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OBSTACLES TO SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: A REVIEW AND RESEARCH AGENDA

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OBSTACLES TO SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: A REVIEW AND RESEARCH AGENDA

Abstract

Our objectives in this paper were to summarize research relevant to obstacles that people with disabilities (PWD) face in the workplace and to identify directions for future research on the topic. We included review, theoretical, and empirical articles in mainstream management journals and those in psychology or rehabilitation journals if they had clear workplace implications. We argue that obstacles identified in prior research may only partially reflect organizational reality. This is because of the heavy reliance on laboratory studies, which we urge researchers to replicate in organizational settings. Better understanding of obstacles will lead to more evidence-based solutions where the payoff is a less exclusionary world in which more individuals are provided opportunities to use their talent for the benefit of all.

Keywords: Disability, Workplace obstacles, Review

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OBSTACLES TO SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: A REVIEW AND RESEARCH AGENDA

According to the World Health Organization (2011) disabilities are broadly defined in terms of physical or mental impairments, activity limitations, and restrictions on participation. Impairments can be problems in bodily functions or structure. Activity limitations imply difficulties in executing tasks or actions, and participation restrictions include restrictions of some sort in everyday situations. Following prior organizational research (Ren, Paetzold, & Colella, 2008; Stone & Colella, 1996) we define disability for this review as an impairment that limits a major life activity, but allows for gainful employment.

Our objectives in this paper are to summarize research relevant to obstacles that people with disabilities (PWD) face in the workplace and to outline a research agenda to stimulate further research on the topic. To achieve our objectives, we have examined both qualitative and quantitative studies as well as theoretical articles that have been published in management journals such as the *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Human Relations*, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *Human Resource Management*, *Human Resource Management Review*, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Journal of Management*, and *Journal of Management Studies*. Other management journals did not yield studies relevant to obstacles that PWD face in the workplace and hence were not included. We also did not include studies from these journals if they spoke about diversity in general and had not focused on disability as a core topic.

Many disability related conversations also appear in the rehabilitation psychology and social psychology literatures. Therefore, in order to be comprehensive in our approach, we also included articles from the following journals: *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*,

Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, Personnel Psychology, Rehabilitation Psychology, and The Journal of Social Psychology. Similar to a relatively recent disability review article (e.g., Ren, et al., 2008) we used organizationally relevant key words in our search (e.g., disability/disabled, hiring/selection/ interview, socialization/integration, and performance appraisal/ assessment/expectation). We did not include articles that dealt only with the legal aspects of workplace discrimination (e.g., Lee, 2001) or did not specifically talk about barriers or obstacles (e.g., if they focused on general dilemmas of concealment of a disability, cf. Allen & Carlson, 2003). We did include experimental studies which had clear workplace implications. Thus, while our review may not be exhaustive in terms of choice of journals (e.g., those focused on rehabilitation) it is indeed comprehensive with respect to capturing organizational obstacles faced by PWD. It is in this spirit that we focus on issues of interest to organizational diversity researchers and policy makers.

Drawing upon aforementioned sources, we review research on barriers to entry or access discrimination and post access treatment of people with disabilities, specifically with reference to disability accommodation, socialization and general social inclusion, and career advancement.

Barriers to Organizational Entry

Stone and Williams (1997) have comprehensively outlined how each step in the selection process can create impediments to hiring PWD. For example, when the initial hiring request and job analysis is conducted, such individuals may be marginalized, sometimes inadvertently, as most job analysis goes beyond essential requirements to include ideal profiles, which PWD may not fit. Next, managers may look for talent in only specific places (e.g., mainstream educational institutions) and hence exclude candidates with disabilities who may more likely be found in

vocational schools. Later, recruiters may screen resumes looking for negative information to narrow the applicant pool. The mention of a disability in a resume may result in an applicant being screened out at this stage. Further, the testing and assessment stage may pose an impediment by screening out PWD who may not be proficient in taking traditional paper-and-pencil tests. Finally, hiring decisions may be affected by other biases against those with disabilities.

Experimental studies have shown that while PWD are sometimes perceived to have desirable employee attributes, employers are often reluctant to hire them. For example, PWD are rated more as warm but not as competent (Louvet, 2007) or their interview performance is seen as favorable, yet respondents do not favor hiring the PWD (Miceli, Harvey, & Buckley, 2001). Other experimental studies (e.g., Louvet, 2007) have indicated that respondents screen candidates with a disability based on certain biases. For example, applicants with a disability are rated more negatively than applicants without a disability in perceived poor-fit conditions, for example, for jobs involving a great deal of interpersonal contact (e.g., secretary) or for traditionally male jobs (e.g., security guard) even when these can be performed by PWD (Louvet, 2007). A relatively recent meta-analysis of experimental studies further cements the finding that there is an overall negative effect of disability on hiring decisions and this effect is stronger for males than for females (Ren, et al., 2008).

Biases are manifested even for experienced applicants. Krefting and Brief (1976), through an experimental study, found that though disability did not have a significant main effect on evaluation criteria such as ability, potential for quality and quantity output, potential for absenteeism or tardiness, potential for getting along with others, or overall rating, the candidate was perceived as less healthy and as exhibiting less potential for promotion. Further, although

experienced applicants with a disability were evaluated as exhibiting more work motivation, more ability, and greater potential for promotion, the inexperienced applicant with a disability was seen as a longer-term employee. These researchers argue that experience thus may not negate the fact that an applicant is seen first as being disabled.

While most research suggests a negative bias against hiring PWD, there is some research that suggests otherwise. For example, in an experimental study (Rose & Brief, 1979) students evaluated hypothetical job applicants where the applicant was either an amputee (caused by accident), an epileptic (disease based), or one without a disability. Results showed that persons with a disability were generally not likely to be discriminated against in the context of the initial employment decision (Rose & Brief, 1979), a finding also seen in another experimental study (e.g., Stone & Sawatzki, 1980).

Some research reverses the negative trend and indicates a positive bias towards hiring PWD. In a study using university employees who had interviewing experience, Nordstrom, Huffaker, and Williams (1998) found that the job candidate with a disability received more favorable trait, hiring, and salary ratings than did the job candidate without a disability, even when qualifications were equivalent. Notably, social desirability scores indicated that participants were not simply giving desirable responses. Results also showed that participants were more tolerant of poor interview responses from the PWD. Pilot testing showed that the applicant with a disability was considered moderately attractive, and did not pose a threat (e.g., was not considered contagious). Nordstrom and colleagues argue that their findings may not be generalizable to actual employment interview situations where people have to live with the consequences of their employment decisions.

