

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

OF BUSINESS MAJORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD DISABILITY,

JOB APPLICANT DISABILITY STATUS, AND

THE PLACEABILITY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

By

FELIX REGINALD ALBRITTON

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The members of the Committee approve the dissertation of Felix Reginald Albritton defended on June 28, 2005.

---

Deborah J. Ebener  
Professor Directing Dissertation

---

David A. Macpherson  
Outside Committee Member

---

E. Jane Burkhead  
Committee Member

---

Bruce M. Menchetti  
Committee Member

Approved:

---

Ithel Jones, Chair, Department of Childhood Education, Reading,  
and Disability Services

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above-named committee members.

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Robert Couch who enthusiastically introduced me to the field of vocational rehabilitation while I was a young undergraduate student at Auburn University.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ATDP	Attitude Toward Disabled Persons Scale – Form O
DOL	United States Department of Labor
JAR	Job Applicant Rating Scale
SGA	Substantial Gainful Employment
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
TWA	Theory of Work Adjustment

## ABSTRACT

In this study, undergraduate students majoring in business (n = 124) were asked to examine then rate the overall strength of a job applicant's qualifications. The main thrust of this investigation was to examine the association between job applicant disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment.

Three focal areas comprised this study. The first examined the impact of (a) disability status of the job applicant, (b) attitudes of the participants toward people with a disability, and (c) prior contact with people having a disability on the hiring decisions of the participants. The second focal area examined the extent to which the association between the job applicant's disability status and strength of rating given the applicant varied depending on the participants' (a) attitudes toward people with a disability and (b) extent of prior contact with disability. The third focal area examined the extent to which attitudes toward people with a disability may be influenced by a job applicant's disability status and whether attitudes toward people with a disability mediate the association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of rating given the applicant for employment.

The Attitude Toward Disabled Persons (ATDP) Scale, Form – O (Yuker, Block, & Campbell, 1960) provided a measure of attitudes. A six-point job applicant rating scale was used to measure the propensity for hiring the applicant. A four-point scale was adopted to provide a measure of prior contact with disability. The demographic factors of age, gender, and race/ethnicity were also incorporated into the analyses.

The participants of the study were randomly assigned to one of two groups based on their class membership. One group of participants viewed a

video depicting the job applicant sitting in a wheelchair when greeted by the interviewer while participants assigned to the second group viewed a video showing the job applicant walking when being greeted.

Results of bivariate as well as multivariate analysis indicated that the participants in both groups comprising this study tended to rank both job applicants favorably without regard to their disability status. Ratings submitted by participants viewing the job applicant not in a wheelchair versus those viewing the job applicant in a wheelchair were 1.295 and 1.370 respectively ( $p = 0.6920$ ).

Multivariate analysis revealed that a significant amount of the variance in attitudes toward people with a disability was explained by the set of independent variables ( $R^2 = 0.1459$ ,  $p = 0.0092$ ). The variance in attitudes toward people with a disability was explained primarily by disability status ( $\beta = 7.2895$ ,  $p = 0.0011$ ) and Hispanic ethnicity ( $\beta = 7.9547$ ,  $p = 0.0241$ ), with those viewing the job applicant in a wheelchair having more positive attitudes toward people with a disability than those viewing the job applicant not in a wheelchair, and those of Hispanic ethnicity having more positive attitudes toward people with a disability than whites.

The implications for assessment and placement practices in the field of vocational rehabilitation have been provided as well as suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In most western cultures, the arena in which we work is arguably one of the most significant variables used when attempting to conceptualize an individual. Some may say work “defines” the person. Often when introducing someone, we immediately follow the provision of their name with a brief summation of their occupation or place of employment. Whether it is vanity or pride, many of us place a great deal of importance on our successes within the competitive labor market. To some, success may be measured by their longevity with a single employer while with others it may be their steady progression up the corporate ladder. Others may measure success solely by the quality or quantity of the product they produce or quite simply by their ability to provide the most basic of needs to their family and loved ones. It is hard to imagine our lives today without work being a significant part of what we do or who we are. Yet many people with a disability find themselves denied access to the competitive labor market.

Unfortunately, people with a disability are often denied access to work not so much by the true handicaps attributed to their disability but rather by the false perceptions and general lack of understanding of disability held by many non-disabled members of society. It is a common belief that many who hold decision making positions in business and could afford employment opportunities to the disabled job applicant are in some way blinded by the applicant’s disability status and fail to see the abilities and potential contributions the applicant could bring to the business entity. It is in part because of the flawed perceptions held by many in society that the National Council on Disability (1998) has promoted that the concept of disability be viewed as the interaction between an individual with an

impairment and their environment rather than emphasis being placed on one or more deficits that may impact in some way upon the individual. Adoption of this view recognizes that although a person with a disability may in fact have an identifiable cognitive or physical liability, the actual impact of that liability can best be determined by carefully examining the extent to which it restricts access to meaningful activities of daily living including, but not limited to, work.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There are marked inconsistencies in the way disability is defined by various sources. Consequently, this often leads to confusing and sometimes contradictory information in regards to disability statistics. Yet one area that remains consistent among all data sources, when looking at employment-related data, is that people with a disability in the United States are at a decided disadvantage when compared to their non-disabled cohort.

Although more than a decade has passed since the implementation of Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), Americans with a disability continue to face what many feel are unwarranted barriers that limit their access to viable employment opportunities within the competitive labor market. The United States Census Bureau (2003) reported that approximately 50 million Americans of all ages have a disability. Of those individuals between the ages of 16 and 64, Census 2000 data showed that individuals with a disability were less likely to be employed than their non-disabled counterparts. Data indicated 79.9% of working-age men without a disability were employed compared to 60.1% of those with a disability. The respective employment rates for working-age women were 67.3% and 51.4%.

The poverty rate among Americans ages 16 to 64 with no disability was reported to be 9.9% compared to 18.8% for those individuals having a disability (U. S. Census, 2003). Historically, employment- as well as earnings-related data have revealed that people with a disability in the United States have higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of income than non-disabled individuals (Louis Harris & Associates, 2000).

Of the working age adults, considered to be ages 18 to 64, approximately 32% of those with a disability work full or part time, compared to 81% of those not having a disability (Louis Harris & Associates, 2000). Of those individuals having a disability who are working, 36% report they have encountered some form of workplace discrimination directly related to their disability and 51% of those having experienced discrimination report having been denied advancement or employment due to their disability (Louis Harris & Associates, 2000). Based upon earlier research, it is estimated that over 70% of those individuals having a disability and not working indicate they would prefer to be working (Louis Harris & Associates, 1998).

Education and training has often been promoted as one of the tools people with a disability can call upon to help break down barriers to employment. However, when we compare individuals with a disability having a college degree to their non-disabled counterparts, we find that 55% of people with a disability remain unemployed as opposed to 14% unemployment for non-disabled college graduates (Louis Harris & Associates, 1998).

Historically, employment discrimination toward people with a disability has been well documented in the rehabilitation literature (Bolton & Roessler, 1985; Carrell & Heavrin, 1987; English, 1971). There have been numerous studies that suggest the existence of a conscious or unconscious bias in society that has been viewed as a hierarchal or social preference dependent upon the type of disability (Byrd, Byrd, & Emener, 1977; Schneider & Anderson, 1980; Tringo, 1970; Williams, 1972). A more recent study reported employers perceived the decision to hire a person having a mobility impairment to rank fourth in presenting difficulty when compared to other disabilities (Gilbride, Stensrud, Ehlers, Evans, & Peterson, 2000). The findings of that investigation indicated individuals having moderate to severe mental retardation, those who are blind, and those presenting as brain injured were viewed by the employers studied as presenting a more difficult challenge when faced with making a hiring decision. It is also interesting that these same employers viewed individuals having mild mental retardation, back impairments, arthritis, deafness, emotional and mental

illness, and respiratory impairments as presenting less difficulty when making hiring decisions when compared to the perceived difficulty in hiring a person having impaired mobility.

Summarizing data compiled from the 1994-95 National Health Interview Survey on Disability, Kaye, Kang, and LaPlante (2002) reported there were an estimated 1.6 million Americans residing outside of institutions that use wheelchairs. It was their view that wheelchair users are among the most visible members of the disability community and have among the highest levels of physical and functional limitations while also having among the lowest levels of employment. They reported that 17.4% of wheelchair users between the ages of 18 to 64 are employed. An additional 2.9% reported being unemployed but actively seeking work. Kaye et al. reported that the remaining 79.6% of wheelchair users in the United States were not participants in the labor force.

While the handicaps attributed to a disability may certainly impose real and permanent barriers to certain types of work or occupations, many Americans identified as having a disability have skills that they could successfully apply daily within the competitive labor market if given a chance. This certainly holds true for many wheelchair users. Unfortunately, there are many people who have a disability who are no longer actively seeking work because of their many failed attempts at locating receptive employers. These individuals, because they are not actively conducting a job search, are no longer counted as part of the labor market of the United States and therefore are often not included in the statistical data that is being compiled related to disability. However, many of these individuals as well as others comprising the almost 20% of the population of the United States identified as having a disability are employable.

