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The Impact of Physical Disability Salience on Discrimination in Employment Interview Evaluations

By  
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The Impact of Physical Disability Salience on Discrimination in Employment Interview Evaluations

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**Abstract**

An experiment was conducted online to test the impact of disability salience and job type on the hiring recommendations and interview performance ratings provided for a job applicant. Participants ( $N = 215$ ) were presented with a pre-recorded employment interview and rated the answers provided by the applicant, and provided a hiring recommendation. The study used a between-subjects 2 (Job Type) X 3 (Interview Condition) factorial design. Participants were assigned to one of six conditions. They were informed the interview was for either a high or low mobility position, and then presented one of three potential interview conditions: video with an able-bodied job applicant, video with a physically disabled job applicant, or an audio recording representing a telephone interview. Participants were recruited from both Canada ( $n = 106$ ) and the United States ( $n = 109$ ). A multivariate between subjects MANOVA resulted in significant effect of Country of Residence on both dependent variables, with Canadian and American participants providing significantly different hiring recommendations and interview ratings. Results suggest that Canadian and American residents may interpret the same information from employment interviews differently.

January 17, 2014

## **The Impact of Physical Disability Salience on Discrimination in Employment**

### **Interview Evaluations**

People with disabilities are among the most systematically discriminated against groups in the realm of employment in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). Despite legal sanctions, such as the Employment Equity Act in Canada (Government of Canada, 1995) and the Americans with Disabilities Act in the United States (United States Department of Justice, 1991) that were put in place to correct this situation, the physically disabled continue to be underrepresented in the Canadian workforce with only 51.3% employed, compared to 75% employment among non-disabled people (Statistics Canada). Although the employment discrepancy may be explained in part by differences in workforce participation, the unemployment rate in 2006 was also significantly higher among people with disabilities (10.4%) versus the non-disabled population (6.8%; Statistics Canada).

The Report on Equality Rights of People with Disabilities provides a snapshot of the status of life for people with disabilities in Canada (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2012). Findings in the report indicate that between 15 and 16% of people with physical disabilities who were employed at the time of the survey held the belief that employers would consider them a disadvantage for employment. This number increased to 16% for women and 27% for men who were unemployed. Men who were unemployed reported the most experiences of discrimination with 18% reporting that they believed they had been refused a job because of their disability, and 12% reporting that they had been refused an interview.

The 2012 Report included data from people suffering from pain-related, agility-related, hearing, seeing, learning, emotional, memory-related, speech-related, and

developmental-related disabilities, and it did not provide separate statistics based on disability type. Data collected in 2006 indicates that in Canada there were 2,923,001 people aged 15 or older who were living with mobility-related disabilities, and 2,819,582 individuals living with agility-related disabilities (these numbers are not to be added, as individuals may suffer from both mobility-related in conjunction with agility-related disabilities). Although data does not exist to determine what percentage of the employment discrimination is experienced by individuals with physical disabilities, the report still suggests that discriminatory attitudes towards all forms of disability are a persistent problem in Canada. Perceived discrimination has been cited as one of the barriers faced by people with physical disabilities in joining the labour force, along with insufficient accommodations, such as modified work schedules and accessible washrooms (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Employment discrimination experienced by people with disabilities also has an economic impact on life for individuals with disabilities. Earnings amongst employed disabled individuals are significantly lower than the general public. The earnings gap in Canada for women affected by a disability for six or more years was 23% less than those without disabilities and 20% for men (Galarneau & Radulescu, 2009).

Part of this discrepancy between the ideals of equitable treatment and actual equal representation in practice may stem from biases in the hiring process. In particular, the biases of interviewers may impede qualified applicants with physical disabilities from being selected for positions for which they are equally qualified. This study aims to determine if negative attitudes towards people with physical disabilities still result in

discriminatory hiring decisions. Should this be the case, this study also hopes to provide a mechanism by which to reduce discrimination in employment interviews.

### **Perceptions and Attitudes Towards People with Disabilities**

Before investigating discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, it is important to better understand these prejudiced attitudes. Not a great deal of the research exists specifically concerning negative perceptions and attitudes towards people with disabilities in the workplace. The majority of the existing theories have been derived from theories explaining negative attitudes towards other minority groups. Nonetheless, researchers have identified many potential reasons for the negative bias held towards people with physical disabilities. Among the most commonly proposed reasons are stereotyping, stigma, and experiences of anxiety by able-bodied people (Colella & Bruyere, 2011).

Stereotyping refers to judgments made regarding an individual based on his or her membership to a particular group (Arvey, 1979). This process involves forming impressions and descriptions for a particular group and then assigning those characteristics to all group members, regardless of additional information to the contrary. People tend to overestimate the distinctiveness of individuals from minority groups by recalling information about that individual. These distinct qualities are often viewed as unfavorable, such as laziness or helplessness, and may be applied to other members of that minority group encountered by the person making the assumption (Tajfel, 1982). Information that matches the stereotype will be retained to strengthen the bias and can lead to further discrimination, confirming and perpetuating the stereotype (Arvey, 1979).

Stigma towards people with physical disabilities comes in the form of negative attributes associated with those individuals suffering from a disability. People with disabilities may be viewed as deviant as they do not fit within the parameters of what is deemed “normal” in society. In particular, people with disabilities are often stigmatized as being less capable, less attractive, and more difficult to engage socially (McLaughlin, Bell, & Stringer, 2004). Another form of stigma that can be problematic for people with physical disabilities is the belief in a just world, or that one gets what one deserves (Colella & Bruyere, 2011; McLaughlin et al., 2004). People with this belief may subconsciously attribute a physical disability to the actions of the sufferer, despite a lack of any evidence suggesting this might be the case, which can result in negative appraisals of the individual suffering from a disability.

Another potential source of negative attitudes towards people with physical disabilities may come from the negative emotions invoked in able-bodied people when they are made aware of a physical disability. People typically report experiencing more fear-related thoughts in the presence of individuals with physical disabilities (Dovidio, Pagotto, & Hebl, 2011; Park, Faulkner, & Schaller, 2003). Physically disabled people have also been found to evoke conflicting feelings, feelings of ambivalence, and even anxiety in non-disabled others (Colella & Bruyere, 2011; Dovidio et al., 2011). Evolutionary psychologists have theorized that negative reactions and avoidance of people with physical and other easily detected disabilities may come as poor application of generalized disease-avoidant behavior (Park et al., 2003). These behaviors are hypothesized to have evolved so that healthy people would stay away from individuals who seemed unhealthy in order to avoid catching any communicable disease. Following

this train of thought, it is supposed that as this behaviour evolved in humans, developing societies did not take into account non-communicable causes of poor health, and as such, people still feel the need to reduce both immediate and future contact with people with disabilities.

Due in part to the previously discussed sources of negative attitudes, individuals react differently to people with physical. Research has found that people will not only avoid contact with individuals with physical disabilities, but also engage in shorter interactions with people with visible physical disabilities compared to those without disabilities (Somervill, Veeder, Graw, & Sechovee, 1979). People without visible physical disabilities are more likely to assume disability is a factor in the interactions of others when one person is visibly disabled than the individuals suffering from a disability themselves (Strenta & Kleck, 1985). Although overtly expressed attraction towards people with disabilities does not differ statistically from attraction for people without disabilities, research shows implicit preference for people without disabilities (Rojahn, Komelasky & Man, 2008). Using stereotypes, individuals will often make judgements on personal characteristics without any relevant information (Tajfel, 1982). One study found that although participants were hesitant to describe a self-disclosed physically disabled applicant compared to the non-disabled job applicant, he was still viewed as less intelligent, curious, and sociable than the non-disabled confederate (Heinemann, Pellander, Vogelbusch & Wojtek, 1981).

Regardless of the exact cause of the negative perceptions, people who have negative views of people with disabilities should be more likely to behave in a

discriminatory manner based on these perceptions (Colella & Bruyere, 2011). This assertion leads to the first hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Biased attitudes towards people with physical disabilities will be negatively related to interview scores and hiring recommendations for physically disabled applicants when compared to hiring recommendations of individuals without the same biased attitudes.*

### **People with Disabilities and the Selection Process**

While Canada and the United States both have legislation in place to reduce discrimination against people with physical disabilities, there is little research in Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology regarding the impact of prejudices in job interviews. A review of six of the top-tier I/O journals revealed that only 10 articles had been published in the past two decades regarding people with physical disabilities in the workforce (Ruggs, Law, Wiener, Hebl, & Barron, 2013). Ruggs and colleagues found that the research that was being presented in top-tier journals focussed on co-worker perceptions, interpersonal relationships when an employee has a disability, and the costs and perceptions of accommodation. Although it is important to improve the quality of work life for people with physical disabilities in their workplaces, the presence of only one article focussing on the interview process in top-tiered journals does suggest a dearth in the research as a whole (Ruggs et al., 2013). Instead, these published works are concentrating on experiences during employment, once the applicant has already been selected. As pointed out by comments on the Ruggs et al. (2013) focal article, one

potential explanation for this lack of published research is that it can be very difficult to conduct studies using a sample of people with physical disabilities, as they are a small population and no central registry exists from which to draw participants (Thompson, Bergman, Culbertson, & Huffman, 2013). Other responses encourage expanding the sources of research to move into other areas and other journals in related fields (Diaz & Bergman, 2013; Nadler, Bartels, Sliter, Stockdale, & Lowery, 2013). Although there is still a shortage of research in the top social psychology journals regarding employment selection (Nadler et al., 2013), drawing upon research from other disciplines that also deal with occupational outcomes can provide a solid base for future research.