In other experimental studies where supervisors and midlevel managers reviewed resumes (Drehmer & Bordieri, 1985) and hypothetical job applicants (Bell & Klein, 2001), or when subjects reviewed transcripts of a bogus interview (Scheier, Carver, Schultz, Glass, & Katz, 1978), or when subjects viewed a videotape of a simulated interview (Christman & Slaten, 1991), applicants with disabilities were judged better on employment potential than those without disabilities. Applicants with disabilities are also rated more favorably for hiring when the employment interview is unstructured rather than structured. Brecher, Bragger, and Kutcher (2006) found that when interviews were not structured, PWD were evaluated more leniently in terms of desirability to hire than equally qualified job applicants without a disability. However this bias was significantly reduced when the interview was structured.

Simulated applicants with a disability may elicit positive responses given overall positive global attitudes toward PWD, impression management concerns, internal motivations to control prejudice, commitment to diversity (Leasher, Miller, & Gooden 2009) sympathy effects (Scheier et al., 1978) or fears of litigation (Christman & Slaten, 1991). Experimental research shows that applicants are also rated favorably, regardless of their disability type, when they are perceived as not contributing to or causing their own disabling condition (Bordieri & Drehmer, 1988). This is because applicants may be seen as having higher potential and greater expected tenure than those who may have caused their own disabling condition (e.g., through drug related problems) (Bordieri & Drehmer, 1986).

Field studies have been few and have presented discouraging trends. In an interview based study, employers across a broad array of industries and geographic regions in the United States indicated a negative bias towards hiring PWD. Employers expressed concerns about performance or productivity potential, and feared that hiring PWD would alienate coworkers and

negatively affect the organizational bottom-line (Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt, & Kulkarni 2008). In another field study, Macan and Hayes (1995) found that pre-interview impressions that raters had of applicants influenced their interview and post-interview outcomes. Drawing upon Dipboye's (1992) social process model of the interview, the authors explain that actors in an interview can gauge the others' impressions and engage in a self fulfilling prophecy. Such beliefs of hiring managers imply unemployment or underemployment of PWD.

Harcourt, Lam, and Harcourt (2005) examined discrimination in hiring applicants with a disability in New Zealand. Their study was anchored in two theoretical perspectives—rational economic and institutional theory. The rational economic perspective emphasizes self-interest and decision making for economic optimization, where PWD can be seen as relatively less productive people and hence not hired. Alternatively, institutional theory focuses on legitimacy enhancing actions of organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Here, coercive pressures (such as equal opportunity legislation), isomorphic pressures (such as union pressures), and mimetic pressures (if organizations are members of an equal opportunity consortium) influence hiring of PWD. Harcourt and colleagues found that only coercive pressures influence hiring of PWD. They explain that organizations may enjoy legitimacy enhancing benefits of being members of certain equal opportunity consortiums but may not necessarily embrace equal employment practices.

PWD also have a role to play in their recruitment process. For example, they can be viewed as contributing to their access and treatment problems (Klimoski & Donahue, 1997) by not being optimistic about their chances for organizational entry (Feldman, 2004). For example, PWD may have trouble transitioning into the workplace as they may make inaccurate assessments of the selection process and perceive a lower probability of being hired. They may

also perceive the cost of workplace accommodation as being high and thus limit their job search (Feldman, 2004).

PWD can also contribute positively to their employment access through behaviors such as engaging in vocational training to obtain jobs (Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2011), using upward influence tactics such as ingratiation to establish better supervisor relationships (cf. Colella & Varma, 2001) controlling their work arrangements (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007), and managing relational input (Taylor, 1988) in some manner. In an interview-based study with male college students with a physical disability, Taub, Blinde, and Greer (1999) found that some individuals proactively manage stigma and negative stereotypes associated with a disabled body by engaging in sport and physical activity. Such engagement allowed individuals to compensate for the body (e.g., an enhanced physical appearance) and helped them overcome negative expectations (e.g., physical competence and movement) associated with a disability.

Another experimental study further showed how those with a disability can influence their employment outcomes. Hebl and Kleck (2002) found that applicants who acknowledged their disability were more likely to be hired than those who did not mention their disability. Applicants who acknowledged their disability were also more likely to be accorded higher levels of job skills, ratings of conscientiousness, and ratings of openness as compared with applicants who did not acknowledge their disability. However, when subjects in the experiment believed that the disability was controllable, they were less likely to perceive the applicant favorably or to hire the applicant. Participants thus liked best the applicant who possessed an uncontrollable disability and acknowledged it.

Overall, most research indicates that people with disabilities face difficulties in trying to obtain a job and have lower employment prospects than those without a disability. Review of

research shows that while employers indicate global positive attitudes (e.g., that equal employment opportunity is good), they also indicate negative specific attitudes (e.g., that PWD should be hired) (Hernandez, Keys, & Balcazar, 2000). Positive attitudes are only generally seen in laboratory situations. It is possible that this is because hiring decisions and performance expectations are judgments or decisions made when PWD are not yet in the workplace and decision makers have not yet meaningfully interacted with them. Decision makers may thus harbor stereotypes and fears about PWD (Ren et al., 2008) or may fear the unknown based on ignorance (Boyle, 1997). Further, those with a disability may not be viewed as qualified since almost all jobs are designed for those without a disability (Boyle, 1997; Stone & Colella, 1996).

Extending Research on Obstacles to Organizational Entry

In order to further this stream of research and correct for the lack of theoretical underpinnings, we urge researchers to design their studies from a stronger theoretical base to gain richer insights into obstacles faced by PWD. We start with noting research directions that will help us understand employer concerns. For example, particularly promising is the application of insights from human capital (Becker, 1964), attribution (Kelley, 1973), and institutional (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) theories. Leveraging these theoretical bases will help us understand if human resource personnel screen out resumes based on attributions (e.g., concerns that disability hiring results in lower human capital) or because they are merely carrying out tacit institutional norms against disability. It may also help us understand reasons why PWD continue being disproportionately represented in lower levels of organizations (Hernandez et al., 2008; Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2011) and how access discrimination hinges on type and severity of disability (cf. Gouvier, Sytsma-Jordan, & Mayville, 2003). Such research has clear policy implications.