Weed and Field (1994) were among the first to offer that there is in fact a distinction between whether a person is employable and whether that same individual is placeable within the competitive labor market. The term *employability* was coined to mean the degree to which an individual has access to the competitive labor market by vocational choice given their cognitive as well as physical capabilities (Weed & Field). The term *placeability*, as posed by Weed

and Field, represents the likelihood that a person with a given disability will be successful in securing appropriate work or suitable gainful employment with or without the assistance of a vocational counselor. Within the context of these definitions, it is conceivable that a person can be found to be employable given their residual knowledge, skills and abilities following the onset of a disability and yet not be placeable due to the competitiveness found within a given occupation or simply because of societal biases or negative attitudes and perceptions directed toward people with a disability.

The extent to which a person's disability is visible and/or the degree to which it impairs independence in performing activities of daily living seems to impact upon one's placeability. McNeil (2001) reported the passage and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) coupled with the robust economic growth and low unemployment during most of the 1990s failed to enhance the prospect of persons who use a wheelchair of accessing employment within the competitive labor market. These findings may be evidence that, in addition to the negative attitudes and perceptions directed toward people with a disability, people with a disability may be denied access to the labor market not because of cognitive or physical liabilities that impair their ability to successfully perform the required job duties but solely because of their presentation as having a physical disability or their use of assistive technology such as the use of a wheelchair.

### **Significance of the Study**

There is a great wealth of information and research related to attitudes, disability, and the employment of people with a disability. The work of Yuker, Block, and Campbell (1960), who may be viewed by some as the first pioneers to study in depth attitudes toward people with disability, led to the development of one of the more widely used measures of attitudes toward disabled people. Hernandez, Keys, and Balcazar (2000) reviewed 37 studies conducted between 1987 and the summer of 1999 that addressed employer attitudes toward workers with disabilities. They noted that no studies were identified that directly observed the actual hiring practices of employers. It was their view that future studies

needed to incorporate an observational component whereby factors that may influence the behavioral intent (hiring practices) of employers could be examined.

Christman and Slaten (1991) examined the relationship between employers' attitudes toward people with a disability and their impression of the employment potential of a female job applicant. In this study a videotaped portrayal of three job applicants was incorporated. One applicant utilized a wheelchair, one crutches, and one applicant was portrayed as being able-bodied or unaided by any form of assistive device. Hernandez, et al. (2000) noted the findings of this investigation were significant in that, unlike other studies (Bordieri, Drehmer, & Comninel, 1988; Millington, Szymanski, & Hanley-Maxwell, 1994; Schloss & Soda, 1989; Weisenstein & Koshman, 1991), employers were found to have very favorable attitudes toward people with a disability and rated applicants depicted with a disability as having higher employment potential than the job applicant depicted as able-bodied.

Marchioro and Bartels (1994) utilized a videotaped portrayal of a job interviewee with a disability (use of a wheelchair) and an interviewee without a disability. They examined the influence interviewers' attitudes (positive or negative) and the interviewee's *disability condition* (non disabled or disabled) had on the interviewer's perception of the interviewee's job competence. Results indicated no significant difference between the competence rating given by interviewers having positive or negative attitudes nor was there a difference in the number of offers for employment extended to the interviewee.

Hernandez et al. (2000) surmised that the portrayal of an interviewee or job applicant through the use of video, an observational component, may afford an interviewer/employer a more direct and realistic view of the job applicant compared to a written scenario. Another explanation of the Christman and Slaten (1991) as well as Marchioro and Bartels (1994) findings might have more to do with the nature of the disability being portrayed in those investigations. Disability was operationalized in both studies by impaired mobility – the use of a cane and/or the use of a wheelchair.

Gilbride et al. (2000) examined employers' perceptions of the ease in hiring people with a disability. Their findings suggested hiring decisions of employers did vary depending on the nature or type of disability presented. Results of their investigation indicated individuals having a disability that is defined as "mobility impairment" were viewed as presenting some of the more difficult hiring decisions. It is interesting that only the blind and brain injured were perceived as presenting more difficult hiring decisions.

There were two primary factors that drove the current investigation. First, the findings of Christman and Slaten (1991) as well as the findings of Marchioro and Bartels (1994) conflict with most of the earlier studies of similar focus. A common thread in these two investigations is the use of a videotaped portrayal of disability status. Hernandez et al. (2000) noted that there were relatively few experimental or quasi-experimental investigations that utilized videotaped simulations of workers with disabilities. The present study offers another investigation with an observational component in its design that examines factors that may influence the association between disability status and employer hiring decisions.

Second, a careful review of the Christman and Slaten (1991) study left it unclear if each of the job applicants portrayed in that study was one in the same person or different individuals. In the Marchioro and Bartels (1994) investigation it was clear the interviewee (job applicant) in both portrayals of disability status was one and the same. Care was taken in the current investigation to make the job applicant and interview exactly the same in each portrayal with the exception of disability status. In addition, care was taken in the current investigation to present a qualified job applicant having a proven successful work history and the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the job for which they had applied.

### **Purpose of the Study**

There are many worthy issues related to disability and the lack of understanding and misinformation about people with a disability perpetuated by society that warrant continued investigation. Initially, the primary focus of this study was twofold. The first focal area was to investigate the impact of (a)

disability status of the job applicant, (b) attitudes of the participants toward people with a disability, and (c) prior contact of the participants with people with a disability on the hiring decisions of employers as measured by the strength of the rating given the applicant on the Job Applicant Rating Form (JAR). The second focal area was to investigate the extent to which the association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant varied depending upon the participants' (a) attitudes toward people with a disability and (b) extent of prior contact with people with a disability.

Although attitudes toward people with a disability was thought to be an inherent, pre-existing characteristic of the participants, the research design required attitudes to be measured *after* the participants had the opportunity to view the disability status of the job applicant. There was concern that seeing a qualified job applicant in a wheelchair may influence the participants' attitude scores. Therefore, a third focal area was incorporated into the study. The extent to which the participants' attitudes toward people with a disability may be influenced by the job applicant's disability status was investigated. Consideration was also given as to whether attitudes toward people with a disability mediate the association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of the rating given the job applicant.

The control variables in this investigation included age, gender, and race/ethnicity. This study was guided by seeking the answers to the following specific research questions:

**Focus 1:**

1. Is there an association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment?
2. Is there an association between the participants' attitudes toward people with a disability and the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment?
3. Is there an association between the participants' extent of prior contact with people with a disability and the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment?

These research questions are represented in the diagram that follows in Figure 1.1 below:

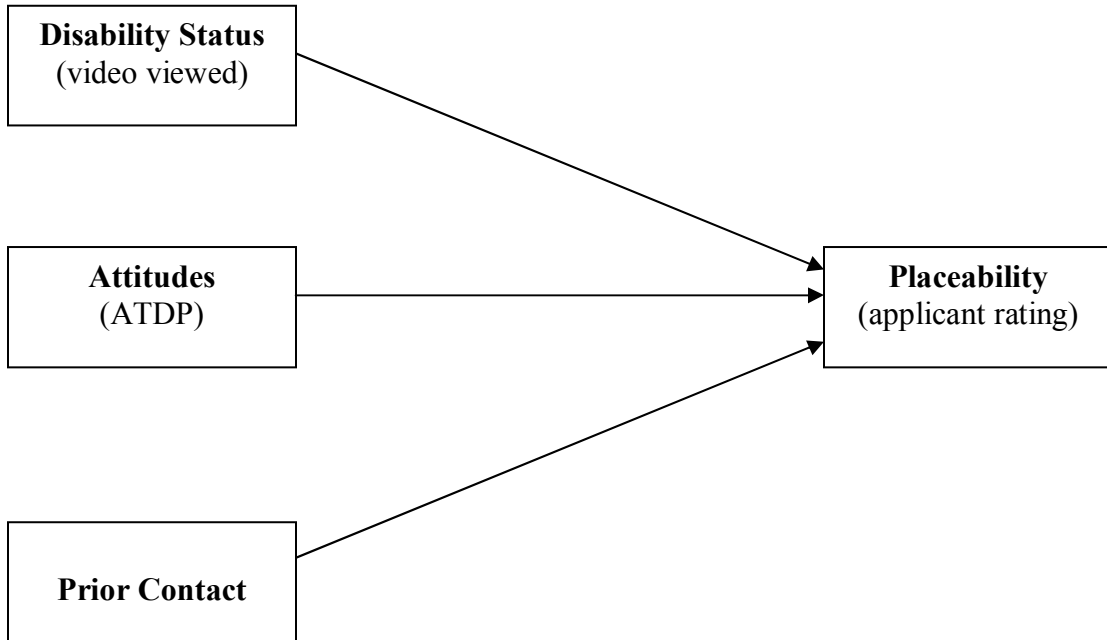


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Model for Focus 1.

