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WHEN ADVOCACY BECOMES (IN)VOLUNTARY: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF
DISABILITY FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Communication

by
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Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

Only 19.1% of people with disabilities are currently employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022b). Stigma associated with disability often forces people with disabilities to have limited options in terms of employment. This has caused organizations like Bitty & Beaus Coffee and The Prospector Theater to make it their mission to hire people with disabilities. To better understand how these organizations are communicating about disability online a thematic analysis of the Instagram pages of Bitty & Beaus Coffee and The Prospector Theater was conducted. The findings suggest that these organizations use the image and likeness of the employees with disabilities to garner positive reactions from their audience, while not providing many opportunities for these employees to discuss their own disability or employment. Most importantly, the findings built off Peterson & McNamee's (2017) involuntary membership framework to introduce the potential for an added subsection entitled, (in)voluntary advocacy. This subsection posits that individuals may be put in circumstances to have to advocate for causes as part of their membership in an organization.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As of 2022, 19.1% of people with a disability were employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022b). This alarming statistic has been the catalyst for a new wave of activism in the form of inclusive employment. Organizations who make it their mission to hire people with disabilities have been at the forefront of the popular news cycle recently—from the Today Show to the CNN Hero Awards (TODAY, 2021; CNN, 2017). Stories of people coming together to build inclusive places where their loved ones could see themselves valued have become intertwined with the missions of these companies. However, little research has been done looking into these organizations and how they may potentially impact the communities around them and those who they employ. To begin we must first define disability within the context of these organizations and further investigate the history of unemployment for people living with disabilities.

An intellectual or developmental disability (IDD) as defined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), is “a limit to a person’s ability to learn at an expected level and function in daily life” (CDC, 2020, para. 1). This means that an IDD can not only affect information processing, but also that some people with disabilities may experience roadblocks when it comes to accomplishing everyday tasks such as eating or grooming. Two relevant examples of intellectual and developmental disabilities would be Down syndrome or Autism (CDC, 2020). Disability is a complex topic and not one singular definition applies. For this paper, when discussing disability, I will be referring to the above definition of IDD as this follows the definition of disability that the organizations I studied operate within. The issue of disability unemployment is wide-spread and impacts

not only people with IDD, but those who define disability different from the way I do in this paper. I do not intend to suggest that the problems I present within this study do not affect people who have disabilities not under that categorization of IDD. However, the unemployment crisis for adults with IDD is a historic issue as this community has often been the ones pushed into alternative forms of employment rather than allowed to be integrated into inclusive employment opportunities, as they have been deemed to have more “significant characteristics” of disability (Weham et al., 2018; Siperstein, Parker, & Drescher, 2013). Thus, there is a need to investigate organizations who are advertising themselves as inclusive employment opportunities for adults with IDD to see if these follow the modern definitions of inclusive employment, we have today.

Now that I have defined disability, I must also define inclusive employment as I understand it in this paper. Following the Professional Fellows on Inclusive Disability Employment’s (n.d.) definition of inclusive employment, inclusive employment is when people with and without disabilities work alongside each other and both groups have the same opportunity for growth and development. Research has shown that when people with disabilities are given opportunities to work, they experience less social isolation and gain valuable civic skills that allow them to participate, both socially and politically, within their communities (Schur, 2002). Aside from the benefits to those who have disabilities, inclusive employment has been shown to give those without experience interacting with people with disabilities the opportunity become more empathetic of those with disabilities (Schur, 2002). To further discuss inclusive employment, I find it important to discuss the history surrounding disability rights within the United States, by introducing the Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA.

Signed into law in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) revolutionized the way people with disabilities were treated in society. This law guaranteed that people with and without disabilities would be able to have the same opportunities and established programs to help increase the quality of life for people with disabilities in the United States (ADA, 2022). The ADA states that employers must provide people with disability equal opportunities to things like “recruitment, hiring, promotions, training, pay, and social activities” (ADA, 2022, para 4). While there are laws and institutions in place that provide resources for employers to hire people with disabilities, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is still at 81% compared to the national unemployment rate of 3.8% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022a; 2022b). Often people without disabilities do not understand, or have not had exposure to, people with disabilities. This may create uncertainty when interacting with a person with an IDD but as discussed earlier, past research supports that providing people with disabilities job opportunities also gives people without disabilities the opportunity to learn to respect and treat others equally (Schur, 2002).

The unemployment of people with disabilities is a nuanced issue, but part of it can be attributed to the fact that people without disabilities are undereducated on how to interact with people with disabilities and often underestimate their ability to perform tasks at a level that would be deemed proficient by able-bodied standards (Legnick-Hall et al., 2008). This discomfort may also stem from misunderstanding of disability, often making it a stigmatized topic to discuss. For example, related to familial history, there is a dark reality of families removing children born with disabilities from the home to send them to care facilities away from the public (Fink, 2022). While the history of creating

segregated spaces for people with disabilities is deeply rooted in ableism, there has been an increase in organizations who are trying to rectify the unemployment issue for this demographic by creating spaces made exclusively for people with disabilities to work. These organizations are often called sheltered or supported employment. The transition from school to adulthood can be difficult for people with disabilities, sheltered workspaces are often seen as an appealing option for families of people with disabilities (Wass et al., 2021). While these spaces are made exclusively for people with disabilities, they are often structured more like day centers where they perform activities and learn skills, but do not have competitive wages (Kregel & Dean, 2002; Cimera, 2011). Sheltered workspaces have been found to be effective in creating structure and strengthening social networks (Carter et al., 2018), but on the other hand, studies have shown that people with disabilities desire integrated employment and stronger involvement in the process of choosing a career (Wass et al., 2021; Rustad & Kassah, 2020).

As an alternative to sheltered employment, some organizations offer integrated workplaces designed for people with disabilities that offer competitive wages and assistance from those without disabilities known as supported employment (Kregel & Dean, 2002; Cimera, 2011). The move from sheltered to supported employment has become increasingly popular and of interest for researchers, studies have been done largely regarding the embodied experience of those who work in these environments (Migliore et al., 2008; Bend & Priola, 2021) However, there remains a lack of research regarding how supported employment organizations promote their mission and the impact of their communication practice. Because of this, I find it important to continue

conversations around organizations who center their mission around helping people with disabilities so we can help decipher what parts of their mission work to “resist and reinforce dominant ableist ideologies” (Hardin, 2007; Peers, 2012 as cited in Hodges et al., 2015, p. 199). By researching the ways organizations are helping to resist ableist ideology through organizational missions we can recommend best practices for future organizations; by shedding light on the portions of the organization that may be reinforcing dominant ableist ideology, we can learn how and why this is happening and learn how to structure organizations who make it their mission to serve people within the disability community in a way that does not reinforce ableist thought.

While there has been research regarding the importance of inclusive employment in terms of how it benefits both the individuals with disabilities and their community (Schur, 2002), little research has been done studying how organizations centered around individuals with disabilities organize and communicate their mission. It is important for this gap in research to be filled so we can strengthen our knowledge of what an inclusive workplace should look like. While there have been studies into organizations who hire majority people with disabilities, marking them as “sheltered employment,” this research mainly dives into the embodied experience of these employees (Wass et al., 2021) whereas this research will focus on the organizational structure. In particular, Cohen & Avanzino (2010) issued a call to study the anticipatory socialization of people with disabilities (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010). The primary purpose of this research is to investigate organizations who make it their sole purpose to hire people with disabilities to understand how they promote ideas of inclusive employment and communicate their mission. This research project will use scholarship from disability studies and

organizational communication to guide the research. This will allow for a greater understanding of how employers who make it their mission to hire people with disabilities are structuring their organization and how that may impact the future of inclusivity in the workplace. This will not only provide insight for employers but will also shine valuable light on how people with disabilities are being socialized into workplaces.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Mission and Commitment

To begin this literature review it is important we investigate the history of mission statements within organizations. Because this research will focus on organizations who center their operations around the mission to employ people with disabilities, the development and implementation of mission statements will be vital in understanding how these organizations may best serve the community they wish to help. Mission statements are integral parts of the organizing process. There is no singular shared definition of mission statements, however definitions in the literature agree that these statements share the values the organization want to uphold and are part of constructing their identity and why they exist as an organization (Alegre et al., 2018; Bart & Tabone, 1999). While they do inform the identity of the organization, they also work to inform the direction of the organization in terms of goals and plans (Bart & Baetz, 2006; Bartkus et al., 2006). While these statements are meant to inform the public on what the purpose of the organization is, they also can inform the way the employees interact dependent on their commitment to the organization (Macedo et al., 2016).

While an organization's mission is central to performance and public perception, their employees must also be in tune with that mission (Macedo et al, 2016). It has been theorized that the performance of employees is linked to their organizational commitment and performance (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Macedo et al., 2016). The definition of organizational commitment varies, but in general organizational commitment contains three parts: a belief in the organizations vision, employee willingness to put in effort to

help that vision advance, and employee desire to remain a member within the organizations (Porter et al., 1974; Macedo et al., 2016). While the organizational mission statement is seen as a key role in making sure the public knows the purpose of the mission, some scholars say that the mission statement is more important internally as it provides a sense of commitment among employees, thus increasing work performance (Bart, 1996). As discussed, missions are often seen as a tool for disseminating their goals and purpose as an organization as well as company culture (Fairhurst et al., 1997). They can also be a powerful tool for employee commitment and retention; however, it begs the question of how this may impact organizational identity if the mission is centered around the employees rather than the organization itself. To answer this question, we must first look at real world implications of the way organizations are structured and how they talk about themselves.