In line with the suggestions of Ruggs and colleagues (2013), there are researchers turning to people with disabilities to better understand their experiences when seeking employment. Job seekers with disabilities have reported negative experiences during the selection process (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2012). More specifically, job applicants with disabilities have reported feeling as though employers were made uncomfortable by their disabilities (Duckett, 2000). Individuals with disabilities reportedly observed unwelcoming nonverbal behaviour during interviews from potential employers, and such behaviour can certainly discourage an applicant in pursuing employment interviews in general, as well as with that employer. Although little psychological research has looked further into the amount and type of discrimination experienced by individuals with disabilities during the selection process, a greater focus has been put on the prevalence of biased decisions made by employers and interviewers.

In a survey-based study of employment of people with physical disabilities, employers did not claim to have issues with hiring people with physical disabilities (Lyth,

1973). However, equally qualified handicapped applicants were given significantly fewer job offers in employment agencies than their non-disabled counterparts (Johnson & Heal, 1976). Most employers admitted that they did not make any targeted attempts to hire individuals with physical disabilities or representative numbers of current employees with disabilities. Although claiming no prejudices, some employers pointed out that they felt as though hiring a person with disabilities would not be cost effective, perhaps due to additional training time required or modified tools and workstations needed. In particular, employers have listed motor difficulties as the most problematic in hiring disabled workers, referring to immobility and paraplegic conditions in particular (Lyth, 1973). Other common concerns of employers regarding individuals with disability included problems with flexibility in work hours, ability to be promoted, accommodations, and supervision requirements (Hernandez, 2000). In another survey study, hiring managers rated employee profiles for physically and psychiatrically disabled individuals as significantly less employable than a non-disabled profile with the same educational and employment background, even after researchers added the caveat of the non-disabled individual having child care requirements (Bricoult & Bentley, 2000).

One important point to note is that not all disabilities receive the same treatment, and the current literature has often failed to separate the effects of physical, mental, and psychological disabilities on biases during the interview process (Macan, 2009). Employers are more willing to retain employees with temporary disabilities, as opposed to hiring new employees with temporary or long-term disabilities (Hartnett, Stuart, Thurman, & Batiste, 2011). Research is beginning to show that ratings vary based on the nature of the disability, with some employers rating certain disabilities more favourably

based on the nature of the position (Macan, 2009). Previous research found that applicants with physical disabilities are more likely to be selected for a position which require less interpersonal contact, such as a phone operator, when compared to one which require a great deal of interpersonal contact, such as that of a janitor (Gouvier, Jordan, & Mayville, 2003). Meta-analytic results suggest that more positive ratings in the form of both performance evaluations and employability predictions are provided for applicants with physical disabilities when compared to those with mental disabilities (Ren, Paetzold, & Colella, 2008).

Another interesting finding regarding the selection of individuals with disabilities is that in one lab study, individuals with physical disabilities were actually rated more positively than those with other or no disabilities (Premeaux, 2001). Interestingly, in the same study, applicants with physical disabilities were still selected less often than non-disabled applicants to fill the position. This curious finding suggests that participants may be providing positive comparative ratings due to social desirability heuristics. This suggests that when people are aware that their results are being monitored, they have a tendency to respond in a way that they feel is the morally correct answer, regardless of whether or not it truly reflects their beliefs and emotions. However, when asked to select the applicant they believe is the best choice, participants still chose non-disabled applicants, regardless of their previous ratings. Similar results have been found throughout the disability employment literature (Ren, Paetzold, & Colella, 2008). In fact, when providing performance appraisals, people with physical disabilities are often rated significantly better than both mentally disabled and non-disabled employees (Ren et al., 2008). The boost in ratings seems to be due to an overcompensation for the known

discrimination rates, despite the actual selection rates remaining at relatively low rates.

Given these trends, it is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 2: Interview response ratings provided for the physically disabled applicant will be greater than those provided for the able-bodied applicant.*

Although there are significant differences between performance evaluations and predictions for people with physical and mental disabilities overall, these rater preferences vary greatly depending on the specific disability, not just the general type. One study found that the applicant with back injuries actually received more negative evaluations of future job performance and suitability compared to the applicant with a developmental disability (Gouvier, Jordan & Mayville, 2003).

Despite empirical support for the positive relations between physical disabilities and appraisals of past performance, the literature suggests that the opposite may hold true in the case of predictions of future performance (Ren et al., 2008). Overall, disabilities have been found to have a significant and negative effect on performance predictions and hiring decisions in both lab and field studies. Though this effect is stronger for mental disabilities, it still holds true in studies focussing on physical disabilities (Ren et al.). In fact, there is a strong tendency across employers and types of disability for individuals with disabilities to be rated more poorly than those without a disability. People with physical disabilities are perceived to be inherently lacking in certain qualities required for positions with high client contact (Hernandez, 2000; Louvet, 2007). Based on the findings that job applicants with physical disabilities are expected to perform more poorly

than their able-bodied counterparts, despite equal qualifications, it can be hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 3: Hiring recommendations provided for the physically disabled applicant will be lower than those provided to the able-bodied applicant.*

### **Perceptions of Job-Fit**

In Canada and the United States, there are laws preventing hiring discrimination on the basis of disabilities when it is possible to make reasonable accommodations to allow applicants to perform job tasks as well as non-disabled employees (Colella & Bruyere, 2011; Government of Canada, 1995). A multitude of accommodations exist that can be put in place to allow employees with various physical disabilities to perform the same tasks as their able-bodied counterparts. Some of these accommodations include adapted mouse devices, wrist splints, ergonomic workstations, telephone headsets, short and frequent breaks, and adjustable work hours, or flextime (Colella & Bruyere, 2011). Nonetheless, people still make assumptions that people with physical disabilities will be unable to perform certain jobs (Colella & Varma, 1999; Louvet, 2007).

When people are asked to make selection decisions based solely on documents (e.g., resumes or cover letters), people with physical disabilities were afforded comparable employability ratings for positions with low mobility requirements, but lower employability ratings for jobs requiring more mobility, such as leaving one's desk more frequently (Louvet, 2007). This trend was found regardless of the fact that the applicant was able to move despite their disability through the use of a wheelchair. It was also

found that although wheelchair-bound applicants were viewed as more open and conscientious, they were also seen as significantly less competent.

Another study manipulating disability type and job type was conducted by Colella and Varma (1999). This study made use of a 3 (disability types) X 2 (job type) design, in which one of six videos was shown with the same actor portraying the employee in all conditions. The job type dimension included either a telemarketing position or a computer operator position, whereas disability was manipulated by having the actress play either someone with no disability, a visual impairment, or a hearing impairment. The differing disability conditions were made clear by highlighting the accommodations required for the woman to carry out her job, however the outcomes were identical across disability type. Regardless of the effectiveness of the accommodations depicted in the videos, future job performance for the employees with a poor job fit (the telemarketer with a hearing impairment and the computer operator with a visual impairment) received lower performance expectations and training recommendations than the employees viewed as having a better job fit. These results lend support to the persistent discrimination faced by individuals with disabilities. It is important to note the effect of job type, as seen in this study, as it adds a new layer to hiring decisions, over and above the inclusion of perfectly effective accommodations. The behaviour of hiring managers appears to be contradicting their beliefs, and this discrepancy is worth investigating further.

*Hypothesis 4: Participants will provide greater hiring recommendations for physically disabled applicant when the job requires limited mobility compared to a job requiring moderate amounts of mobility.*

### **Disability Salience**

While researchers have considered reasons for disability discrimination, and how it might impact job applicants in the employment process, few have taken steps to counteract this serious issue. Although there is a dearth of research providing solutions to discriminatory attitudes, answers may lie in the ability of the interviewer or employer to determine that the candidate has a disability. Although studies have not sought to investigate the impact of disability salience on hiring recommendations, many studies are designed to reflect that the negative bias in ratings may come from the level of salience that the target has a disability.

Results from one video-based study had the same actor portray a job applicant either with a mobility-related disability, hearing impairment, partial leg amputation, or no impairment (Cesare, Tannenbaum, & Dalassio, 1990). When compared to conditions in which an applicant had a mobility-related disability, or no disability, the applicants portrayed with hearing impairment and a partial leg amputation were rated as significantly less qualified, despite verbatim dialogue and the same qualifications being presented across all conditions presented. These results indicate that when presented with applicants with disabilities that are more salient, participants will provide worse ratings in comparison to able-bodied applicants. Perhaps the lower ratings are due to the visibility of the disability, such that it was overt and clear to the rater, influencing their

judgement of the applicant. It is worrisome that applicants that are equal on paper can receive different ratings once the rater views their video, highlighting the difficulties faced by those with disabilities during the interview process.

