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Emerald Article: Virtue theory and organizations: considering persons with disabilities

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Abstract

Purpose – This research aims to apply virtue theory to the under-employment problem of persons with disabilities (PWD). Historically, PWD have been under-employed within society and discriminated against in the workplace. The authors review virtue theory research and illustrate how it can be used to better support the meaningful employment of PWD.

Design/methodology/approach – This research reviews the current literature in the areas of virtue theory and the employment challenges of PWD to create a new framework that can assist in the integration of PWD into the workplace.

Findings – Literature on the employment of PWD indicates that significant differences exist in the employment experiences between PWD and persons without disabilities (PWOD). Problems such as stigmatization impede the integration of PWD into the work environment. The review of the virtue theory literature supports the development of a new framework that provides additional ways to address this ongoing problem.

Practical implications – This paper suggests human resource management practices that virtuous organizations could use to address the problem of the under-employment and stigmatization of PWD.

Originality/value – No research currently applies virtue theory to the under-employment problem of persons with disabilities.

Keywords Virtue theory, Persons with disabilities, Human resource management, Discrimination, Ethics

Paper type Conceptual paper

Recent ethical leadership crises have focused attention on responsibility, ethics, and virtue within organizations (Knights and O'Leary, 2006); resulting in increased interest in the construct of virtue within organizational research (cf. Cameron *et al.*, 2004; Chun, 2005; Flynn, 2007). While Manz *et al.* (2008) indicate that many definitions of virtue link to a meaningful life purpose, Cameron (2003b) believes that virtue is evidenced "in" and "through" organizations. He states that "virtue in" relates to individual behaviors, while "virtue through" relates to organizational culture and processes (Cameron, 2003b). Cameron (2003a, b) suggests that organizational virtue fosters a sense of meaning, relationship harmony, and resilience. Current research in virtue theory proposes links between virtuous behavior, and corporate leadership and organizational performance. Crockett (2005) suggests virtue, within an Aristotelian framework, as a means to reconcile the gap between scholarly discourse and managerial practice.

Virtue theory could be useful in the exploration of meaningful employment experiences of PWD.

Historically, PWD have been under-employed (Markel and Barclay, 2009). Many countries have enacted disability laws in an attempt to alleviate this problem. For example, the UK recently passed the Equality Act of 2010 (Government Equalities Office, 2010) to complement the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995. Australia adopted the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) to prohibit disability-based discrimination (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2011). The USA passed the Americans with Disability Act (1990). Despite legislation, there still is discrimination against PWD in the workplace (Colella and Stone, 2005). Lengnick-Hall *et al.* (2008) report that employers choose not to hire PWD for a variety of reasons:

- perceived lack of skills;
- perceived inability to perform physical tasks;
- increased health care costs;
- required accommodations;
- increased safety problems;
- perceived discriminatory treatment lawsuits;
- decreased workplace morale; and
- perceived negative impact on customers.

Schur *et al.* (2009) find disability status linked to lower pay, less job security, fewer training opportunities, and less participation in decision-making. Wooten and James (2005) also report that organizations have difficulties in preventing discrimination against PWD applicants or employees. This paper first provides a brief overview of the virtue literature. Second, it reviews research on the work experiences of persons with disabilities (PWD). Next, a framework suggesting how the application of virtue theory can facilitate meaningful work experiences for PWD is presented. Last, directions for future research as well as recommendations for how organizations can use this framework to support the employment of PWD is outlined.

1. Virtue and organizations

> ... we become just by doing just acts ... (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethic, Book II*).