Additionally, to solve for empirically conflicting results, we believe that research will benefit from a greater emphasis on field studies across a wide range of organizational types. Most of the research on barriers to organizational entry for PWD has operated on experimental designs. The majority of these studies show that there is more of a negative bias against the applicant. The positive bias is found only in few laboratory settings where there are no consequences to the rater. The generalizability of such settings to organizations is tenuous at best. It would be useful to obtain archival data from various organizations to examine how job advertisements (equal employment signals) correlate with actual hiring over time (equal employment practice). It would also be useful for researchers to examine if organizations from certain industries (e.g., software services) hire PWD more so than organizations from other industries (e.g., manufacturing) given their needs for rationality, legitimacy, or simply, ability to do so. Field research will help us understand why some organizations are proactive, some are reactive, and some are passive in hiring PWD.

Components of the recruitment process also need examination from the perspective of the PWD. Perspectives of PWD should also be included in future research since selection and hiring is a two-way process. Most of the selection research has adopted the perspective of the person in charge of the hiring decision. It may well be likely that, to broaden their job search and in their quest to obtain jobs, PWD apply for jobs independent of job profiles, recruitment advertisement design, and locations of recruitment, that are traditionally thought to be discriminating negatively against such applicants. PWD can indeed influence their self selection into the recruitment process.

By combining human capital (Becker, 1964) and signaling (Spence, 1974) theories, researchers can further study if signaling of education and skills works as much, more, or less for

this set of candidates as it does for those candidates without a disability. This may also help us know if roadblocks appear more so for core positions as opposed to peripheral or noncore positions and for certain levels of organizational hierarchies. Further research can examine if hiring decisions change when the interviewer also has a disability, if applicants engage in any strategies (e.g., leveraging social networks; appeals to sympathy; timing and form of disclosure; signaling of human capital) to increase their selection chances, and which barriers to hiring according to them pose the most significant hurdles.

Finally, research needs to focus more on gaining a nuanced understanding of hiring decisions across different job types and hierarchical levels. We do know that disability (type and severity) interacts with job types in affecting hiring decisions (i.e., discrimination in hiring people with disabilities is not a uniform experience). What we need to know more about is ‘when’ (e.g., age of PWD) and at what point in the hierarchical levels (e.g., first level management responsibility) do PWD hit greater selection roadblocks. We summarize a few directions for future research in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Obstacles Post Organizational Entry

Once hired, PWD continue encountering obstacles as employees. In this section we outline experiences with reference to workplace accommodations, organizational integration (i.e., socialization and general inclusion), and career management.

Accommodation

Accommodation refers to workplace adjustments that enable a PWD to perform his/her job. Reasonable accommodation, as defined by United States Equal Employment Opportunity

Commission (2002) involves three modifications or adjustments: (i) to a job application process that enable qualified PWD to be considered for a position; (ii) to the work environment under which the position held or desired is customarily performed that enable a qualified PWD to perform essential functions; and (iii) that enable PWD to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment as are enjoyed by similarly situated employees without disabilities.

Researchers have not focused as much attention on accommodation issues as they have on barriers to organizational entry. However, unlike research on organizational entry barriers, accommodation research has taken a far more theoretical focus examining three interrelated themes (a) why PWD may not seek legitimate accommodation, (b) how coworkers influence accommodation requests, and (c) how managers decide whether to favor an accommodation request.

Baldrige and Veiga (2001) have proposed a theoretical framework of the psychological processes involved in requesting accommodations. They draw upon the theories of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), help seeking (Nadler, Fisher, & DePaulo, 1983) and distributive justice (Cropanzano, 1993) and argue that PWD may have certain beliefs that hinder their help seeking. They may not seek help given concerns of image and stigmatization, that is, requesting help may make them appear lower in competence or ability, or may invite labeling. They may also not seek help based on the fear that they may not be able to reciprocate, or that they may tilt resource distribution inequitably against coworkers. Workplace norms also influence accommodation requests such that when help seeking is not perceived as being appropriate, people shy away from doing so. Situational characteristics such as task interdependence, resource availability, and reward systems also influence help seeking.

In a follow up study, Baldrige and Veiga (2006) found that recurring accommodation requests are based more on fears of imposition costs (e.g., asking people to slow down for the sign language interpreter) than on monetary costs (e.g., cost of hiring interpreters). In fact, requests may be withheld even when monetary costs are minimal. Results showed that individuals thought about the likelihood of supervisory compliance (will I get accommodation if I ask my supervisor), personal cost (do I hurt my image or create a sense of indebtedness by asking for help), and normative appropriateness (is my request seen as inappropriate by others) when asking for accommodation. Social indebtedness considerations also stemmed from resource scarcity, that is, if resources utilized for disability accommodations may mean fewer resources for others. Baldrige and Veiga (2001, 2006) explain that organizations may not provide accommodation because PWD may not request it because they fear negative social consequences.

Research also shows that perceptions of both procedural and distributive justice are important to those making a request for disability accommodation as well as coworkers. Balser and Harris (2008) found that employee input (an indicator of procedural justice) and whether the requested accommodation was granted (an indicator of distributive justice) were associated with satisfaction with the accommodation. Both procedural and distributive justice is also important to coworkers of PWD. This is because coworkers are directly affected when tasks, resources, and rewards are interdependent (Colella, 2001; Colella, Paetzold, Belliveau, & Hollenbeck, 2004). Coworkers may thus form judgments about distributive (Colella, 2001) and procedural (Colella, et al., 2004) fairness with respect to requested or granted accommodation.

For example, coworkers may evoke equity rules and feel that accommodation unfairly alters outcomes to benefit PWD. Further, even though coworkers may view accommodation as

distributively unfair to them, they may be more accepting of the accommodation if they perceive underlying procedures to be fair. Colella and her colleagues (2004) argue that coworkers may be more inclined to view accommodation as being procedurally fair if they care about addressing injustice or if they have had more contact with those with a disability, leading them to view people as individuals rather than as a part of a stereotypical group.

Managers are also key figures in the fulfillment of accommodation requests. Through an experimental study, Florey and Harrison (2000) studied managerial reactions to informal accommodation requests, defined as those made casually, without invoking any laws. They studied characteristics of the PWD who requested the accommodation, of the manager receiving the request, and of the request itself. Results showed that managers expressed a more negative attitude towards compliance with a request if the PWD was seen as being responsible in some way for the disability and if the magnitude of the request was large (that is, the total outlay of resources such as time, effort, money, and changes to work flow was substantial). Notably, results showed that previous contact with PWD was not important in psychological responses to a request. Managers were more likely to comply with a request when those with a disability had been good performers and when their performance was clearly based on requested accommodation. Florey and Harrison point out that this is especially so because, contrary to coworkers, managers may directly benefit from subordinate performance.

