

I TELL OR YOU TELL:
THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN
STIGMAS AND DISCLOSURE

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the interaction between disclosure of potentially stigmatizing information and the controllability of the stigma. A study was conducted with 298 participants (228 women, 70 men); participants were undergraduate students from a large public university. An experiment was conducted in order to measure the interaction between disclosure and the controllability of the stigma. The present study predicted that self disclosures about an uncontrollable stigma would be rated the most likeable, where as controllable stigmas revealed by another would be rated the least likeable. Past research (Hebl and Kleck, 2002) has shown that uncontrollable stigmas were perceived more favorably than controllable stigmas. Additionally, previous research (Hastorf et. al, 1979) indicates that uncontrollable stigmas are rated more favorably if the stigmatized acknowledges the stigma. Furthermore, Ward and Brenner (2006) contend that acknowledgement of a stigma can negate negative feelings, whereas acknowledgement of a stigma by a third party actually exacerbates the negative rating of the stigma. Therefore, the present study investigated participants' opinions of the hireability of an applicant. Participants were presented with one of four conditions and asked to rate the overall applicant's hireability. Contrary to the hypothesis, no interaction was found. Though, there was a significant mean difference in the uncontrolled category for success potential, hireability, and likeability. These findings suggest that, at least for uncontrolled disabilities, disclosing the disability can be seen as a positive and works to put others at ease as to the condition of the disabled individual.

I Tell or You Tell:

The Intersection between Stigmas and Disclosures

People with disabilities bear the brunt of stigmatization, socially and professionally, on a daily basis, which can lead to difficulties finding gainful employment. Furthermore, when applying for a job a person with a disability must decide when to inform a potential employer of their limitations, whether real or perceived. Disability is a very personal and often private stigma, and choosing when or even if to disclose can be a daunting task. Longmore (1985) argues that the mere use of disability tinged monikers may lead people with disabilities and others to feel that they are subpar. Frequently these monikers allude to the person *being* less of a human. Unfortunately, the use of these negative labels often further reinforces the negative stigmatization and ultimately the stereotyping that goes along with being disabled. Taken together, this greatly increases the overall difficulty level of finding and interviewing for a job.

Frequently, applicants with physical disabilities have trouble with interviews due to the bias associated with the stigma of having a physical disability (Hebl & Dovidio, 2005). Hastorf, Wildfogel, and Cassman (1979) attempted to address this problem by using acknowledgement of the handicap as a social tactic during the job interview. It seems plausible that this strategy may garner success, due to the fact that people without physical disabilities typically avoid bringing the obvious disability into conversation (Goffman, 1963). Hastorf et al. (1979) asked participants to watch taped interviews featuring confederates portrayed as paraplegics; the confederate either did or did not, acknowledge their disability. After viewing the taped interviews, participants were asked

to select one of the confederates they had just viewed to work with on an activity.

Hastorf et al. (1979) findings were enlightening, for they found that participants consistently chose to be partnered with the confederate that offered the acknowledgment of his handicap.

Concerned that the preference was not due to the acknowledgement of disability but, due to a personal self-disclosure, Hastorf et al. (1979) investigated the acknowledgement of a handicap versus the effect of personal self-disclosure in a follow up study. Participants again watched taped interviews featuring confederates portrayed as paraplegics. By contrast, this time one confederate acknowledged his disability, whereas the second confederate made an unrelated personal disclosure. In order to keep the study as consistent as possible, the participants were again asked to select one of the confederates they had just viewed to work with on a project. In a similar manner, they found that participants preferred confederates who acknowledged their handicap over confederates who disclosed personal information with no relation to the visible handicap.

A personal disclosure of one's disability status is all fine and good, but Hastorf et al. (1979) was concerned as to whether the addition of nervousness added to the disclosure would negate the positive effects of the disclosure altogether. In a follow up study, Hastorf et. al (1979) investigated whether a nervous, tense or anxious acknowledgement of the handicap would be as effective as an unrelated personal disclosure. It seems reasonable that a participant would prefer the confederate that made the personal disclosure because with a nervous or anxious acknowledgement, the verbal and nonverbal elements are contradictory. Therefore, Hastorf et al. (1979) hypothesized that the nonverbal contradictions would lead the participants to feel that talking about the

disability was not acceptable which would then lead participants to feel even greater levels of discomfort around the confederate. Conversely, Hastorf et. al (1979) again found that participants preferred the confederate who acknowledged their handicap, even if they seemed anxious or nervous. These results indicate that disabled individuals would be better served socially and professionally by acknowledging their disability in an interview setting.

