led to a long-term return on these investments.

Proponents of the human resource-oriented perspective also endorsed the idea of reci-procity. However, unlike the participants following the charity-oriented perspective, these participants saw their relationships and interactions with PWDs as more holistically mutu-ally beneficial, rather than seeing PWDs as teaching their department to be more patient and accepting. Participants in this camp enjoyed working alongside PWDs because they saw the unique talents and skills PWDs brought to the workplace and enjoyed the personal relation-ships they formed with these coworkers. This likely contributes to both PWDs and other employees feeling in community with one another and as though they can depend on each other in the workplace.

Some employees who had never worked with a PWD before joining the health care organi-zation welcomed this as an opportunity to learn from expanding their contact with individuals with diverse backgrounds and skills. This allowed HR to facilitate trainings that contributed to a more inclusive, positive corporate climate. One HR staff member reported, "We might enter a department that the coworkers have never worked with an individual with a disability... we had to go in and do a lot of disability awareness training and disability sensitivity training with just the coworkers." These instances were never described as unhelpful or challenging. Rather, HR staff members described these trainings as opportunities for growth within the organiza-tion to continue to live out the BS values of diversity and inclusion.

As participants reported on the benefits and values in hiring PWDs as they saw them, several employees reported feeling frustrated by the organization and greater society for not doing more to be inclusive toward PWDs. In the findings, several interviewees described feeling that certain PWDs were unable to meet their full potential by being assigned positions that did not utilize their intellectual gifts. One participant expressed frustration at their perception that jobs for PWDs often lacked meaning, lamenting, "We're paying... to support persons with disabilities. Then why aren't we finding things for them to do that gives them value in life?" Another participant, toward the end of their interview, reproached the divide between leadership and understanding the logistics in employing PWDs:

> But I do think if I was going to say one thing it would be that specifically that there is a gap that has created some challenges for us in retaining employment because there have been coworkers of persons with disabilities that don't understand the disability or are biased towards persons with disabilities.

Ultimately, taking a human resource-oriented perspective is born of the central belief that everyone has value even if individuals must be considered from novel angles in order to identify that value. One participant described the essential value one PWD added to their department, stating, "Even though she has this disability, she is like phenomenal with organizational skills and the printer. She is very good with technical things, mechanical things. Like when she was gone for the week over Thanksgiving and the printer kept breaking we were like where is she?"

This core difference—between seeing PWDs as needing help and support to get by and seeing PWDs as being able to flourish when given what they need to be successful—epitomizes the dichotomy between the charity-orientation and the HR-orientation. As one interviewee summarized, "Everybody brings something to the table and everybody has talents. You just have to know how to tap into those."

Future Directions

In future work, it will be important to understand if each the charity-oriented and human resource-oriented perspectives are developmental in nature and what types of experiences lead participants to shift one way or another across this continuum. Part of this understanding may be gleaned through implementing widespread disability awareness and sensitivity training throughout this and other hospital systems. In meeting all employees where they are and encouraging them to acknowledge and confront their own biases, various workplaces may be able to reestablish organizational norms and generate a more inclusive culture. Additionally, interviewing PWDs themselves to gather their perspectives on workplace culture and acceptance would further illuminate our understanding of how programs designed to hire and support PWDs live up to this promise. By turning the inquiry to the source, researchers may be able to understand the needs, concerns, and benefits experienced directly by PWDs.

CONCLUSION

Overall, we found fundamental differences in the understandings, motivations, rationales, support strategies, and concerns of participants related to the employment of PWDs. Even though participants in this study were recruited because of their direct involvement in supporting PWDs in the workplace, they articulate different definitions of disability, perceptions of organizational commitment, and investments in employment practices related to PWDs. These findings suggest that for organizations seeking to strengthen employment practices and organizational culture for PWDs, it may be important to support individual employees in clarifying and modifying their perceptions and understandings of PWDs, particularly shifting from a charity-oriented to a human-resource oriented perspective. Likewise, it is important to recognize that just because individual employees may be engaged in similar work or behaviors, their understanding of and motivations for their actions may be different. Uncovering and addressing these undercover or implicit perspectives may provide an opportunity for organizations to support employees in developing greater understanding of PWDs and broadening their perspectives to become more human-resource oriented. As suggested by the TPB, interventions focused on addressing employees' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control may be productive in facilitating this transformation. Likewise, findings from this study may support advocates for PWDs in anticipating challenges and developing more effective framing for the expansion of opportunities and supports for PWDs in the workplace.

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