West and Cardy (1997) have outlined a model depicting cognitive processes underlying managerial judgments regarding accommodation requests. They draw upon psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1990) and agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1985) to explain that accommodation requests lead to attributions, perceptions of reasonableness, and notions of psychological contracts. Managers think about perceptions of deception and interpersonal

consequences at various cognitive stages. For example, if the manager believes the disability is motivation based, and there is some element of deception, the attribution and judgment will be negative. Perceptions of reasonableness of requested accommodation are also based on costs of accommodation and concerns about others' reactions. Higher cost may lead to perceptions of unreasonableness. West and Cardy argue that perception of deception may lead managers to estimate higher costs. They acknowledge that even if managers believe that the psychological contract is violated due to deception or that the employee is shirking duties, the actual decision may be based on considerations of lawsuits. Baldrige and Veiga (2006) further add that because outright refusals to accommodation requests are not possible given legal reasons, there may be incentives for employers to more subtly discourage requests.

Overall, although the theme of accommodation has not received as much attention in workplace related research, this research is quite encompassing in the form of comprehensive theoretical models of why accommodation requests are fulfilled or not – from the perspectives of all stakeholders.

Extending Research on Obstacles to Organizational Accommodation. Accommodation research tells us that stakeholders evoke procedural and distributional justice perceptions when making requests or complying with them. We agree with Balser and Harris (2008) that future research could consider the role of interactional justice (e.g., respectful treatment) (Bies & Moag, 1986) in understanding encouragement of and fulfillment of accommodation requests. We go a step further and suggest that interactional justice could extend existing theoretical models outlined earlier. For example, it is possible that accommodation requests are not discouraged by managers given interactional justice concerns over and above concerns about equity and other forms of fairness.

While fairness concerns of coworkers and managers are very important determinants in the creation of a context where PWD decide to make accommodation requests, an equally, if not more important component of the environment is the threat of legal actions by PWD. It is likely that in an organizational context, PWD may make recurring or occasional requests knowing well that consequences of non compliance can push them towards a legal recourse; something that organizations do not wish. Thus, while coworkers may have concerns about equity and other forms of fairness, managers may act more so based on legal considerations of non-compliance of accommodation requests. This line of research may help us examine how concerns of different organizational social agents and the interaction of types of fairness and other concerns additively influence accommodation request decisions or other help seeking.

The role of organizational systems and norms (e.g., rewards skewed in favor of lone rangers) may also influence perceptions and hence accommodation requests of PWD (Stone & Colella, 1996). Finally, characteristics of the PWD such as age, educational attainment, severity and type of disability, and the perceived controllability of the disability (e.g., drug use related problem versus war injury) can also be combined into to a theoretical framework to understand probability of accommodation requests (cf. Stone & Colella, 1996). For example, it is likely that seeking and receiving accommodation is more straightforward for those perceived as well educated and who have been unfortunate victims of a war or occupational accident that left them with a disability. It is also quite conceivable that those with a positive work history in the organization or a positive occupational background in general are seen as more worthy accommodation recipients. Their concerns for labeling, expectations of injustice, and fears of non-compliance of requests may be lower than for those who may have caused their own

disability or are not well educated, or are non-performers. We summarize a few directions below in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Socialization and General Social Inclusion

Socialization includes formal and informal processes that allow naïve newcomers to become fully informed insiders. It is how newcomers learn both factual information, such as the organization’s history, values, jargon, culture, and procedures, as well as contextual information, such as informal norms and social networks (Morrison, 2002). Despite its importance for integrating new employees into the organization, little research has focused on PWD. We could identify only two articles that dealt explicitly with organizational socialization of PWD.

In a comprehensive theoretical model Colella (1994) reviewed the literature and identified barriers to the successful socialization of PWD. She suggested that coworkers may not interact enough with the person, PWD themselves may have unrealistic expectations which may lead to frustrations, and people may engage in kindness and offer unchallenging projects to PWD. All these factors may stall future advancement of PWD. Further, if socialization is off-the-job (or informal), PWD may not be able to participate, and miss understanding rituals, roles, and how they fit into the organizational picture (Colella, 1994).

In a field study, Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall (2011) examined how PWD viewed various aspects of their socialization process. Their results showed that organizational integration was most influenced by coworkers and then by supervisors. Coworkers were especially important in terms of socialization and integration as this group could offer direct social acceptance, psychosocial support, and help in understanding and executing daily tasks. Results also suggested that the presence of current employees with disabilities was perceived by new

employees as an indication of an inclusionary environment where at least a few coworkers could understand their unique needs and problems. Supervisors were seen as secondary guides or mentors mainly for work-related issues. Respondents noted that socialization and eventual integration was mostly driven by ad hoc practices that were designed, or simply came about, possibly because they represented a small portion of the workforce. Finally, results showed that PWD seemed averse to seeking help proactively. Their reasons ranged from gratitude for what was already done by their organizations, to guilt in asking for more, to relying on external support in lieu of organizational support.

Though workplace socialization has not enjoyed much attention in the literature, numerous studies have examined factors that may influence the general social inclusion of PWD. Research shows that both the interaction partners (Berry & Meyer, 1995; Kelck, Ono, & Hastorf, 1966) and the PWD (Comer & Piliavin, 1972) experience discomfort when interacting with each other and tend to terminate the interaction sooner. Interactional barriers and negative treatment stem from perceptions that PWD are less competent with respect to job performance (Boyle, 1997) because of labeling and stigmatization (Wertlieb, 1985) and because of out-group categorization (Shore et al., 2009) based on identity (Tajfel, 1981) and similarity (Byrne, 1971).

In an experimental study (Kleck, 1969) where a task required proximate interaction, videotapes revealed that subjects maintained greater interactional distance when interacting with the confederates with disabilities. Though interactional distance was reduced over time, the impression of the PWD held by the subject became less positive with increased interaction. Notably, research shows that contact with PWD does not necessarily increase people's comfort around PWD or the inclusion of the PWD (Jones & Stone, 1995).

In an experiment, Miller and Werner (2007) found that characteristics of the coworker and type of disability are significantly related to helping behavior. In particular, they found that employees higher in benevolent equity preference (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1985) or those comfortable with helping coworkers with disabilities attain better outcomes with comparatively lower inputs were more likely to help such coworkers. That is, such employees were more willing to help a coworker achieve the same outcomes as themselves but with lower inputs.

In a survey of Fortune 500 companies, McFarlin, Song, and Sonntag (1991) found that greater exposure to PWD is associated with more positive attitudes towards them. For example, respondents from high exposure organizations believed that disability is not associated with higher absenteeism or lower career advancement. Respondents from these organizations were also more likely to mention working from home and buddy systems to help PWD. The same survey also found that attitudes tend to cluster. For example, those more likely to feel that PWD tend to have higher absenteeism rates are also more likely to feel that accommodating them is expensive, that they experience slower advancement, and that they are poor performers.

