Disability status, stereotype content, and employment opportunities in sport and fitness organizations

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of disability status among job applicants on stereotype attributions and personnel decisions. The authors also consider the possible moderating role of application qualifications.

Design/methodology/approach – Participants (N = 247) took part in an experiment in which they evaluated job applications for a personal trainer position.

Findings – Applicants who had a disability were rated as warmer than their able-bodied peers, but ratings of competence did not vary based on the disability status. This was the case across levels of qualifications. The relationships between competence and work outcomes (person-organization fit and hiring recommendations) were stronger than those between warmth and these outcomes; however, the relationships were qualified by a significant competence-by-warmth interaction. As the competence increased, so did the ratings of the person-organization fit, but this relationship was stronger for persons rated as warm.

Originality/value – Persons with disabilities in the sport and fitness context face unique stereotypes, relative to their peers in other settings. These stereotypes influence their evaluation as job applicants.

Keywords Diversity, Inclusion, Disability

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Persons with disabilities represent a sizeable portion of the world’s population, as the World Health Organization (n.d.) estimates that 15 percent of all persons have a disability – over 1 billion people. The proportion is even higher in the USA, where US Census Bureau estimates indicate that 18.7 percent of the populace had a disability in 2010 (Brault, 2012). Despite their predominance across the world, people with disabilities routinely encounter negative stereotypes and face discrimination. Again, drawing from the US Census Bureau data, compared to their able-bodied peers, persons with a disability are less likely to have a high school or college degree and less likely to find a full employment (Brault, 2012). These trends are particularly salient among persons with mental and physical disabilities, as opposed to communicative disabilities. When they are employed, persons with disabilities face discrimination in their pay, earning just 72 percent of their able-bodied peers (Brault, 2012), face barriers in accessing development opportunities (Kulkarni and Gopakumar, 2014), and are frequently not considered for top leadership positions (Roulstone and Williams, 2014).

These trends are also apparent in the sport and physical activity contexts. Among sport participants, barriers are present in the design and access to being physically active (DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Fay, 2011; Misener and Darcy, 2014), and as a result, the chance for people with disabilities to develop skills and confidence is diminished (Hodge and Runswick-Cole, 2013). There is also evidence that athletes with disabilities face exclusion,
prejudice, and stigmatization (Dane-Staples et al., 2013; Kitchin and Howe, 2014), and these are reinforced by athletes and in the media. As a result, several organizations and governing bodies have endeavored to enhance their sport offerings for persons with disabilities (e.g. King Pung and Taylor, 2014; Kitchin and Howe, 2014), though a lack of organizational capacity can thwart these efforts (Wicker and Breuer, 2014).

While there is a growing understanding of the barriers athletes face to being active, as well as the organizational structures and process that can help facilitate this end, less is known about the sport organization employees with disabilities. To this point, Shapiro and Pitts (2014) showed in their content analysis that the vast majority of scholarship in the area focused on participants or the marketing of a disability sport. The purpose of this study was to address this gap. Specifically, we draw from the stereotype content model (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske and Tablante, 2015; Fiske et al., 2002) to examine potential stereotypes and differential evaluation of persons with disabilities applying for a position at a sport organization, relative to their able-bodied peers. In doing so, we focus on how raters consider the job applicants along two domains of stereotype content: warmth and competence. We also examine the potential moderating effects of qualifications, considering the possibility that high levels of expertise might alleviate the bias raters might otherwise have toward persons with disabilities. Finally, we consider how the stereotype content is related to personnel decisions in the fitness industry. In the sections below, we offer an overview of the theoretical framework and present specific hypotheses.

Theoretical framework
Stereotypes represent “the traits that we view as characteristic of social groups, or of individuals members of those groups, and particularly those that differentiate groups from each other” (Stangor, 2009, p. 2). They inform the attitudes and beliefs people hold toward others, and they are one of the key factors affecting a discriminatory behavior. Stereotypes are also socially constructed and temporally bound; in this way, the attitudes and beliefs people have toward others can shift over time and might vary from one context to another.