**Focus 2:**

4. Do attitudes toward people with a disability moderate the association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment? In other words, does the association between the job applicant's disability status and strength of rating given the job applicant for employment vary dependent upon the participant's attitudes toward people with a disability?
5. Does the extent of prior contact with people with a disability moderate the association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment? In other words, does the association between the job applicant's disability status and strength of

rating given the job applicant for employment vary dependent upon the extent of the participant's prior contact with people with a disability?

These research questions are represented in the diagram that follows in Figure 1.2 below:

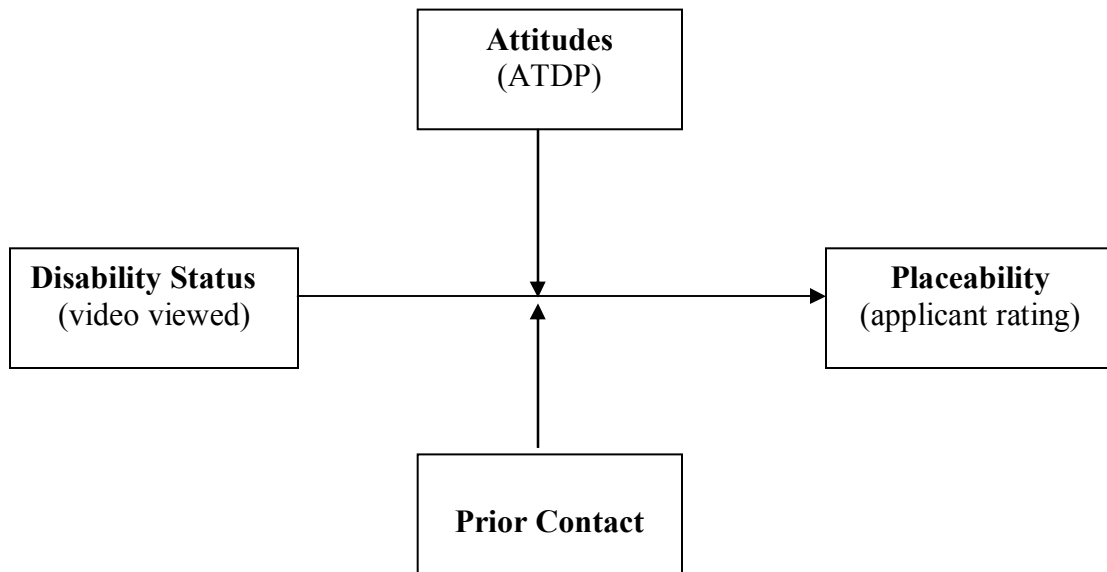


Figure 1.2. Conceptual Model for Focus 2.

### Focus 3:

6. Is there an association between the job applicant's disability status and the participants' attitudes toward people with a disability? In other words, do participants' attitudes toward people with a disability vary depending upon the disability status of the job applicant?
7. Do attitudes toward people with a disability mediate the association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of the rating given the job applicant? In other words, are the participants' attitudes toward people with a disability influenced by the job applicant's presentation of their disability status; and, in turn, is the strength of the rating given the job applicant influenced by these attitudes?

These research questions are represented in the diagram that follows in Figure 1.3 below:

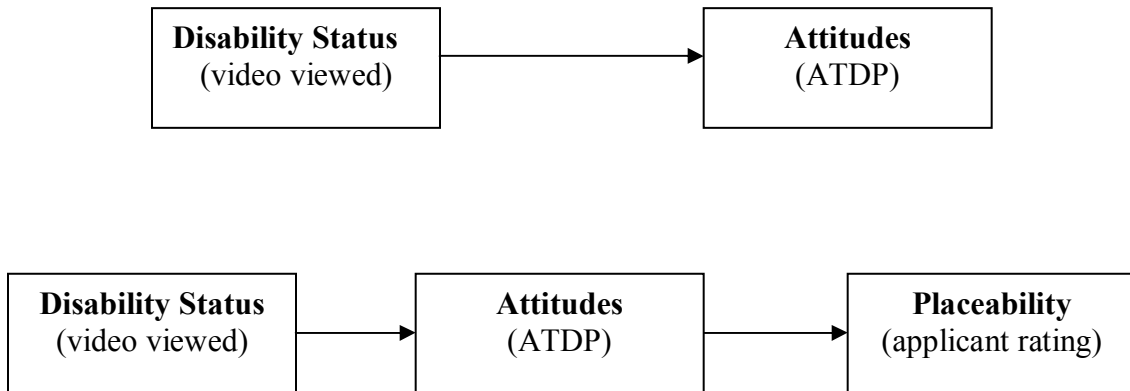


Figure 1.3. Conceptual Models for Focus 3.

Undergraduate college students majoring in business were selected as the target population for this study. Students in this group were seen as being representative of future business owners and/or managers that will one day be charged with making hiring decisions for the companies they represent.

#### **Limitations**

The extent that the findings derived from this study can be generalized to other populations is minimal given the participants were drawn from a sample of convenience comprised of individuals currently enrolled in college. As undergraduate students, the overall work experience of the participants was minimal and probably encompassed little experience in jobs that require the making of management-level decisions.

As with any self-reporting measure, there exists the possibility of falsifying the reporting of information. It has been noted that one of the limitations of utilizing the Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) Form - O (Yuker et al., 1960) is that respondents may attempt to endorse only those statements that

they feel present themselves in a socially acceptable way (Antonak & Livneh 1988). Edwards (1957) referred to this tendency as the social desirability variable in personality or the social desirability response style. The possibility of the participant presenting a socially acceptable or desirable response may also be argued as problematic in regards to the ratings submitted on the Job Applicant Rating form adopted for this investigation.

It is also important to note that the research design adopted for the present study called for the measurement of the participants' attitudes toward disabled people to occur *after* the participants had the opportunity to observe the job applicant's disability status. Therefore, it is unknown whether the attitude scores obtained in this study accurately reflect or are representative of inherent attitudes toward people with a disability held by the participants prior to being introduced to the qualified job applicant.

### **Operationalization of Variables**

The dependent variable, the strength of the hiring decision submitted by the participants, represented the perceived degree of *placeability* of the job applicant. Placeability represents the likelihood a person will be successful in securing a specified job for which it has been pre-determined they are fully qualified to perform. This term was operationalized by the ratings score submitted by each participant on the Job Applicant Rating Form (JAR) developed for this study. The JAR was composed of a single six-point Likert-type scale. The higher the rating or score, the stronger the job applicant was viewed by the participant as a potential hire or viable candidate for the job opening for which they applied.

Disability status of the job applicant, either having a disability or not having a disability, was operationalized in this study by the use of a videotaped segment of the job interview. In one video, the interview was preceded by an introduction of the qualified job applicant using a wheelchair when greeted by the interviewer. In the second video, the interview was preceded by the introduction of the same job applicant walking unassisted when greeted by the interviewer. The actual

interview portion of the video was identical in both videos, and the wheelchair was undetectable during the interview.

Care was taken to ensure participants were attentive to the introduction portion of the production by carefully surveying the class before starting the video. Also, a video countdown was incorporated into the beginning of the production to allow additional time for participants to focus on introduction.

Attitudes toward people with a disability was operationalized in this study by the score on the Attitude Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) Form-O (Yuker, et al, 1960). The higher the score on the ATDP, the more positive or accepting the attitudes toward people with a disability; while lower scores represented more negative or rejecting attitudes toward people with a disability (Yuker & Block, 1986).

The extent of prior contact with people having a disability was operationalized with a single four point Likert-type scale identified as the Prior Contact with Disability Scale (PCD). The range of the scale was from 1 (almost no contact with a person or people having a disability) to 4 (almost daily contact with a person or people having a disability). Therefore, the higher the rating or score reported on the scale, the greater the participant's prior contact or exposure to people with a disability.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Identifying factors that enhance or impede the probabilities of employment for people with a disability has long been the inherent focal point of research conducted within the field of vocational rehabilitation. There are many studies within the field that have investigated or sought to identify those factors that contribute, either positively or negatively, to level of access people with a disability have to viable employment opportunities within the competitive labor market. This review of the literature provides an overview of studies that have contributed to identifying and better understanding the extent to which disability status, societal attitudes toward people having a disability, and the extent of prior contact with disability influence the hiring decisions of employers.

First, a theoretical foundation of the current investigation is provided. The implications that the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) (Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1964) has on employer hiring decisions is discussed. A review of the criterion used to define disability by the various agencies that report employment-related disability data in the United States is followed by a general functional definition of disability as offered for this study.

Next, a review of prior investigations that provide insight into the impact disability has on employment, the focal relationship of this investigation, is provided. Included in this review is an examination of factors such as labor market participation of people with a disability based on disability status as well as an in-depth look at the theoretical constructs of attitudes and the link between attitudes toward people with a disability and the hiring decisions of employers. An expansion upon the concept of attitudes and the historical development of ways to measure societal attitudes toward people with a disability is provided. This

section also includes a discussion of the limitations of attitude measures as identified through prior research.