Drawing upon research in the field of relational demography (e.g., Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989), Colella and Varma (2001) explain that suboptimal exchange relationships between a supervisor without a disability and a subordinate with a disability may result from lack of demographic similarity which is associated with lower liking and relational integration. Further, supervisors without a disability may operate based on the just world notion (Lerner, 1980) and believe that people may be responsible in some way for their disability, and thus may have less affect for them, and may expect less contribution from them. Finally, supervisors may act in an extreme manner toward PWD based on amplification of their ambivalent responses (cf. Katz & Glass, 1979). Colella and Varma explain that when faced with ambivalence towards PWD,

people face conflict and may defend one reaction and deny the other, and thus resolve the conflict. This may result in extreme behaviors toward the PWD.

Some with a disability may indeed harm their integration by reflecting a perceived negative societal attitude towards them (Zernitsky-Shurka, 1988). A study of two rehabilitation groups (visible and emotional disabilities) showed that both groups expressed the most positive evaluation towards the normal (no disability) person and the most negative evaluation towards the other stigmatized group. Further, both groups negatively evaluated the person who was in the same position as them, that is, in the process of rehabilitation. Notably, subjects with a physical disability evaluated their successfully rehabilitated ingroup member less positively than they evaluated a normal person. Zernitsky-Shurka (1988) argues that this may be because PWD are always seen as disabled, and never fully normal.

Overall, research shows that socialization of PWD is fraught with interactional and relational hurdles and those with a disability may be sidelined because of labeling or categorization. Studies further show that contact does not necessarily reduce relational hurdles. *Extending Research on Obstacles to Organizational Socialization and General Social Inclusion.*

Considering that prior sections outline, in some form, the role of organizational stakeholders and the role of the PWD, here we focus more on the role of organizational processes in the creation of an inclusionary environment for the PWD. We believe that future research needs to focus more explicitly on the process of socialization in organizational settings. This will help us examine relational barriers outside of a laboratory setting.

Drawing upon socialization research (Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) researchers can examine how the form and content of organizational socialization programs influence social integration over time. For example, future research can examine if an individual-

specific socialization strategy is more helpful for PWD or if that labels and differentiates PWD even more from the rest of the newcomers. It is also fruitful to conduct longitudinal research to note if barriers diminish over time and if inclusion increases. This is important given conflicting findings regarding the influence of increased contact on social acceptance of PWD. Such research may also help us know if types of barriers change over time and if longer structured socialization programs need to be designed.

Drawing upon social network research, researchers can examine if encouragement of social and instrumental networks during the socialization phase afford the same benefits to a PWD that they may to a person without any disability. Networks may be especially important to PWD as compared with their counterparts without a disability given their customary status on organizational social fringes. Thus PWD may benefit from such programs more so as compared to their counterparts. Alternatively, it is likely that forced interactions and forced relational integration alienates people and harms assimilation of PWD over the long run. Knowing if and how networks influence outcomes for PWD has clear implications for employers and human resource professionals who are trying to create inclusive workplaces.

While previous research on general social inclusion has focused on relational barriers, we believe that future research should also be directed toward understanding structural barriers. We could not identify any studies that dealt explicitly and empirically with the influence of the organizational structure, processes, or the environment as it afforded help or hindrance to the integration of those with a disability. If tasks and processes are indeed designed to work against the disability, organizations may inadvertently be creating a context of failure. As Colella (2001) and Stone and Colella (1996) have cogently argued, organizational structure and processes such

as training programs and circulating success stories of those with disabilities may help reframe orientations of stakeholders by signaling the inaccuracy of stereotypes.

Finally, given the findings about PWD who do not initiate their own integration, it will also be productive to examine how they do influence their own integration and which expectancies they form regarding the workplace environment. Such research may also point to some of the proactive strategies of PWD which can help others. Such research is also of help to vocational rehabilitation centers who help PWD get ready for organizational work. We summarize a few directions for future research in Figure 3 below.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Career Management and Development

Stone and Colella (1996) have argued that PWD have lower earning potential and lower career fulfilling opportunities. In this section we examine research that has focused on performance evaluations, performance expectations, learning, and job progression as they affect people with disabilities.

In an early experimental study, Hastorf, Northcraft, and Picciotto (1979) found that respondents did not administer very negative feedback to PWD - even when performance was lacking - probably reflecting societal values of kindness towards the disadvantaged or less fortunate. These researchers explain that it is also likely that PWD were not expected to perform optimally. Thus respondents may have seen no reason to punish lower performance. A later experimental study by Bailey (1991) indicated that regardless of task outcome, PWD were rated more favorably than those without. In this study, disability was disclosed and visible (e.g., person was in a wheelchair). Bailey explains that mention of the disability may have put subjects at ease, as they now knew this was not a taboo subject to be avoided. It is also likely that subjects

may have viewed the PWD more favorably as the individual had likely overcome physical barriers to reach this stage.

Conversely, another experimental study showed that disability is associated with a negative bias (Colella, DeNisi, & Varma, 1998). Those with a disability were evaluated more negatively than those without even when the objective performance level was same for both. However, this happened when rewards of the focal coworker were interdependent with the PWD and when people held stereotypic views of how PWD can or cannot perform various jobs.

A meta-analysis of experimental studies showed an overall positive effect of disability on performance evaluations and performance expectations, that is, PWD received higher ratings on both in comparison to those without a disability. However, the same study showed that the positive effect of disability on performance expectations was stronger in laboratory experiments than in field experiments (Ren, et al., 2008). In fact, experimental results show that when the person is not physically present when being evaluated and when subjects are told that their evaluations will not be reported back, PWD received more negative evaluations than those without a disability for comparable performance (Russell, et al., 1985). Russell and his colleagues explain this finding as being reflective of true feelings rather than socially desirable responses. Positive evaluations may also fade in the face of monetary and other competitive consequences (Colella, DeNisi, & Varma, 1997).

The performance evaluation research thus has produced mixed findings. Colella, DeNisi, and Varma (1997) have offered theoretical explanations for conflicting results. For example, the norm to be kind or lower expectations from the disadvantaged groups perspective would indicate that regardless of whether the people deserved the high rating, managers would give them the higher rating as compared with those without a disability for the same job (Hastorf et al., 1979).