Based upon Hastorf et al. (1979) it seems plausible that acknowledging a physical disability allows the stigmatized to be seen in a more positive light, though Hebl and Kleck (2002) argue that the controllability of the stigma also has an effect on the overall likability of the stigmatized individual, regardless of the acknowledgement of the stigma. This argument led Hebl and Kleck (2002) to compare the likeability of individuals with either a controllable or an uncontrollable stigma. In order to test likeability, college students were asked to view a 10-min taped interview; upon completion the students were asked to assume the role of an interviewer or evaluator. The students were then asked to rate the individuals they had just seen on likability, hireability, and perceived personality factors. The individuals being evaluated were either obese or disabled, and their conditions were either considered controllable or uncontrollable. Additionally, during the taped interview the confederates either acknowledged or did not acknowledge their obvious stigma. Hebl and Kleck (2002) found that confederates with uncontrollable stigmas were perceived more favorably overall than were confederates with controllable stigmas. Consistent with previous research (Hastorf et al., 1979), confederates with an uncontrollable stigma, disability, were rated more favorably if they acknowledged their stigma. By contrast, confederates with a controllable stigma, obesity, were rated less

favorably if they acknowledged their stigma. Obesity was considered more controllable than a physical disability. Overall these results suggest that individuals with visible stigmas should consider the perceived controllability of the stigma before deciding whether to mention it in an interview setting.

Though it may seem to be a situation of *buyer beware* when acknowledging a controllable stigma in an interview, the pratfall effect suggests that admitting to an unfavorable quality or characteristic can actually help to change people's impressions of an individual. Ward and Brenner (2006) investigated whether negative acknowledgement would negate a negative impression of an individual. In one study they asked college students to read either a confusing paragraph that included an admission that the paragraph was indeed confusing or the same paragraph without the admission. Ward and Brenner (2006) found that when the paragraph included an acknowledgment about the confusing nature of the material, participants rated that paragraph as clearer and more easily understood than they did with the paragraph that lacked the acknowledgement.

In a follow-up study, Ward and Brenner (2006) asked participants to listen to a five minute psychology lecture given by a speaker with a strong Australian accent. The lecture either included an oral acknowledgement of the "rather strong accent", or it concluded with no acknowledgement. On average, participants rated the speaker's lecture as being clearer when the acknowledgement of the "rather strong accent" was made as opposed to when he did not make the acknowledgement. Taken together with Hebl and Kleck's (2002) findings, it seems as though an acknowledgement of an uncontrolled stigma, in this case the accent, is indeed an effective strategy for both

breaking the ice, and putting the interviewer at ease, thereby taking steps to negate the stereotyping stigma.

Ward and Brenner (2006), continued their work on the acknowledgement of negative attributes by conducting a follow-up study in which students were asked to assume the role of college admissions interviewer and rate the appeal of a high school student for admission into the college. There were three separate conditions including: the student admitting his grades “weren’t the greatest”, the counselor admitting that the students grades “weren’t the greatest”, and no acknowledgment about the grades whatsoever. Ward and Brenner (2006) found that the acknowledgment of subpar grades was slightly negated, which lead to higher ratings of the high school student, if the acknowledgment came from the student himself. Both of the other conditions, including the counselor acknowledging the subpar grades and no acknowledgement being made resulted in a significantly lower rating of the student. Ward and Brenner’s (2006) results indicate that taking personal responsibility for a perceived inadequacy may invalidate the negative feelings produced by the perceived inadequacy.

Though individuals with controllable stigmas may try to acknowledge their differences, stigmas are typically hard to overcome. Physical disabilities are especially difficult because people without physical disabilities simply do not know how to relate to, or react to, disabled individuals (Duggan, Bradshaw, & Altman, 2010). Stereotypes regarding disabled individuals continue to flourish and include notions that these individuals are maladjusted, depressed, or excessively needy and dependent upon nondisabled individuals (Colella, 1994). Furthermore, according to Hebl and Dovidio (2005), nondisabled individuals will even subconsciously shun disabled individuals.

Hebl and Dovidio (2005) reviewed the findings of multiple studies and found that this social shunning behavior has been shown to display itself as a lack of communication and socialization (Edelmann, Evans, Pegg, & Tremain, 1983; Harris, Milich, Corbitt, Hoover, & Brady 1992) and reduced eye contact (Perlman & Routh, 1980; Edelmann et al., 1983). Furthermore, nondisabled people tend to sit further away from, and reduced the length of their interactions with disabled people (Kleck, 1968; Langer, Fiske, Taylor, & Chanowitz, 1976). These avoidant behaviors lead people with physical disabilities to have a less developed set of social skills, which results in an even greater reduction of contact with nondisabled people. Moreover, as a direct response of the active shunning, disabled individuals tend to be socially isolated to such an extent that when people do finally take the time to get to know them, the disabled person's stunted social skills cause them to be liked even less (Hebl & Dovidio, 2005).