Society of the Spectacle

To be able to understand potential implications of how these organizations share their mission with the public, we will look to Guy Debord's (1967) *The Society of the Spectacle*. Guy Debord (1967) said that "everything that has directly lived has receded into a representation" (p. 1). Guided by the ideas of Karl Marx, Debord laid out the concept of the spectacle in his work *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). Debord explained that he believed humans are turning their experiences into representations, or images, and thus everyday life will turn into a series of spectacles (Debord, 1967). Debord introduced his conceptualization of a spectacle as not simply a collection of images but, rather, implies that images are replacing social relationships (Debord, 1967). While the term spectacle can be jarring, Debord merely means that an object, idea, or

person is hidden behind a representation, and that representation is now separated from its origins; society has chosen to replace their perception of 'real' with an augmented version, easier and more entertaining for viewing (Debord, 1967; Flyverbom & Reinecke, 2017). The representation Debord discusses has often been studied in terms of social media, marketing, or pop culture (Osumare, 2014; Nunn, 2019; Richileiu & Webb, 2020). Debord's critical analysis of modern society points out the negatives of consumer culture and capitalistic intent. The dangers Debord saw in this way of living had to do with the commodification of socialization. He warned that when replacing interactions with representations, images, and consumer goods, we are becoming increasingly concerned with our appearances to others to the point of obsession with commodities, a phenomenon he explains through commodity fetishism. Built upon Marx' ideas on commodity fetish that focused on whether individuals would add as much value to the commodity if they were cognizant of the production and exploitation associated with it (Winge, 2008; Flyverbom & Reinecke, 2017), Debord (1967) built on this theory suggesting that individuals would turn the commodity into spectacle, causing an obsession with materialism.

Not only did Debord believe people would become fixated with material goods and replace their own interactions with representations, but he also theorized we would begin to use celebrities to create more spectacles (Debord, 1967). To this end, Debord suggested that celebrities would be commonly used as spectacles so the public would be persuaded to buy products (Debord, 1967). This idea is certainly one we are familiar with as we see celebrities being used in advertising to market products or as spokespersons for causes (Lim & Moufahim, 2015). For example, Lim and Moufahim (2015) studied

celebrities who were spokespersons for Comic Relief, a charity that raises money for various causes by having celebrities perform comedic routines. While Debord's approach has been used to explain modern society's obsession with technology and images, other researchers have focused on spectacle outside of the technological, asking how organizations function as spectacles. This is where I will direct the rest of this review of literature.

While historically the spectacle has been investigated through pop culture trends and book series (Stratton, 2021; Sasani & Darayee, 2015), some scholars have looked at organizations and events in terms of their ability to serve as spectacle (Gabriel, 2008; Flyverbom & Reinecke, 2017). Using the same critical framework that one would study images within the media, these scholars suggest that organizations themselves are the foundation for many spectacles within our society. Flyverbom and Reinecke (2017) offer three different ways organizations may present reality as spectacle, they are as follows: fetish, simulacrum, and performativity. I will discuss each of these in turn.

First, fetish describes a relationship with the representation as one that "conceals the real" (Flyverbom & Reinecke, 2017, p. 1629). This position would assume that organizations purposefully market themselves positively to their audience and conceal any possible glimmer of one's 'reality.' Debord (1967) relates his idea of the spectacle to Marx's conception of commodity fetishism—meaning that one asserts value into the product and not the people it came from. This is where Debord (1967) builds his argument that everything has receded into images or products that we see. An organization that presents itself as a fetish spectacle would then rely heavily on branding, persuasion, and marketing to hide flaws or other aspects away from the viewer. An

example of this would be the spectacle made out of Enron, a company who was deemed highly influential to the public while facing dire economic disasters internally (Boje et al., 2004).

The second, simulacrum, is based on Baudillard's conception of hyper-reality (Flyverbom & Reinecke, 2017). Hyper-reality assumes that there is some hidden form of reality behind the spectacle, but it is reinvented in a way where it becomes fictionalized. Flyverbom & Reinecke (2017) use the example of reality television as a form of hyper-reality; the image is familiar and known but exaggerated for viewing pleasure. It plays upon viewers perhaps intentional blindness to something being not based in truth to get them to believe in the product or image the company is trying to sell (Flyverbom & Reinecke, 2017). While both are important to discuss when conceptualizing how an organization may perform as a spectacle, it is the third type that will be most important for the purposes of my research, and that is performativity.

Performativity is the primary type of spectacle I will be discussing as it relates to the idea of inclusive employment. When introducing performativity, Flyverbom & Reinecke (2017) asked "what if the organizational spectacle actually creates a new reality?" (p. 1636). A performative spectacle would not distract from reality but perform reality to shape the public's way of thinking (Flyverbom & Reinecke, 2017). They further argue that performative spectacles can shape reality and that these spectacles can create representations that can "take the shape of aspirations and promises about the future" (Flyverbom & Reinecke, 2017, p. 1640). They suggest that this form of spectacle helps to shape others' reality and creates meaning beyond Debord's (1967) original conception of the spectacle.

Disability as Spectacle

The idea of the spectacle has long been associated with media, capitalism, and commodities. Scholars have discussed representations of disability in the context of the spectacle, claiming that it adds another layer to the spectacle as people tend have a "fascination with the other" (Hodges et al., 2015). Otherness has been studied as it relates to the spectacle not only in the disability context, but also within other marginalized communities. For example, in their study Gerrad and Farrugia (2015) claim that the visibility of homelessness and power structures inherent within that shed light on issues of inequality within capitalism that Debord would allude to. Gerrad and Farrugia's (2015) findings suggest that the visibility of marginalized communities' sheds light on inequalities perpetuated by capitalism. Other studies have found that when disability is presented as spectacle it only serves to continue to treat people with disabilities as the "other" (Peers, 2012). Thus, organizations may unintentionally impose capitalistic biases upon able bodies. This makes it important to study organizations who advertise marginalized individuals to investigate how they are portraying that community and any implications along with that.

While historically spectacle as a theory has been used to critique modern society's obsession with consumer culture, recent scholars have found there is utility in studying it in terms of organizations. Using Special Olympics events to study Debord's ideas, Webb & Richeliu (2021) found that the spectacle can be used in a way that benefits society. They proposed that the use of spectacle in the Special Olympics offers a persuasive alternative to common conceptions of what it means to be an athlete (Webb & Richeliu, 2021). Similarly, the concept of spectacle has been studied while researching

Paralympics. For example, Hodges et al., (2015) discussed that the visibility of the Paralympics illuminated the public's fascination with 'the other,' suggesting that people enjoyed the excitement of watching people with disabilities perform because they were intrigued by their ability to compete in the sport. Hodges et al., (2015), suggested this is because the spectacle causes such "waves of excitement...moments of reverent arousal" (Debord, 1967, thesis 67). Often the fascination with the other can turn into overemphasizing the other's ability to accomplish tasks and thus turning their daily lives into a form of 'inspiration.' Similar to the concepts forwarded by Debord, "inspiration porn" turns the accomplishments of people with disabilities into spectacles and places of amazement. In a study by Shelton & Waddell (2021) participants reacted to ads with people with disabilities. After viewing these ads, participants felt higher levels of emotion and more positive feelings towards the ads than they did to ads without a person with a disability. While in this context celebrities weren't used, we can see a connection to Debord's ideas that society would use celebrities to sell products to individuals and thus they would become spectacle. In this case companies are using people with disabilities as a spectacle to sell their product because of the emotional reaction of inspiration it causes in the public, perhaps similarly to the feelings of excitement one feels when they see a celebrity. Because of the emerging body of literature regarding disability as a spectacle, I think it's important to study other organizations who center their mission around serving the disability community. This will lead to the next section of my literature review which will focus on the organizational communication theories, such as socialization.

Socialization

When people are introduced to work or a group, they often go through a socialization process when they join, participate, and leave organizations (Kramer, 2010). Jablin (2001), introduced the model of socialization, it is as follows: 1) anticipatory socialization or entry (how one learns and decides to become a member), 2) assimilation (joining the organization, going through new member steps, and feeling like a member), and 3) exit (leaving the organization).

The first step known as anticipatory socialization (Jablin, 2001) states that individuals receive the needed information about future careers before they start them. Often this can be through family members, education, and media (Jablin, 2001; Taylor & Kent, 2010; Dailey, 2016). Previous literature suggests that organizations themselves can serve as a form anticipatory socialization (Dailey, 2016 & Dailey et al., 2020). Dailey et al. (2020) studied Special Olympics in this context. They suggested that being involved with Special Olympics allowed the athletes to gain valuable communication skills and apply them to their workplaces, thus making Special Olympics itself a form of anticipatory socialization (Dailey et al., 2020). Because of the limited options for people with disabilities in terms of employment and schooling, it is important to study how organizations who are attempting to create opportunities do so and what their socialization looks like. Most anticipatory socialization research has focused on how the employees are affected by their socialization process, rather than the implications on the organization or those who interact with it.