Conversely, those operating from a stigma bias (Stone & Colella, 1996) or a bias to dislike dissimilar others (Colella, & Varma, 1997) may give lower ratings to PWD. Finally, raters operating from a just world notion (Lerner, 1980) may believe that PWD deserve their fate and do not deserve special attention with respect to appraisals. Overall, performance appraisals are an indirect outcome of cognitive processes where PWD are categorized, beliefs are generated, performance expectations are formed, and actual performance is rated. Ratings thus need not reflect performance (Colella et al., 1997).

Regardless of causes and directionality, inappropriate performance expectations and evaluations have a negative impact on the recipient with a disability. Hastorf, Northcraft, and Picciotto (1979) explain that even unrealistic positive feedback has important implications for the recipient's learning and socialization. Continued positive feedback irrespective of performance may make the person attribute the feedback to the giver's favorableness or simply ignore it. On the other hand, if the person were to suddenly receive negative feedback, he may ignore the so far positive feedback received and focus only on the negative.

Colella (1996) further explains that those without a disability use labels which may influence perceptions of work, relationships, and hence appraisals of PWD. For example, PWD are seen as either a saint, embittered, needy, or helpless. Further, sometimes they are placed in certain jobs as a result of presumed or actual ability but not based on their desire, need, or aspiration (Boyle, 1997) and this may elicit suboptimal performance and hence evaluation. Sometimes, the person may exhibit self limiting behaviors, and at other times, organizational factors such as a token or outgroup status, perceptions of limited job fit, lack of role models, lack of mentors, and lack of critical feedback lead to limited career advancement of those with a disability (Jones, 1997). Finally, Feldman (2004) notes that if there are only a few PWD in the

organization, they may serve as representatives on various task forces and committees. As a result their focus may be directed away from activities that are much more important for developing their own careers, and thus suffer negative long-term consequences.

We could identify only one article that explicitly studied the relative job progression of those with and without a disability. This research was based on the civil services employees of the United States Air Force Logistics Command and showed that job progression of both sets of employees is different (Bressler & Lacy, 1980). Those without a disability averaged slightly more promotions per year, had higher supervisory ratings, were given more awards, and had a substantially higher salary, as compared with PWD. Those with a disability, conversely, had a higher rate of sick leave, but also had longer tenure, higher self-advancement rates in terms of formal education, and had a larger number of suggestions approved for cash rewards or formal recognition, as compared with their counterparts.

In another organizational focus group study, Hernandez and her colleagues (2008) found that PWD continued being employed mostly in entry-level and semi-skilled positions and could not or did not avail themselves of advancement opportunities either because employers expressed productivity concerns or because they thought PWD would be comfortable enough in their current positions and thereby stall their own promotion possibilities. Overall, PWD may have to contend with unrealistic feedback, evaluations (both positive and negative), and hence may not experience the same job progression and other career outcomes as their counterparts without a disability who exhibit the same performance level.

Extending Research on Obstacles to Career Management and Development. We realize that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain real time organizational data on career-related issues such as performance evaluations. Real time data may be even harder to obtain for a

minority group for fear of researchers unearthing something that leads to lawsuits or social embarrassment for employers. What researchers could do is to obtain historical data from numerous organizations (aggregate data may allay employer fears of being highlighted for a finding) that allows them to map evaluations onto antecedents and outcomes. This will allow us to understand not only if and why those with a disability obtain different evaluations as compared with others, but also if and how much evaluations translate into other career outcomes such as learning and advancement. For example, we will then know if inflated ratings observed in laboratories are a reality in organizations. If they do reflect organizational reality, do they translate into promotions for PWD, or are they empty 'feel good' numbers on a rating form that over time harm the career and beliefs of PWD? Such studies will also yield practicable implications.

Interviews with managers across industries can also help us know if their expectancies are directly or subtly harming career development potential of their subordinates with a disability. For example, when thinking about the next organizational move (e.g., lateral movement or a vertical promotion), managers may erroneously assume that the PWD may not be able to execute job tasks or that the person may not even want the job. Managers may also fear coworker reactions. Such thoughts may influence, in turn, characteristics of performance feedback and the feedback conversation. For example, managers may cut short the duration of the conversation by signaling how they are actually doing the PWD a favor by not moving the person. Conversations may thus sound positive while being far away from yielding a positive career outcome for the employee with a disability.

We also observed that research has focused lopsidedly on the role of managers and decision makers. What remains unexamined is the role of PWD and how they manage their

career-related outcomes. We agree with Fine and Asch (1988) that disability may not always influence social interaction, and there are indeed contexts where disability is not disabling. As they point out, research may have engaged with disability as a way to advance social theories and notions of stigma, victimization, justice, or altruism, rather than to advance knowledge of the disability experience. We argue that research may miss appreciating the true experience of someone with a disability in an organization if the specific focus is not on the person. Thus, knowing which barriers PWD have overcome, their career strategies, and which barriers seem generally insurmountable can help inform both theory and practice. Directions for future research are presented in Figure 4.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Conclusions and Implications for Managerial Practice

Our aims in this paper were twofold – to review existing organization-relevant research with respect to obstacles to success in the workplace for PWD, and to provide future research directions. Our review points out that PWD face barriers to organizational entry, have difficulties in asking for accommodation, are usually on the periphery of social groups in organizations, and have uncertain career outcomes. While the review focused on obstacles, we also note the proactive role that PWD can and do play in overcoming or attenuating the obstacles. We call for more field studies and reliance on organizational archival data to complement the previous emphasis on laboratory studies. We also recommend more focus on leveraging perspectives of PWD to get a more holistic understanding of various access and treatment phenomenon in the workplace.

We are optimistic that we yet have tremendous scope for future organizational research that can systemically inform organizational practice and advance theorizing about the experience of disability in organizations. Here we outline implications of our review for managerial practice. As we have suggested, understanding the recruitment and selection process from the applicant's perspective will allow employers to gauge the congruence between their intended signals and applicant perceptions. Employers can thus understand and act upon their sometimes tacit norms of inclusiveness and equal opportunities aimed at PWD. As a related point, the applicant's perspective will allow employers to understand the degrees to which various factors (e.g., organizational processes and/or recruiter mindsets) influence the selection of PWD. Employers will also realize if indeed certain physical locations they use for recruitment (e.g., traditional schools) mean they inadvertently yet systematically exclude those with disabilities.

Regarding the treatment of PWD after hiring, employers will benefit from examining the degree to which their social and structural contexts allow for or hinder accommodation requests or other workplace help requests. For example, employers can determine if they create unfair contexts via informational or procedural gaps that they can remedy in favor of all involved stakeholders. Employers can also examine if and how social barriers (e.g., coworker reactions) also influence overall integration of those with a disability throughout their socialization period as well as their entire organizational tenure. Such investigations into the socio structural contexts will help organizations become truly inclusive places that genuinely cultivate and use all available human potential.