The aforementioned social issues and the bountiful stereotypes often lead many people with disabilities to question whether or not they should acknowledge the disability. Due to intimate nature of disability, this can be a very uncomfortable situation even for those extremely comfortable with their disability. Additionally, once they have made the decision to acknowledge the stigma, they must then decide *when* to make the acknowledgement. According to Hebl and Skorinko (2005), sooner is better. They hypothesized that addressing ones disability early during an employment interview would lead to the interviewer forming a more positive impression of the disabled person. To test this theory, college students were asked to watch an eight minute video featuring a confederate with a physical disability completing an employment interview. Upon completion of the video students were asked to assume the role of interviewer and rate

the individuals they had just viewed based on their hireability. Additionally, participants were either in one of two groups, acknowledgment or no acknowledgment. In the groups that the confederate acknowledged the disability, they either made the acknowledgment at the beginning, middle, or end of the interview. Consistent with their hypothesis, Hebl and Skorinko, (2005) found that participants rated individuals as happier and more capable when the disability acknowledgement was made at the beginning or middle of the interview rather than at the end of the interview or not at all. Moreover, Hebl and Skorinko (2005) contend that the acknowledgements made at the beginning of the interview lead the participant to view the person with a disability as more psychologically sound. Past research (Colella, 1994; Goffman, 1963; Hebl & Dovidio, 2005) argues that people with physical disabilities are often seen as psychologically unfit and maladjusted, so it seems plausible that this assertion of acceptance of the disability assuages the negative perceptions related to the disability.

The previous studies have primarily focused on acknowledgment of stigma as a social strategy for either controllable or uncontrollable stigmas (Hastorf et al., 1979; Hebl & Kleck, 2002; Ward & Brenner, 2006), though particular attention must be given to the finding that controllable stigmas are seen as negatives (Hebl & Kleck, 2002).

Additionally, *when* to reveal a stigma is of utmost concern for a disabled or stigmatized individual. Though ultimately, it seems that likeability for disabled individuals can be increased by addressing the 800-pound elephant in the room, by getting the obvious out in the open. People are uncomfortable with *different*, and addressing the different helps to put people at ease. By addressing the obvious, disabled individuals can begin an interview or a casual conversation by putting their best foot forward.

Taken together, these findings indicate that it is better for an individual to disclose potentially stigmatizing information if the stigma is considered beyond the individual's control, but the available literature seems to be lacking information regarding controlled vs. uncontrolled disclosures made by a third party. The present study is a replication of Blomquist, Willems, Laurie, and Giuliano's (2010) study in which they investigated the interaction between controllability of a stigma and disclosure. Blomquist et al. (2010) argued that individuals who self-disclose an uncontrolled stigma would be more likeable than individuals that have a third-party disclose a controlled stigma. To test that theory Blomquist et al. (2010) issue paper surveys to 96 college students (44 men, 52 women). The surveys contained a demographic section, a resume, the disability disclosure statement, and hireability and likeability measures. Though they did not find a significant interaction between disclosure and controllability, they did find that individuals who have a third-party disclose their stigma tend to be rated higher for getting along with their coworkers. The present study seeks to include a larger range of students, as well as take out the social desirability factor of a face-to-face survey but administering the survey via the Internet.

The purpose of the present study was to test for an interaction between who discloses and the controllability of the disclosed stigma. Given Ward and Brenner's (2006) findings, the present study contends that stigmatized individuals will be less stigmatized when they divulge the stigma themselves. Additionally, when considering Hebl and Kleck's (2002) findings, the present study contends that stigmatized individuals will be considered more likeable if the stigma is considered beyond their control. To explore this theory, a between-subjects design was used. It was predicted that

uncontrollable stigmas disclosed by self would be rated more likeable, and ultimately more hireable, than controlled stigmas disclosed by a third-party. Two hundred ninety-eight undergraduate students participated in an experiment in which they were asked to read a job candidates resume and a supplemental materials sheet, which included an embedded disability disclosure. Once the participant reviewed these materials they were asked to rate the candidate's overall likeability and hireability, as well as their likeability and hireability for particular jobs.

Method

Participants

Two hundred ninety-eight undergraduate students (228 women, 70 men) from a large public university in central Texas participated in the present study; participation was voluntary and no compensation was received. Participants were chosen via convenience sampling, and were recruited from various locations on campus, including classrooms, computer labs, and dining halls. In addition, participants were recruited through an email request for participants distributed through their psychology classes. The mean age of the sample was 21.91 ($SD = 4.97$), with a range of 38 years. The sample consisted of 54.7% Caucasians, 6.7% African Americans, 0.7% Asian Americans, 31.9% Hispanics, 4.4% who categorized themselves as multiple-races, and 1% another ethnicity. All participants specified their ethnicity. Of the students in the sample, 45 participants were currently in their first year, 77 their second year, 70 their third year, 68 their fourth year, and 38 in their fifth or more year. Participants' socioeconomic status

was not recorded. Additionally, individuals with visible handicaps were neither sought out nor excluded from participation.

Design

A between-subjects design was used to explore the relationship between the source of a stigmatizing disclosure and the controllability of said disclosure. Participants were randomly assigned a survey denoted with an internal code, though participants were not made aware that the survey forms were different. The present study investigated participants' judgments of a fictional job applicant. Of particular interest were both the source of the disclosure and controllability of the stigma, and whether or not this influenced participant's opinion of the applicant.

