



UEL Research & Knowledge Exchange Conference 2013

Call for Abstracts

Name & Title of Presenter:	Anna Stone
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Co investigators:	
Title of Abstract:	<i>A study aimed to investigate the recruitment prospects of people with facial disfigurement and a contrasting group of wheelchair users</i>
Key Theme/ Key words:	

Abstract (No more than 400 words):

To date there are few studies of stereotyping of people with facial disfigurement, in comparison with a substantial body of research exploring how people with disabilities are seen by the general public. I conducted two experiments (both within-participants) which showed positive evaluations of people depicted as wheelchair users and, from the same participants, negative evaluations of people with facial disfigurements, compared to controls. This suggests the possibility that prejudice against people with facial disfigurement may be seen as somehow more socially acceptable than prejudice against people with disability, or perhaps stronger and harder to overcome. Experiment 2 investigated these possible explanations. Social norms were perceived to permit more discrimination against people with facial disfigurement than against wheelchair users, and implicit attitudes were more negative toward people with facial disfigurement and were correlated with evaluation negativity. These factors could help to explain the evaluative differences between the two disadvantaged groups.

This study aimed to investigate the recruitment prospects of people with facial disfigurement and a contrasting group of wheelchair users, representing a functional impairment with little aesthetic impact. Three applications were made to each of 144

vacancies using three CVs and cover letters rotated around conditions in which one applicant was described as a wheelchair user, another had a non-contagious facial disfigurement, and the third (control condition) had neither. There was evidence of discrimination against people with facial disfigurement in jobs requiring high (but not low) levels of customer contact, and against wheelchair users for jobs entailing high or low customer contact. Aesthetic considerations, social norms, and the possibility of stigma by association are discussed as potential underlying factors.

A recent study, in preparation, observed that the reported emotional experience of participants when looking at people with facial disfigurement depends on the degree of perceived anonymity. Those participants who felt more anonymous reported feeling an elevated experience of repulsion whereas those who felt less anonymous appeared to have suppressed this emotion. This fits with earlier pilot studies which found that participants who were less aware that their responses would be compared to others tended to give poorer evaluations of people with facial disfigurement.

It appears that there is considerable prejudice against people with facial disfigurement but this may be reduced in circumstances in which individuals are aware that they may be held to account for their attitudes.