With regards career-related issues such as performance evaluations and job progressions, employers will benefit from examining if they indeed treat employees differently. Understanding this is important not only from a legal perspective, but also from a human resource management,

development, and leverage perspective. Underutilizing, under-recognizing, or erroneously measuring and classifying certain members of the organization may reduce the employer's ability to fully leverage all the knowledge that may exist within the organization.

Additionally, with regards social inclusion and socialization, employers will benefit from examining factors that are deemed helpful or otherwise by all involved stakeholders. Creating inclusionary and supportive climates for those with disabilities involves a careful consideration of all these aspects of employee treatment. Finally, engaging periodically with employees with a disability will help point to areas of strength as well as improvement with respect to access and treatment of this organizational group. For example, employers may discern reasons PWD do or do not seek disability specific help in their workplaces. Such an engagement may also help dispel myths about current and potential employees with disabilities.

Better understanding of obstacles to success for PWD in the workplace will lead to more evidence-based solutions to this global problem. Removing or reducing these obstacles to success will require a combined effort on the parts of employers, PWD, and society at large. Nevertheless the payoff is a less exclusionary world in which more individuals are provided opportunities to use their talent for the benefit of all.

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Figure 1

Extending Research on Organizational Entry of People with Disabilities

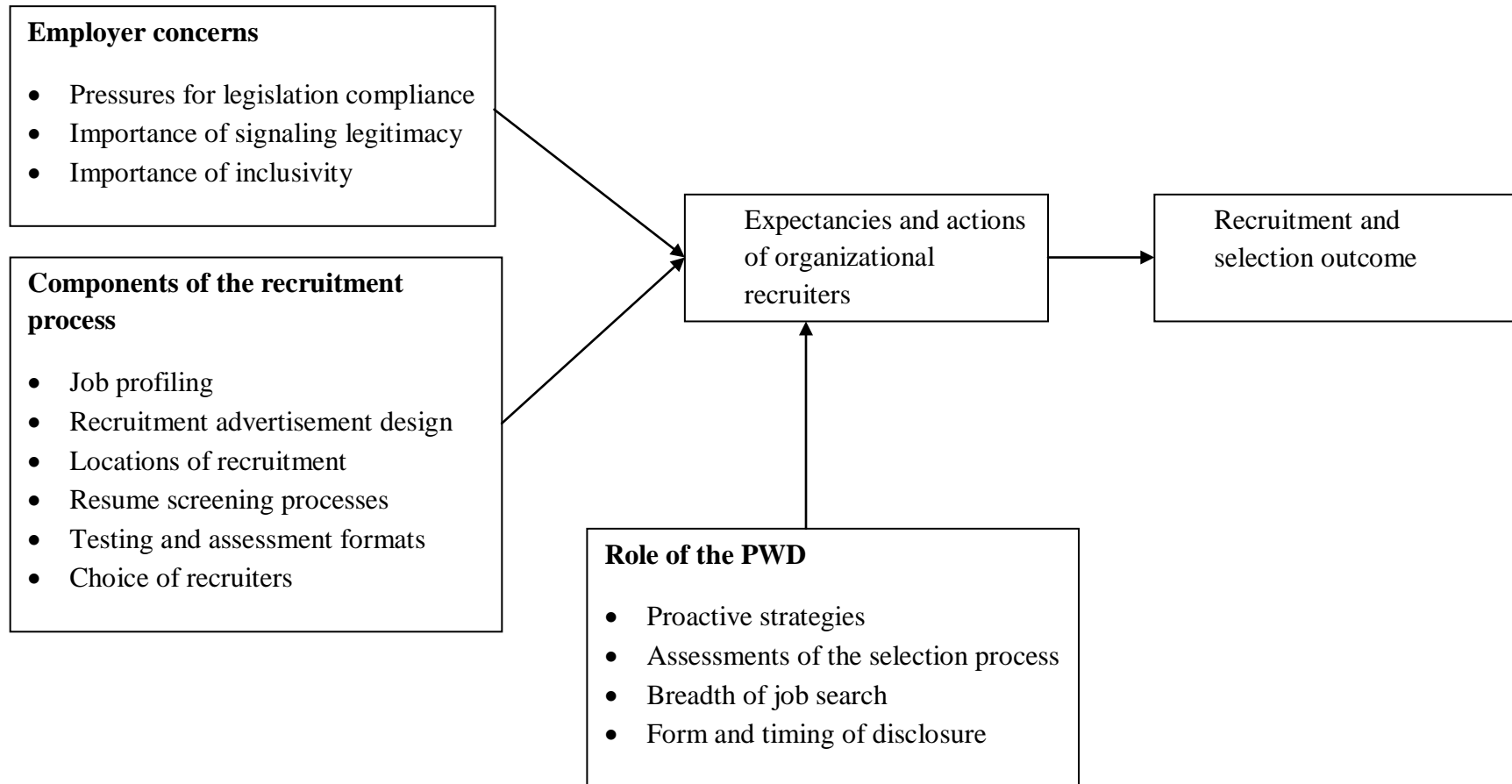


Figure 2

Extending Research on Organizational Requests for Accommodation of People with Disabilities