The second step known as assimilation describes the stage when someone becomes acquainted and comfortable in the organization (Jablin, 2001). During this step

the employee often learns more about the company culture and sees how their own identity and values fit into that. This is often referred to as individualization (Jablin, 2001). Researchers have found that the individualization is very important for people with disabilities, as they may need extra assistance to complete their job, such as accommodations (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010). If the individualization process is not done, then individuals may not perform their roles as desired. In the context of employees with disabilities, if not given their proper accommodations by their employer the employee may not be able to perform their task at all (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010). This should mean that organizations are diligent about providing their employees sufficient accommodations to ensure they are comfortable, but this is not the case. It has been found that organizations often do not provide their employees sufficient accommodations due to negative perceptions of those who are disabled (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010). Even more, it has been found that smaller organizations, who make it a priority to advocate for those with disabilities also fail to provide accommodations to their employees because their attention and perspective becomes lost among their pride in employing this demographic (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010). Thus, it becomes a priority for people with disabilities to have to take action when it comes to their own accommodations, through self-advocacy.

As mentioned previously, people with disabilities often require extra assistance or time when they join an organization. Making the socialization process integral to success in employment opportunities. However, organizations, even those committed to employee people with disabilities, often fumble the process, especially when it comes to the individualization step (Cohen & Avanzino, 2010). This leads the way to making self-advocacy potentially a central part in this process. Self-advocacy is when individuals

speaking up for themselves to get resources they may need when they are in difficult situations (Hagan & Donovan, 2013). There have been studies done regarding self-advocacy and individuals with disabilities that suggest when these skills are learned they can strengthen resilience (Goodley, 2005), belonging (Frawley & Bigby, 2015), as well as helping construct a positive identity (Anderson & Bigby, 2015). Self-advocacy is not limited to people with disabilities and has a long history within health research as it relates to patients being able to advocate for their own rights (Hagan et al., 2017). In the study done by Dailey et al. (2020), it was found that when participating in Special Olympics individuals learned to ask questions and had a higher sense of self-esteem or identity. This could lead to a strong ability to self-advocate for the accommodations one needs, however when organizations are unwilling to provide accommodations, this may become difficult for the employee as the manager is exerting a certain amount of power over them. This could cause the employee to become stuck in their position, potentially not allowing them to move to the final phase of socialization, which is exiting. Or potentially, feeling like they are involuntarily in this organization.

(In)voluntary membership

When an individual joins a group, they normally join do so voluntarily, such as seeking employment or other activities (Peterson & McNamee, 2017). Some people may volunteer their free time for an organization. When they do this, they typically spend about five hours a week being involved in these organizations in which they are volunteers for (Hooghe, 2003). Most organizational communication literature focuses on those who are willingly part of the organization. However, some individuals are a part of organizations against their will. This is called (in)voluntary membership (Peterson &

McNamee, 2017). This concept means that some people are forced to be members of organizations without electing to be a part of them. Peterson and McNamee (2017) explained this concept through their study of prisoners. They suggested that when incarcerated, these individuals are forced to become (in)voluntary members of the prison industrial complex (PIC) and must identify as a prisoner. Regardless of whether their membership is (in)voluntary or not, (in)voluntary members still go through a similar socialization process to the one we mentioned previously. Peterson and McNamee (2017) made it clear that membership is (in)voluntary. By this definition, they move away from the binary nature of voluntary versus (in)voluntary, suggesting that members can move freely on the spectrum of (in)voluntary depending on their status and identification with the organization at any time (Peterson & McNamee, 2017). Therefore, when I refer next to the five facets of (in)voluntary membership, I acknowledge there is fluidity to the (in)voluntary membership process; it is not stagnant and the changing environments a member may be in could possibly have an impact on how much they identify with their own membership.

In Peterson & McNamee's (2017) study on the experiences of individuals within the prison system, they found the following five facets to the construction of (in)voluntary membership and explain the ways in which (in)voluntary members have agency within these organizations. I will briefly explain each facet and how I hypothesize they will relate to people with disabilities. The five facets include: physical environment, mobility, relationships, body, and engagement (Peterson & McNamee, 2017).

Physical environment has been heavily studied by communication scholars. Research suggests that when an individual is new to an organization or workplace, they

have some autonomy over their work environment and can fuse their own identity into these places (Jablin, 1984; Peterson & McNamee, 2017). In the prison example from Peterson and McNamee (2017) the prison guards and institution have absolute control over the physical environment of the prison; meaning they control everything from the lights, spaces, and virtually every other aspect of these prisoners' environment (Peterson & McNamee, 2017). Thus, showing how those with the power in a given situation have the ability to control one's position along the (in)voluntary membership spectrum. The next facet of (in)voluntary membership is mobility. This is one's ability to move in, out, and within an organization (Peterson & McNamee, 2017). Typically, when one is a part of an organization, they have free will to move in, within, or out of it. We see the prisoner's relationship with mobility effected as they are contained inside the prison walls; they are allowed little movement around the facility and are monitored when they do move (Peterson & McNamee, 2017). Third, the relationship portion of (in)voluntary membership discusses the complexities of relationships within an (in)voluntary organization, this includes relationships with other members as well as with those in control (Peterson & McNamee, 2017). Fourth, the prisoner's body was tied to their (in)voluntary membership as it was a reminder of their imprisonment as they were physically punished (Peterson & McNamee, 2017). The last facet of (in)voluntary membership is called engagement. This refers to the participation of individuals within (in)voluntary organizations (Peterson & McNamee, 2017). All five facets are extremely important in understanding what it means to be an (in)voluntary member.

To situate disability organizations in the context of (in)voluntary membership, it is important to understand why I believe the employees of disability organizations are

(in)voluntary members. Although they are paid employees who went through an interview process, I argue that the organizational structures in place allow them to be on the spectrum of (in)voluntary membership of (dis)ability. Referring to the definitions of intellectual and developmental disabilities, we can assume that these individuals did not choose to be members of the disability community. Intellectual and developmental disabilities develop before birth or due to trauma (CDC, 2021). Therefore, upon their diagnosis they were then labeled by society as members of the disability community, which according to Goffman (1963), then forced other stigmas and associations upon them. Goffman wrote about stigma in his 1963 book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*. Goffman (1963) suggested that stigma occurs when an individual is denied full acceptance to society. This may occur because one possesses physical traits or characteristics, such as race, or behaviors deemed by society as not socially acceptable. Goffman suggested that the person with the stigma must attempt ‘hide’ these parts of themselves to fit in to the constraints put in place by society. Similarly, the social model of disability gained popularity to help explain the lived experience of those with disabilities (UPIAS, 1976; Oliver, 2013). The social model of disability suggests that the world denies full acceptance of people with disabilities into society by constructing their world in ways that make it inaccessible for others (UPIAS, 1976; Oliver, 2013). In this case, it puts the onus of society why stigma surrounding people with disabilities is pervasive in society today. This could mean that people with disabilities are forced to be involuntary members of organizations they are in due to being denied full membership by the organizations they are in. To study both Guy Debord’s spectacle and (in)voluntary

membership in relation to organizations who employ people with disabilities, I propose the following research questions:

Research Question(s)

To better understand the current landscape of how organizations who make it their mission to hire people with disabilities are shaping discourse about disability to the public, I propose the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent do organizations that hire people with disabilities make it a part of their organizational identity?

RQ2: What are the best practices to inform the building of an organization around disability?

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

To answer the research questions above, I began by completing a thematic analysis of two organizations who openly discuss their commitment to be employing people with disabilities via their social media accounts. These two organizations were selected based on the following criteria: must include hiring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities within their mission, must have been an established organization for over one year in the United States, must be active on Instagram. For the purpose of data collection, I deemed active as having posted within the last month at the time of research. While not representative of every organization that carries this sort of mission, I chose two organizations that clearly exemplify these criteria: Bitty & Beaus Coffee and The Prospector Theatre.

To complete this thematic analysis, I followed Braun & Clark' (2006) instructions. I chose to do a thematic analysis as it allowed me to critically analyze Instagram posts as data. I chose thematic analysis because of its flexibility and ability to answer a wide range of research questions (Braun & Clark, 2006). Braun and Clark (2006) presented six steps to completing a thematic analysis, which are 1. Familiarizing yourself with codes, 2. Initial codes, 3. Look for themes 4. Review themes, 5. Name themes, and 6. Reporting themes (p. 87).

First, I downloaded every other photo and caption from the respective Instagram pages of these two organizations. Posts were not included in the data collection if they were regarding store announcements for the public such as hiring events, repeated content or videos, or giveaways. In total, I pulled 143 Instagram posts for this analysis.

Of these posts, 137 were photographs, and 30 were video based. I chose Instagram for the purpose of this analysis because both organizations I chose to analyze were the most active on this platform. Additionally, Instagram as a platform provides what I believe to be the most content to analyze due to its multimedia capacities.

Afterwards, I analyzed these posts by identifying two things: who was in the post and what was the caption. After the first level of coding, I then moved around the posts based on what they had the most in common. This is where I identified there were three distinct groupings of posts. I then identified what these groups were comprised of and named them. After defining and naming the three themes, I then created a chart to make reporting my findings in this paper more accessible.