Virtue, typically discussed in philosophy, is now a construct and theory used in organizational research. While initial virtue scholarship focused on ethical managerial behavior (e.g. Morse, 1999; Solomon, 1992; Whetstone, 2003), a number of researchers in the positive organizational scholarship movement are now discussing the role virtue plays in organizational performance areas such as innovation, turnover, quality and profitability (Cameron *et al.*, 2004; Caza *et al.*, 2004). Much of work in ethical behavior uses an Aristotelian framework. While this is not the only virtue-based approach, a complete discussion of other philosophical schools is beyond the scope of this paper. According to Crockett (2005), Aristotle was interested in unifying conduct such that both citizens and the city-state would flourish, suggesting that a virtuous organization supports both employee and organizational prosperity.

When considering a virtue ethics framework, one needs to define virtue. Whetstone (2001) defines virtue as a "qualitative characteristic" (p. 104). He also indicates that virtue (ethics) provide a learning process through which a person is motivated to act within the social community. Virtues include integrity, compassion, and courage (Caza *et al.*, 2004). Virtue is not an all or nothing state for individuals or organizations, an organization's culture and processes can facilitate or hinder virtuous behavior (Cameron, 2003b).

Organizational research often frames employee or individual behavior through situationalism. Situationalism suggests that personal dispositions are situation-specific. Virtue theorists posit the existence of personal character traits that transcend situations (Merritt, 2000). Alzola (2008) illustrates this difference by discussing the Milgram obedience studies. These studies demonstrated the impact of situational forces in determining behavior (Burger, 2009). In these studies, participants continued to administer electric shocks to other another person when directed, in spite of believing that they were causing harm (Burger, 2009). Situationalists interpret the results as showing that situations are stronger than character. Even though participants knew they were inflicting harm on another subject, they continued because of the situational characteristics that supported that behavior. If situationalists are correct, Alzola (2008) suggests that organizations should not invest in ethical and values training since employees would only behave in concert with a situation, regardless of their personal character. To support the virtue ethics position, Alzola (2008) indicates that not only do organizations select employees; individuals actively choose an organization for its values, suggesting the importance of personal character. Therefore, virtue ethics may make a significant contribution towards a new framework for organizational research concerning PWDs. Virtue theory supports the belief that individuals make active decisions about not only where to work, but also how to behave at work based on (personal) values. This framework may offer an additional means to address stigmatization towards PWD at work.

Cameron *et al.* (2004) report that several psychological instruments exist to assess individual virtue. They developed an organizationally focused survey that asked respondents to characterize employing organizations based on different virtues. An example of a survey item is, "Kindness and benevolence are expected of everyone in this organization" (p. 775). Factor analysis of the scale generated a five-factor structure of forgiveness, trust, integrity, optimism, and compassion. Their research found organizational virtuousness related to organizational performance as defined by innovation, quality, customer retention, and employee turnover. Similarly, Cameron (2003b) indicates that the key attributes of organizational virtuousness are human impact, moral goodness, and social betterment. Virtue is a multidimensional concept; organizational, as well as, individual (employee) behavior can measure virtue.

Cameron *et al.* (2004) also suggest that the virtue-performance relationship is explained by the ability of virtue to amplify and buffer. Individual behavior that is virtuous has an amplifying effect. The positive emotion, social capital and pro-social behavior resulting from a virtuous act generates more acts that are virtuous. Buffering occurs when virtuousness protects the organization from negative effects of trauma (Cameron *et al.*, 2004). If individuals and the organization adhere to and reinforce virtue, they will be able to recover from trauma and stress more quickly through resilience.

In addition to the positive effect virtue can have on organizational performance, other authors consider how current organizational practices would be modified by the addition of a virtue perspective. For example, Crockett (2005) believes that many businesses primarily focus on a shareholder maximization perspective. He believes that adding a virtue perspective can inspire individuals and organizations to strive for excellence beyond the typical organizational strategy of shareholder return maximization to the benefit of both employees and the employer. Caza *et al.* (2004) call for a framework of virtuousness in organizations that shifts the discussion from solely externally applied rules such as laws, to an internationalization of a code of responsibility based on virtue. That is, if an organization solely relies on avoiding behaviors that could result in legal action, it does not necessarily develop proactive or virtuous behaviors that could improve organizational performance. Hence, virtue can have a place in strategic management. Strategic management is the process where an organization proactively plans its activities to meet its corporate goals and objectives (Mello, 2011). If an organization aligns practices related to virtuousness with its overall strategic planning efforts, it is not only likely to comply with external legislation supporting the employment of PWDs, but be characterized as an organization known for its excellence.