Another study that investigated rater salience of physical disability had participants rate videotaped interviews with actors portraying an interviewee who either willingly discloses a spinal cord injury early in an interview, late in an interview, or makes no mention any disability (Robert & Macan, 2006). The early discloser received more favourable interview ratings than both the late disclosers and the non-disabled, with results approaching significance. These results may have been in part by the impressions that participants had of the early discloser as significantly more honest were as the applicants who disclosed this information later were rated the worst overall. The late-disclosing applicant received the lowest ratings for qualifications and likeability. Although this study suggests that early disclosure will be positively received by employers, these findings only apply to cases in which a person's disability is not inherently visible, and it is under their control to conceal or disclose this information. People with physical disabilities may not get the positive effects of being viewed as more honest in an interview when a potential employer is able to see their impairment at the beginning of an interview.

Though these studies provide support for the theory of the negative effects of disability salience, studies that actively mask disabilities from raters are required to better understand whether or not disability salience is the primary factor or if people with physical disabilities act inherently differently in employment interviews. One such study from social psychology literature was conducted using confederates with leg amputations

who performed interviews with student participants while either wearing their prosthetics or not (Somervill et al., 1979). Although the students engaged in similar interactions with the interviewers across the disability salience conditions, the interactions were significantly shorter when participants were aware of the disability. This desire for shorter interactions, coupled with the previously stated feelings of anxiety and avoidance (Park et al., 2003) when presented with the physical disability provides further support for the theory that people react negatively when disability information is salient.

Unfortunately, most disabilities cannot be hidden as easily in interview settings, as amputations can be with quality prosthetics. As such, this study will propose a potential solution for job applicants with physical disabilities that are visually salient by suggesting the use of telephone interviews as an alternative to face-to-face (FTF) interviews. Although current research provides contradictory results between studies in which interviewers rate interviewees more and less favourably in telephone interviews compared to FTF interviews, it has been suggested that the removal of visual cues that comes as an unintentional result of using telephone interviews may reduce adverse impact (Anderson, 2003).

*Hypothesis 5: The applicant depicted with physical disabilities in FTF interviews will receive lower hiring recommendations than the same applicant in the audio condition.*

The purpose of this study is to assess the current impact of discriminatory attitudes towards people with physical disabilities in employment interviews, and also determine if disability salience plays a role in these biased ratings. This study looked to

reproduce past research results showing that raters provided lower recommendations for applicants with physical disabilities compared to recommendations provided for able-bodied applicants. Additionally, this study investigated the relationship between a person's reported attitudes towards people with physical disabilities, and the ratings they will provide when presented a physically disabled applicant. The third aim of this study was to provide support for the theory that disability salience plays a role in the discriminatory ratings provided to job applicants with physical disabilities. Finally, this study will help build the research regarding telephone interviewing, which is still in its infancy, by comparing ratings as it will allow comparisons between telephone interview ratings both for seemingly able-bodied applicants, in addition to physically disabled ones. The third aim is perhaps the most important, as, unlike the other research objectives of this study, it may provide some insight as to how to reduce the potential for discrimination in employment interviews in the future.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants in this study comprised 215 English speaking adults (135 women, 78 men), ranging in age from 18 to 79 ( $M = 34.56$ ,  $SD = 14.80$ ), and were predominantly Caucasian (76.7%). Slightly over half of the sample was currently employed (55.3%).

This sample was recruited using three different methods. Ninety-nine student participants were recruited using the psychology department SONA online bonus point system at Saint Mary's University in Canada; however, data was only included from 42 student participants. Of those students whose data was omitted from the study, 26 were removed for not completing the study, and the responses from an additional 31 students

were removed prior to analysis, as they recognized the actor playing the role of the interviewee. All participants were granted a 0.5% bonus to the psychology course of their choosing, regardless of whether or not their data was included in the study. The student sample was primarily female and Caucasian, with a mean age of 21.19 ( $SD = 2.92$ ), as displayed in Table 1.

This study also includes 73 participants recruited using convenience-sampling methods. The researcher contacted friends and family using messages via e-mail and Facebook™ by posting a recruitment advertisement offering the chance to enter a \$100 prize draw as compensation for participation (Appendix A). The convenience sample had an even gender split and a mean age of 35.19 ( $SD = 16.11$ ).

An additional 109 participants were recruited using the online survey software Qualtrics.com. This sample, unlike the previous two, was comprised entirely of American participants. Participants were predominantly female and Caucasian, with a mean age of 39.61 ( $SD = 13.64$ ).

*Table 1.*

Summary of demographic info by participant source.

Demographic Characteristic	Student	Convenience Sample	US Residents
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
<b>Age</b>			
18-29	41 (97.6)	35 (60.3)	33 (31.7)
30-39	1 (2.4)	5 (8.3)	17 (16.4)
40-49	0 (0)	3 (5.2)	22 (21.1)
50- 59	0 (0)	9 (15.3)	25 (24.1)
60+	0 (0)	6 (10.2)	7 (6.7)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	13 (31.7)	34 (53.1)	31 (28.7)
Female	28 (68.3)	30 (46.9)	77 (71.3)
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Caucasian	31 (73.8)	45 (70.3)	89 (81.7)
Other	10 (23.8)	18 (28.1)	20 (18.3)
<b>Education Completed</b>			
High School	N/A	8 (12.5)	48 (44.0)
College Diploma	N/A	9 (14.1)	16 (14.7)
Undergraduate Degree	N/A	28 (43.8)	34 (31.2)
Master's Degree	N/A	14 (21.9)	9 (8.3)
Doctorate/PhD	N/A	5 (7.8)	0 (0)

IMPACT OF DISABILITY ON EMPLOYEMENT INTERVIEWS			25
None of the Above	N/A	0 (0)	2 (1.8)
Employment Status			
Employed	28 (66.7)	19 (29.7)	63 (57.8)
Unemployed	14 (33.3)	45 (70.3)	46 (42.2)

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*Note: The version of the study presented to the Student sample did not include a question asking the highest level of education completed as all participating students were registered to an undergraduate program at Saint Mary's University*

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In order to determine the agreement within the participants that would enable combined the three samples, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted comparing the responses provided by participants from the three sample sources, specifically for ratings provided during the interview and for biased attitudes towards people with physical disabilities. According to Tukey's post-hoc comparisons, the student sample and the Canadian convenience sample did not differ significantly from one another; however, both provided significantly different responses as compared to the U.S. sample for the variables of interest<sup>1</sup> ( $p < .05$ ). A comparison of means between Canadian and American participants is provided in Table 2.

As the study was conducted online, and there was a high rate of attrition, missing data analyses were conducted. Responses were not included for final analyses of results unless participants indicated that they agreed to have their results included in the study upon completion of the study. When including only data from those participants included

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<sup>1</sup> The responses from the Canadian convenience sample and the US residents sample on the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Towards Persons with Disabilities affect subscale did not differ significantly ( $p = .13$ ), however the Canadian convenience sample and student sample were more similar ( $p = .79$ ) and the student sample still differed significantly from the US residents sample ( $p = .05$ ).

in the final results, no single item was missing more than 5% of responses. However, when accounting for all surveys that had been started, it was found that the only pattern with regards to missing data was that as the study progressed, fewer participants continued to provide responses, thus leading to incomplete surveys.

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*Table 2.*

*Hiring recommendations, response ratings and MAS scores for Canadian and US residents.*

	Canadian Residents	American Residents
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Hiring Recommendation*	4.48 (.82)	4.95 (.75)
Mean Interview Ratings*	3.57 (.51)	3.98 (.58)
ATDP	-21.13 (15.89)	-23.44 (16.53)
MAS- Affect*	2.71 (.59)	2.47 (.73)
MAS- Cognitions*	2.31 (.58)	2.03 (.63)
MAS- Behaviours	2.31 (.62)	2.17 (.72)

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*Notes:* Higher MAS and ATDP scores are associated with more negative attitudes towards individuals with physical disabilities.

\* denotes a significant difference in scores of  $p < .05$ .

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## Study Design

This study employs a 2 (Job Description) X 3 (Interview Stimuli) factorial design, modified from the design employed by Colella & Varma (1999). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions identified by the design.

**Job type.** The two job descriptions used in the study required either high mobility or limited mobility to do the job. Participants were presented with the job title and description of a data entry position suggesting limited mobility requirements ( $n = 98$ ) or for a position as a grocery store clerk ( $n = 108$ ) suggesting higher mobility requirements (see job descriptions in Appendix B). Both job descriptions were developed based on the corresponding O\*NET listing, confirming that the grocery store clerk position had greater mobility requirements.

**Interview stimuli.** Three versions of the interview stimuli were presented in the study. These included two video conditions: one explicitly depicted an applicant in a wheel chair; the second, showed a seemingly able-bodied applicant. The third interview type consisted of an audio recording representing a telephone interview.