While many scholars have offered frameworks for understanding how stereotypes form (see Stangor, 2009), Fiske and colleagues (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske and Tablante, 2015; Fiske et al., 2002) stereotype content model is among the most empirically supported and robust models. They suggest that stereotypes exist along two domains: warmth, including how moral, friendly, trustworthy, and sincere the individual is considered; and competence, or the evaluation of one’s confidence, intelligence, creativity, and ability to execute tasks. Importantly, this model allows for, and the authors have shown, that people can be evaluated positively or negatively across both domains. Thus, it is possible to believe that someone is warm but not competent, both warm and competent, and so on. Cuddy et al. (2008) refer to this process as ambivalent stereotypes, or stereotypes with mixed content. Emotional and behavioral outcomes follow these evaluations. For example, Fiske et al. (2002, Study 4) observed that people considered low in both warmth and competence (e.g. the poor and people experiencing homelessness) were more likely to experience contempt from others than people with other stereotype evaluations.

The stereotype content model is also applicable to the discussion of persons with disabilities. Across numerous studies in different countries, Fiske et al. (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske and Tablante, 2015; Fiske et al., 2002) have observed that people generally perceived persons with disabilities as high in warmth but low in competence (see also Coilella and Stone, 2005). As a result, people are likely to express pity toward people with a disability, something that is likely to be a disadvantage for employees with disabilities. Indeed, Fiske et al.’s findings are parallel with those from other researchers, who have

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shown that people hold negative stereotypes toward employees with disabilities, including the belief that they are not skilled, require time demands from supervisors, are a financial drain on the organization, and might lack the emotional well-being because of their disability (Kulkarni and Gopakumar, 2014; Stone-Romero et al., 2007). These negative evaluations are likely to hurt career opportunities for people with disabilities (Roulstone and Williams, 2014).

High skill as a buffer
We also consider a potential moderator in the relationship between disability status and stereotype activation: skill level. Inclusion of moderators is important because they demonstrate when and under what conditions the relationship between two variables might exist (Bacharach, 1989). Along these same lines, the inclusion of moderators helps extend this theory by offering a more thorough understanding of phenomena (Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan, 2007; Cunningham, 2013).

In this study, we consider the role of skill level in helping to buffer the effects of disability status on prevailing stereotypes. It is possible that when an employee is highly skilled or qualified, the stereotypes that people might have otherwise made might not be activated. We suspect that this is particularly the case when the skills and qualifications are based on generally accepted criteria, such as educational attainment, work experience, or certifications, and when evidence of superiority is unequivocal. On the other hand, if an individual’s qualifications are ambiguous or if the person’s qualifications are not superior, then stereotypes might be activated, as countervailing evidence is not evident.

There is some evidence from research in other forms of bias that this pattern might occur. For instance, jurors are likely to engage in prejudicial decision making when the evidence is ambiguous, but are less likely to do so when evidence more clearly points toward one’s innocence (Levinson and Young, 2010). Similarly, implicit, subtle forms of prejudice are likely to manifest when social forces to not express prejudice are weak (Son Hing et al., 2008). In the context of the employment decisions, information presented on a resume would provide such social forces (Cunningham, 2015). Finally, Isaac et al. (2009), in their review of decades of research, observed that gender bias was evident in personnel selection, but this was assuaged when there was unambiguous evidence of high job qualifications.

Current study
In drawing from this theoretical framework, the purpose of the current study was to examine the stereotypes held toward persons with disabilities seeking employment in sport organizations, and how they impact subsequent employment ratings. As outlined in more depth in the Method section, we developed an experiment where study participants reviewed an application for a fitness trainer position. Blank et al. (2004) note that experiments are particularly useful for examining prejudice and discrimination, largely because they allow for causal inferences. The applications were crossed by the disability status (able-bodied or with a disability) and qualifications (highly qualified and marginally qualified). Participants rated the applicants based on their warmth, competence, person-organization fit, and whether they would hire the individual for the position.