Statement of speaking for others

Through this research I investigated organizations that are unique in their design as they make it their mission to hire people with disabilities. As a researcher who does not identify as disabled I do not, in any means, suggest I have the solution to any issues regarding employment of people with disabilities. I also would like to make it clear that I will never understand the lived experience of individuals with disabilities and do not intend to speak for them. I did not speak with any individuals who identify as disabled throughout this process. In no means do I intend to speak for them rather, my focus from an organizational communication approach, intends to compile best practices from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. Because of my methodological choice, this thesis only discusses the recurring themes I witnessed, which will be the foundation for this paper. I reiterate that I do not intend to suggest I understand everything within the community or know what it is like to have a disability, rather I hope to use my platform

and knowledge for the empowerment of others (Alcoff, 1990). As an advocate for people with disabilities I find it important to research establishments who are committed to trying to end the stigma surrounding people with disabilities. Using my platform to shed light on these issues is of importance to me as an academic researcher. I aspire to be a part of conversations surrounding the best practices for organizations to socialize people with disabilities into their workplaces.

I have spent the last several years involving myself in disability advocacy work. I managed Bitty & Beau's Coffee for three years; I was the president of Best Buddies, a mentor organization for adults with disabilities; and have interned at the National Down Society Syndrome. I feel strongly about my relationship to this community, however, recognize my proximity has often been from a place of power. My own ability can be seen as a reminder of the innate privilege that comes with being able-bodied. Whether it be through being deemed able enough to be a manager at merely 18 years old, or to gaining opportunities to intellectualize my experience with the community in this paper, I am acutely aware that I have been provided a myriad of opportunities due to my ability that those within the community are constantly being denied access to. I don't mean to disregard the voices of people with disabilities throughout this paper, I instead intend use my own expertise and unique position coming from these organizations to provide instructions that will resist the power that people, like my past self, have exerted over these individuals due to our roles.

The two organizations I chose for this study were Bitty & Beau's Coffee and The Prospector Theater. I chose these two organizations as I identified them as good representations of businesses hiring people with disabilities. Both organizations make it a

part of their mission to employ people intellectual and developmental disabilities. Before jumping into the findings from the thematic analysis I would like to describe the mission of each organization respectively.

Bitty & Beau's was founded in 2016 by Amy and Ben Wright. Their vision was to create a coffee shop dedicated to employing people with disabilities. The impetus behind this was Amy and Ben's youngest children, Bitty and Beau who both have Down syndrome. The couple became frustrated thinking about how their children's futures may be limited because of their disability (Bitty & Beau's, n.d.). To try and increase the employment rates of people with disabilities, Amy and Ben founded Beau's coffee in Wilmington, North Carolina in 2016. Here they started to make a change by giving 19 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities a job. The small space quickly became a favorite in the town and began to grow rapidly. After moving to a larger space in Wilmington, N.C., and a name change to include younger sister, Bitty, Bitty & Beau's decided it was time to spread the mission outside of their community. They opened their second location in Charleston, South Carolina and shortly after in Savannah, Georgia and Annapolis, Maryland. These four locations helped to employ hundreds of people with disabilities (Bitty & Beau's, n.d.). Bitty & Beau's mission as stated on their website is as follows:

As advocates for the value, acceptance, and inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the Wrights have dedicated their lives to making the world a better place for their children and others living with disabilities. (Bitty & Beau's, 2022).

The organization has seen great success in the years since its inception. Social media has been, no doubt, a key player in spreading the message of Bitty & Beau's across the country. Bitty & Beau's has been featured on programs such as "CBS Evening News," "PBS StartUP," as well as becoming the official coffee of "The Rachel Ray Show" (Bitty & Beau's, n.d.). Additionally, Amy Wright was awarded the CNN Hero of the Year award in 2017; an award given to outstanding individuals who are committed to changing the lives of others (CNN, n.d.). The team was also recently invited to speak at the White House as a recipient of the Paycheck Protection Program loan in 2020 (Cerullo, 2020). This success has also allowed the company to begin franchising their shops. As of March 2022, they have 20 franchises opening within the next year from Boston, MA., to Austin, TX (Bitty & Beau's, n.d.).

Similarly, the Prospector Theater has gained recognition from major media outlets, such as The New York Times and The Today Show. Founder Valerie Jensen's inspiration was her sister Hope, who has Down syndrome. After a career in special education, Valerie, decided to use her creative side and work at a non-profit who specialized in teaching adults with disabilities art skills, such as filmmaking and musical theater. While serving as the executive director of this arts non-profit, Valerie, like Ben and Amy, became shocked at the lack of people with disabilities she knew that had jobs. Using her experience, Valerie founded The Prospector Theater in 2014 (The Prospector Theater, n.d.) .The mission of the organization is as follows:

The Prospector Theater is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing competitive and integrated employment to people with disabilities through the operation of a premium, first-run movie theater located in Ridgefield, CT.

Employees of the Theater are known as Prospects. Approximately 74% of our workforce self-identify with a disability. We sparkle and transform our passions into professions, while earning paychecks with competitive wages. (The Prospector Theater, n.d.)

Both organizations are examples of the current landscape of supported employment in the United States today. Therefore, it is important that they be studied to understand how they are communicating their mission to the public via social media. Because of the wide reach, their platform as changemakers in the community are integral to public perception about disability. To allow us to gain a better understanding on what this messaging looks like today and any potential implications it has we will now look at the findings from my thematic analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Throughout my thematic analysis of the Instagram accounts of Bitty and Beau's and Prospect Theater, I identified three recurring themes. They are as follows: *focus on team members*, *focus on change*, and *focus on team being change*. Each of these themes highlights the ways in which these organizations are talking about their mission online through the social media app, Instagram.

Focus on Team Members

The first theme I came across when exploring the Instagram pages of these two organizations was that many of the posts focused on the employees of these organizations. While looking through these posts, I noticed most of them were focusing on individual employees, often showcasing them performing job tasks, receiving promotions, birthdays, or introductions. I have divided this theme up into two sub themes: accomplishment and emphasizing difference. Each are examples of the ways in which employees are talked about on Instagram.

Accomplishment. Within this theme, the first type of post I saw were those that focused on the *accomplishments of the team*. For example, Bitty & Beau's posted a video of an employee jumping up and down screaming in joy because he received his first paycheck, the caption being "Joe's on cloud 9 – He got his first paycheck!" (Bitty & Beau's, 2022k). Additionally, they posted a video of an employee pouring a drink into a cup and her being excited about performing this task with the caption "In honor of Katie's birthday, we're remembering the day she made her first frappe and the video broke the internet – 37 million views! Happy Birthday Katie! [red heart emoji] [Sparkle

Emoji]” (Bitty & Beau’s, 2022h). Each of these are examples of how Bitty & Beau’s highlights what their employees accomplish in their roles.

Accomplishment is used within this theme to highlight how the organizations publicly celebrate milestones these employees reach that, for most able-bodied individuals, would be performed on a regular basis. While these posts do highlight positives within this organization, such as providing someone with their first check, the captions used along with the posts work, at times, to infantilize these employees and their work performance. Each of these are examples mentioned above exemplify how Bitty & Beau’s may be using their employees’ tasks as inspiration porn. As stated before, inspiration porn has often been used to sell products because of the fact seeing a person with a disability perform otherwise mundane tasks produces with higher positive emotions for the viewer (Shelton & Waddell, 2021). I believe that these organizations are capitalizing on the knowledge that inspiration porn exists and often works to garner the attention of a large audience. As seen with just two videos above, Bitty and Beau’s is using the usually mundane task of receiving a paycheck or pouring a drink as a barista to excite and engage their audience—even going so far as to reference the virality of the video (i.e., 37 million views). This type of post is trying to attract an audience of people without disabilities so that they can become excited or “inspired.” In terms of disability studies, this has been coined as the “ableist gaze” (Davis, 1995). This means that people view disability through the lens able-bodiedness, which further exacerbates feelings of “inspiration” because they are amazed that someone can both have a disability while also, in this case, have a job. Thus, making the mission of these organizations biased towards

the ableist gaze as they both desire to show the world or able-bodied individuals that people with disabilities can work.

Emphasizing difference. Other posts that were focused on the team not only highlighted employees doing their jobs, but they heavily emphasized difference, most often meaning disability. For example, Bitty & Beau's posted a photograph of an employee with the caption: "What do America's 61,241 coffee shops have in common? They all serve coffee. What makes Bitty & Beau's different? Who serves it." (Bitty & Beau's, 2022g). In this instance Bitty & Beau's are celebrating the differences of their employees' disabilities, but they do it in a way that is also trying market their products and mission, allowing for the marketing to overemphasize the employee's disability. The caption from above makes a direct comparison to other coffee shops and positions Bitty & Beau's as unique just because of their employees, which in this case is interchangeable with disability. While this is consistent with their mission, the wording seems to further ideas of othering. Using the word different puts the viewer of the post in a unique position to consider why the employees of this shop are different—the answer is their disability. This semantic choice emphasizes that this set of employees is different from the rest and not considered a normal "barista", regardless of if they are performing the same set of tasks. Referring to ideas of inspiration porn, Gagladi (2017) found that captions of social posts regarding people with disabilities can serve to further social inequality just by their wording (Gagladi, 2017). The use of "different" in the caption above emphasizes the fact that the employee's disability is important to this organization, thus it becomes their whole identity when in this workplace. Goffman (1963) discussed that because one is stigmatized in society, like those with disabilities, their identity would

become ‘spoiled’ as they begin to internalize these feelings of stigma and not be able to differentiate themselves from this identity any longer. A potential issue that could arise when organizations use this type of messaging is further social isolation if employees feel like they are not allowed to move on from this organization as it is the only place that values them because of their disability. Language used by these organizations seems to contradict their purpose of trying to get the world to value people with disabilities as they often use inspiration porn type wording that furthers othering. Not only do we see Bitty & Beau’s using language in ways that isolates their employees, but we also see them use it as a persuasive tool to try and shape the public’s perception of the inclusive employment movement. This is something which I will explore in the second theme – focus on change.