The last body of literature reviewed in this chapter addresses the extent to which prior contact with disability may influence an employer's hiring decision. The limitation of information gleaned from prior studies that have incorporated a measure of prior contact with disability is discussed along with the limitations of instrumentation developed to measure this construct.

### **Theory of Work Adjustment**

The Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) stemmed from research conducted during the Minnesota Studies in Vocational Rehabilitation funded through a federal grant to the first Regional Rehabilitation Research Institute (Wright, 1980). It was first postulated by Dawis et al. (1964) and was the result of efforts to conceptualize a theoretical foundation upon which future investigations into how people with a disability interact with work environments could be based. Since first being offered, the TWA has been elaborated on by its authors (Dawis, Lofquist, & Weiss, 1968; Lofquist & Dawis, 1969, 1984, 1991). However, the principle foundation of the TWA has remained the same since its inception—that is, the assumption or belief that individuals seek to find compatibility or *correspondence* between the environment in which they work and their work personality. The TWA proposes that for individuals to adjust to work, they seek to achieve and maintain correspondence with their environment. It is also within the framework of the TWA that correspondence is achieved when the work environment is meeting an individual's needs and the individual is meeting the demands or needs of the work environment—or employer.

According to the TWA, individual vocational and personal preferences coupled with demonstrated capabilities or strengths comprise one's work personality. In addition, the theory poses that one's work environment is, in general terms, synonymous with one's workplace. While individuals have preferences, capabilities, and needs, the work environment or workplace also has its own set of needs and ability requirements. Roessler and Rubin (1998) posed the view that the appropriateness of an individual's vocational choice

cannot and should not be determined based solely upon the consideration of the capabilities or interests of the individual or what the TWA would identify as one's work personality. While they recognized that compatibility with one's work environment is an important factor contributing to successful employment outcomes, they recognized that this represented only half of the equation. A factor of equal importance that must be given consideration when predicting successful employment outcomes is the characteristics or needs of the work environment or employer.

Within the framework of the TWA, the extent to which one's work environment meets the needs and aligns with the capabilities of an individual is reflected in a measure of the worker's *satisfaction* with the work environment. In contrast, *satisfactoriness* is based on the evaluation or measure adopted by the work environment or employer to judge or to determine the quality of performance in meeting the needs of the work environment. This interaction between satisfaction and satisfactoriness reflects the extent to which correspondence exists between the two entities. As previously indicated, correspondence occurs when there exists a balance between the two entities. That is, the work afforded an individual meets his or her needs; and the individual is able to provide knowledge, skills, and abilities that meet the needs of the work environment. The TWA poses that knowledge as to the extent of correspondence between the two entities serves as a predictor of work adjustment or the extent to which the needs of the individual are being met and tenure, the length of time the individual remains in a given work environment.

The work personality of an individual may be surmised from a careful look at a successful work history or may be formulated from information gleaned from a formal vocational assessment. The requirements of the workplace or work environment may be determined from the needs of an employer presented in job postings describing the minimum knowledge, skills, and abilities required of a potential worker.

## Disability Conceptualized

One of the first problems encountered when attempting to understand the impact disability has on job seekers in the United States is the lack of a uniform definition or criterion for disability. Currently, those agencies charged with collecting disability-related data in this country each have their own definition. This lack of consistency makes it virtually impossible to make reliable comparisons of data -- including information regarding employment outcomes for people with a disability. Therefore, when reviewing employment statistics on disability, it is important to note the variation in statistical information between sources can often be contributed to how the source has defined disability as well as the type and severity of the disability reported.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to critique the various agency definitions or criterion for disability reported in the United States, it is important to consider the framework within which current disability employment data is derived. This can best be achieved by reviewing some of these definitions or the criterion adopted when compiling disability related data.

The United States Social Security Administration (SSA) (2003) has defined disability as the inability to engage in any *substantial gainful activity* (SGA) because of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s) that can be expected to result in death, or that has lasted or that can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. Furthermore, SSA guidelines specify individuals having impairments other than blindness that are earning an average of over \$800 per month have demonstrated SGA and, therefore, may be determined not to be disabled (SSA, 2003).

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is conducted and compiled annually by the United States Census Bureau. Their criteria for determining if an individual is reported as having a severe disability is that person having one or more of the following conditions: they use a wheelchair, a cane, crutches, or a walker; they have a mental or emotional condition that seriously interferes with everyday activities; they have received federal benefits based on

an inability to work; or they have Alzheimer's disease, mental retardation, or another developmental disability.

Disabilities may be identified or placed within a broad category. For example, individuals may be viewed as having a developmental disability or they may be viewed as having an acquired disability. The United States Code defines developmental disability as a:

Severe, chronic disability of an individual that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments; is manifested before the individual attains age 22; is likely to continue indefinitely; results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity:

- self care
- receptive and expressive language
- learning
- mobility
- self-direction capacity for independent living
- economic self-sufficiency;

reflects the individual's need for a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, or generic services, individualized supports, or other forms of assistance that are of lifelong or extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated (Title 42, Chapter 144, Subchapter I, Part A, Section 15002).

Individuals viewed as having an acquired disability may have many of the same impairments and/or functional limitations that have been characterized above. The onset of their disability may be the result of a gradual deterioration in their functional abilities such as that experienced with the progression of a condition such as carpal tunnel syndrome or the result of sudden physical limitations imposed by trauma from a catastrophic event such as an automobile accident or stroke. Often individuals having an acquired disability have lived what would be considered "normal" lives prior to the onset of their disability. They may

have been active participants in their school or community, just beginning a career or at the peak of their chosen career, or head of a household or a business manager. For many people with acquired disabilities, the forced change in lifestyle from which they are accustomed--whether due to a slow progressive condition or the sudden onset of disability resulting from catastrophic injury--becomes overwhelming not only physically but also psychologically. In more general terms, disability may be physical and/or psychological in nature. The onset of a disability may be attributed either directly or indirectly to the onset of a disease or debilitating condition and/or be the result of catastrophic injury.

With respect to individuals, disability has been defined within the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the individual, there is a record of such an impairment, or the individual is being regarded as having such an impairment. Major life activities as defined within the ADA means functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

Yelin and Trupin (2003) compile yet another definition for disability when conducting the 1996 California Work and Health Survey. While not intended as a criticism of their investigation, it is interesting that not one of the existing functional definitions of disability currently in existence provided them with the criterion they felt was necessary to effectively report their findings.

The definition for disability presented within the 1996 California Work and Health Survey (Yelin & Trupin, 2003) as well as the definition of disability offered in the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) provided the foundation upon which the functional definition of disability adopted for this study is based. It is posed that a person may be considered to have a disability if they are limited in any way in any activities because of a physical or mental impairment that has lasted for longer than three months or can be reasonably expected to last longer than three months.

## **The Impact of Disability on Employment**

There have been numerous studies that have investigated the extent to which disability status impacts upon the employment opportunities afforded people having a disability. The inconsistency in defining disability makes it impossible to make accurate comparisons between various sources. However, there is little disagreement that the sources charged with collecting disability data have one finding in common; no matter how disability has been defined, findings show that people identified as having a disability are at a disadvantage in regards to employment when compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

The United States Census 2000 figures indicate that approximately 50 million people in this country have a “long lasting condition or disability” (U.S. Census, 2003). According to the most recent National Organization on Disability/2000 Harris Poll results, 71% of working-age adults with disabilities were unemployed in comparison to 20% of working-age adults identified as not having a disability (Louis Harris & Associates, 2000).

Yelin and Trupin (2003) conducted an analysis of working-age participants contacted in the 1999 and 2000 California Work and Health Survey. It was their view that although the economy was quite strong during the years they conducted their surveys, the findings of their survey were consistent with those of similar studies conducted at other times. Their findings were reported to show that there existed substantially lower employment rates among persons with disabilities when compared to non-disabled individuals. In addition, Yelin and Trupin noted that workers with disabilities were reported to have been more than twice as likely to experience job loss in the year preceding the survey than their non-disabled counterparts.

It is generally agreed among rehabilitation professionals that the extent that any given disability impacts upon a person’s ability to secure and maintain employment can vary significantly depending on the severity and nature of the disability. However, it is important to recognize that it is the functional capabilities of an individual and not solely the vocational handicaps imposed by a disability that must be given consideration during one’s pursuit of employment. For

example, it is reasonable to conclude that the paraplegic having average to above-average general learning abilities will have far greater access to viable employment opportunities within the competitive labor market than a paraplegic who is mentally challenged. Even when a disability imposes very obvious handicaps, it is imperative that consideration be given to one's capabilities when making employment or career decisions. To base employment and/or career decisions solely upon an understanding of one's cognitive and/or physical liabilities denies a person having a disability access to potential viable employment opportunities.