The first independent variable, disclosure, contained two levels: self-disclosure and other (third-party) disclose. Specifically, self-disclosure was operationally defined as a supplemental materials paragraph, written by the job candidate, disclosing the cause the candidates disability. Other disclosure was operationally defined as a supplemental materials paragraph, written by the interviewer, disclosing the cause the candidates disability. The second independent variable, controllability, also contained two levels: controllable stigmas and uncontrollable stigmas. A controllable stigma was operationally defined as the applicant's physical disability being attributed to the applicant causing a car accident while texting and driving. An uncontrollable stigma was operationally defined as the applicant's physical disability being attributed to the driver of the other car causing a car accident while texting and driving. The dependent variables, likeability and hireability, were measured based upon higher scores on a 7-point Likert scale.

Furthermore, likeability and hireability were operationally defined as higher scores of suitability for particular jobs.

Materials

The survey and consent form were uploaded onto a psychology survey website, Qualtrics. The website is secure and offers unique tools tailored to psychological surveys and questionnaires. In the present study, each participant was randomly issued one of four experimental survey forms for recording their opinions of the job applicant as well as a research consent form. The surveys were marked with an internal code which indicated male or female, as the present survey intended to keep all mitigating factors even. The survey consisted of multiple online pages. The pages were kept fairly short to keep from becoming overwhelming with long chunks of text. Additionally, the entire survey was kept consistent in both overall length and page length across all four variations. The survey began with the consent form, followed by a full page of demographic information. Each page contained a set of instructions for completing that section of the survey. After the consent and demographic information, participants were prompted to complete a self-assessment of their ability to be a fair judge. On the next page participants were instructed to carefully read through the applicants resume and supplement materials.

The survey was spread across multiple pages and contained thirty-four items including background demographics, reactions to the job applicant, suitability of the job applicant and characteristics of the job applicant. The survey ended with a two-question memory check which consisted of questions about who cause the accident and who

disclosed the disability. This encouraged participants to read more carefully if they were unable to answer those questions.

Each section of the survey included directions specific to that section. Additionally, the instructions at the beginning of the survey contained information on how the researchers would maintain the participant's anonymity.

The survey included a demographic section which asked for participant's age, gender, year in school, and ethnicity. All sections included in the survey contained explicit instructions for completing the scale. The next section included a self-assessment which questioned how fair the participant felt they were. Immediately following the self-assessment were the included supplemental materials, the resume and interview excerpt. Part II of the survey consisted of the participant's reaction to the job applicant. They were asked if they would hire the applicant. In addition, participants were asked rate the qualities of the job candidate.

Part III of the survey measured the participant's opinion of the suitability of the job candidate for particular jobs. Participants were instructed to imagine that the candidate had any and all necessary degrees needed for employment in the particular job field. The job's consisted of a collection of non-professional jobs and a collection of professional jobs. The non-professional jobs included: receptionist, secretary, phone operator, administrative assistant, and clothing store manager. The professional jobs included lawyer, doctor, professor, corporate consultant, and accountant. Part IV asked the participants to make judgments about the characteristics of the job candidate, including how responsible the candidate was for their disability and if the candidate was

deserving of sympathy or pity. The final portion of the survey included the previously mentioned memory check. This was used to measure whether or not the participant had actually read the included supplemental materials; if a participant was unable to correctly answer either of the questions it could be assumed that the data they provided would not be reliable.

To avoid confounds in the present study wording and length of the personal statements and reference letters was held at a constant across four conditions. The only information that varied across conditions was the disclosure statement which included the type of stigma disclosed. Additionally, previous research indicated that the timing of the disclosure, when the disclosure was introduced to a participant, could have an effect on likeability of someone with a visible stigma (Hebl & Skorinko, 2005), thus in the present study timing of the disclosure was held constant throughout conditions to ensure that time of disclosure did not affect the likeability of the job applicant. Furthermore, no particular occupation was specified to ensure that the type of job did not affect the likability of the applicant for a particular job.

Finally, each of the four conditions was represented in an even number surveys. In other words, each condition was represented equally, and randomly distributed to participants. The current study used blocked random assignment; surveys were marked with one of four alpha-numeric codes. In addition, participants were placed into all conditions in a random order, though an attempt was made to ensure that the number of men in each condition was equal. Since so few men participated, it was not possible to have equal men and women. Hebl and Skorinko (2005) contend that acknowledgements made at the beginning or a middle of an interview lead the participant to view the person

with a disability as more psychologically sound, therefore to control for disclosure timing participants in all conditions were exposed to the disclosure in the middle of the packet. Finally, a double-blind method was used so the researcher and participant were both unaware of the condition that participants have been assigned to.