Focus on Change

The second theme that emerged when I analyzed these posts was focus on change. This theme was comprised of posts that were mission focused. The reason I coined this theme “focus on change” is because the posts that were categorized into this group discussed how the mission of these organizations was part of larger societal change. Because these organizations are heavily mission oriented, I anticipated their social media presence would also reflect that. This theme emerged because of the emphasis on the fact that their mission is to promote change in the world, an issue, or people’s feelings in general.

A more positive example of how wider change may be starting in these organizations was in a post by The Prospector Theater.

Yesterday we began our journey of becoming a #GoodMaps venue – an app, free of charge, providing a trusted wayfinding experience of the Theater. The first step was Matt doing the indoor digital mapping. There will be several more steps until the app is done and available to all. Universal accessibility is good business!

Sparkle on, GoodMappers! #SparkleOn #WorkingisWorking #ProspectorTheater @mapswithamission (The Prospector Theater, 2022b)

This post shows how The Prospector Theater is actively trying to reflect their mission in every part of their organization. By collaborating with other companies who are trying to make everyday technologies more accessible, they are showing the public how they are a small part of a larger change outside of their mission.

While posts like the one above highlights the extra lengths the organizations go to ensure change is being made outside of their normal operation, most of the posts coded under this theme only discuss how the mission by itself is changing the world. For example, I noted that Bitty & Beau’s overwhelmingly used this tactic within their social media marketing. They have two main slogans for their shop which are: “it’s more than a cup of coffee” (Bitty & Beau’s, 2022a) and “a human rights movement disguised as a coffee shop.” (Bitty & Beau’s, 2022i). They often use these phrases as captions or call-to-action posts for individuals wanting to become a part of the change.

“It’s more than a cup of coffee” is a common phrase used by Bitty & Beau’s (2022a). This phrase is used to tell the audience that the experience they are going to have at Bitty & Beau’s will be something unlike anything they have experienced before. It’s used to tell the audience to not care about the product being sold, but to care about the people who are selling it. But what are the potential consequences of this? If they are

suggesting that the cup of coffee the barista hands you has more than just a burst of caffeine and indulgent pleasure, then there is room to suspect that they are replacing the symbol of a coffee cup with their mission of inclusive employment. Following the logic forwarded by Debord (1967), this suggests that Bitty & Beau's is using the coffee to sell an *idea* of inclusive employment to their audience. Since their target demographic seems to be people without disabilities, we can assume that they are trying to persuade the audience to think about disability and workplace inclusion differently, simply by providing them a cup of coffee. Not only does this give a whole new meaning to the cup of coffee, but their emphasis on who serves it, as we discussed previously, allows for this same meaning to fall on the employees. Not only is the transaction of buying a cup of coffee now something more than its original intent, but the baristas are also becoming inextricably tied to the image of inclusive employment. Making the very design and idea of Bitty & Beau's also tied to what inclusive and meaningful employment should look like. This is problematic as it limits the public perception of inclusive employment to something that is very much not that. Bitty and Beau's operates under a framework that is closer to supported employment. Only hiring people with disabilities and having their managers being able-bodied individuals be their managers is not inclusive. So by saying that they are an example of inclusive employment promotes the idea that an inclusive workplace just means that people with disabilities are working, which is not the case. An inclusive workplace means that people with and without disabilities are treated equally and given the same opportunity for advancement (PFIDE, n.d.). When in fact they are misleading the public into the idea that a workplace of almost exclusively people with disabilities is inclusive. This may work directly against their mission as the public may

not inspire anyone to want to employ people with disabilities if they think it's okay to keep them in their own spaces.

Additionally, Bitty & Beau's (2022i) uses another slogan: "A human rights movement disguised as a coffee shop" within their social posts. Like the previous slogan, this positions their coffee shop to be far more than what a typical coffee shop's purpose would be. The emphasis on human rights is even more of a blatant statement that indicates they are trying to make this mission change the way the entire world feels about inclusive employment. Promoting a human rights movement works, in this case, to encourage the customer to become more involved with the mission. They often use this slogan especially when discussing adding members to the team or expanding the franchise. The sentence has a distinct persuasive nature by calling people in to become a part of something greater just by buying a cup of coffee. This shows that Bitty & Beau's desires for their customers to do something with their time in the coffee shop beyond just getting a cup of coffee. This desire means not only did they turn the symbol of a cup of coffee into a way to promote inclusivity and meaningful employment, but the entire shop is also used to signal a new wave of activism. While perhaps not intentionally malicious, the idea that someone can go into a coffee shop, purchase a cup of coffee, and that one interaction will change the landscape of disability rights promotes ideas of performative activism while simultaneously making their shops spectacle. As discussed in the literature review, Flyverbom & Reinecke (2017) build upon Debord's ideas and said that organizations can be a performative spectacle by trying to change the world's perspective by performing a reality different from one that may exist to the viewer. In this instance, Bitty & Beau's is using shops and persuasive messaging to have their customers join a

‘movement’ of inclusive employment – one clearly not reflected in national unemployment statistics for people with disabilities. Using persuasive language and structuring their mission in a way that is attempting to change the public perception on disability allows for these organizations to be a performative spectacle of inclusive employment.

Focus on Team Members Being Change

While the past two themes have focused on solely the employees doing their jobs or mission centered posts, the final theme that emerged combined the two. The focus on team being change puts the emphasis on the employees being the reason larger societal change is occurring. Posts coded under this theme used similar captions of those within the focus on change while also focusing on how the employees are the actual reason the shift is happening.

The first example is from The Prospector Theater. The theater posted a video showing one of their prospects, Ali, using an assistive technology device to speak about her disability. The caption of the video is, “Ali is a shining example of what it means to be a Prospect. Shine on, Ali! [popcorn bucket emoji, movie camera emoji, pink heart emoji #ProspectorTheater #WorkingisWorking #SparkleOn.” (The Prospector Theater, 2022a). However, while this video is focused on Ali, her job at the theater, and even educates the public on what Ali’s disability is, a lot of that information is conveyed through interviews of Ali’s family and friends. A fellow employee says in the video, “Ali is an exemplary prospect that shows the mission of the theater, competitive and integrated employment for adults with disabilities, is working.” (The Prospector Theater, 2022a, 6:04). In this video they explicitly state that Ali is an example of how the mission is

working. This makes Ali now a sign of what inclusive employment looks like, similar to the ideas stated above that it makes her mean and purpose as an employee something far greater than just a job. Not only do they say that she is an example of how the mission is working, but they also simultaneously only use her image by only providing her a very limited time to share her own side of the story.

Another post pulled from the Bitty & Beau's account shows a photograph of an employee with the caption "80% of people with disabilities are unemployed. 100% of people with disabilities deserve a chance. Come meet Tabitha and see what's possible." (Bitty & Beau's, 2022j). While at first glance this post may seem to be just about an individual employee, it is an example of how the change Bitty & Beau's says they are making is the responsibility of the employees to demonstrate. This post demonstrates the strong emphasis Bitty & Beau's puts on any interactions between the public and their employees. Putting the ideas into customers heads that these employees are the definition of the future of inclusive employment or "what's possible".

Now that I have provided evidence to support the work that these organizations are doing to position their employees as individually responsible for the success of their mission, I will present the last finding. This finding is a lack among not only this theme but throughout every single theme I presented above. Throughout all the themes I presented, it has become abundantly clear that these organizations desire to show the world what inclusive employment can look like through interactions with their employees with disabilities. However, this desire to hear from the employees is not reflected in their social media presence. Only three times were employees given the opportunity to speak about themselves or their disability. These three instances were all posted by The

Prospector Theater. The following caption was pulled from an Instagram post highlighting one of the employee's eighth anniversary of working at The Prospector Theater:

‘When I became disabled and had to stop my tutoring business, I wondered if the most I could hope for was an enjoyable part time job. But being here has given me so much more than employment. It has actually become the sandbox that I want to be in... to create, to experiment, to make music, and to marvel at what my friends here have been able to do.’ – Michael Happy Prospectiversary! 8 Years of Sparkle! [sparkle emoji] [popcorn emoji][camera emoji][pink heart emoji] #SparkleOn #ProspectorTheater #WorkingisWorking - - - Photo Caption: Michael smiles for a photo in theatre three (The Prospector Theater, 2022c).