Chun (2005) suggests that organizations use virtue ethics to determine "what kind of organization should we be?" (p. 269). This is similar to the Aristotelian discussion of how a good person should live (Flynn, 2007). According to Chun (2005), it is possible for organizations to identify virtues to differentiate themselves within the marketplace. For example, organizations that have been proactive in the integration of PWD have found this behavior helps with overall business strategy by identifying new customers and products. Microsoft has an Accessible Technology Group with 40 employees. These employees are intertwined with Microsoft's strategy to make products that appeal to the widest audience possible (Lengnick-Hall, 2007).

Arjoon (2000) states that traditional approaches to ethics focus on rights and duties developed through codes of conduct. He suggests that these codes are threats as they focus on the avoidance of wrongdoing. In addition, he states they are regressive as they look at avoiding past failures of behavior. That is, an organization previously accused of discrimination might develop anti-discriminatory training as well as elaborate recruitment protocols to avoid future charges. Arjoon (2000) reports that organizations, using a virtue theory approach, find competitive advantage though higher productivity, reduced absenteeism and positive morale.

We suggest that traditional approaches to the treatment of PWD often involve following rules defined by legislation rather than an examination of organizational values and behavior. Much of the extant literature for practitioners, in particular, focuses on practices derived from legislation such as how to interview a candidate, when to have a medical exam, how to consider an accommodation (e.g. Gurchiek, 2011). These articles focus on the impact of externally mandated laws on organizational practice and treatment of PWDs. A virtue theory approach to the organizational treatment of PWD would involve an approach centered on the question, "what kind of an organization do we want to be and how do we attract and retain organizational members that support what we want to be"? It would move the treatment of PWD away from solely avoiding discriminatory behavior to proactively practicing behaviors related to support and respect for all.

2. Persons with disabilities

> There's a kind of sick security some people get out of keeping away from people with disabilities (Major Owens).

The employment gap between people with and without disabilities is a focus of government programming and advocacy efforts. Many factors contribute to the low levels of employment and earning of individuals with disabilities. According to the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics, the gap between the employment rates of working-age people with and without disabilities was 40.3 percentage points in the USA in 2005. That year the difference in median earning between people with and without disabilities was $US6,000 (Markel and Barclay, 2007). This paper will use the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) to provide an example of typical legislation in this area. Our intent is not to review all law, but to provide a starting point for the development of a virtue theory framework.

The Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) was passed to protect PWD from discrimination. However, PWD still experience problems in gaining access to employment as well as in receiving equitable treatment once employed. Unlike other equal employment legislation in the United States (e.g. the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967), the ADA is unique in that it directs employers to alter workplace conditions to enable PWD to participate on an equal basis with non-disabled individuals performing a job (i.e. reasonable accommodation). The ADA does not mandate the same treatment for people with similar disabilities; people might require different types of accommodation based on the physical layout of the organization, the degree to which they have symptoms, etc. The law acknowledges that work environments are the result of choices about how work is accomplished and that employers can make choices about the design of work, the degree of flexibility in the work environment and even tolerance in the workplace (Harlan and Robert, 1998). Employers continue to have fears about the costs of accommodation, sick leave use, and workers' compensation (Braun, 2009). These are similar to the concerns detailed earlier by Lengnick-Hall *et al.* (2008).