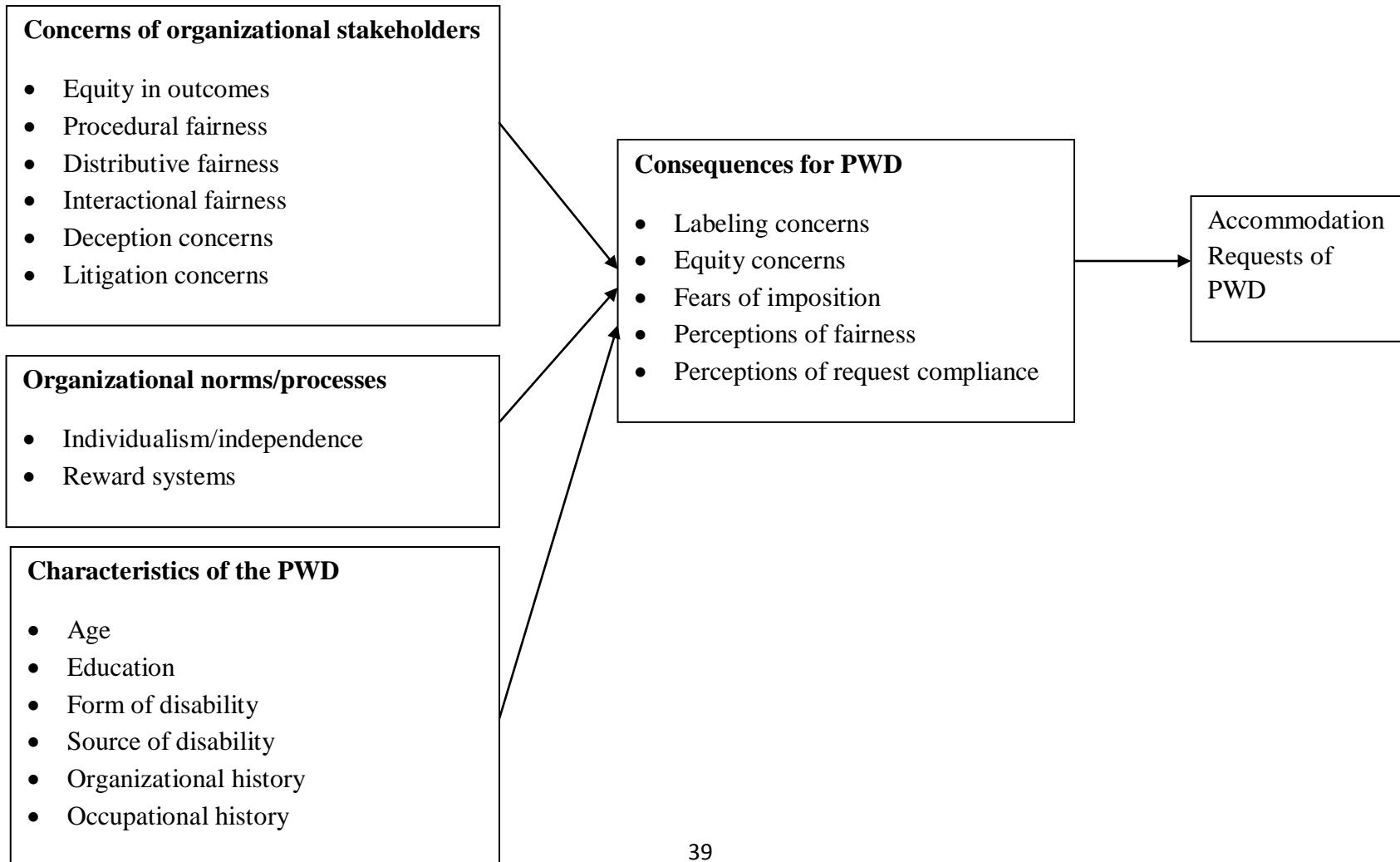


Figure 3

Extending Research on Organizational Integration of People with Disabilities

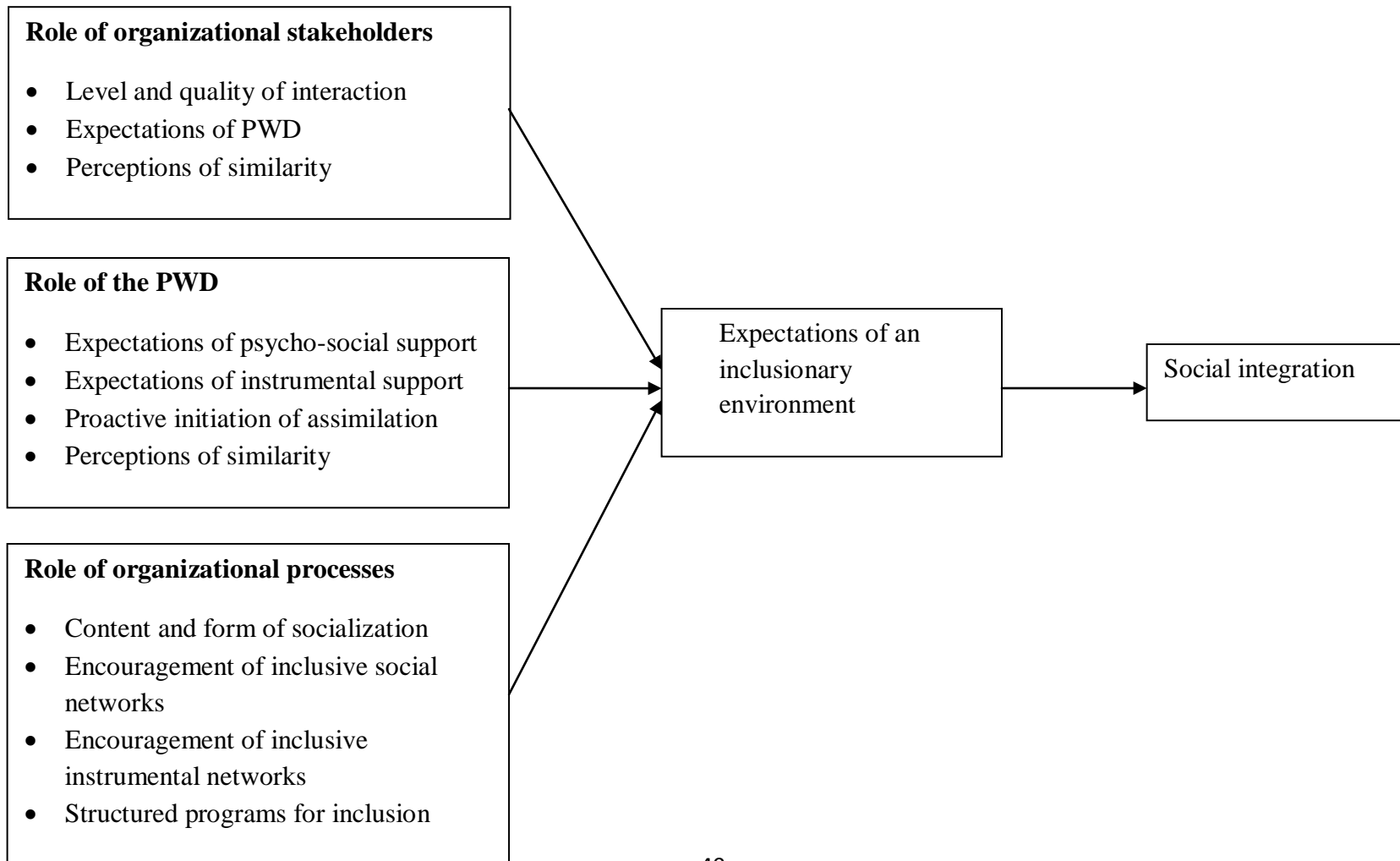


Figure 4

Extending Research on Career Outcomes of People with Disabilities