The stereotype content model (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske and Tablante, 2015; Fiske et al., 2002) suggests that stereotypes are based on people’s assessments of others’ warmth and competence. The theory also suggests that mixed stereotypes also exist, whereby a group can be rated highly along one domain but not on another. In this study, we seek to extend this work by also considering the role of a potential moderator: qualifications. Here, we suggest that not
all persons with disabilities are perceived the same; instead, those with high skills and expertise will likely have different stereotypes than those with modest skill levels. We have the following hypotheses:

\[ H1a. \text{ Applicants with disabilities, compared to their able-bodied counterparts, will be rated higher on warmth.} \]

\[ H1b. \text{ Applicants with disabilities, compared to their able-bodied counterparts, will be rated lower on competence.} \]

\[ H2. \text{ Qualifications will moderate this relationship, such that, while they will still maintain their warmth stereotypes, higher skilled persons with disabilities will be rated higher on competence than their moderately skilled peers with a disability.} \]

The stereotype content model (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske and Tablante, 2015; Fiske et al., 2002) also suggests that people react differently to others based on the stereotypes they hold toward those individuals. People who are believed to be incompetent and cold are frequently viewed with contempt; those believed to be incompetent and warm with pity; those believed to be competent and cold with envy; and finally, those believed to be both warm and competent with admiration. Clearly, if people are not believed to be competent, they are unlikely to be considered a good fit for the organization or to be recommended for the position. Ren et al. (2008) suggest that this dynamic has plagued persons with disabilities, as they are frequently expected to perform at low levels. It is less clear, however, how warmth will factor into personnel decisions, as people believed not to be warm might be viewed with envy and admiration, simultaneously (Fiske et al., 2002). These nuances again point to the value of considering the outcomes associated with both competency and warmth simultaneously — that is, the stereotype itself. In drawing from the notion that competency will likely drive personnel decisions, we hypothesize the following:

\[ H3. \text{ Competency ratings will have a stronger relationship with person-organization fit than will warmth ratings.} \]

\[ H4. \text{ Competency ratings will have a stronger relationship with hiring recommendations than will warmth ratings.} \]

The nuanced structure of stereotypes also suggests that warmth and competence are likely to interact to predict employment decisions. The effects are not merely additive, as high competence might offset perceptions of low warmth. This is observed, for instance, in Fiske et al.’s (2002) study, where people with considered competent but not warm were envied. These findings point to the possibility of interactive effects. Thus, we hypothesized the following:

\[ H5. \text{ Competency and warmth will interact to predict person-organization fit.} \]

\[ H6. \text{ Competency and warmth will interact to predict hiring recommendations.} \]

In short, we suggest that the high-competency ratings will offset potential diminishing effects of high warmth ratings.

**Method**

**Participants**

Undergraduate students \( (N=247) \) enrolled in physical activity classes at a large, public university in the Southwest USA participated in the study. The sample included 96 women (38.9 percent) and 151 men (61.1 percent). Participants were predominantly White \( (n=170, 68.8 \text{ percent}) \), followed by Hispanic \( (n=41, 16.6 \text{ percent}) \), Asian \( (n=17, 6.9 \text{ percent}) \), African American \( (n=7, 2.8 \text{ percent}) \), and persons who were listed “other” \( (n=12, 4.9 \text{ percent}) \). The mean age was 20.87 years \( (SD = 11.67) \), and participants exercised an average of 2.3 days per week \( (SD = 0.51) \).
**Measures**

Participants responded to a questionnaire where they were requested to provide their demographic information (sex, age, race, and days of exercise per week) and to respond to items measuring the applicant’s warmth, competence, and person-organization fit, as well as their hiring recommendation. Unless otherwise indicated, all items were measured on a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), and the mean score of the items was used as the variable score.

We adapted Fiske et al.’s (2002) instrument to measure warmth and competence, with revisions made to reflect the employment context. Warmth was measured with four items (e.g. “in general, I would characterize the applicant as friendly”), as was competence (e.g. “in general, I would characterize the applicant as intelligent”). Both scales had a reliability coefficient of 0.87, pointing to their reliability.