The mere presence of an impairment that defines a disability, whether it be cognitive or physical in nature, in and of itself may not preclude that individual from having access to viable employment opportunities. Ideally, employers should focus solely upon the qualifications and capabilities necessary to perform the essential functions of the job in question and not be distracted by a job applicant's cognitive or physical limitations or impairments that do not prevent the applicant from performing the essential functions of the job for which they have applied. The research of Johnson, Greenwood, and Schriener (1988) suggested employers typically are less concerned about hiring individuals having physical impairments and more concerned with hiring individuals having intellectual, psychiatric, and communication impairments or disabilities. Gamboa (2002), when addressing disability-related issues concerning employment, noted that:

Impairment, disability, and work disability are three distinctly different concepts. An impairment is anatomically based, and an impairment rating is usually stated as a percentage of impairment to a particular body part or as a percentage of impairment to the body as a whole. Persons with an impairment may or may not have a work disability, and the same impairment may result in a severe work disability for one person and a non-severe work disability for another. An individual may have a disability as a result of an impairment in that one or more activities of daily living are limited, but not limited in terms of performing work, and therefore, not have a work disability (p.9).

Upon his analysis of the Current Population Surveys compiled by the United States Census Bureau between 1992 and 2001, Gamboa (2002) found that both males and females with a work disability experienced a decrease in labor force participation and employment during the early 90s. In addition, it was his view that Americans classified as having a work disability are becoming more and more unlike their non-disabled counterparts in their ability to secure employment.

In the years that have followed the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), the concept of *reasonable accommodations* in the workplace has been given much attention. The provision of a reasonable accommodation can be the catalyst that propels a person with a disability into the competitive labor market for the first time. A person having an acquired disability may find the provision of a reasonable accommodation expedites their return to work after injury. However, there is evidence that, overall, injured workers that have been successful in securing work through the provision of a reasonable accommodation are often paid lower wages than their non-disabled cohorts (Gunderson & Hyatt, 1996).

The United States Census 2000 identified roughly 50 million people in this country as having some type of “long lasting” condition or disability (U.S. Census, 2003). Findings from the National Organization on Disability/2000 Harris Poll indicated 71% of working age adults with a disability in the United States were unemployed (Louis Harris & Associates, 2000). In comparison 20% of working age adults identified as not having a disability were unemployed (Louis Harris & Associates, 2000). McNeil (2001) reported that 33 million people in the United States, just over 12% of the population, have a severe disability. However, as suggested by Gamboa (1998), it is important that we recognize that an individual having significant physical impairments or what could be termed a severe disability may very well be employable. Even though by definition an individual may be viewed as having an occupational disability, they may be employable or possess transferable work skills that give them potential access to a substantial

number of jobs found within the competitive labor market. This is particularly true for many individuals having a severe physical impairment that have successfully completed higher levels of education. Their education or training may have occurred prior to the onset of their disability or they may have acquired their marketable knowledge, skills, and abilities as a person with a disability. Unfortunately, even when we compare the college graduate with a disability to those graduates not having a disability, we find that over half of graduates (55%) with a disability remain unemployed while 14% of graduates without a disability are unemployed (Louis Harris & Associates, 1998).

### **Employer Perspectives: Hiring People with a Disability**

Greenwood and Johnson (1987) conducted a review of more than 90 studies covering 40 years that addressed employer perspectives of workers with disabilities. Among their findings they noted employers placed great emphasis on the job applicant's application and job interview when making hiring decisions. They also found that employers appeared to be more willing to hire job applicants having reduced physical capabilities for sedentary job openings as opposed to jobs requiring more strenuous work. They reported that employers were found to emphasize productivity as being the bottom line in hiring and/or retaining workers. However, they also reported that their findings suggested many employers seemed to have reservations or doubts as to whether a worker with a disability could be as productive as a non-disabled worker.

Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, Francis, and Levy (1993) conducted a statewide survey of employers doing business with the state of New York. A total of 418 representatives responsible for making hiring decisions for their employer responded to their survey; this was noted as a 5% return rate. It was their view that a lack of knowledge and/or experience with disability could account for the low number of respondents. Results indicated almost 60% of the respondents had personal experience with workers or employees with disabilities and that most of these experiences had been positive. Their analysis revealed that the most favorable responses toward hiring people with a disability came from female respondents, respondents having college degrees or attending graduate

school, respondents representing companies that have large numbers of employees, and respondents who represented companies that had hired within the past three years workers having a disability.

### **The Attitudinal Link**

The relationship between attitudes and behaviors has been the primary pillar upon which many studies in vocational rehabilitation and the social sciences in general have been founded. In this study, the behavior of primary interest is the propensity of an employer to offer employment to a clearly qualified job applicant. One factor that must be given consideration is the extent to which an employer's attitude toward people having a disability influences their decision to offer employment to a worker who has a disability.

One of the inherent struggles faced in the social sciences has been the difficulty scholars and researchers have encountered when trying to define the term *attitude*. Attitudes are not a feature or trait that is readily observable. In addition, the definitions and general constructs of what might be labeled *attitude* have been noted to vary significantly depending upon, in part, one's area of interest. It has been almost 20 years since Antonak & Livneh (1988) estimated there had been as many as 500 published definitions for attitude. Even today, attitudes remain a focus of much research and we continue to struggle with defining and measuring attitudes in a way that will help us better understand the influence attitudes have on specific individual behavior.

Among the earliest research in the United States that attempted to measure attitudes was that conducted by Thurstone (1927, 1928, 1929, 1931; Thurstone & Chave, 1929). Since the inception of the term *attitudes*, identifying the construct and developing an overall concept of the term have been of importance to researchers interested in defining and measuring attitudes. Antonak and Livneh (1988) offered a summarization of the concept of attitudes after their review of the definitions offered by various scholars and researchers:

There appears to be a consensus among scholars and researchers that attitudes have the following elements: (a) attitudes are learned through experience and interaction with other people, social objects, and

environmental events, rather than being innately determined, although the role of heredity or constitutional factors in attitude formation has not been fully investigated; (b) attitudes are complex, multi-component, structures; (c) attitudes are relatively stable (even rigid) as evidenced by their resistance to change; (d) attitudes have a specific social object as a referent (e.g., people, situations, events, ideas); (e) attitudes vary in their quantity and quality, possessing differing degrees of motivating force (intensity, strength), and direction (toward, against, away from the attitude referent); and (f) attitudes are manifested behaviorally via predisposition to act in a certain way when the individual encounters the attitude referent (p. 9).

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) has been postulated as a structural model for conceptualizing attitude and the resulting behavior attributed to attitudes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Since first conceptualized, the principles of TRA have been further clarified. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) posed that the primary cause of behavior is the “intention to behave” which in turn is caused by “attitude and subjective norm” (p. 47). That is to say that one’s intentions provide an immediate determinant of one’s behavior. It has been noted that intentions often change over time. Therefore, the closer the intention is measured to the performed behavior, the more accurate a specified behavior can be predicted. Upmeyer and Six (1989) reviewed numerous attitude-behavior prediction models and posed that TRA is likely to be the predominant model adopted in attitude-behavior related studies due to the small number of predictors and the size of the explained behavioral variance.

Hernandez et al. (2000) reviewed 37 investigations conducted from 1987 through the summer of 1999 that examined employer attitudes toward workers with disabilities and their view of the rights of workers under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The studies included in their review encompassed the years that immediately preceded the passage of the (ADA) in 1990 and extended approximately seven years after the July 26, 1992, enactment of Title I of the

ADA. Included in their review were 30 published studies, 6 unpublished doctoral dissertations, and the findings of the 1995 Harris survey. They wrote the criteria for inclusion in their literature review were:

1) Studies had to assess the attitudes of employers or managers in a position to hire, terminate, or supervise employees, and 2) studies had to include a measure that assessed employer attitudes toward either workers with disabilities or the employment provisions of the ADA (p. 5).

In summarizing their findings, Hernandez et al. wrote: "There appears to be a veneer of employer acceptance of workers with disabilities" (p.5). It was their view that more positive attitudes toward people with a disability were evident in those studies where "global attitudes" toward people with a disability were being assessed. The authors stated, "Negative results were more evident in studies that assessed more specific attitudes toward workers with disabilities" (p.5).

Hernandez et al. (2000) surmised that most researchers in the vocational rehabilitation arena, when investigating employer attitudes toward workers with disabilities, have tended to measure either "global attitudes" or "specific attitudes" in their studies. It was their view, "global attitudes are evaluated responses concerning a general topic that typically do not involve declaring planned actions or intentions" (p. 5). Responses to the items on scales intended to provide a measure of attitudes toward people with a disability were given as examples of "global attitude" measures.

Hernandez et al. (2000) defined "specific attitudes" as those having "a narrow scope and may include a statement of intended behavior" (p. 5). That is, the measure of specific attitude provides a clear indication of the individual's intent in a specific situation. The expressed willingness to hire a person having a disability or the degree to which a job applicant having a disability is recommended for employment would exemplify "specific attitudes" by this definition.