In their groundbreaking work, Stone and Colella (1996) developed a model with three factors that explore the treatment of disabled individuals in organizations. These factors are person characteristics (e.g. individual attributes of both observed and observer), environmental factors (i.e. legislation) and organizational characteristics (e.g. reward systems, jobs, policies). The model suggests that these three factors combine to affect the treatment of PWD. The authors also outline several mechanisms that could facilitate the integration of PWD into organizations. These include changing beliefs about PWD, changing behavior toward PWD, changing affective reactions toward PWD and PWD changing observers' beliefs and responses. Virtue could facilitate activation of these mechanisms.

A stream of psychological research dealing with the treatment of PWD focuses on the stigmatization process (Stone *et al.*, 1992). The stigmatization process can lead to ambivalent feelings on the part of PWOD, resulting in the devaluation of the contributions of PWD and additionally place PWD in isolated environments. Stone-Romero and Stone (2007) extend the work on stigmatization by examining cognitive, affective and cultural influences. Their research considers human resource

processes and practices within the context of culture by identifying dominant cultures within US organizations. This is important since the cultural endorsement of an "ideal job candidate" or a "rational section process" provides motives for stigmatization.

Related psychological research focusing on help seeking suggests that individuals who need help might not ask for it (Tessler and Schwartz, 1972; Williams and Williams, 1983). That is, PWD may hesitate to ask for accommodations because of the fear of stigmatization. However, if an employer does not know that an individual has a disability, there could be negative attributions about poor performance that could lead to termination (Sheffield, 2005). In this case, others perceive the PWD as incompetent rather than a person needing accommodation. Baldridge and Veiga (2006) suggest there are social consequences of repeatedly asking for accommodation. Their research indicates that when a PWD repeatedly asks for accommodation, others view that person as imposing on the organization. As a result, co-workers could exert pressure to stop accommodation requests, and supervisors could hold negative opinions because of perceived monetary costs. This dynamic suggests that organizational culture can develop that leads to a non-supportive environment for PWD where stigmatization occurs and the shareholder return perspective is dominant.

Crampton and Hodge (2003) state that disability discrimination claims primarily occur after a PWD is hired. They report that 23 percent of problems faced by disabled workers relate to reasonable accommodation and 50 percent relate to discharge. Wooten and James's (2005) research supports this data. They analyzed data from ADA lawsuits, concluding that organizations have difficulties in creating disability-friendly environments because of barriers to learning. These barriers include discriminatory routines based on the social construction of work as an "ableness" environment, defensive routines used to justify discriminatory practices, reliance on reactive learning that does not involve reflection, window dressing or a superficial commitment to PWD, and lack of vicarious learning.

It is clear that despite the legislation, research and resulting recommendations, problems remain in the employment levels and experiences of PWD. If an organization stigmatizes PWD, and believes that their employment will lead to additional costs, it is unlikely that the organization and its members would exhibit virtue. The process of stigmatization of PWD may additionally generate ethical disengagement (Barclay and Markel, 2009) blocking the facilitating effect of "virtue in". We suggest that an organization that promotes and practices the use of virtue will have moved beyond stigmatization and rationalization to develop a culture of inclusion for all employees including PWD.

3. Virtue theory as a framework

> People didn't always see a person with a disability who had to use a ramp or elevator as people who have been given unnecessary privileges. But I run into that often now. People are saying, "Why do we have to go to great expense for these people?" (Major Owens).

Extant work on virtue in organizations does not address the integration of persons with disabilities into the workplace. By facilitating and practicing virtue, organizations might better support meaningful employment opportunities and accommodation for PWDs. The common theme among theorists is that virtue stems from higher order phenomena, for example, an individual's values (regardless of the situation) or an

organization's efforts toward a higher order goal (beyond shareholder value). Cameron (2003b) suggests that organizational structure is neither inherently virtuous nor non-virtuous. However, he states that organizations can be structured to support virtuousness. He reports on an organization (referred to as AES) where employees were organized into groups. These groups had decision power for hiring, budgeting, etc. This structure permitted what he refers to as *positive human impact*, one of his attributes of organizational virtuousness. The structure resembled small family groups (p. 3). This structure helped employees: develop relationships, learn, and develop and engage in meaningful work (Cameron, 2003b). Cameron (2003b) also discusses another attribute of organizational virtuousness, social betterment (benefit for others). He suggests that organizations that engage in socially responsible programs just for benefit to the firm (i.e. reputation) are not displaying virtuousness. A virtuous organization would engage in such activities without considering reciprocity or shareholder value. In this context, a virtuous organization would work toward creating an environment for the meaningful employment of PWD.