We used the items from Sartore and Cunningham (2007) to measure person-organization fit (e.g. “based on this information, I would say the applicant is a good fit for the job”) and hiring recommendations (e.g. “I would hire this person for the personal trainer position”). Both measures had three items, one of which was negatively worded and reverse scored, and both demonstrated acceptable reliability estimates (person-organization fit, $\alpha = 0.92$; hiring recommendation, $\alpha = 0.90$).

**Procedures**

The (Texas A&M University) Human Subjects Review Board approved the study, and participants voluntarily consented to participate. We designed a 2 (ability: able-bodied applicant, applicant with a disability) $\times$ 2 (qualifications: moderate, high) experiment, whereby participants were asked to review the dossier of an applicant for a personal trainer position at a local fitness club. They read the following: “Suppose you are hiring a personal trainer for a fitness organization. A picture and the qualifications of an applicant are provided below. Please review the applicant’s credentials and then respond to the items on the following page.”

We varied conditions through the material found in the dossier. Qualifications were varied such that one applicant had good, but not outstanding credentials, while the other applicant’s credentials were high quality. Moderately qualified individuals had a Bachelor’s degree in general studies, did not have certifications, had previously worked in a recreational sports setting, and had been a member of two university sports clubs. On the other hand, high-qualified applicants had a Bachelor’s degree in exercise science, had certification from the National Strength and Conditioning Association, had previously worked in a recreational sport setting, and were a member of three outside organizations, including varsity athletics at the university. These are similar manipulations used in previous research focusing on fitness trainer (Sartore and Cunningham, 2007). We varied disability status through organizational membership (Wheelchair Sports Federation vs Amateur Athletic Union) and team membership (university wheelchair basketball team vs university basketball team). We varied information for each of the activities and memberships listed. After reviewing the dossier, participants responded to a post-experiment questionnaire.

**Results**

**Manipulation checks**

We first tested the efficacy of the manipulations. Respondents were asked to respond to four items concerning the applicant: fit or overweight, qualified or unqualified, attractive or unattractive, and had a disability or has no disability. The fitness and attractiveness items were included as fillers. We computed $\chi^2$ analyses to determine if the participants correctly identified the applicant characteristics. This was the case for both applicant disability status, $\chi^2 (df = 1, n = 213) = 68.27, p < 0.001$, and applicant ability ($df = 1, n = 213) = 51.76, p < 0.001$. Thus, the manipulations were successful.
Descriptive statistics

Means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and correlations are presented in Table I. Results show that the demographic characteristics of the participants were not associated with applicant ratings, so we did not include them as controls in subsequent analyses. Applicants with a disability were generally rated warmer than those who are able-bodied ($r = 0.25$), and ratings of competence were more strongly related to person-organization fit ($r = 0.69$) and hiring recommendations ($r = 0.66$) than the ratings of warmth ($r = 0.44$ and 0.43, respectively). The magnitude of both differences was significantly different: person-organization fit $t(246) = 6.19, p < 0.001$; hiring recommendations $t(246) = 5.49, p < 0.001$.

Hypothesis testing

With our first set of hypotheses, we first predicted that applicants with disabilities, compared to their able-bodied counterparts, would be rated higher on warmth and lower on competence. We also expected this relationship to be moderated by applicant qualifications. These hypotheses were tested through a two-way multivariate analysis of variance, with the disability status and qualifications serving as the independent variables, and warmth and competency ratings serving as the dependent variables.

The multivariate effects for disability status were significant, $F(2, 242) = 8.51, p = 0.003$, and mean scores are reported in Figure 1. Subsequent univariate analyses demonstrated significant direct effects for warmth, $F(1, 243) = 16.13, p = 0.001$. Consistent with $H1a$, persons with a disability were rated higher on warmth ($M = 5.58, SD = 0.90$) than their able-bodied peers ($M = 5.05, SD = 1.17$). On the other hand, univariate analyses showed no significant direct effects for competence, $F(1, 243) = 3.31, p = 0.07$; thus, $H1b$ was not supported.