Procedure

Participants in the present study were 298 Texas State University students, ranging in age from 18-56 years old. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling. That is, students were approached in common areas and asked if they would like to participate in a research study. Additionally, information regarding the present study was distributed to students by their psychology professors via email in an attempt to solicit participants. No compensation was offered for participation. In order to prevent socially desirable responses, a cover story was used to explain that the research was investigating college students' perceptions of the hiring process and what qualifications predict hireability. After agreeing to participate, participants were randomly assigned to one of four possible conditions: self-disclosure of a controllable stigma, self-disclosure of an uncontrollable stigma, other-disclosure of a controllable stigma, or other disclosure of an uncontrollable stigma. Participants were then asked to carefully read the instructions and were then given time to ask any questions to clarify the directions. Next, participants were informed that the survey would take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participants were asked to read a consent page, which included an example of the questions that would be asked, and indicate their consent to participate in a research study. Then, participants were instructed to read a resume and supplemental information containing questions from an application answered by the applicant, as well

as a section titled that included three things that should be known about the candidate. That section included a paragraph with the disability disclosure made by either the applicant or the interviewer explaining either the controllable or uncontrollable stigma. Participants were then asked to complete the questionnaire which included questions about the hirability of the applicant. Upon completion of the survey, participants were thanked for their time and asked not to discuss the experiment with other students. Finally, once all data had been collected, participants were sent an email to debrief them on the experiment. Participants were again thanked for their time and subsequently informed that the true purpose of the present study was to investigate self and other disclosure of uncontrollable and controllable stigmas and how presentation of this information affects the hireability of job applicants.

Results

A one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was calculated examining the effect of disability (controlled or uncontrolled) and significant effect was found, $\Lambda(4,293) = 0.670, p = .000$. The present study found that potential success, which was categorized with questions coded as potential, competency, and success in 10 years, had a significant mean difference in the controlled ($M = 13.47$) vs. uncontrolled ($M = 13.96$) categories. Meaning, participants rated the applicant more competent when the disability was beyond the applicant's control. In addition, participants rated the applicant as significantly more employable, coded with questions such as hireability, appropriate for the job, and recommended for the job, when the disability was considered uncontrolled ($M = 14.74$) vs. controlled ($M = 14.25$). Participants also rated the candidate as someone they would like to get to know more when the disability was

beyond the applicants control ($M = 14.11$) rather than a controlled disability ($M = 13.48$). Furthermore, participants offered less blame for the disability when it was an uncontrolled disability ($M = 5.58$) vs. a controlled disability ($M = 8.32$). A surprising outcome was that participants blamed the applicant more when their disability was revealed by a third party ($M = 7.23$) vs. a self-disclosure ($M = 6.61$), regardless of whether the disability was controlled or uncontrolled. Contrary to prediction there was not a significant interaction between controllability of a disability and disclosure type, self or third-party, $\Lambda(4,293) = 0.97, p = .101, ns$.

Discussion

The results of the present study indicate that the origins of personal disclosures are not as important as whether the possibly stigmatizing information could have been prevented. The present study contends that humankind wants to like those that we consider less fortunate, and having an uncontrolled stigma would seemingly fall into that category. Given that statement it comes as no surprise that the participants ranked the uncontrolled stigma higher across all three measures: competency, likeability, and hireability. The findings are in tune with our propensity towards fighting for the underdog. Surprisingly though was the tendency to blame the individual that allowed their disclosure to be shared by a third party. Blomquist et al. (2010) found the exact opposite in that they found a higher a rating for individuals in the third-party disclosure treatment. That being said, the findings of the present study are still in line with previous research (Hebl & Kleck, 2002; Ward & Brenner 2006).

Hebl and Kleck (2002) argue that the controllability of the stigma has an effect on the overall likability of the stigmatized individual, regardless of the acknowledgement of

the stigma. The present results are consistent with those findings for in the present study individuals that were rated high on uncontrollability of a stigma were rated high on likeability and hireability. Furthermore, Ward and Brenner (2006) contend that that taking personal responsibility for stigmatizing information can work towards negating negative feelings. The present findings support this claim. Participants rated the individual higher on measures of blame when the stigma was disclosed by a third-party, regardless of the perceived controllability of the stigma.

Although the present results offer clear support for controllability as the mitigating variable, it is perhaps appropriate to recognize several potential limitations. A first concern was length and the variety of topics the questionnaire covered; it was not centered on the topics with which I was concerned. The questionnaire could have been more concise if it were reduced in length to include only those items necessary to the variables disclosure and controllability. Furthermore, due to the overall length of the supplemental materials and the attention to detail required while reading these materials, participants may have skipped over portions in an attempt to reduce the amount of reading required. Therefore, if the supplemental materials were revised with brevity in mind it may change the outcome of the study. Similarly, another possible issue may have been the number of questions used to study the relationship between disclosure and controllability. More questions added to measure this relationship may be helpful. Another potential limitation is that the questionnaire required complete honesty on the part of the student participant, anything less would result in measurement error. It seems plausible that making the switch to an online environment may have worked to remove some social desirability, but humans still tend to lean toward rooting for the underdog,