Arjoon (2000) suggests that virtues (core competencies), the common good (mission) and the environment (dynamic economy) are linked. He believes that virtue theory allows for "sensitivity and appreciation of circumstances and opportunities not emphasized in traditional approaches" (p.173). Thus, when individuals practice virtuous behavior, there is a better integration of PWD into the workplace. For example, accommodation would not result in physical isolation, allowing the PWD to have more involvement in the life of the organization. Virtuous behavior inherently recognizes others' rights in practice. Better PWD organizational integration would provide better connections to virtuous and pro-social behavior. According to Cameron (2003b), an organizationally virtuous environment enhances social capital. People share better and more information, have stronger relationships and exchange valued resources. Applying the construct of virtue and its related theory to the integration of PWD into the workplace would center the discussion on proactively finding ways and exchanging the necessary information (social capital) to help people prosper in their work environment. This is counter to traditional approaches in the disability literature that focus on the costs of accommodation, social isolation of the individual with a disability or disparate treatment (Robert and Harlan, 2006). If an organization is grounded in virtue, ethics, values, principles, and integrity, organizationally acceptable behavior will be based on these core tenants (Cameron, 2003a). While these values may help an organization to be more successful overall, one of the most important consequences of this framework is that it supports people to trust and make sense of situations (Cameron, 2003a). If an individual accepts the core beliefs of an organization, we propose that they will be more likely to accept the employment of a PWD rather than engaging in stereotyping and stigmatization. That is, they will not decide that a person is incompetent because they have a disability. They will have faith in the organizational selection process, and treat that individual with compassion.

Just as Cameron (2003b) suggests that an organization structure is neither inherently virtuous or not, the same can be said of the design of an organization's environment and jobs. Story *et al.* (1998) indicate that early efforts in accommodation and accessibility often resulted in expensive and unattractive environments. Universal design is a response that is consistent with a virtue theory approach. Universal design is a movement beyond assistive technology (i.e. devices for personal use) (Story *et al.*,

1998). As seen earlier, accommodations can isolate the PWD. The purpose of universal design is to reduce both physical and attitudinal barriers between PWD and PWOD (Story *et al.*, 1998). An organization embracing universal design, considers design for all employees with regard to aesthetics, flexibility of use, and equitable use (Chan *et al.*, 2009). Organizations applying universal design consider how all people can use work processes. This forethought results in fewer case-by-case assistive accommodations (Committee on Disability in America, 2007), and the organization makes positive change in the overall work environment. The PWD is productive without being identified as a special case. For example, the design of flat entrances (those without steps) does several things, not only does the individual confined to a wheelchair gain ready access to the organization, but so do the workers who use briefcases with wheels.

Table I compares common human resource processes in a traditional versus a virtue theory framework as they influence the employment of PWD. The table includes the typical processes involved in an employment relationship (regardless of disability). In this section, we detail how a virtue theory framework can support the meaningful employment of PWD. Stone and Williams (1997) state that human resource management practices create obstacles for PWD. These obstacles can be either physical such as application procedures that do not allow for the assessment of PWD, or attitudinal where stereotypes can bias selection decisions. They suggest that selection processes need change. We hypothesize that organizations employing a virtue theory framework will overcome these obstacles by changing how they execute common human resource practices.