In this instance, Michael both self-identifies as being disabled and discusses what his workplace means to him. This representation is important and shows the importance of involvement and consent within social media marketing. However, I would like to highlight again that this type of representation only appeared 3 out of 143 posts I pulled within the last year. This means that these employees were only given the opportunity to speak about their disability, the reason they are employed at this place, less than .02% of the time January to September of 2022.

To provide a deeper understand of these themes I have provided a table of definitions below along with other examples that were in my data set (see fig. 1).

Table 4.1: Theme Definitions

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Example</i>
Focus on team members	Posts focused on individual team members. Subthemes focused on the emphasis on team member accomplishments and highlighting the presence of disability.	“Aaron has been learning how to be a projectionist! He’s learning how movies are played on the big screen and finding a new sparkle along the way” (The Prospector Theater, 2022d)
Focus on change	Posts focused on the societal change made through their mission.	“A job for our employees changes much more than staggering statistics, it provides a chance for them to feel valued- something every human should feel.” (Bitty & Beau’s, 2022)
Focus on team members being change	Posts focused on how team members were responsible for shift in public perception of inclusive employment.	“Changing the way people see other people” (Bitty & Beau’s, 2022c).

So, what do all the findings mean when analyzed as a whole? It seems that these organizations are trying to show the public what people with disabilities are capable of by showing them at work. Whether intentional or not, the way these organizations are posting about this mission seemingly removes the personal autonomy of the employees as they do not actively use their voice within their social media presence. Rather than educating the public on disability and employment, they choose to show it through

inspiration porn type posts using the employee's disability as a means to market a product. The ramifications of this are the further infantilization of people with disabilities as well as a potential shift in public perception that inclusive employment being misguided, as these organizations are more structured like supported employment.

The use of the employees' image, in combination with messaging surrounding how their organizations are changing public perception of disability, puts the responsibility of this change on the employee. Because they are using the employees' image to discuss the change the organizations are attempting to make, I suggest the nature of these organizations allow themselves to be a performative spectacle. As discussed previously, Flyverbom & Reinecke (2017), building upon Debord's (1967) theory of spectacle, submitted that organizations can become performative spectacle if they try and shape the public's perception on what the future could look like. Based on the way they discuss their mission, and their mission itself, Bitty & Beau's can be seen as performative spectacle of inclusive employment. Each organization make it clear that their organizations work to show the public "what's possible" when people with disabilities are employed.

Not only do these organizations function as performative spectacle by depicting what a future can look like if people with disabilities are given the chance to work, but they have also made multiple artifacts and symbols within their organization, like the interactions and cups of coffee, spectacle as well. Because the organizations are structured in ways that may lead to being performative spectacle, there are other potential consequences that go along with this. I will discuss this by returning to Peterson & McNamee's (2017) theory of involuntary membership. While the two theories have not

historically been used in tandem, I believe that the same organizational decisions that may prompt an organization to become a performative spectacle also promote an idea of involuntary membership for employees and, further, involuntary advocates—an idea I will present and expand on within the next section.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

To explicitly answer RQ 1: To what extent do organizations that employ people with disabilities make it a part of their organizational identity? I argue that both organizations I studied make the fact they employ people with disabilities a large part, if not all, of their identity as an organization. The following post by Bitty & Beau's articulates this argument best as they described themselves by saying "We are a radically inclusive workforce dedicated to showing the world what's possible when business innovates around people with disabilities" (Bitty & Beau's, 2022f). This quote shows that they built their business around people with disabilities, making their organizational identity inextricably tied to the identity of their employees. Making it clear that the business is more foundationally oriented around disability rather than coffee. I don't think this is a negative way to discuss themselves as an organization as it is consistent with their mission, there are potential harmful side effects to this positionality for public perception. The wording above is potentially harmful as it uses a similar persuasive nature that other Bitty & Beau's post use as discussed in my analysis. This time, the message is that other organizations can be "radically inclusive" (Bitty & Beau's, 2022f), if they structure their organization around people with disabilities. When doing so is not consistent with the definitions of inclusive employment discussed in this paper. It is forwarding the notion that a whole organization or business must be structured around people with disabilities for those individuals to be able to work, rather than educating the public on how to assimilate people with disabilities into already functioning spaces. Additionally, making one's entire organizational identity about trying to change

perceptions of people with disabilities puts an extremely unfair weight on those who they employ. By structuring the entire organization around the idea of trying to change the way able-bodied individuals see people with disabilities puts enormous pressure on the individual employees. Putting the deconstruction of negative public perception of people with disabilities ability to work on the part of the employees is extremely unfair. I will further explore the issues surrounding this by using Peterson & McNamee's (2017) involuntary membership framework.

As discussed in the literature review, Peterson & McNamee's (2017) studied the experiences of individuals within the prison system. Consequently, they discussed five facets of involuntary membership (IVM). I will briefly discuss how the organizations I studied may influence each facet positioning their employees to be involuntary members of these organizations. This will then lead me to discussing my project that accompanies this thesis. Although each of these organizations make it abundantly clear through their mission and media presence that their employees are paid and went through an interview process, I argue that these employees are involuntary members by virtue of the organizational structures in place and social media marketing.

Earlier, I laid the foundation for the argument that people with disabilities are involuntary members of the disability community. Because of the lack of understanding and historic stigmatization of people within the disability community, there has been a need for organizations like Bitty & Beau's and Prospect Theater to arise. These organizations both stated they were established because of the stark realization that people with disabilities are severely unemployed, making these organizations one of the only options for people with disabilities. With few options available for people with

disabilities to get work, these individuals are, I argue, are involuntary members of these organizations. However, it is important to note that involuntary membership is a spectrum, meaning that each member does not feel or display the same amount of “involuntariness”. Not only is the very idea of their employment involuntary but, based on my knowledge of these organizations, I will present how these organizations control a few of the different facets related to involuntary membership.

First, with the IVM framework, mobility refers to one’s ability to freely move in and out of the organization (Peterson & McNamee, 2017). According to the definition of inclusive employment provided within the literature review, there should be equal opportunity for development and mobility within the organization (PFPIDE, n.d.). While looking at these social media pages, it seemed there were few, if any, signs of mobility demonstrated within these organizations. While there were signs of promotions within the organizations, it seemed that these promotions were performative, as they some individuals with disability held titles such as “Director of Good Vibes,” and very little information was given regarding if any additional responsibilities are associated with these promotions (Bitty & Beau’s 2022d; 2022e). The videos and pictures forward an image to the public that these employees are able to “climb the ladder” of these organizations. However, the job titles, combined with the small number of promotions, seem to serve little purpose beyond the post itself. They seem to promote a view of individuals with disabilities as incapable of being given responsibility in the workplace, furthering ideas of infantilization. So, while there is some hope of mobility in these organizations, it seems like it is few and far between as only three employees have been promoted within the past year (Bitty and Beau’s, 2022d; 2022e). Additionally, when

thinking about the fact that these organizations are some of the only organizations hiring people with disabilities, it may place further constraints on their mobility as they may not be exposed to other career choices in fear that they won't be able to find employment elsewhere.

Another IVM facet I noticed during my analysis was how the organizations controlled their employee's body. They primarily did this through using the employees disability as a form of marketing. As discussed within the analysis, only three times were employees given the space to discuss their disability. This means the rest of the time their image and likeness were being used to promote the mission. Because the mission of these organizations is tied to the Instagram posts, it makes it easy for the viewer to assume the person in the photo has a disability, even for those who might have disabilities that do not manifest visibly or physically. Additionally, Bitty & Beau's stipulates that their employees with disabilities wear different uniforms from their managers who do not have disabilities. Furthering feelings of othering while blatantly showing whose bodies are a priority for customer engagement within this shop. This leads to the next facet I will be discussing, engagement.

Engagement is one of the foundational aspects of the organizational missions of Bitty & Beau's and Prospect Theater. Because of their desire to teach people about the employability of people with disabilities, they strive to have their employees engage with the customers in highly visible ways. They are intentional about how they set up their shops that service customers and encourage them to interact with the employees. Amy Wright said in a 2016 interview with Southern Living, "it's very intentional we don't have a drive through. We have created a culture where people are spending time

together” (Southern Living, 2016, 1:53). This quote shows that they are intentionally providing the opportunity for people to interact with their employees, ostensibly so that their customers can interact with people with disabilities. In addition, the explicit mission of these organizations is to have people come into their shops and interact with a person with a disability, maybe even for the first time. This implies that engagement is critical for these organization to succeed. However, the way the organizations promote and organize themselves makes engagement between able-bodied persons and persons with disabilities a part of the job task and mission, not allowing for it to be natural. While the conversations between the customers and employees may be occurring without interruption, the fact that Bitty & Beau’s is explicit that their design is to ensure these conversations between people with and without disabilities happens make them forced and ultimately for the benefit of the customer. In this case they are controlling the engagement of their employees by creating an environment where not only is engagement with customers key, but the engagement they want is focused on the employee with a disability teaching the public about inclusive employment.