The same analyses were used to test $H2$. The multivariate effects for the disability status-by-qualifications interaction were not significant, $F(2, 242) = 2.35, p = 0.10$. Thus, $H2$ was not supported.

We tested the remaining hypotheses via a moderated regression, following Cohen et al. (2003) guidelines. We first controlled for disability status, and then standardized the warmth and competence variables, entering these first-order effects in the following step. We then entered the warmth $\times$ competence interaction term in the final step. We followed these steps for both person-organization fit and hiring recommendations. Results are presented in Table II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
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<td>2. Race</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td>3. Age</td>
<td>–0.07</td>
<td>0.10</td>
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<td>4. Exercise</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Applicant ability</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
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<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Applicant qualifications</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>–0.10</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>–0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Competence</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td>8. Warmth</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
<td>–0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td>9. Person-organization fit</td>
<td>–0.08</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>–0.07</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Hiring recommendation</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
<td>–0.03</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean (%)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20.87</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>4.91</td>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\alpha$</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.92</td>
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Table I. Means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, and reliability estimates

Notes: Gender coded as 0 = male, 1 = female. Race coded as 0 = White, 1 = racial minority. Applicant ability coded as 0 = able-bodied, 1 = applicant with a disability. Applicant qualifications coded as 0 = moderate qualifications, 1 = high qualifications. $|r| \geq 0.13, p < 0.05$
With our third hypothesis, we predicted that competency would have a stronger relationship with person-organization fit than with warmth. As seen in Model 2 of Table II, competence held a strong relationship with person-organization fit ($\beta = 0.66, p < 0.001$), while warmth did not ($\beta = 0.07, p = 0.25$). The first-order effects explained 49 percent unique variance ($p < 0.001$) in the person-organization fit. The 95 percent confidence intervals for the two did not overlap, indicating statistical significance in the magnitude of the differences. Thus, $H3$ was supported.

Similarly, $H4$ was supported. As seen in Table II, the block of competence and warmth variables explained the 44 percent unique variance ($p < 0.001$) in hiring recommendations. Competence ratings were significantly related to hiring recommendations ($\beta = 0.63, p < 0.001$), while warmth ratings were not ($\beta = 0.06, p = 0.37$). The 95 percent confidence intervals did not overlap, indicating that the magnitude of the effects significantly differed.

Finally, we predicted competence-by-warmth interactive effects for both person-organization fit ($H5$) and hiring recommendations ($H6$). These terms are shown in Model 3 for both regression analyses presented in Table II. The interaction term was significant for the person-organization fit ($\beta = 0.13, p = 0.006$). We computed simple slopes following Cohen et al.’s (2003) recommendations, and the interactions are presented in Figure 2. When both competency and warmth ratings were low, so were the estimates of...
person-organization fit. As competency increased, so did the fit ratings, but the regression slope was stronger for people who were considered warm ($B = 1.02$, SE = 0.09, $p < 0.001$) than for those who were not ($B = 0.82$, SE = 0.08, $p < 0.001$). Thus, $H_5$ was supported.

Finally, the competence-by-warmth interaction term did not significantly predict hiring recommendation ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = 0.75$). Thus, $H_6$ was not supported.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the stereotypes associated with job applicants with disabilities, and how these stereotypes were associated with personnel decisions. While there is a considerable research associated with athletes with disabilities, as well as the marketing of disability sport, empirical analyses associated with sport organizations’ employees with disabilities are largely lacking (DePauw and Gavron, 2005; Fay, 2011; Misener and Darcy, 2014; Shapiro and Pitts, 2014). Our theoretically grounded work addresses this gap in the literature, and we also advance theory by specifying a potential moderator: qualifications.