3.1 Recruitment

Any organization must source a job vacancy. Traditionally, organizations post a job in common outlets (e.g. company intranet and website, trade publications and online job boards). An organization that uses a virtue theory framework still wants to recruit the best-qualified candidate, but may develop more inclusive means of recruitment. This might mean moving away from the traditional sources used in the past. For example, recruitment processes that are accessible for individuals with disabilities (e.g. a website can support adaptive technology, application processes that can accommodate both online and paper submissions). Recruitment materials may also reflect the organization's diverse population. Materials might include photographs of PWD as well as statements of the organization's value system beyond a simple diversity statement. Actions such as these communicate commitment to hiring a diverse population and organizations are often known for their human resource practices. For example, there are organizations that have good reputations for hiring PWD (Krepcio and Cooper, 2008).

3.2 Selection

If a PWD applies for the posted job, the organization must evaluate the candidate during the screening process. There is evidence that organizations do not hire individuals with visible disabilities because of fears of incurring costs (Braun, 2009). Organizations employing a virtue theory framework would ensure that their selection processes are free from discrimination. While a traditional organization would train interviewers not to make inappropriate comments or ask illegal questions, a virtuous organization would go beyond these initial steps. For example, they would use

Human resource process	Using a traditional approach[a]	Using virtue theory framework
Recruitment	Jobs posted using one format Recruitment sources do not consider diverse populations Post non-discrimination statements	Postings in alternative formats Recruitment sources consider disability groups Make sure notices are accessible Include PWD in recruitment materials and organizational websites
Selection	Train interviewers not to ask discriminatory questions	Screening processes are sensitive to diverse populations and focus on behavioral assessment
Accommodation	Request accommodation Accommodation may be questioned	Request accommodation Company considers universal design and improved work processes for all
Performance feedback	Person may be isolated through accommodation Poor performance attributed to disability Situational aspects of performance analyzed	Development feedback provided

Note: [a]Traditional approaches are not inherently negative; however, the probability of negative outcomes occurring is more likely as the organization falls into scripted routines

Table I.
The impact of virtue theory on the employment of persons with disabilities

interview protocols that center on the essential duties of the job or behavioral interviews that elicit relevant examples from job candidates about their qualifications and experiences.

3.3 Accommodation
As already mentioned in the discussion of the ADA, employers may need to make accommodations for a PWD once employed. The employee may decide not to ask for accommodation because they may have had experiences where accommodation requests led to stigmatization. For example, Laden and Schwartz (2000) report on a case of a nurse who had a psychiatric illness. When her co-workers learned of this disability, they stigmatized her as a threat. On the other hand, the employee may feel the need for an accommodation and request it.

In a traditional approach, when the new employee requests accommodation, the organization will review the request and decide if fulfilling the request would result in undue hardship (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2002). According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2002), undue hardship is more than excessive financial cost. Undue hardship can be an accommodation that is disruptive to the work process. The organization would review the request, possibly asking for documentation before making a decision to make the accommodation.

Under virtue theory, while the organization may still investigate the requested accommodation, the request may already be unnecessary because of the organization's use of universal design. For example, the office space may already have wheelchair accommodation in place. In some cases, all computers may already be equipped with screen readers or magnification programs. The organization that supports the universal design philosophy is likely a place honoring PWD requests. In addition, the organization may already permit schedule flexibility where PWD needing time for medical treatments would not draw the attention they might in a rigidly scheduled environment.

3.4 Performance feedback
Regardless of whether an employee requests accommodation, the PWD will have their performance evaluated. Organizations have latitude in designing effective performance management systems. However, Stone-Romero *et al.* (2006) report that PWD are often viewed as out-group members and their performance problems are viewed as being related to their disability status rather than other possible causes. Organizations employing a virtue theory framework would be more likely to ensure that their system centers on objectively evaluating employee performance. Therefore, common problems such as bias and inconsistency in employee evaluations would be minimized. Rather than attributing poor performance to the disability, the employer would explore whether an accommodation was needed or whether the individual needed training.