(In)voluntary Advocacy

Now that I have contextualized ways in which these organizations can position their employees as involuntary members, I further suggest the idea of involuntary advocacy. Built upon Peterson & McNamee’s (2017) involuntary membership, involuntary advocacy happens, I submit, when organizations, like the two I presented in this study, operate a mission under the assumption that just employing people with disabilities is a form of advocacy, or that doing so will bring radical change. Operating an organization under a guise of activism or “human rights movement” (Bitty & Beau’s,

2022i) can not only create spectacle, but it assumes that the jobs of these vulnerable individuals are in and of themselves, a form of activism or resistance. I suggest that these organizations are based on a very limited definition of activism. Rather than following more traditional forms of activism, which continuously fights for justice and political change, these organizations assume that interpersonal inter-abled interaction is sufficient in changing the public perception of disability. While consistent with previous literature that suggests people without disabilities are fearful of those who have disabilities due to limited interaction, it is inadequate to assume that every customer who comes into the shop is willing and able to continue fighting for inclusive employment after leaving the doors. This way of thinking and organizing puts an unequal burden on the employees with disabilities, as it makes every small interaction or job task an act of resistance rather than just a job.

Thus, involuntary advocacy occurs when an involuntary member is put in a position where their membership is used to advance the mission of an organization or cause. This only occurs when members are not provided with sufficient training or active involvement with the mission outside of their normal tasks. In the case of this study, the idea that interactions or just “a cup of coffee” are means of protesting high disability unemployment rates makes every normal task during a work shift a form of involuntary activism. Based on their organizational mission, in their brick-and-mortar stores or theaters, these organizations expect any interaction the public has with their employees to be an enjoyable and transformative experience for the customer. There is also a presumption that customers will leave equipped with the knowledge that people with disabilities are capable of employment.

I also argue that this same form of involuntary activism happens every day on social media. As demonstrated through my thematic analysis, these organizations use their employees to further their mission through social posts while giving employees no active voice. Making their face the image of organizational activism, the organization forces employees in a position to perform activism on behalf of the organization. I believe this is where the intersection of spectacle and involuntary activism comes into play. As an involuntary member of the disability community, the employees of these organizations are limited in terms of employment options, forcing them to become involuntary members of these organizations. Not only is their membership involuntary due to lack of options, but these organizations also continue to control Peterson and McNamee's (2017) facets of involuntary membership. Like IVM, I argue that there is intentional fluidity to involuntary advocacy. Individual employees can intentionally advocate for themselves in these organizations, however, because of the ways these organizations have crafted their messaging it becomes hard to differentiate from forced advocacy to intentional. Additionally, while in these roles employees with disabilities are presented as spectacle, as their main purpose as an employee is to be the image of inclusive employment, thereby making every interaction an employee has a performance of involuntary advocacy. This is problematic as it is tokenizing the disabilities of these employees for the benefit of the public. Using these individuals' employment as a form of radical change or activism is harmful to the future of inclusive employment. It forwards the notion that people with disabilities must be exceptional in everything they do. It continues to perpetuate themes of inspiration porn by making their job as a barista or usher at a movie theater far more exceptional than what the typical tasks of these jobs

would be for their able-bodied peers. Ultimately, it assumes that a customer's view of the world will be permanently changed through a single interaction with a person with a disability – a weight not commonly shared by able-bodied individuals performing similar jobs.

While I have concluded that these organizations are creating an environment that is spectacle of inclusive employment that puts employees in a position to perform involuntary activism, it is imperative that we continue to learn how to best discuss disability online and avoid making spectacle out of these employees. Because people with disabilities are so highly stigmatized in society, public perception of their ability to work is both something that is important to highlight, but also needs to be approached with sensitivity. As I presented in the analysis, organizations like Bitty & Beau's and The Prospector Theater aim to serve the disability community by providing them job opportunities, however each organization failed to spread meaningful information about inclusive employment to their community, making the mission dissemination fall on the identities of the employees. To prevent this from happening and help to potentially aid in providing more jobs to people with disabilities, I have compiled what I believe to be best practices in aiding against involuntary advocacy. This plan is a direct response to my second research question: what are the best practices to inform the building of an organization around disability?

I found that organizations that make it their sole intent to hire people with disabilities often put individuals with disabilities in positions where they become involuntary advocates for the disability community. After analyzing the social media pages of two organizations committed to employing people with disabilities, I provide a

summary of best practices for social media strategy as well as a plan for how to structure organizations like these to maximize inclusion and prevent involuntary advocacy. This manual includes multiple worksheets and ideas to prevent involuntary advocacy from occurring within these organizations. As a part of this project, I compiled all materials made for this project into a PDF document attached to this thesis for accessible viewing.

The training manual I have curated is based on the five facets of involuntary membership (Peterson & Mcnamee, 2017). Peterson & Mcnamee (2017) stated that these five facets are not stagnant, there is a purposeful fluidity to involuntary membership. Therefore, while I have divided the five facets into discrete categories to organize the manual, I want to acknowledge that each of these facets affect each other in unique ways. They will overlap and parts of the manual intentionally serve to target multiple facets at one time. The purpose of this training manual is to provide a basic guide for organizations who strictly hire people with disabilities. As detailed, it may be the case that these organizations put these individuals in situations where they are forced to participate in involuntary advocacy. Parts of this work are inspired by Schimmel & Jacobs' (2001) ideas on how leaders can manage involuntary members. Using this framework, this manual largely focuses on how the managers or owners of these businesses can structure and design their organizations to simultaneously help further their mission while also ensuring members are not put in a position where they must perform involuntary advocacy.

Training manual

Physical environment The first facet of Involuntary Membership (IVM) that I will discuss is physical environment. The physical environment is an important part of ensuring one feels comfortable with an organization. This is especially true for people with disabilities. Often people with disabilities are left out of spaces because they do not fit within the physical spaces those who are able-bodied may be able navigate easily, both physically and socially. This is consistent with the social model of disability, which states that the world is not built for people with disabilities leading to the further isolation (UPIAS, 1976; Oliver, 2013). As prominent figures in the disability rights movement, these organizations should hold themselves to be examples of how to be inclusive. One barrier to access is having an inaccessible social media presence. Inaccessibility on Instagram was something I noticed during my own research of the two organizations. For example, only the Prospector Theater used alternative captions on their Instagram posts. Not using accessibility features such as alternative captions on Instagram posts directly goes against what these organizations stand for in terms of inclusivity of people with disabilities. To address this issue and ensure that organizations are reflecting their commitment to inclusive employment on their social presence I have created a social media audit. This audit reflects suggestions for accessibility provided by those in the technology field (Instagram, n.d.; Sehl, 2021). The second material in this section is a remodeled Instagram post from the Bitty and Beau's Instagram. This remodel shows how to make an Instagram post more accessible. Not only is it remodeled, but I also reworded the caption to avoid language that I critiqued earlier in this paper that leaned towards involuntary advocacy. Both are simple and accessible fixes to ensure the maximum

number of individuals can interact with your content regardless of ability. Finally, the physical manual reflects suggestions provided by experts in terms of accessible fonts and colors (Bureau of Internet Accessibility, n.d.; Innovation Studio, n.d.; Bruce, 2021).

Body A second facet of IVM is the body. As discussed within the themes of this paper, the Instagram pages of the two organizations focused heavily on the employees themselves, making their body and image of high importance in the marketing practices. One of the most shocking discoveries in this research was the fact that the employees with disabilities self-identify or discuss their job only three times. Because organizations like the ones in this study amass large social media following, it is imperative they use the voices of their employees with disabilities are central to discourage them from becoming involuntary members or perform involuntary activism. Thus, I created two separate consent forms. One is a continued consent form to be signed each time a photograph is posted of an employee. When presented with this document employees will get to approve the picture and associated caption. The second is specifically for when organizations want to highlight individual employees on their social media. Each function to protect individual employees from having to disclose their disability on social media without their constant consent. There is also another document that outlines potential questions employees may choose to ask their employees when interviewing them for a spotlight. All these forms help protect the identity of these employees and puts control of their body back into their own hands.

Mobility The next facet of IVM I will focus on is mobility. Outside of these organizations, we see that the mobility of people with disabilities is restricted because they have historically been excluded from social settings. The inability to be allowed in

certain organizations is a reason why people with disabilities are involuntary members of the disability community as discussed earlier. However, it is important that we understand *how* these organizations who solely focus on hiring people with disabilities are limiting employee mobility. While I cannot make claims for exactly how these organizations are run, their social media presence indicate that they exert some amount of control over mobility. An example of this is job promotion. These organizations are vocal on social media about the promotions they give their employees. However, many of these organizations give these employees titles that do not indicate an upward mobility with the organization (i.e., manager of good vibes). As discussed previously, the titles indicate a lack of seriousness and responsibility that may normally be associated with a promotion (Bitty & Beau's 2022d; 2022e). This section of the manual primarily focuses on strengthening self-advocacy skills because they have been seen as an effective tool in allowing people with disabilities to obtain leadership positions.

Smith & Mueller (2021) stated that teaching people with disabilities self-advocacy skills is fundamental to engaging in true equality. Thus, it is important that teaching self-advocacy skills be at the center of these organizations because these skills can act as a gateway to better employment inclusion. Further, Goodley (2005) showed that self-advocacy can reduce the feeling of stigmatization that one may feel and is also a proven tool for empowerment. Concurrently, Woolf and de Bie (2022) found that secondary education is not sufficiently preparing students with disabilities with self-advocacy skills. So, given that these individuals have limited mobility due to outside forces stigmatizing their position as a person with a disability, it is critical for there to be

action to rectify this issue. This is why I argue for self-advocacy lessons through the training process in my manual.