We found mixed support for our first set of hypotheses. Consistent with past researchers (Colella and Stone, 2005; Fiske et al., 2002), we observed that sport organization job applicants with disabilities were rated more warmly than their able-bodied counterparts. However, unlike the past research, we observed that ratings of competence did not vary based on the disability status. These findings run opposite to the previous work in the area of employment stereotypes (Kulkarni and Gopakumar, 2014; Stone-Romero et al., 2007). Furthermore, the findings held across levels of qualifications, as we did not observe a disability-status-by-qualifications interaction.

To explain these findings, we turn to the stereotype theory. Stangor (2009) noted that stereotypes are socially constructed and contextually bounded, such that those held in some settings or a particular time might differ in a different time or setting. Not only do these sentiments point to the need for context-specific investigations such as this one, but more fundamentally, they suggest that stereotypes in sport and physical activity, as a unique context, have the potential to vary from those in other settings. Indeed, we observed as much here, such that job applicants with disabilities benefit from pro-warmth stereotypes, but stereotypes concerning competence were not present. Instead, as qualifications increased,
so did the competence ratings. In other words, when it came to competence, all applicants were judged on their job-related merits.

We also examined how these stereotypes might relate to personnel decisions. Consistent with our expectations, competence ratings were positively associated with both person-organization fit and hiring recommendations, and the effects were significantly stronger than those of warmth. That noted, stereotypes often have mixed content (Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske and Tablante, 2015; Fiske et al., 2002), thereby demonstrating the importance of competence-by-warmth interactive effects. We observed as much for person-organization fit. Here, people more qualified were considered a better fit, but the effects were augmented among those also considered warm. These findings suggest a bonus effect for warmth perceptions and further suggest that, within the sport context, highly qualified persons with disabilities might be preferred for job openings because of the warmth stereotype that accompanies them.

Implications, limitations, and future directions
There are many implications from our research. First, from a theoretical standpoint, we show shows the value of considering specific contexts when examining stereotypes (Stangor, 2009). Our findings suggest that, within sport and physical activity, persons with disabilities are not seen with pity, but with admiration. Thus, sport offers a unique context in which perceptions of persons with disabilities encounter different stereotypes, at least when searching for employment opportunities. Second, from a practical standpoint, it is clear that participants in our study rewarded qualifications, as demonstrated by degrees held, certifications, clubs, and work experiences. These findings highlight the importance of persons with disabilities accumulating human capital. For sport and exercise programs in universities, this means to ensure that students with disabilities have opportunities for experiential learning in field settings. For sport managers, it means making certain that all employees, including those with disabilities, have opportunities for a professional and personal development. Unfortunately, such opportunities are frequently missing for employees with disabilities (Kulkarni and Gopakumar, 2014).

Despite the contributions and implications of our research, there are limitations. First, we relied on a student to review the application files. The students were active exercisers and enrolled in physical activity classes, and thus likely have some understanding of what the personal trainer position involves. Further, there is some evidence that ratings from students parallel those of the human resource professionals (Jawahar and Mattsson, 2005). Nevertheless, we do recognize that validity evidence might be enhanced with a sample of fitness club managers. Second, our experiment was limited to fitness club contexts, a decision made based on the size and prevalence of a participant sport in the sport industry (Chelladurai, 2014). Given the importance of this context, we cannot be sure that the findings would be applicable to other parts of the sport industry, such as for positions in professional sport leagues or intercollegiate athletics.

Finally, there is a need for additional research in this area. As Shapiro and Pitts (2014) have noted, more research is needed examining the intersection of disability and sport organization employees. While our work addresses this need, additional inquiries are needed. Second, future researchers should consider diversifying the sample (working professionals) and context (beyond the fitness industry) to examine how our findings generalize to other settings. Finally, we observed that stereotype content in sports was different from other contexts. Future researchers would benefit from a deeper understanding of why this was the case. What is it about sports that elicit different stereotypes than other work settings? These are questions worth exploring. Indeed, given the prevalence of disabilities across the world and of disability-related prejudice and discrimination, additional inquiries are needed.
References


Further reading


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