The findings reported by Hernandez et al. (2000) are consistent with those generated from earlier literature reviews where an analysis of multiple studies

assessing the attitudes and employment practices of potential employers were conducted. Wilgosh and Skaret (1987), surmised there to be a marked discrepancy between what employers were willing to express in regards to hiring applicants with disabilities and their actual hiring practices. The conclusions posed by Wilgosh and Skaret, when contrasted to those of Hernandez et al. (2000) suggest that even after the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), many potential employers continue to “talk-the-talk” or present what is socially acceptable when responding to inquires concerning disability but do not “walk-the-walk” or exhibit behaviors that actually extend opportunities for employment to people with a disability. Their findings exemplified the appearance of employer acceptance and willingness to hire people with a disability as *expressed* through measures of global attitudes. However, the analysis of actual employment trends for people with a disability suggests the *actions* or specific attitudes of employers do not support their expressed attitudes for hiring workers having a disability. When addressing employers’ acceptance of workers with disabilities, Hernandez et al. wrote, “their global acceptance of these workers seems superficial and is likely not indicative of significant efforts to employ them” (p. 5).

Schneider and Anderson (1980) posed that negative attitudes toward individuals with disabilities may be more handicapping than those imposed by the condition identified as a disability. In fact, a person may be identified as having a disability by their documented impaired cognitive or physical abilities or by an inability to adjust psychologically or emotionally to the very presence of their disability. Yet, the presence of a disability may or may not result in handicaps that impede performing activities of daily living or access to employment. But as noted by Schneider and Anderson, a person having a disability may be limited more so by factors such as societal attitudes--factors that are clearly outside their control--than the actual functional and/or psychological limitations imposed by their disability.

**Attitudes as a moderator of the association between disability status and hiring decision.** Attitudes toward people with a disability may modify the

association between disability status and the hiring decision rendered by an employer. That is, the association between disability status and the employer's expressed hiring decision may vary depending on the employer's attitudes toward people with disability. It has been suggested that employers holding more positive attitudes toward people with a disability may be more likely to hire a person with a disability than those holding more negative attitudes. This premise is based in part on research that has shown employers having prior positive contact with workers with a disability overall maintain positive attitudes toward people with a disability (Diska & Rogers, 1996; Levy et al., 1993; Levy, Jessop, Rimmerman, & Levy, 1992).

Findings from other investigations suggest attitudes toward people with a disability have no impact on hiring decisions. Marchioro and Bartels (1994) found no significant differences between individuals with positive and negative attitudes toward people with a disability and the competence rating or number of job offers the individual extended to the same job applicant with and without a disability. However, one of the limitations of their investigation was that the participants in their study represented a sample of convenience as they were selected from college students enrolled in introductory psychology.

Marchioro and Bartels (1994) did take care when designing their investigation to eliminate the possibility of having a marked variation in making two separate video productions. Only one job applicant interview was conducted but that interview was videotaped from two different camera angles simultaneously. The varying camera angles permitted the production of one interview where the applicant was seen in a wheelchair while in the second production the participants could not see that the applicant was seated in a wheelchair.

Marchioro and Bartels (1994) noted that their findings were not unlike earlier investigations that found employers viewed disabled and non-disabled job applicants equally (Krefting & Breif, 1976; Stone & Sawatzki, 1980).

**Attitudes as a mediator between disability status and hiring decision.**

For attitudes to be a mediator between a job applicant's disability status and the

employer's hiring decision, the job applicant's disability status would have to, in effect, *cause* or influence the employer's attitudes, which would in turn *cause* or influence the hiring decision. Attitudes are generally thought to be a pre-existing, stable characteristic of an individual, and therefore wouldn't be "caused" by the job applicant's disability status. However, an individual's measured attitude toward people having a disability could conceivably be influenced in a positive manner by their viewing a highly qualified job applicant or by some other positive experience with a person having a disability.

This premise is not clearly delineated within prior investigations. However, prior research has shown that employers having prior positive experiences with workers with a disability hold positive attitudes toward people with a disability (Diska & Rogers, 1996; Levy et al., 1992; Levy et al., 1993; Scheid, 1999; Walters & Baker, 1996).

**Factors that influence attitudes toward disability.** Among one of the most noted factors that is investigated as to its influence on attitudes toward people with a disability is prior contact. As has been mentioned, there are prior investigations that have shown the extent and intensity of prior contact with disability influences attitudes. In addition, prior research indicates the level of knowledge one has about disability has influence on the attitudes held toward people with a disability. Hunt and Hunt (2000) surmised that individuals having had significant contact with disability exhibit more positive attitudes toward people with a disability given their increased knowledge and awareness of individuals within this group.

Having a disability or having an established contact with a person having a disability has also been identified as a factor that contributes to more positive attitudes toward people with a disability (Amsel & Fichten, 1988; Hernandez et al., 2000; Levy et al., 1993; Wilgosh & Skaret, 1987). There are studies that indicate individuals that have a disability or have a close associate or family member with a disability also tend to exhibit more positive attitudes toward people with a disability (Wright, 1980; Yuker, 1994).

In their previously noted survey of company representatives responsible for making hiring decisions, Levy et al. (1993) found that those managers having had favorable prior contact with persons with a disability had more favorable attitudes toward people with a disability. These findings were noted to be consistent with those from earlier studies conducted by Bluhm (1977), Gruenhagen (1982), and Yuker and Hurley (1987).

Hunt and Hunt (2000) compared the attitudes toward people with a disability held by undergraduate rehabilitation and business majors. As had been hypothesized, the attitudes toward people with a disability held by rehabilitation services majors were significantly more positive than those of business majors. In part, their investigation found that prior contact with disability contributed significantly to more positive attitudes toward individuals having a disability. They reported that their findings supported and were consistent with the earlier investigations of Chubon (1982), Yuker and Hurley, (1987), Makas (1993), and Yuker (1994).

In a study investigating the influence personal experience with disability has on attitudes toward people with a disability, Hunt and Hunt (2000) found what they described as “surprising” results. Contrary to previous investigations, their findings suggested there was no significant influence found to exist in terms of personal experience with disability (self or family) and attitudes toward people with a disability. These findings are contrary to the beliefs fostered by many individuals within the disability-related community. Vash (1981), one of the most noted advocates for disability, fosters the belief that the extent and nature of an individual’s early childhood experiences with disability influence the attitudes that individual exhibits toward disability later in life. It was her view that individuals that were shielded by their parents from interacting with children having a disability were deprived of the opportunity to alleviate any concerns or fears they have about people with a disability. Roeher (1961) surmised that “prejudicial attitudes toward individuals with disabilities originate in early childhood and are influenced by attitudes transmitted by parents” (p. 7).

There are many other factors that have been found to influence attitudes toward people with a disability. One view has been that individuals that believe persons with a disability are different are more likely to present as having negative attitudes toward people with a disability (Bowe, 1978; Weinberg, 1978). This view might be supported by research has shown that having accurate information about disability can significantly alter or modify negative attitudes toward people with a disability (Hafer & Narcus, 1979; Weinberg, 1978). Contrary to this belief, Threlkeld and DeJong (1983) surmised that even when the provision of accurate information concerning disability evokes a positive change in expressed attitudes toward people with a disability, there is no way to determine if the actual negative behavior toward people with a disability was affected or changed.

Greenwood and Johnson (1987) investigated employer perspectives on workers with disabilities. They found that disability type, the size of the company, and the rater's level of educational attainment all contributed to expressed attitudes toward people with a disability. More positive attitudes were expressed for individuals having a physical or sensory disability as opposed to those having an intellectual or psychiatric disability. In addition, they found that individuals representing larger companies tended to have more favorable attitudes toward people with a disability than did those representing smaller firms. Company representatives having higher levels of educational attainment also tended to have more positive attitudes toward people with a disability.

**Measuring attitudes toward people with a disability.** Within the rehabilitation community there is disagreement as to how best to construct and measure the concept of attitudes toward people with a disability. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that relatively few professionals having worked in the vocational rehabilitation arena would argue that the attitudes held by all involved in the vocational rehabilitation process – the consumer, family members, the rehabilitation counselor, and the potential employer – impact on vocational rehabilitation outcomes, including successful job placement. It is a commonly

held premise that positive attitudes contribute to positive outcomes and negative attitudes tend to impede successful rehabilitation outcomes.

Social psychologists Strong (1931) and Barker (1948) have been noted to be among the first researchers to investigate attitudes toward people with a disability. While the study of attitudes has application throughout the social sciences, the contributions of Yuker, et al. (1960), Antonak (1982), and Makas (1988) are among the most recently noted studies of attitudes toward people with a disability.

In the forward to *The Measurement of Attitudes Toward People with a Disability* (Antonak and Livneh, 1988), Yuker submitted the following views concerning attitudes toward people with a disability:

Attitudes toward disabled persons are complex and multifaceted. Many perspectives are possible. Data indicate that it is difficult to measure, change, and even to understand attitudes toward disabled persons. Even though these things are difficult, they must be done in order to improve the quality of life and status of persons with disabilities (p. v).