which in this case would lead to higher ratings of potential success, likeability, and hireability.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, these results suggest several theoretical and practical implications. For example, stigmatized individuals appear to have difficulty starting personal relationships due to a lack of social skills caused by social shunning (Hebl & Dovidio, 2005). The results of the present study, when considered in conjunction with the findings of Hebl and Dovidio (2005), could help stigmatized individuals develop appropriate wording when disclosing stigmas. It has been shown that uncontrolled stigmas are viewed more favorably than controlled stigmas (Hastorf et al., 1979; Hebl & Kleck, 2002), therefore it seems plausible that one would want to reveal any elements of the stigma that are more uncontrolled and that doing so would result in greater acceptance of an individual. Being better accepted may, in turn lead to greater self-acceptance, and the resulting confidence might also enhance social skills for stigmatized individuals. Another implication for the present research is in hiring; these findings could be helpful for training interviewers. If interviewers are better aware of the special social needs that a stigmatized individual may have, they may be able to conduct a more productive interview. If the stigmatized individual is lacking in some social areas as a result of the stigmatization, as suggested by Hebl and Skorinko (2005), a properly trained interviewer may be able to better assess aptitude levels for stigmatized individuals. As opposed to current conditions (as suggested by the current study and the literature previously outlined), where stigmatized individuals (in particular people with disabilities) are frequently seen as lacking, regardless of their actual skills, properly trained interviewers may be better able to recognize the actual degree of aptitude such an

individual has brought into the interview situation. It seems as though these capable, and possibly talented, individuals may be currently overlooked due to interviewer bias or stereotypes.

In terms of future research, it would be useful to extend the current findings by examining other variations of the disability condition. One important research question asks, “does the type of disability change the ratings of an individual?” In the present study use of a wheelchair was used to define disability. If the type of visible disability were changed, there may be a difference on positive and negative ratings of an individual. An additional research question focuses on the involvement of others. If the disclosure included more background information about the injury, i.e. were other people hurt at the time the individual became disabled?, would this affect hireability ratings, perceptions of competence, etc.. Lastly, further research could include different types of disclosure methods. The present study used a written interview excerpt to disclose the disability. Perhaps there may be a difference if the disclosure were via video. Much work remains to be done before a full understanding of the relationship between disability controllability and disclosure is established, but these suggestions may be a helpful starting point.

The current research appears to be one of the first steps at linking perceived controllability of a disability and personal disclosure source. Prior to this work, there does not appear to be literature linking these variables together. People with disabilities are frequently stigmatized and stereotyped, which can lead to trouble finding gainful employment. If the present research were used to better train interviewers, personal disability would be seen as less distracting, thereby allowing the interviewer to focus

more on the actual job skills of the individual searching for employment. These better trained interviewers would serve the corporate world two-fold; business would have access to a fresh pool of workers, and individuals with disabilities would have better access to jobs, and ultimately social interactions.

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◇ HIRING RECOMMENDATIONS SURVEY ◇

All of your responses are anonymous; do NOT put your name anywhere on this questionnaire!

The purpose of this research survey is to assess college students' perceptions of the hiring process and what qualifications predict hireability. This packet contains a resume of a job applicant, an additional statement providing extra information about the applicant, and a short survey for you to take. Please complete the following background information and then read the application materials very carefully before answering the questions about them on the scale provided. There are no right or wrong answers, so it is important that you answer each question as *honestly* as you can. Your objective feedback will help in future hiring decisions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your gender? (circle one) Female Male
3. What is your year in school? (circle one) First Second Third Fourth Fifth
4. What is your ethnicity? (circle one)
Asian-American Hispanic-American White/European-American Native-American Multi-Racial African-American Other

PART I: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Directions: Using the scale below, please rate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by writing a number from the scale in the blank next to each item.

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------|-------------------|---|---------|-------|----------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| ____ | 1. | I try to be a fair person. | | | |
| ____ | 2. | I am generally good at judging other people's talent. | | | |
| ____ | 3. | I can tell when someone is lying or exaggerating. | | | |
| ____ | 4. | I am a good judge of character. | | | |
| ____ | 5. | I am a hard worker. | | | |
| ____ | 6. | I would be a fair boss. | | | |
| ____ | 7. | I think smart people make better employees. | | | |

You are now going to read a job applicant's resume and supplemental materials, which provide extra information about the applicant. As a reminder, please DO NOT look back at the application materials when completing the survey.