3.5 Applying virtue theory to other discrimination issues
This paper discusses virtue theory as a framework for understanding discrimination against PWD. However, it could also be applied to other forms of workplace discrimination. Previous research (e.g. Stone-Romero and Stone, 2007) suggests that the stigmatization process discussed with regard to PWD also can occur in situations dealing with age, gender and race discrimination. Virtue theory is just as applicable to

these situations as it is for the treatment of PWD. For example, Whetstone (2001) reports on research that found that managers who were most admired in the Southeast USA were those who rejected values supporting racial segregation. They were exposed to segregation values while growing up, but were able to acquire and practice values supporting integration at work. This suggests that other forms of discrimination (e.g. race, gender and age) that result from stereotyping and the stigmatization process could be alleviated by the cultivation of values in a virtue theory framework.

4. Discussion

> All virtue is summed up in dealing justly (Aristotle).

This paper outlines the use of virtue theory as an approach to better recruit and integrate PWD into the work environment. As noted earlier, PWD have a lower employment rate than PWOD, they earn less when employed, and they suffer from stigmatization because of their disabilities. While empirical work on virtue theory exists (Cameron *et al.*, 2004), none of the empirical work has been applied to the case of PWD. Therefore, empirical evidence is needed to support the applicability of virtue theory to the employment experiences of PWD. One of the biggest challenges is to test if PWDs are more successful and less stigmatized in a virtuous organization than a traditional one. As a starting point, the framework presented in Table I outlines how virtue theory can be applied to human resource processes. It suggests the modification of HR processes to facilitate a virtue framework. Future research can be grounded in these suggestions.

4.1 Implications for theory
Crockett (2005) indicates that there is a gap between scholarship on moral issues and actual practice. Laws exist to address the under-employment of PWD, but they still find themselves at a disadvantage. Previous research proposes models to understand the stigmatization of PWD, however, in practice such behavior still occurs (i.e. Stone-Romero and Stone, 2007). By integrating virtue theory with earlier research on PWD, the gap between theory and practice can begin to be addressed. In addition, the framework presented grounds this new theoretical application in a substantive way using human resource processes that exist in all organizations.

4.2 Future research
Initially research should compare whether differences in human resource process actually exist across organizations that vary on their level of virtuousness. Our framework suggests that there will be evidence of a virtuousness environment, not just on individual behavior, but in how the organization is committed to recruiting and retaining its human capital. In turn, these practices will create environments that are supportive of the employment of PWDs. We present several hypotheses that arise from earlier research and discussion of virtue theory, PWD and Table I.

Research investigating virtue and PWD should be conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, Table I suggests that organizational websites will vary between organizations that approach diversity from a traditional versus virtue theory perspective. By taking a qualitative approach, researchers could examine websites for the presence or absence of PWD. From a quantitative perspective, surveys

could be used to assess the level of virtue within an organization and investigate its relationship to employment constructs such as job satisfaction, motivation and commitment. Since virtue theory has not yet been empirically investigated with regard to PWD, it would be productive to use the scale developed by Cameron *et al.* (2004).

The human resource processes, in Table I, are often detailed either through the reputation of the employer in the employment context or value statements. That is, a virtuous organization is more likely to be considered a "great place to work", and will provide accommodation to a wide range of employees (i.e. PWD, working parents, and community volunteers).

H1. Organizations that actively recruit and promote PWD as evidenced by value statements will have a more positive employer reputation than organizations that do not.

Research could also compare the human resource processes to determine differences in displayed empathy towards PWD. Because so much of anti-discrimination legislation centers on an organization's ability to accommodate a PWD, it would be useful to conduct research that centers on how requests for accommodation are perceived in organizations with varying levels of virtue. For example, research (Baldridge and Veiga, 2006) indicates that requesting accommodation results in supervisors holding negative opinions about PWD. Therefore investigating attitudinal differences with regard to accommodation requests in organizations with different levels of virtue seems a logical outcome of future research.