Given the complexity of the constructs that form the global concept of attitudes toward people with a disability, it is not surprising to find differing views among scholars and researchers as to the identity of these constructs and how best to measure them. There have been multiple attempts to conceptualize and introduce a standardized measure of attitudes toward people with a disability (Antonak, 1982; Makus, Finnerty-Fried, Sigafos, & Reiss, 1988; Yuker et al., 1960). As with any attempt to define and measure a theoretical construct, there are merits as well as potential weaknesses inherent in the foundation of the construct. These theoretical differences are reflected within the various scales that are purported to provide a valid and reliable measure of attitudes toward persons having a disability. Millington, Leierer, and Abadie (2000) suggest that research in the area of assessing attitudes toward disability and their affect on employment selection outcomes is constrained by the lack of an appropriate theoretical model. It was their view that an appropriate model does not exist for

understanding selection bias and the unfair discrimination practices of employers and that there was an absence of a meaningful and valid measure of employer attitudes.

It should be noted that most measures of attitude toward people with disability developed to date have been constructed in a way that provide respondents latitude in rendering their views at a chosen point between two opposing viewpoints. A Likert-type scale may be utilized to solicit the respondent's view of a particular construct of attitudes toward people with a disability. For example, the following construct statement may be presented: All people with a disability should be afforded access to meaningful gainful employment. After reading this statement, the respondent may be given the opportunity to provide their view of the given construct by indicating a point of their choosing between the two opposing views – *strongly agree* versus *strongly disagree*.

**Limitations of attitude measures.** Not unlike most measures of human behavior, there are inherent limitations in any scale utilized to measure attitudes toward disability. These limitations must be given consideration when interpreting the results obtained from the use of any such scale. Thomas (2001) criticized the utilization of measures of attitudes toward people with a disability that ask generalized questions about “disabled” people. It was noted that such measures are typically tabulated and reported as a “total score” suggesting a single dimension can account for an individual's perception of an individual with a disability. Thomas (2001) reported that a factorial analysis of sixteen concerns regarding workers with disabilities identified at least three distinct dimensions that underlie perceptions of people with a disability. The overtness of the disability, the risk associated with the disability, and the response of the person having a disability has to their environment influence the perceptions individuals have toward people with a disability.

Antonak and Livneh (1988) posed another criticism of using summated rating scales for the measure of attitudes toward people with a disability. They aptly noted that on measures of attitudes toward disability, especially those that

represented a summated rating scale, the intention of the items included on the scale would be readily apparent to a respondent. It was their view that, a respondent may deliberately distort responses to present a favorable or more socially acceptable impression. They referred to this as a “fake good” (p. 117) response when giving a favorable impression and a “fake bad” (p. 117) response when giving an unfavorable impression.

Although often criticized, over the past half century the Attitude Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) (Yuker et al, 1960) has been one of the most widely used, if not the most widely used, measure in studies where attitudes toward people with a disability are considered. Addressing the concerns that have been posed by many researchers in regards to the potential of a respondent faking their responses on the ATDP, Yuker (1986) wrote:

Even though ATDP scores can be faked, there is no evidence that they are faked in good research studies nor is there evidence that faking affects research results. The possibility of faking should make us wary of interpreting scores on attitude measures such as the ATDP as indicative of absolute levels of positive attitudes (p. 203).

It was also his view that when attitudes are expressed in behavior, it is not important whether or not the expression is “deeply felt” (Yuker, 1986).

Edwards (1957) introduced what he termed the socially desirability response style. It was his view that respondents endorse only those items on an attitude scale that he or she considers to represent the socially appropriate or socially sanctioned response. Yuker and Block (1986) reported, after reviewing multiple studies that utilized the ATDP, that scores obtained on this measure may be “slightly influenced” by social desirability but the “influence is small and does not threaten the validity of the scales” (p. 40).

Social desirability has been noted to be one of the primary criticisms of attitude measures (Feinberg, 1967). The probability of a socially desirable or acceptable response toward people with a disability is more likely to be expressed by a non-disabled person because it is socially unacceptable to be critical of others in a public forum.

Politically correct or socially acceptable responses that are provided by the respondent on attitude scales such as the ATDP may or may not be congruent with the respondent's demonstrated behavior. As an example, a potential employer may project in their responses on the ATDP what would be considered to be a positive or "socially acceptable" attitude toward workers having a disability yet display a hesitancy or unwillingness to actually provide employment opportunities for workers having a disability. The latter of course represents a "behavior" that is not congruent with the assessed attitude toward people with a disability.

### **The Prior Contact Link**

Altman (1981) noted there are many conceptualizations to contact. The extent of prior contact with disability can include never having contact, proximity contact that makes the probability of interaction with a person having a disability more likely, to actual contact where a direct interaction with a person having a disability has occurred (Cook & Selltiz, 1955).

As has been previously discussed, most investigations have addressed the relationship between prior contact and attitudes toward people with a disability. There is a notable absence in the vocational rehabilitation literature of studies that have investigated the influence or relationship between the extent of an employer's prior contact with disabilities and employer hiring decisions. Evidence of the moderating effect prior contact with disability may have on the association between disability status and employer hiring decisions is also absent from the literature.

Gilbride, Stensrud, Vandergoot, and Golden (2003) conducted a qualitative study to determine the characteristics of employers that were known to be open to hiring people with a disability. They found that there were three key characteristics of employers open to hiring people with a disability. They identified these as work cultural issues, job match, and employer experience and support issues.

The first characterization, work cultural issues, was reported to encompass factors such as a desire of the employer or organization to foster

diversity and to focus on a worker's performance on their assigned job rather than on the disability. The second characterization, job match, reflected factors such as the employer's willingness to focus on the consumer's capabilities and placing the consumer in a job that is consistent with those capabilities. This characterization fits nicely into the concept of the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) where correspondence exists between the needs of the worker and the needs of the work environment.

While not directly addressing the issue of prior contact with people having a disability, the third characteristic--employer experience and support issues--did draw upon the employer's experiences. The two areas identified included the employer's experience in supervising a diverse workforce as well as the experience of working with community rehabilitation programs. The latter would have the employer working directly with rehabilitation support staff as well as with the consumer. These findings would suggest positive contact or experiences with the disability community, whether through direct consumer contact or indirect contact, may enhance the probabilities of establishing a positive working relationship with an employer.

**Measuring prior contact.** Yuker and Hurley (1987) noted that most studies addressing the effect of prior contact with people having a disability utilized a measure that was constructed specifically for that study. They observed that, "Most questions about contact tended to be primitive, based on priori assumptions, and lacking psychometric evidence of reliability or validity" (p. 147). Measures were noted to range from a single question to an 11-point scale ranging from 0, indicating no contact, to a 10, indicating extensive contact with people having a disability. While Yuker and Hurley (1987) introduced the Contact with Disabled Persons (CDP) Scale to help fill this void in instrumentation, many investigators continue to struggle with identifying an efficient means of compiling valid and reliable data that provides an effective measure of the extent of prior contact with people having a disability.

## **Summary**

Given current disability related employment data, the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) appears to have done little in erasing an underlying bias that impedes people with a disability from maximizing their employment potential. There is a wealth of information and research that has investigated and identified factors that in some way contribute, either positively or negatively, to people with a disability having access to viable employment. Much of this research examined attitudes and the resulting behavior or intentions of potential employers in regards to hiring people with a disability. Prior research has also investigated the impact prior contact with disability has had on attitudes and the general view of individuals toward people having a disability.

In reviewing prior investigations related to examining disability, attitudes, prior contact, and the hiring decisions of potential employers, it has been noted that there have been few experimental or quasi-experimental investigations conducted to date that have incorporated videotaped simulations of workers with disabilities in their research design. Most studies have relied upon written scenarios. This proposed study represents an effort to further close that void by incorporating a videotaped portion of the job applicant's interview in the overall research design.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was designed to investigate and focus upon the extent to which the independent variable, disability status of a job applicant, impacts upon the dependent variable, strength of the job applicant rating submitted by the study participants. Disability status was operationalized in this study as whether the qualified job applicant was a wheelchair user or not. The 124 participants in this study were undergraduate students majoring in business.

Analyses were also conducted which incorporated two additional independent variables or factors into the investigation, the measured expressed attitudes of the participants toward people with a disability and the extent of prior contact the participants had with people having a disability. This was done to determine to what degree these variables or factors may directly influence the job applicant rating and the degree to which these variables influence or moderate the association between disability status of the job applicant and the strength of the job applicant rating submitted by the participant for employment. In addition, this study controlled for the participant demographic variables of gender, race/ethnicity, and age.

In this chapter, the presentation of the hypotheses are followed by a discussion of the: (a) selection of participants, (b) research design and variables, (c) instrumentation, (d) collection of the data, (e) data analysis, and (f) summary.

#### **Research Questions**

There were seven research questions that directed this study:

1. Is there an association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of the job applicant rating given for employment?