Interview stimuli condition was manipulated by editing the same recordings into the three distinct interview stimulus types from the same initial video clip. The actor playing the applicant did require a wheelchair in reality due to impaired lower body mobility, but had full use of his upper body. Participants in this study were presented one of three interview conditions: a FTF interview of an applicant without any apparent disabilities representing the social norm, a FTF interview of a physically disabled applicant, and a telephone interview without visual representation of the applicant. All three interview types consisted of four segments. In the first segment, the interviewer

explained the purpose of the interview, asked the first interview question, and received the applicant's response. The second and third interview clips each included only one interview question and the applicant's response. The final interview clip began with the fourth interview question, followed by the applicant response, and ended with the interviewer confirming that the interview was complete. In the non-physical disability FTF condition, the first video clip began with the applicant sitting at a desk and his wheelchair not being visible at any point. In the physical disability FTF condition, the video began with the applicant entering the room in the wheelchair for the interview; otherwise, this video clip was identical to that in the non-physical disability FTF interview. In the telephone condition, participants listened to the audio from the videos, representing a telephone interview. The interview questions and the applicant responses were scripted prior to the interview (see Appendix C). A composite score was computed using the ratings provided for each of the four interview questions to represent a mean interview rating.

The interviews took the form of structured interviews to enhance the realism for participants. Structured interviews are better predictors of performance than unstructured interviews (Wiesner & Cronshaw, 1988). Structured behavioural interview scores also display a strong positive correlation with performance scores for interpersonal communication and problem solving skills (Huffcut et al., 2001; Motowidlo, Carter, Dunnette, Tippens, Werner, Burnett & Vaughan, 1992), which comprise two of the interview questions in the study. Following each interview question participants rated each answer using a behaviourally anchored rating scale (BARS) in which "1"

represented a poor response and “5” an excellent response (see the scoring key provided in Appendix D).

### **Measures**

**Selection.** For each condition, participants rated the applicant on the following question “Based on the interview, I would hire the applicant for the job”, on a 6-point scale with 1 indicating “Strongly Disagree” and 6 indicating “Strongly Agree”.

**Biased attitudes towards individuals with physical disabilities.** Attitudes towards people with physical disabilities were measured using two scales. The Attitudes Towards Persons with Disabilities scale (ATPD; Yunker, Block & Campbell) contained 20-items rated on a 6-point agreement scale ( $\alpha = .73$ ). Sample items include “Parents of disabled children should be less strict than other parents” and “Most disabled people worry a great deal.”

The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale Towards Persons with Disabilities (MAS; Findler, Vilchinsky, & Werner, 2007) includes a vignette followed by three scales, all of which were rated on a 5-point scale from “not at all” to “very much”. The affect scale had 16 items referring to possible emotions felt by the protagonist of the vignette including tension, shame and serenity ( $\alpha = .82$ ). The cognition dimension had 10 items referring to potential cognitions by the main character in the vignette, for example “I enjoy meeting new people” ( $\alpha = .91$ ). The behaviours dimension included eight items with possible behaviours the main character in the vignette might engage in, such as “Start a conversation” ( $\alpha = .69$ ).

**Socially desirable responding.** In order to assess the impact of social desirability on ratings, participants completed the Marlowe-Crowne social desirability

scale, Short Form C (Fischer & Fick, 1993). The 13-item true or false includes items such as “I sometimes feel resentful when I don’t get my way.” ( $\alpha = .37$ ). Due to low internal reliability, this scale was not included in any analyses.

### **Procedure**

Participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions (job type X interview stimuli). Participants were provided with a job description corresponding to the job for which they would be providing a hiring recommendation. Before beginning the interview, participants were provided a training task on how to rate with BARS. In this training task, participants were first shown a video in which an interviewer asked a job applicant a question, to which she responded (the script for the training task video can be found in Appendix E). Participants then used the BARS to rate the answer and were given written feedback showing the correct rating for the applicant’s response. The feedback included a brief explanation for the appropriate rating (Appendix F). The four interview questions and applicant responses, also shown by video, immediately followed the training task. Following each question and response, participants rated the interviewee’s response. After rating all four interview questions, participants made a hiring recommendation, and then completed the attitude measures and demographics questionnaires (Appendix G).

### **Results**

Due to the factorial design of this study, data analyses were conducted in two phases. First, in order to assess the relationship of attitudes towards people with disabilities and employment interview outcomes, correlation analyses were conducted to determine if prejudiced attitudes were associated with both interview ratings and hiring

recommendations. Separate correlations were conducted for the full sample, as well as only those subjects who were shown the disabled applicant interview condition, to better depict any differing impact of prejudiced attitudes in the presence of an individual with physical disabilities on employment outcomes in response to Hypothesis 1.

Next, to test Hypotheses 2 through 5, I conducted a 2 (Country of Residence) X 2 (Job Type) X 3 (Interview Condition) factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). I used a MANOVA as the two important dependent variables, hiring recommendation and interview scores were highly related. Additionally, MANOVA not only assessed the impact of all three independent variables and their interaction, but also assessed the covariance of biased attitudes towards individuals with disabilities.

### **Impact of Biased Attitudes on interview ratings**

Hypothesis 1 predicts that people with biased attitudes against individuals with physical disabilities will provide lower hiring recommendations when presented with the disabled applicant interview condition. Before testing the relationship between biased attitudes and recommendations provided for the disabled job applicant condition, analyses were conducted using all participants. As shown in Table 3, only the Affect and Cognitions scales of the MAS were related to the hiring recommendations or interview ratings provided by participants, such that negative attitudes were directly related to negative outcomes across all conditions. Specifically, participants reporting more negative affect tended to provide both lower hiring recommendations ( $r = -.14, p < .05$ ) and interview scores ( $r = -.18, p < .01$ ), whereas negative cognitions were only significantly related to lower interview scores ( $r = -.16, p < .05$ ). One noteworthy finding is the difference in the significance of the correlation coefficients between the

scales measuring biased attitudes towards people between Canadian and American residents. It appears that the scales were more significantly correlated for the American sample than for the Canadian sample. Table 4 depicts the differences in correlations between the Canadian and American samples.

Three significant differences in correlations were found between Canadians and Americans. First, the age was significantly related to gender for the Canadian sample ( $r = -.33, p < .01$ ), with male participants being significantly older than the female participants, with gender coded as Male = 0 and Female = 1. This relationship was not significant in the American sample ( $r = -.01$ ). Scores for the ATDP and the MAS Cognitions subscale were significantly correlated for the American sample ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ), but not the Canadian sample ( $r = .02$ ). Finally, although the Affect and Behaviours subscales were significantly related for both Canadians ( $r = .24, p < .05$ ) and Americans ( $r = .62, p < .01$ ), the relationship is significantly more pronounced in the American sample.

Table 3.

Descriptive statistics and correlations.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	34.56	14.80	-								
2. Gender	-	-	-.11	-							
3. Employment Status	-	-	.16*	.02	-						
4. Country of Residency	-	-	.35**	.17*	-.27*	-					
5. ATDP	-22.3	16.22	-.13	-.18*	.01	-.07	(.73)				
6. MAS - Affect	2.30	.68	-.12	-.00	-.11	-.18**	.36**	(.82)			
7. MAS - Cognitions	2.17	.62	-.05	-.10	.06	-.22**	.19**	.20**	(.91)		
8. MAS - Behaviours	2.24	.68	-.24**	.03	.13	-.10	.32**	.52**	.27**	(.69)	
9. Hiring Recommendation	4.72	.82	.12	.07	-.13	.29**	.06	-.14*	-.08	-.01	-
10. Mean Response Rating	3.77	.58	.17*	.05	-.16*	.36**	.01	-.18**	-.16*	-.05	.67**

Notes: Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) are denoted on the diagonal. For Sex 0 = male and 1 = female.

\* denotes  $p < .05$ , \*\* denotes  $p < .01$ . N = 215.

Table 4.

Correlations split by Country of Residence.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	-	-.01	-.08	-.10	-.02	-.04	-.19	-.09	.01
2. Gender	-.33**	-	-.05	-.15	.02	-.14	-.02	.11	.02
3. Employment Status	-.07	.17	-	.06	.10	-.01	.13	-.17	-.06
4. ATDP	-.14	-.19	-.08	-	.40**	.31**	.38**	.10	-.04
5. MAS - Affect	-.13	.03	-.04	.28**	-	.42**	.62**	.03	-.13
6. MAS - Cognitions	.09	.02	.01	.02	-.18	-	.36**	-.07	-.15
7. MAS - Behaviours	-.26*	.13	.08	.24*	.36**	.12	-	.11	.04
8. Hiring Recommendation	.09	-.06	.07	.07	-.23	.05	-.09	-	.66**
9. Mean Response Rating	.09	-.05	-.09	.12	-.14	-.02	-.10	.61**	-

Notes: Canadian results are shown below the diagonal and American results above. N = 215. Means and by Country of

Residence are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

\* denotes  $p < .05$  and \*\* denotes  $p < .01$ .