H2. Employees in organization with high levels of virtue will hold more positive attitudes toward PWD asking for accommodation than employees in organizations with low levels of virtue.

H3. PWD will report significantly higher levels of satisfaction with the accommodation process in organizations with high levels of virtue than in organizations with low levels of virtue.

H4. Employees in organizations with high levels of virtue will be significantly more satisfied with accommodation in general than employees in organizations with low levels of virtue.

There has been a great deal of research on the stigmatization of PWDs in employment. We have argued in this paper that PWDs in a virtuous organization will have lower levels of stigmatization than those in a traditional organization. Shur *et al.* (2009) report that PWD who experience lower pay, less training and less security are more likely to hold negative attitudes toward the organization.

H5. PWD employed in organizations with high levels of virtue will have significantly higher job satisfaction than PWD employed in organizations with low levels of virtue.

One difficulty in this research will be gaining access to organizations as well as securing the cooperation of organizations that have actively sourced PWD. Ideally, research in this area should collect data across organizations that compare both the employment levels and work experiences of PWDs.

4.3 Implications for practice and society

This paper suggests that adopting a virtue framework results in positive work experiences for PWD as well as additional benefits for the organization and society. PWDs would be less likely to be stigmatized, organizations could discover new opportunities, in terms of customers or improved work processes, and society would have made progress in addressing a significant under-employment issue. As indicated earlier, Cameron *et al.* (2004) report that virtuous organizations rate higher on objective measures such as innovation, customer retention, turnover, quality, and profitability. Higher performance could be due to better integration of all types of individuals into the organization. That is, we suggest that virtuous organizations perform at a higher level because they are better at including all talents into the organization in a supportive environment. Positive experiences for both the organization and PWD may allow for the amplification of values that are supportive of the additional integration of PWDs into the workplace, an additional benefit to society.

As future research is conducted, virtue theory can be expanded to other aspects of organizational life affecting PWD. For example, Shur *et al.* (2009) report that corporate culture shapes the workplace experiences of PWD. Their research indicates that PWD have lower participation in decision-making. If one is isolated and not allowed to participate in organizational life, it would be difficult to flourish and find one's job meaningful. However, Cameron *et al.* (2004) suggest that virtue allows employees to flourish. Cameron (2003b) indicates that virtue builds better quality relationships. Therefore investigating how culture can provide meaning to work to allow PWD to flourish would be logical.

Work meaningfulness at the individual level should improve both personal and work life, as positive experiences build upon themselves much as virtue is viewed as having an amplifying effect (Cameron *et al.*, 2004). According to Porras and Berg (1978), awareness of each role within the company through planned interventions can also create a more developed organization through groups that are more aware of their interconnections. Appreciation of individuals for their contributions is important. For instance, in *Wired to Care*, Patnaik (2009) relates the example of the housekeeping staff in the Joie de Vivre hotels. By having housekeepers stop giving extra-special touches, Joie de Vivre found how much customers changed their behavior based on the housekeepers' less caring behavior. Through this experiment, housekeepers learned the importance of their work. This example, while not directly related to PWD, shows the impact of empathy and meaningfulness of work in the employment relationship; making sure each individual is supported and aware of his or her relationship to other individuals and the common good can contribute to the overall level of positivity within the environment. Overall, several key aspects may influence the effectiveness of an organization at supporting disabled individuals. First, the emphasis on the common good within virtue theory (Arjoon, 2000) may help a disabled individual remain with an organization. There is a general assumption that all individuals are valued in a virtuous environment. Furthermore, an emphasis on virtue at the organizational level may better equip individuals to deal with the accommodations that need to be made for disabled individuals. If the organization can better support supervisors and other members of the organization, they will in turn exhibit citizenship behaviors through empathy, courage and conscientiousness that will aid the other members of the organization. Ideas centering on virtue can be studied for specific applications for

disabled individuals. It is our position that the development of a framework based on virtue will help to address the under-employment of PWD problem.

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