While there is not a one size fits all way to train individuals to self-advocate, I have broken up the self-advocacy tools into a worksheet based on a framework provided by Test et al (2005). Test et al (2005) suggested that an individual with a disability needs to be able to communicate two things to be able to self-advocate, ultimately affording them the opportunity for equal access to leadership roles: knowledge of the self and knowledge of rights. To re-examine the way students with disabilities learn self-advocacy skills Woolf & de Bie (2022) suggested that students take part in their own accommodations process to allow them to gain a better understanding of what goes on in the process of obtaining accommodations. By being involved in the process of creating their accommodations, employees can gain a better knowledge of the self (Test et al., 2005). To do this, I suggest that the supervisor of the organization sit down one-on-one with each new hire, go through the pages I have created in detail, and have the employee with a disability engage by writing their own answers, if able, or using any other modification as necessary. This follows Schimmel & Jacobs (2001) suggestion to engage involuntary members by having them physically write down information to engage them in tasks. The first step in this process is to understand what career goals these employees have; this will help tackle the knowledge of the self in a way that begins to help resist the organizations restriction on their mobility by acknowledging that this job can be a steppingstone in their career.

As Test et al (2005) suggested one must also have a knowledge of their rights to achieve leadership through self-advocacy. To do this, I have created an ADA fact sheet

that will be given to each employee. Ideally, the manager would be able to read through this sheet with employees and answer any questions they may have. I also suggest it be hung in an accessible place within the workplace so employees can return to it later. This will allow employees to gain a stronger knowledge of their rights as a person with a disability because legislation like the ADA is largely inaccessible and difficult to read.

The last page included in this section of the manual targets both the knowledge of self and rights by going over available accommodations. Accommodations and/or modifications are protected rights under the ADA (EEOC, n.d.). These can be anything from modifying ones existing work environment to adjusting one's work schedule (EEOC., n.d.). As described earlier, there is overlap with these five facets, so this accommodations worksheet will also work to help ensure the physical environment for the employee is comfortable as possible, while also tackling their mobility as they will gain skills to help ensure they can self-advocate for these accommodations in the future. Thus, ensuring that mobility and physical environment are not restricted through thorough training in self-advocacy.

Building off the previous section, Woolf & de Bie (2022), suggested that to ensure that self-advocacy skills are taught in a way that empowers the individual with a disability they need to become thoroughly involved in the process, and taught how to advocate for change. In an academic environment, they suggest a more “pedagogical” relationship between the educators and the students with disabilities. This would allow for students to be involved in the process of making materials, trainings, and expansion of services (Wolf & de Bie, 2022). Other scholars have suggested that people with disabilities need to become actively become involved in political change to feel this

empowerment (Smith & Mueller, 2021). Because I suggested that these organizations deny these employees much autonomy by making every interaction they have a form of advocacy, I suggest that by strengthening their involvement in the communicating organizational mission will help reduce or limit acts of involuntary advocacy.

To do this, I suggest that these organizations should place a strong emphasis on training their employees on the mission and how to communicate it to the public. As stated previously, there has been a link found between organizational commitment and performance (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). While these organizations make it seem like the employees are committed to the mission, there is little evidence that they are actually engaging the employees within the mission, especially because we saw a severe lack of employee's voices on the social media. This is important as these organizations are making it seem as though the employees are the ones making the change. However, as evident in my involuntary advocacy section, without proper training in mission dissemination, the employees with disabilities likeness and interactions are replaced as a means for showing the public what inclusive employment is. Therefore, I have outlined different ways they organization can discuss their mission with their employees: this ranges from training sessions to talking points. This will allow the employees to see themselves as more involved within the mission process and ensure they aren't performing involuntary advocacy through just performing their job tasks.

Additionally, a critique I presented earlier of these organizations I studied was their limited view of what activism is. To ensure that these organizations, and one's similar, are being consistent with their messaging, they need to add an educational level to their organizations, either through social media or teaching other businesses how to

include people with disabilities in their organizations. They can, for example, engage with the local community and provide training sessions on how to hire people with disabilities and what accommodations in the workplace look like. To address this, I have created a mini presentation that could be presented to local businesses. I also suggest managers share the materials within the manual with those within their communities so other businesses can begin to include people with disabilities in their workspaces. I also encourage employees to work on these presentations with the managers. This would make the outcome of threefold: 1. Resist the idea that a single interaction is sufficient for increasing inclusive employment, 2. Increase engagement of employees with the mission thus ensuring they are not performing involuntary advocacy and 3. Strengthening their self-advocacy skills through presentations with the public which could eventually lead to more open mobility through new opportunities with local businesses.

Relationship The final facet of IVM that I will discuss is relationship. This facet is complex, and I suggest that it will be impacted based on the implementation of the tools I have presented in this study. Meisenbach & Kramer (2014) showed that one's relationship with the organization they are a part of becomes stronger if they feel involved. All the suggestions I provided above work to ensure that the employees are constantly involved in all aspects of their career—from self-advocacy to mission involvement. Because I suggested that these individuals may be involuntary members of this organization, thus putting them in situations where they may have to perform involuntary advocacy, it is important to recognize that this could have impacts on how they view themselves and their co-workers. The issue of relationships cannot be solved within a single page of a training manual. This issue is complex and is embedded in a

larger conversation of power and ableism. Therefore, I suggest that organizations should act on these suggestions as they will provide people with disabilities a more comfortable environment where they are able to strengthen their skills, learn about themselves in a workplace, and work towards a more inclusive world without having their disability exploited for the benefit of the organization. Their relationship with work may become more positive, and the public's perspective and relationship with disability may be shifted as well, but not because these places exist, but because these places foster real meaningful inclusion.

As shown throughout the materials included in the manual, simple measures can be put in place to prevent involuntary advocacy from occurring. The general theme among these materials is inclusion. Inclusion in this instance has two meanings. First, ensuring that the employees are included within both creation of their own materials as well as intentional dissemination of the mission materials. Second, inclusion of people with disabilities reflected on a larger scale, in terms of curating a comfortable physical and online environment.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Currently, we still see shockingly low rates the employment rates among people with disabilities. While both organizations I studied are doing great work in terms of highlighting this fact and providing jobs to this demographic, we are still far from inclusive employment for people with disabilities. Additionally, we are still relying on older organizational structures like supported employment, which isolate people with disabilities from their typically developing peers (Kregel & Dean, 2002; Cimera, 2011). This sort of organizational structure is not reflective of the meaningful work people with

disabilities are capable of. Continuing to advertise that organizations like Bitty & Beau's and The Prospector Theater are true inclusion could potentially be harmful to the public perception of people with disabilities.

Throughout this paper I analyzed two organizations who provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities. My thematic analysis of these organizations' Instagram pages showed that structuring an organization's entire identity around their employees may promote a performance of (in)voluntary advocacy. This paper drew upon Peterson & McNamee's (2017) IVM framework to suggest there could be room to add a subsection entitled involuntary advocacy. I suggest that future researchers continue to study this using the embodied experiences of people with disabilities. Ideally, this would look like interviews with employees in organizations like Bitty & Beau's and The Prospector Theater to see if they reflect the feelings I alluded to earlier in this paper. This will allow for a more robust understanding of how involuntary advocacy is performed. While this study intentionally focused on the disability community, there are involuntary members in many other communities where involuntary advocacy could occur. I would suggest future researchers also explore how involuntary advocacy may be performed using other demographics.

Practically, I was able to provide materials that organizations like Bitty & Beau's and The Prospector Theater to use to ensure they are avoiding putting their employees in instances where they perform involuntary advocacy. Additionally, it is my hope that organizations like Bitty and Beau's and The Prospector Theater share these with businesses in their community to show a commitment to spreading awareness about inclusive employment and begin to see the change they say they are making. As said in

the beginning of this paper, people with disabilities have expressed interest in being able to choose their career options (Wass et al., 2021; Rustad & Kassah, 2020). Organizations like Bitty & Beau's and The Prospector Theater are giving people with disabilities a solid starting place for integrating into the workforce, however without the implementation of the materials above in both supported employment settings and other workplaces, people with disabilities will still be stuck in a vicious cycle of limited employment options ultimately denying them from exploring career options. Ultimately, there is still stigma surrounding people with disabilities and many businesses neglect to hire them because of the misconceptions associated with the amount of labor and costs that come with accommodations (Legnick-Hall et al., 2008). Organization like Bitty & Beau's should try and be more conscious of the platform they have and use it to show their community how simple including people with disabilities can be. I believe the materials I have made reflect that simplicity and will helpful for businesses who have never hired a person with a disability before.

Overall, these organizations are important to study as they are unique in their structure as they are beginning to try and positively shift the employment rates of people with disabilities. However, they still struggle to balance sharing a mission regarding people with disabilities and avoiding exploitation of their identity. The exploitation of their identity can lead to having to perform (in)voluntary advocacy on the part of the organization. Further research and implementation of tools like the ones I provided in this manual will hopefully help these organizations move away from upholding structures that may make their employees perform (in)voluntary advocacy.

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