When examining only the participants presented with the disabled applicant interview condition, the relationship between negative attitudes and interview outcomes decreased, as shown in Table 5. In particular, the Affect scale of the MAS was no longer significantly related to neither hiring recommendation ( $r = -.15, p < .05$ ) nor interview ratings ( $r = -.09, p < .05$ ), although the difference between the correlations was not significant. This relationship may not be significant due to the reduced sample size of participants in the disabled applicant condition. The Cognitions scale was still negatively related to interview response ratings ( $r = -.26, p < .05$ ), suggesting that applicants with negative attitudes towards individuals with physical disabilities will provide poorer ratings to the interview responses given by an applicant with a physical disability, than would be provided by someone with less biased attitudes. Interestingly, these negative attitudes did not significantly predict hiring recommendations, however, the correlations of the participants in the physically disabled applicant condition and the full sample were not significantly different.

Table 5.

Descriptive statistics and correlations for participants who viewed the disabled job applicant interview stimuli.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	34.66	15.34	-								
2. Gender	-	-	-.14	-							
3. Employment Status	-	-	-.01	-.05	-						
4. Country of Residency	-	-	-.39**	.15	-.25	-					
5. ATDP	-27.59	16.55	.13	-.14	-.20	-.01	-				
6. MAS - Affect	2.63	0.69	-.04	-.03	.05	-.06	.38**	-			
7. MAS - Cognitions	2.17	0.63	-.13	.08	.21	-.30*	.13	.06	-		
8. MAS - Behaviours	2.22	0.69	-.20	.11	-.03	.05	.07	.37**	.31*		
9. Hiring Recommendation	4.64	0.88	.23	-.12	-.17	.28*	.06	-.15	-.08	.01	-
10. Mean Response Rating	3.78	0.57	.20	-.02	-.11	.46**	.00	-.09	-.26*	-.07	.62**

Notes: *N* = 65. \* denotes  $p < .05$ ,

\*\* denotes  $p < .01$ .

**Impact of Interview Condition and Job Type on Interview Ratings**

A factorial MANOVA was conducted using the 2 (Country of Residence) X 2 (Job Type) X 3 (Interview Condition) design. In addition to the independent variables, the Affect and Cognitions scales of the MAS were included as covariates, as they were significantly correlated with hiring recommendations and interview ratings, and family-wise error was set at  $\alpha = .05$ . Neither the Affect nor Cognitions scores had a significant impact at the multivariate level<sup>2</sup>. Cell means and standard deviations according to the factorial design are shown in Table 6.

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<sup>2</sup> The MANOVAs were run without the inclusion of covariates and results did not differ significantly.

*Table 6.*  
*Hiring recommendations and interview response ratings based Job Type, Interview Condition, and Country of Residence.*

Job Type	Interview Condition	Canadian Residents		American Residents	
		Hiring Recommendations <i>M (SD)</i>	Mean Interview Ratings <i>M (SD)</i>	Hiring Recommendations <i>M (SD)</i>	Mean Interview Ratings <i>M (SD)</i>
Data Entry					
Position	Able-bodied applicant	4.54 (.66)	3.76 (.49)	4.88 (.72)	3.84 (.60)
	Physically disabled applicant	4.41 (1.00)	3.80 (.54)	4.92 (.67)	4.31 (.52)
	Telephone interview	4.62 (.74)	3.52 (.47)	4.53 (.77)	3.72 (.62)
Grocery Store					
Clerk	Able-bodied applicant	4.65 (.67)	3.63 (.56)	5.00 (.66)	4.03 (.61)
	Physically disabled applicant	4.55 (.93)	3.67 (.43)	4.88 (.78)	3.88 (.55)
	Telephone interview	4.27 (.96)	3.46 (.62)	5.30 (.70)	4.13 (.54)

*Note: N = 206.*

Data used to calculate MANOVA violated assumptions of equal sample size and power. This study did not have an adequate sample size to ensure the detection of moderate effects. The sample used was adequate to support the hypothesized 2 (Job Type) X 3 (Interview Condition) factorial design; however, the additional Country of Residence factor was added post-hoc due to differences in responses provided by American and Canadian residents. Sample sizes were not equal between cells within the factorial design; however, it was decided to avoid random sampling within larger samples, as sample size was limited and this would reduce power further. Data did satisfy all other assumptions of MANOVA.

There was a significant three-way interaction between Job Type, Country of Residence and Interview Condition at the multivariate level when tested using Pillai-Bartlett Trace's  $F$  approximation ( $F(4, 192) = 3.93, p < .01$ ). Univariate tests indicated that the three way interaction had a significant impact on both hiring decision ( $F(2, 192) = 3.18, p = .04$ ) as depicted in Figure 1, and interview ratings ( $F(2, 192) = 4.22, p = .02$ ) as shown in Figure 2. The figures present the interaction between Job Type and Interview Condition separately for Canadian and U.S. participants. It appears that although there is little difference in the hiring recommendations provided across Job Type and Interview Conditions by Canadian participants, there is an interaction between Job Type and Interview Condition for American participants. The interaction is such that differences by Job Type only appear in the telephone interview condition, with lower hiring recommendations being provided by participants who assessed the applicant for the data entry job compared to those who assessed the applicants for the grocery store clerk position. The three-way interaction had a different impact on interview ratings, as it

appears that Canadian and American residents rated the physically disabled applicants differently for the two positions. While Canadians appear to provide better ratings to people with physical disabilities when presented with the grocery store clerk position, Americans provide more favorable ratings to the physically disabled applicant when provided with the data entry job description, providing partial support for hypothesis 4, which proposed that participants presented with the physically disabled applicant interview condition would provide significantly higher ratings when told the applicant was interviewing for a data entry position as opposed to a grocery store clerk position. None of the two-way interactions were significant at the multivariate level, including the interaction between Job Type and Interview Condition; however, this may be explained by the differing Job x Interview Condition interaction found for Canadian and American residents.

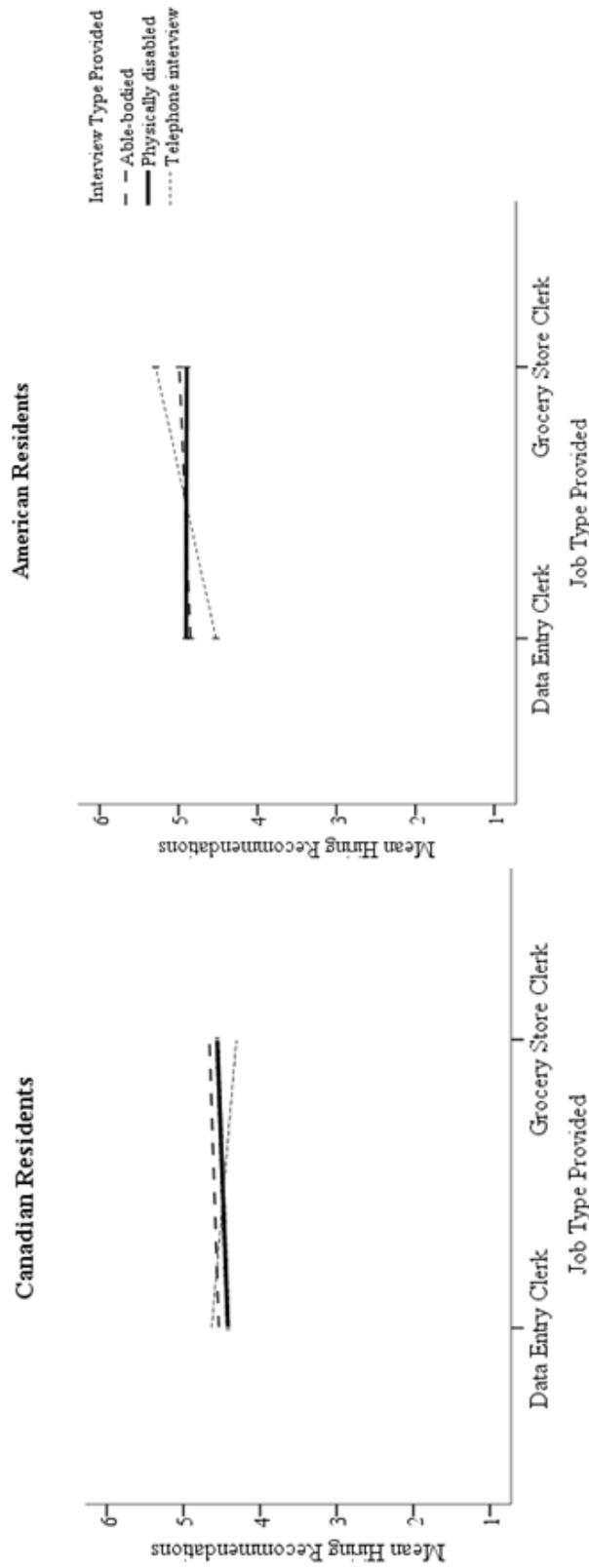


Figure 1. Shows the effect of the three-way interaction between job type, interview condition and country of residence on hiring recommendations.