Jennifer Thompson

jennifer.thompson@gmail.com

Current Address

8405 Hanbridge Lane
Seattle, Washington 98101
(583) 7822-8998

Permanent Address

4127 High Star Lane
Los Angeles, California 90014
Cell: (994) 098-9835

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a position utilizing administrative and communication skills.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science: Psychology (Business minor)

Fulbright University; GPA: 3.12

May 2009

Seattle, Washington

EXPERIENCE

Quality Assurance Intern

Star Insurance Inc. – Shelly Robinson

June 2009 – August 2010

Seattle, Washington

- Created a functional database for client satisfaction information using the SPSS software program
- Coded, entered, and analyzed data for client satisfaction surveys
- Created graphical representations of the findings and presented them at a Star Insurance Inc. board meeting
- Interviewed staff and developed community intranet to spotlight different programs within Star Insurance

Experimental Psychology, Laboratory Assistant

Psychology Department, Fulbright University

September 2008 – May 2009

Seattle, Washington

- Taught psychology students to write scientifically and to design research projects
- Explained complex concepts such as statistics and research design
- Researched background literature for possible research projects

AmeriCorps, Intern/Camp Counselor

Los Angeles Community Lighthouse

June 2008 – August 2008

Los Angeles, California

- Managed a class of 12 1st-4th graders following a curriculum
- Tutored the children using worksheets and planned fun activities
- Accompanied the children on field trips and supervised swimming

HONORS/ACTIVITIES

Fulbright University Wind Ensemble (2005-2009)

Merrill S. Perkins Scholarship (4 year merit scholarship)

Beta Chi (National Collegiate Service Fraternity) (2008-present, secretary 2008-2009)

Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Honor Society

SKILLS

Computer: PC; Windows; Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Internet Explorer

Languages: Spanish (reading and writing, some speaking)

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

[Excerpts from the application]

▫

1. What unique qualities do you believe that you will bring to the job?

I believe that I am unique because I have had many different experiences. My psychology background taught me research skills that will be invaluable to this job. I have experience designing and carrying out experimental research, and I would be able to apply these skills to this job. I have also had experience volunteering with children, and that experience improved my interpersonal skills and taught me the patience I will need in interactions with my co-workers and clients. Finally, I am bilingual, so my Spanish speaking skills will help me to interact with clients who do not speak English.

▫

4. What is a weakness of yours, and how do you hope to overcome it?

My greatest weakness is that I sometimes doubt myself. I have struggled with this over the years but I am proud to say that I have all but let go of this notion and I now see myself as uniquely qualified for this position.

[The candidate was asked to discuss 3 things that might affect her performance (good or bad) if hired. In response to this question, she wrote:]

1) I believe that one of the foundations of a successful business is how well organized the business is. That is a strength I feel that I can bring to your company. I have strong organizational skills, and furthermore I actually enjoy putting them to use. Additionally, I am not a procrastinator, though I feel that procrastination is just another symptom of poor organization. For once things are organized and moving smoothly, it is a simple task to stay on top of projects and assignments.

2) [INSERT ONE OF THE DISABILITY STATEMENTS FROM THE NEXT PAGE HERE]

3) I enjoy being part of a team, and more importantly being a team player. In my opinion you can accomplish far more when you are working in a group, than by making a go at it alone. One of the things I enjoy is being helpful. Even though it is not my project I am happy to lend a hand where needed. I think that having a helpful attitude can not only lead to a more cohesive group environment, but it can also help to make tasks take less time.

**STOP! PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU ARE FINISHED LOOKING
THROUGH THE APPLICATION MATERIALS BEFORE YOU MOVE
ON TO THE SURVEY!**

(ONE OF THE FOLLOWING DISABILITY STATEMENTS WAS INCLUDED ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE IN THE SECTION MARKED

“INSERT ONE OF THE DISABILITY STATEMENTS FROM THE NEXT PAGE HERE”

About a year ago, I was in a car accident driving home from work. I was texting my friend while driving, and when I looked up I had veered off into oncoming traffic. The woman in the other car wasn't injured, but I lost the use of my legs, and now I use a wheelchair. It's been difficult for me to adjust, but I have come to terms with it. I left my most recent job because it wasn't very accessible, but I am really excited about the prospect of this job, and I am excited to start working again. I believe that my physical disability will not affect my job performance in any way.

About a year ago, I was in a car accident driving home from work. The other driver was texting a friend while driving, and when she looked up she had veered off into oncoming traffic. The woman in the other car wasn't injured, but I lost the use of my legs, and now I use a wheelchair. It's been difficult for me to adjust, but I have come to terms with it. I left my most recent job because it wasn't very accessible, but I am really excited about the prospect of this job, and I am excited to start working again. I believe that my physical disability will not affect my job performance in any way.

About a year ago, Jennifer was in a car accident driving home from work. Jennifer was texting her friend while driving, and when she looked up she had veered off into oncoming traffic. The woman in the other car wasn't injured, but Jennifer lost the use of her legs, and now she uses a wheelchair. It's been difficult for her to adjust, but she has come to terms with it. She left her most recent job because it wasn't very accessible, but she is really excited about the prospect of this job, and she is excited to start working again. I believe that her physical disability will not affect her job performance in any way.