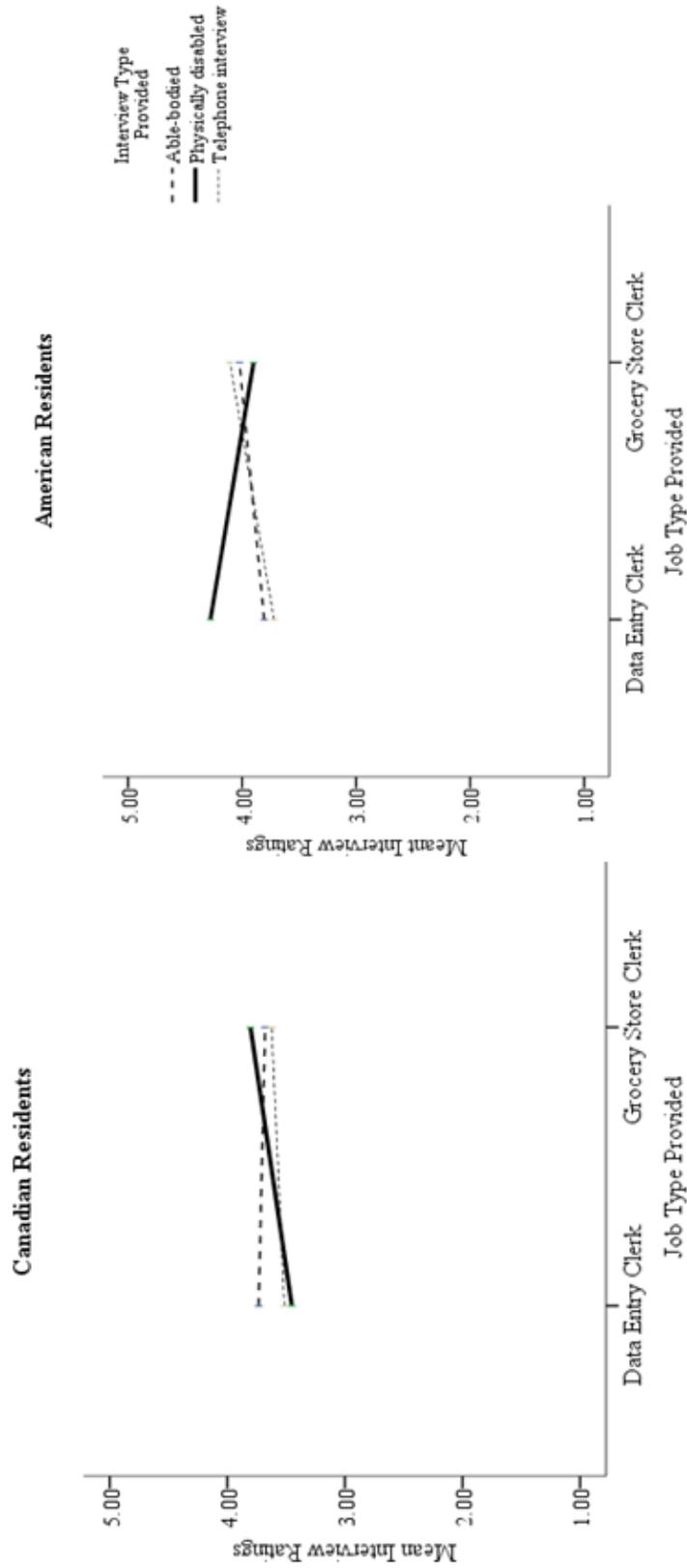


Figure 2. Shows the effect of the three-way interaction between job type, interview condition, and country of residence on mean interview ratings

**Impact of Country of Residence on Interview Ratings**

One surprising finding was the significant impact of country of residence on interview outcomes ( $F(1, 192) = 9.51, p < .01$ ). Univariate analysis showed that country of residence significantly predicted both hiring recommendations ( $F(1, 192) = 11.62, p < .01$ ) and interview ratings ( $F(1, 192) = 18.36, p < .001$ ), with Americans providing significantly higher ratings on both variables. Although previous research had not suggested that there would be any differences between ratings provided by Canadian and American residents, these findings help explain the significance of the three-way interaction, and suggest that the two groups provided significantly different ratings when provided with identical information.

As such, two follow-up MANOVAs were conducted, testing a 2 (Job Type) X 3 (Interview Condition) design separately for the American sample and the Canadian sample to test the significance of the differing Job Type by Interview Condition suggested by the results of the three-way MANOVA. Again, neither the MAS Affect nor Cognitions scales were significant covariates. Results from the Canadian participants mirrored those of the entire sample, with the interaction between job type and interview condition not significant at the multivariate level, nor were there any significant simple effects of the dependent variables.

Conversely interaction between job type and interview condition for the American sample ( $F(4, 101) = 2.96, p = .02$ ) was significant, explaining the differences visible between the two samples in both Figures 1 and 2. This interaction had a significant impact on interview ratings ( $F(2, 101) = 3.95, p = .02$ ), and hiring recommendation ( $F(2, 101) = 3.10, p = .05$ ). As previously mentioned and illustrated in Figure 2, this

interaction appears to be explained through the differing ratings provided in the telephone interview condition, such that the lowest scores were provided for the data entry position when participants were in the telephone interview condition and conversely this same interview condition also produced the highest ratings for the interview when presented with the grocery store clerk job description.

No main effects were found for Job Type or Interview Condition for either sample. However, the multivariate effect of job type was approaching significance ( $F(2, 101) = 2.43, p = .09$ ). This seems to be driven primarily by the effect of job type on interview ratings ( $F(1, 101) = 24.13, p = .05$ ). No main effect was found for interview condition, and Tukey's post-hoc tests indicated no differences between conditions approaching significance across Job Types. However, a follow-up MANOVA showed a significant multivariate effect of Interview Condition for the data entry position ( $F(2, 62) = 2.52, p = .05$ ) but not for the grocery store clerk position. The multivariate effect was caused by the significant impact of Interview Condition on interview ratings ( $F(2, 62) = 3.09, p = .06$ ), which was nearing significance. Results of Tukey's post-hoc tests show that participants who were assessing the applicant for a data entry position provided significantly higher ratings for the physically disabled applicant condition, compared to the telephone interview condition ( $p = .03$ ). This finding does not support Hypothesis 5 which proposed that participants in the telephone interview condition would provide more favourable hiring recommendations compared to those provided in the physically disabled applicant condition was not supported. Neither the physically disabled applicant condition, nor the telephone interview condition differed significantly from the able-bodied applicant condition.

**Impact of interview condition on ratings provided by American participants.**

Three one-way MANOVAs were conducted in order to better understand the main effect of Job Type for each Interview Condition. Significant multivariate effects of Job Type were found for both the physically disabled applicant condition ( $F(1, 25) = 3.67, p = .04$ ), and the telephone interview condition ( $F(1, 45) = 6.40, p < .01$ ). In the case of the physically disabled applicant condition, Job Type had a univariate effect that was nearing significance on interview ratings ( $F(1, 25) = 1.27, p = .05$ ), with the data entry clerk condition receiving more positive ratings ( $M = 4.31, SD = .52$ ) than the grocery store clerk condition ( $M = 3.88, SD = .55$ ). Job type had a significant univariate effect on both hiring recommendations ( $F(1, 45) = 6.86, p < .01$ ) and interview ratings ( $F(1, 45) = 1.62, p = .02$ ). In the telephone interview condition, more positive hiring recommendations and interview ratings were provided for the grocery store clerk position compared to the data entry position, as shown in Table 7.

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*Table 7.*

*Means and standard deviations for hiring recommendation and interview ratings by Job Type for American residents in the telephone interview condition.*

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Job Type	Hiring Recommendation	Interview Rating
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Data Entry	4.53 (.77)	3.72 (.61)
Grocery Store Clerk	5.30 (.70)	4.13 (.50)

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### **Discussion**

Research in the area of employment discrimination towards people with physical disabilities has indicated a negative impact of disability on hiring decisions (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Ren et al., 2008), but has provided few solutions for this problem. The purpose of this study was to replicate previous findings of the negative impact of disability on employment while also testing a potential mechanism to counteract that negative impact. Although the present study was unable to replicate previous findings, it does contribute to the research by suggesting that the negative impact of physical disability on employment interview outcomes may be declining.

The present study did not find support for Hypothesis 1 which asserted that biased attitudes towards people with physical disabilities would be associated with lower hiring recommendations and interview ratings in the physically disabled applicant condition. This finding may be associated to the pressures to respond in a socially correct manner, as overt displays of negative attitudes towards people with physical disabilities is no longer acceptable (Pruett & Chan, 2006). It is possible that participants both chose to respond to the attitudes measures so as to appear less biased against people with physical disabilities, but also corrected for their biases in providing ratings, in order to meet societal norms.

This study differs from the majority of past research, as it did not result in different ratings for the physically disabled applicant when compared to the able-bodied applicant. As there was no main effect for the Interview Condition on hiring recommendations and interview ratings, this study was unable to support Hypothesis 2, which hypothesized that the participants in the physically disabled applicant interview

condition would provide higher interview ratings when compared to those in the able-bodied applicant condition.

Neither do these results support Hypothesis 3, which theorized that participants would provide higher hiring recommendations in the able bodied applicant condition, when compared to the physically disabled applicant interview condition. Similarly, results failed to support Hypothesis 4, which proposed that there would be an interaction between Interview Condition and Job Type such that participants would provide more positive hiring recommendations for the able-bodied candidate over the physically disabled candidate when in the Grocery Store Clerk condition, compared to the Data Entry condition. No significant effect was found for the interaction, nor was simple effects found for Job Type of Interview Condition.

These results might also indicate a shift in attitudes and behaviours in the general public. Though studies in which people with disabilities receive more positive hiring decisions are in the minority, one other video study found that an applicant who appeared to be physically disabled actually received hiring ratings that were significantly more positive than the seemingly able-bodied applicant (Nordstrom, Huffakeer, & Williams, 1998). Previous positive contact with employees with disabilities is associated with positive views regarding hiring people with disabilities (Hernandez, 2000). It is possible that in recent years people have been exposed to more interactions with physically disabled employees and coworkers, which might explain the change in rating bias. Though there has been little research conducted specifically investigating changes in attitudes towards people with physical disabilities in the workplace, more recent studies are finding applicant physical disability to have less of a negative impact on employment

ratings with comparison to earlier studies (Ren, Paetzold, & Colella, 2008). For example, perceptions regarding the inclusion of disabled people in the workplace appear to be changing for the better. One study found that the majority of participants stated that they would have more favourable views of organizations that hired people with disabilities and would prefer to do business with such organizations (Siperstein, Romano, Mohler & Parker, 2006). One final explanation may be that people in wheelchairs have been found to be perceived as more open and conscientious (Louvet, 2007), which may have counteracted the negative assumptions made with regards to people with physical disabilities.

Data did not support Hypothesis 5 that theorized that participants in the telephone interview condition would provide more favourable hiring recommendations and interview ratings than those in the physically disabled applicant condition. These results can be partially explained by the unbiased ratings provided by participants. Therefore, should there be no impact of bias against people with physical disabilities to begin with; there would be no bias to be corrected through the use of telephone interviews.

Differences in interview ratings were found in the opposite direction with American residents who were told they were providing recommendations for a data entry position. In this case, participants provided less favourable interview ratings for the telephone interview condition compared to the physically disabled applicant condition. One possible explanation is the finding that overall, people tend to perceive FTF interviews as more fair when compared to telephone interviews, which may also be linked to the lack of non-verbal cues (Bauer, Truxillo, Paronto, Weekly, & Campion, 2004). It is possible that participants who were able to assess visual cues from the applicant felt more

confident in providing higher interview ratings than those who were in the telephone interview condition. Although there is little research on the equivalency of telephone and FTF interviews, the results from the present study suggest that they are a poor substitute for FTF interviews. Although the interviews were not only scripted, but included identical audio information, participants were likely using visual cues from the job applicant in the non-telephone conditions when assessing his interview responses. Visual cues are not only important for social interaction from the interviewer, but in forming an opinion about the job applicant. As such, it may be to the advantage of all job applicants and employers to pursue in person interviews over telephone interviews. Currently, there is no research regarding ability of visual cues in employment interviews to predict future job performance.

Perhaps the most interesting finding was the differences in responses provided by the Canadian and American participants. In general, American participants provided significantly more favourable hiring recommendations and interview ratings, and reported significantly less negative attitudes towards people with physical disabilities. Despite reporting higher negative attitudes, Canadian residents rated applicants similarly across all experimental conditions. In contrast, American residents provided significantly higher interview ratings to the physically disabled applicant condition compared to the telephone interview condition. One interesting demographic difference between the American Sample and the Canadian convenience sample was employment status. A significantly higher number of the American participants were unemployed. While it may appear that American participants who were currently unemployed provided more positive ratings out of sympathy could explain the differences in results between

Americans and Canadians, the correlations between employment status and interview ratings and hiring recommendations were non-significant, as depicted in Tables 3 and 4. Canadian and American residents may perceive the same information differently or differences in culture and exposure to information and laws regarding discrimination against the disabled resulted in different perceptions about the disabled applicant. There is no research that compares decision making of Canadians to Americans with respect to hiring the disabled, and as such, any explanation of these differences is speculative.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Despite the true experimental design of this study, there are still limitations that should be addressed by future research. The primary issue in attaining significant results in this study was the issue of sample size. The unexpected differences between American and Canadian residents added a third factor to the experimental design, thus reducing the number of participants in comparison groups. This addition resulted in a decrease in power. As such it is possible that trends in the data, such as the decreased interview ratings for the grocery store clerk position in comparison to the data entry position for American residents presented with the physically disabled applicant condition, may reflect real differences in perceptions of interview responses. However, the small sample size has made it difficult to provide significant evidence. Future studies should seek to obtain similar applicant ratings from a diverse and large sample, ideally closer to 300 participants.

One potential issue with the current study may have been the actor who portrayed the job applicant across all three interview conditions. As previous mentioned, he did require the use of a wheelchair due to impaired lower body mobility, while still retaining

full upper body mobility, adding realism to the physically disabled applicant condition. Although he was an ideal actor in order to allow all three interview conditions to be created using the same video recordings, his other characteristics may have impacted the interview and hiring ratings provided in the study. The actor was very confident and well-spoken in his delivery of the scripted interview responses. It is possible that his composure lead participants to perceive him as more confident and qualified when compared to their expectations of applicants for the positions presented in the study. It should also be noted that the actor was an active member of both student government at Saint Mary's University, as well as the Psychology Society. This is, in part, the reason that the responses from a number of student participants were removed, as mentioned previously. It is also possible that some participants may not have recognized him when completing the study, but had in fact had previous contact with him and as such had more positive perceptions of his abilities.

Another important limitation is in the design of the survey. First, there is the lack of comparison between applicants. In the experimental design, participants did not make comparisons between applicants as previous research showed that doing so can lead to social desirability bias (Premeaux, 2001), making it more difficult to determine any impact of disability on ratings. However, the decision to use a between subjects, rather than within subjects design lacks external validity. Follow-up research should allow for comparisons between applicants, either through ranking candidates or allowing the selection of one or no applicants from a pool. An additional study design related issue is the online format we used, which is not directly generalizable to actual interviewing and hiring practices. Future research should focus on having participants' rate confederates

in a lab setting, in which the participant might serve as the interviewer. It is also possible that the placement of the discriminatory attitudes scales may have had an impact on the responses provided by participants in the physically disabled applicant condition.

Participants who had viewed the physically disabled job applicant may have modified their responses to the ATDP and the MAS in order to appear to have less discriminatory.

A final issue in the study might be the lack of ambiguity in the quality of the applicant's responses. Racism research shows that the impact of racial prejudice in hiring decisions is only significant when the candidate appears neither very qualified, nor very unqualified for the position (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). It is possible that there is a similar effect of prejudices against people with physical disabilities in the hiring process. Although all responses were scripted to result in a "fair" response, or a "3" on a 1 to 5 rating scale, it is possible that participants viewed "fair" to mean adequate for the position. Additionally, the very use of BARS may have reduced the variance in responses, as providing anchors for responses removed the ambiguity and thus potential for unconscious biases to impact ratings. A follow-up study should be conducted in which new responses are scripted to be of slightly poorer quality. Furthermore, rating scales for interview responses should not be anchored, in order to allow participants to judge what they deem a "poor", "fair", or "excellent" response.

### **Conclusion**

The present study provides encouraging information with regards to the perceptions of people with physical disabilities in employment interviews, as results suggest that, under experimental conditions, people are not inclined to provide less favourable hiring recommendations for people with physical disabilities. This

information may in turn help people with physical disabilities who feel discouraged in seeking employment enter the job market with more confidence that their skills and abilities will not be judged differently on the basis of their disabilities. The findings of the present study do, however, indicate that telephone interviews may not be a viable alternative to traditional FTF interviews and in fact may result in less favourable interview outcomes for the job applicant. Finally, the present study suggests that I/O researchers should reconsider grouping Canada and the US together because their socio-economic similarities and further examine the differences between the cultures of these two nations.

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**Appendix A- Recruitment Message**

Hello,

I am currently completing my master's thesis at Saint Mary's University in Industrial and Organizational psychology. I would appreciate your participation in an online study looking at how people rate interviews. We will be asking participants to either watch, or listen to a recorded interview, and rate how the interviewee did, and give us a hiring recommendation.

This study will take approximate 15-30 minutes to complete. It will require that you be able to play youtube clips on your computer, and be able to listen to the audio or video clips while taking the survey.

As compensation, **participants will be entered into a draw for a \$100 pre-paid credit card.** Your participation would be greatly appreciated, and would help build scientific literature regarding job interviews.

The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board (REB) has approved this study.  
REB #- 13-058

**Please forward this message to friends and family above the age of 18.**

Kind regards,

Anjali Daté  
MSc Student, Saint Mary's University  
[anjali\\_date@hotmail.com](mailto:anjali_date@hotmail.com)

**Survey Link:**

**[https://smupsychology.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_7ZIFCWgJpBMjUrZ](https://smupsychology.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_7ZIFCWgJpBMjUrZ)**

## Appendix B- Job Descriptions

### Occupation #1: Data Entry Clerk –Limited mobility condition

This position will require an individual who is capable of competently recording client data using our organization's databases, and maintain records of past and present clients. Applicants must be competent and capable with computers, and word processing and spread sheet software in particular.