About a year ago, Jennifer was in a car accident driving home from work. The other driver was texting a friend while driving, and when she looked up she had veered off into oncoming traffic. The woman in the other car wasn't injured, but Jennifer lost the use of her legs, and now she uses a wheelchair. It's been difficult for her to adjust, but she has come to terms with it. She left her most recent job because it wasn't very accessible, but she is really excited about the prospect of this job, and she is excited to start working again. I believe that her physical disability will not affect her job performance in any way.

PART II: REACTION TO THE CANDIDATE

Hiring Decision:

A: Using the scale below, please rate whether you would hire the job candidate by circling one number from the scale.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
(No, I would not hire this person.) (I might hire this person.) (Yes, I would hire this person.)
This person is not a good candidate. This person is an average candidate. This person is an extremely good candidate.

B: Using the scale below, please rate the qualities of the job candidate by writing a number from the scale in the blank next to each item.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all Very

___ 1. The candidate would be appropriate for the job.
___ 2. I would be willing to get to know the job candidate.
___ 3. I believe the job candidate has potential for success.
___ 4. This person would get along well with their co-workers.
___ 5. I think the job candidate is competent.
___ 6. I predict that this job candidate will advance rapidly in the company.

PART III: SUITABILITY OF THE JOB CANDIDATE

For the next set of questions, IMAGINE THAT THE JOB CANDIDATE HAS THE NECESSARY DEGREES FOR THE FOLLOWING JOBS. Listed below are several different types of jobs. Using the scale below, rate the suitability of the job candidate for each of the following jobs by writing a number in the blank next to each item.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not at all suitable Very suitable

___ 1. Lawyer
___ 2. Receptionist
___ 3. Professor
___ 4. Secretary
___ 5. Doctor
___ 6. Phone Operator
___ 7. Corporate Consultant
___ 8. Administrative Assistant
___ 9. Accountant
___ 10. Clothing Store Manager

PART IV: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JOB CANDIDATE

Directions: The following statements refer to the job candidate. Using the scale below, please rate how much you agree with each statement by writing a number from the scale in the blank next to each item.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neutral Somewhat agree Strongly agree

___ 1. She is responsible for her disability.
___ 2. I believe she could have prevented her accident.
___ 3. She is deserving of sympathy.
___ 4. I don't feel pity for her.

PART V: MEMORY CHECK – PLEASE ANSWER WITHOUT LOOKING BACK

Directions: Please circle one answer.

1. Who caused the accident that put the job candidate in a wheelchair?

- a. the job candidate
- b. the other driver
- c. both the job candidate and the other driver
- d. neither the job candidate nor the other driver

2. Who mentioned the cause of the job candidate's disability?

- a. the job candidate
- b. someone recommending the job candidate
- c. both the job candidate and someone recommending her
- d. neither the job candidate nor someone recommending her

◇ HIRING RECOMMENDATIONS SURVEY ◇

CODING MANUAL

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SUBNUM

Disability (1 = controll, 2 = uncontrol)

Disclosure (1 = self, 2 = other)

3. What is your age? _____ **AGE**
4. What is your gender? (circle one) **GENDER** Female = 1 Male = 2
5. What is your year in school? (circle one) **YEAR** First = 1 Second = 2 Third = 3 Fourth = 4 Fifth = 5
6. What is your ethnicity? (circle one) **RACE** White/European-American = 1 African-American = 2
 Asian-American = 3 Hispanic-American = 4 Native-American = 5 Multi-Racial = 6 Other = 7

PART I: SELF-ASSESSMENT

Directions: Using the scale below, please rate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by writing a number from the scale in the blank next to each item.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

- ___ 1. I try to be a fair person.
- ___ 2. I am generally good at judging other people's talent.
- ___ 3. I can tell when someone is lying or exaggerating.
- ___ 4. I am a good judge of character.
- ___ 5. I am a hard worker.
- ___ 6. I would be a fair boss.
- ___ 7. I think smart people make better employees.

PART II: REACTION TO THE CANDIDATE

Hiring Decision:

HIRE A: Using the scale below, please rate whether you would hire the job candidate by circling one number from the scale.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
(No, I would not hire this person.)			(I might hire this person.)			(Yes, I would hire this person.)		
This person is not a good candidate.			This person is an average candidate.			This person is an extremely good candidate.		

B: Using the scale below, please rate the qualities of job candidate by writing a number from the scale in the blank next to each item.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all						Very

ControlTOT = MEAN (RESPONSIBLE, COULDPREVENT, CONTROLLABLE)

PART V: MEMORY CHECK – PLEASE ANSWER WITHOUT LOOKING BACK

Directions: Please circle one answer.

MANIPCAUSE 1. Who caused the accident that put the job candidate in a wheelchair?

JOB CANDIDATE = 1

OTHER DRIVER = 2

BOTH = 3

NEITHER = 4

MANIPWHO 2. Who mentioned the cause of the job candidate's disability?

JOB CANDIDATE = 1

RECOMMENDER = 2

BOTH = 3

NEITHER = 4