Duties may include verifying data and preparing materials for printing.

#### Tasks

1. Read source documents such as cancelled checks, sales reports, or bills, and enter data in specific data fields or onto tapes or disks for subsequent entry, using keyboards or scanners.
2. Compile, sort and verify the accuracy of data before it is entered.
3. Compare data with source documents, or re-enter data in verification format to detect errors.
4. Store completed documents in appropriate locations.
5. Locate and correct data entry errors, or report them to supervisors.
6. Maintain logs of activities and completed work.
7. Select materials needed to complete work assignments.
8. Resolve garbled or indecipherable messages, using cryptographic procedures and equipment.

### Occupation #2 Grocery Store Clerk – Greater mobility condition

This position will require an individual who can stock shelves, racks, cases, bins, and tables with merchandise and arrange merchandise displays to attract customers.

Applicants must be able to effectively manage their time to best serve customers and maintain tidy shelves and organized product displays.

Duties may include taking physical count of stock or check and mark merchandise.

#### Tasks

9. Answer customers' questions about merchandise and advise customers on merchandise selection.
10. Itemize and total customer merchandise selection at checkout counter, using cash register, and accept cash or charge card for purchases.
11. Take inventory or examine merchandise to identify items to be reordered or replenished.
12. Pack customer purchases in bags or cartons.
13. Stock shelves, racks, cases, bins, and tables with new or transferred merchandise.
14. Compare merchandise invoices to items actually received to ensure that shipments are correct.

15. Requisition merchandise from supplier based on available space, merchandise on hand, customer demand, or advertised specials.

### **Appendix C- Interview Script**

Interviewer: Hello, please come in.

(Applicant enters room and settles at desk. No physical disability video would be cut to begin from this point.)

Applicant: Hello.

Interviewer: Thank you for your application, before we start the interview, do you have any questions about the position?

Applicant: No, thank you.

Interviewer: Great, then we can start.

Throughout life we encounter team activities, such as sports teams and group projects. Describe a project you have worked on in the past that involved a team effort.

Applicant: At school, I've had to work in group projects. For one class, last year, I was assigned to a group of with four other people. Since none of us knew each other, I set up a facebook group in order for us to get in touch with the whole group when we weren't together,

As a group we decided to have mid-week checkups between our allotted class time each week to make sure everyone was on the right path. In the end we got a good mark on the project, and we also avoided having any major fights between group members.

Interviewer: Good.

Now, we all make mistakes at one time or another. Can you describe a time when you made an error (at school, home or work) and how you determined that an error had been made?

Applicant: When I was working as a cashier, I once miscounted the till. I didn't realize that I was off until we were closing up for the day, and I was filling out the bank deposit forms. Once I realized, I told my manager and started recounting the cash, coin and total credit card purchases. I managed to catch my counting mistake, which came from forgetting to include a couple

of credit cards receipts, and filled the forms out with the correct information, before locking up and giving my manager the cash to be deposited.

Interviewer: Not all work situations require the same level of employee supervision. Can you tell me about a time that you worked with little or no supervision.

Applicant: In my last job at an engineering company, in which, after being trained we were expected to run tests simple geological tests by ourselves. We would report our findings to our supervisor, who was an actual engineer, who would only take a quick look at the results, and unless there was something very unusual about them, they would assume that our results fine. For the most part I was able to do the job without any help, but from time to time I would get unusual results, and in those cases I would ask my supervisor to help me go over the test with me.

Interviewer: Sometimes our friends ask us to “do them a favor”. Tell me about a time that a friend asked you to do them a favor and you had to reuse them.

Applicant: One time a friend called me because her car had broken down and she needed someone to come get her and help her out. Unfortunately, I didn't have access to the car at the time, which I told her right away. I also offered to call some of our mutual friends to pick her up, while she called her insurance, to reduce the time she was stuck outside alone.

Interviewer: Thank you. Those are all of my questions for today. We will get back to you with our decision either way within the next two weeks.

Applicant: Thank you.

**Appendix D- Interview Questions and Rating Scale**

Modified from DAT Committee Oct 22-23/99

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disapprove	Disapprove	Indifferent	Approve	Strongly Approve

Team Work

Throughout life we encounter team activities, such as sports teams and group projects. Describe a project you have worked on in the past that involved a team effort.

Excellent Response (5)

- Demonstrates a willingness to cooperate and get along well with others
- Takes initiative in organizing team tasks
- Ensures that all team members are working together effectively
- Expresses a positive attitude towards team experiences

Fair Response (3)

- Indicates a willingness to cooperate in team activities
- Enjoys the social aspects of team work
- Offers suggestions for completing team projects on schedule

Poor Response (1)

- Indicates that they prefer to work independent of teams

Problem Solving

We all make mistakes at one time or another. Describe a time when you made an error (at school, home or work) and how you determined that an error had been made.

Excellent Response (5)

- Examines the consequences of the initial course of action and determines that an error has occurred
- Evaluates the seriousness of the error
- Identifies key elements of the initial course of action to aid in rectifying the situation
- Demonstrates confidence in light of the error
- Incorporates the experience into knowledge base to enable them to make better decisions in the future

Fair Response (3)

- Identifies the consequences of the initial course of action

- Seeks ways to rectify the situation
- Uses the experience to prevent future mistakes from occurring

Poor Response (1)

- Expresses a lack of concern in making the error.

Self-Directed Work

Not all work situations require the same level of employee supervision. Tell me about a time that you worked with little or no supervision.

Excellent Response (5)

- Demonstrates confidence in ability to work alone
- Demonstrate self-motivation
- Exhibits a high degree of reliability and trustworthiness
- Identifies problems as they arise and is able to initiate corrective action
- Able to work independently

Fair Response (3)

- Expresses comfort in dealing with familiar work situations but seeks direction in new or unique situations
- Reports problems as they arise and seeks solutions
- Exhibits a reasonable degree of reliability and trustworthiness

Poor Response (1)

- Consistently asks for help without attempting to solve work related problems

Communication

Sometimes our friends ask us to “do them a favor”. Tell me about a time that a friend asked you to do them a favor and you had to refuse them.

Excellent Response (5)

- Initiates a friendly conversation with the individual
- Acknowledges the individual's request
- Displays concern for the individual's feelings through effective listening
- Conveys feelings of remorse for being unable to comply
- Demonstrates a willingness to provide the individual with assistance at a later date

Fair Response (3)

- Provides an explanation for denying the request

- Encourages the individual to describe their feelings concerning the situation
- Suggest various options in lieu of the favour

Poor Response (1)

- Indicates that they ignored the person OR Deny the request without explanation

**Appendix E – Training Video Script**

**Question:**

Most students have had at least one professor who is notorious for giving very difficult and long exams. Tell me about a time when you knew you had a very long, difficult exam that you were worried about and really wanted to do well on. Please describe what you did in this situation.

**Response:**

I begin preparing for the final exam on the first day of classes. I go to class every day, buy the text and take good notes. If the professor uses Web CT I download everything that is available. So, I have a lot of material at the ready. I don't leave studying till the last minute but put in some time each day on the course. When it comes time for an exam, what I do is review all my notes, the texts and web material. I also arrange to form a study group before hand with some of my friends who are also in the class so we can help each other with the more difficult material in preparing for the final. As a result, I received an "A" on the final

**Based on the applicant's answer and the scoring guide, what score do you give her?**

<b>Poor Response</b>		<b>Fair Response</b>		<b>Good Response</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

**Appendix F – Training Video Rating Feedback**

Please compare how you rated the interviewee with the appropriate rating:

The interviewee deserves a 4 for her response.

Why did she deserve a 4?

- She started studying well in advance
- She planned studying ahead of time
- She formed a study group

**Appendix G – Demographics Questions**

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your age?

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What is your ethnic background?

- Caucasian
- African/Caribbean
- Middle-Eastern
- South Asian
- East Asian/ Pacific Islander
- Latin
- Aboriginal
- Mixed Background
- Prefer not to Disclose

Is English your primary language?

- No
- Yes

What year of study are you in?

- First year
- Second Year
- Third Year
- Fourth Year
- Other

What is your program?

- Psychology BA
- Psychology BSc
- Other BA
- Other BSc
- BCom

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Secondary School/ High School
- CEGEP (Quebec Residents)
- College Diploma
- Undergraduate Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate/ PhD
- None of the above

Have you ever been to a job interview?

- No
- Yes

Are you currently employed?

- No
- Yes

If you answered yes to the previous question, what type of job do you hold?

- Part-time
- Full-time
- N/A

What is your current occupation?

- Clerical
- Management
- Professional
- Retail/ Sales
- Service Staff
- Public Service
- Health Care
- Information Support
- Skilled Trades

Do you recognize the person being interviewed?

- No
- Yes