2. Is there an association between attitudes toward people with a disability and the strength of the job applicant rating given for employment?
3. Is there an association between the extent of prior contact with people having a disability and the strength of the job applicant rating given for employment?
4. Do attitudes toward people with a disability moderate the association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment? In other words, does the association between the job applicant's disability status and strength of rating given the job applicant for employment vary dependent upon the participant's attitudes toward people with a disability?
5. Does the extent of prior contact with people with a disability moderate the association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment? In other words, does the association between the job applicant's disability status and strength of rating given the job applicant for employment vary dependent upon the extent of the participant's prior contact with people with a disability?
6. Is there an association between the job applicant's disability status and the participant's measured attitudes toward people with a disability?
7. Is the variable "attitudes toward people with a disability" a mediator between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of the job applicant rating given for employment?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of the job applicant rating given for employment.
2. There is no association between attitudes toward people with a disability and the strength of the job applicant rating given for employment.
3. There is no association between the extent of prior contact with people having a disability and the strength of the job applicant rating given for employment.

4. The variable “attitudes toward people with a disability” is not a moderator of the association between the job applicant’s disability status and the strength of the job applicant rating given for employment.
5. The extent of prior contact with people having a disability is not a moderator of the association between the job applicant’s disability status and the strength of job applicant rating given for employment.
6. There is no association between the job applicant’s disability status and the participant’s measured attitudes toward people with a disability.
7. The variable “attitudes toward people with a disability” is not a mediator between the job applicant’s disability status and the strength of the job applicant rating given for employment.

### **Selection of Participants**

The participants in this study represented a sample of convenience. They were selected from undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in classes offered through the College of Business at a large southeastern university who declared a major in one or more of the programs offered through the college. Participant selection for this study was based solely upon their enrollment in the selected class, their having a declared major within the College of Business, and their agreeing to volunteer as a participant in the proposed study. Some, but not all, instructors gave extra credit to students for their participation.

The original sample was comprised of 150 participants. Three were excluded from analysis because they failed to answer more than half of the questions on the ATDP scale. There were only four graduate level students, all in one class, and all seeing the same video. This class of four graduate students was also excluded from analysis because of concerns that they may be more likely to have work experience that might affect their hiring decisions differently than undergraduate students and because they were not equally distributed between the two groups. Furthermore, one class that was comprised of almost entirely male students (18 males vs. 1 female) was eliminated from analysis. Their instructor suggested that this class was different than the other classes who participated, in part because they were the only students who were in the

information technology tract. The instructor viewed this group of students as engaging in very critical thinking during any decision making process. Because this class was not equally distributed between the two video groups (they saw only the videotaped segment of the job applicant in a wheelchair) and the concern that this class was unlike the others, they were also eliminated from analysis. It was important to ensure as much as possible that the only difference between the groups seeing the two videos was the video itself.

The final study sample was comprised of 124 undergraduate students; 80 were female and 44 were male. The relatively large share of females compared to males is consistent with recent United States National Center for Education Research data that projects approximately 57% of bachelor's degrees conferred in year 2004 – 2005 will be to women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003).

The majority of the participants in this study were white (n = 90); the remaining students were categorized as black (n = 15), Hispanic (n = 13), or other (n = 5). One participant did not provide ethnicity/race information. The average age of the participants was just over 21 years.

### **Instrumentation**

Instrumentation for this study included a functional job description, the resume of the job applicant, two videos depicting a segment of the job applicant's interview, the job applicant rating form, Form O (Original) of the Attitude Toward Disabled Persons (ATDP) Scale (Yuker et al., 1960), and the demographic data form that included an inquiry pertaining to the extent of the participant's prior contact with people having a disability.

#### **Functional Job Description and Resume of the Job Applicant**

In an effort to minimize the introduction of bias, the participants comprising the control group and the experimental group in this study reviewed the same functional job description and functional resume for the job applicant. The functional job description was printed in a two-page format that also included wage and benefits information. The resume reflected general functional and experiential content and was presented in a one-page format. The knowledge,

skills, and abilities reflected on the functional job description were very similar to those reflected in the job applicant's resume. The job opening in question in this study was promoted as offering an opportunity for entry into mid-level management with the company and affording further opportunities for advancement within the overall management structure of the company.

The functional job description adopted for this study reflected in part duties that are consistent with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for success in the position of *Purchasing Agent* as identified for that occupation by the United States Department of Labor (DOL) and published in *The Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (1991). This publication has been recognized as the one of the most reliable sources of unbiased occupational information since first being published in 1939. The procedure and techniques utilized to analyze and record the occupational information found within *The Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (1991) followed strict guidelines consistent with those specified within another DOL publication, *The Revised Handbook for Analyzing Jobs* (1991).

While a detailed discussion of job analysis procedures and techniques is beyond the scope of this study, it is important that the content validity of both the functional job description (Appendix A) and the functional resume of the job applicant (Appendix B) developed for this study is supported by unbiased occupational information. As previously indicated, the inherent knowledge, skills, and abilities deemed significant in the advertised job opening were generated in part from the occupational title of Purchasing Agent (DOT code number 162.157-038) as presented in *The Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (1991, p. 105). This occupational information has been adopted for this study and applied in forming both the functional job description as well as the functional resume. In addition, the advertised wage information portrayed on the functional job description is consistent with national wage information for similar occupations as presented by the DOL in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2004-05 Edition* (2004). Therefore, these two tools are viewed as being unbiased as well as content valid.

## **Video of Job Interview Segment**

Two videotaped productions of a segment of the job applicant's interview were made. Both productions depicted the initial greetings and preliminary conversations in the interview process conducted with the job applicant by a company representative. Each video production was approximately five minutes in length. They differed only during the initial segment or first 5-8 seconds of the production. One video presented the job applicant utilizing a wheelchair when greeted by the interviewer while the second video shows the job applicant walking toward the interviewer unaided by any form of mobility device. The subsequent segment of the videotaped interview is identical in both productions as it was spliced or shared to maintain congruence in both visual as well as conversational content.

An experienced interviewer from a large defense research firm was used to interview the job applicant. A general script for the interview questions as well as the responses of the job applicant were developed based on input and recommendations from the experienced interviewer. To promote a more realistic affect during videotaping, both the interviewer's questions as well as the job applicant's responses to questions reflected a general dialogue that followed a prepared outline as opposed to reciting lines that were committed to memory from a prepared script.

The participants of the study were randomly assigned to one of two groups based on their class membership. One group of participants viewed the video depicting the job applicant sitting in a wheelchair when greeted by the interviewer while participants assigned to the second group viewed the video showing the job applicant walking when being greeted.

## **Job Applicant Rating for Employment Form**

The Job Applicant Rating Form (JAR) was utilized by each participant to provide their overall opinion of the applicant as a viable candidate for the job for which they applied. This form is comprised of a single six-point Likert-type scale permitting the respondent to rate the applicant from one to six. The options

ranging from one to six were: “don’t hire,” “very weak candidate,” “poor candidate,” “good candidate,” “very strong candidate,” and “must hire.”

Weems and Onwuegbuzie (2001) reported that increasing the number of response categories on a scale coupled with avoiding using scales comprised of an odd number of response categories result in a notable increase in score reliability. Onwuegbuzie and Daniel (2002) reported in their analysis of response patterns that the use of midpoint options on scales may attenuate score reliability. It was their view that this would be the result of many respondents, particularly those whose opinions are not firm, avoiding choice or what they viewed as piling on the midpoint. The potential of the midpoint having a detrimental effect on score reliability has been attributed to its ambiguous meaning in that it may imply “neutral,” “don’t know,” “don’t care,” or “no opinion” (Weems & Onwuegbuzie, 2001). Because this variable was measured on an ordinal scale of six levels, it was treated, by convention, as an interval-level variable.

### **Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) Form – O**

The original (Form – O) of the Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons (ATDP) Scale (Yuker et al., 1960) was used to quantify the participants’ attitudes toward people with a disability. This version of the ATDP is comprised of 20 statements concerning people with a disability. Each of the 20 statements are purported to reflect statements suggesting the difference, if rejected, or similarities, if accepted, between disabled and non-disabled people. Respondents are asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with each statement on a six-point Likert-type scale that ranges from -3 (“I disagree very much”) to +3 (“I agree very much”). Each point along the scale is defined as follows: -3 (‘I disagree very much’), - 2 (‘I disagree pretty much’), -1 (‘I disagree a little’), +1 (‘I agree a little’), +2 (‘I agree pretty much’), to +3 (‘I agree very much’). The six-point scale eliminates the opportunity for a respondent to provide a neutral response. Participants in this study recorded their response to each statement on a machine scoreable answer sheet. The scoring procedure yielded an interval-level variable with possible scores on the ATDP ranging from 0 to 120. The higher

scores are reflective of a more positive view of people having a disability (Yuker & Block, 1986).

The ATDP has been reported to be the most widely used and carefully studied of all instruments measuring generalized attitudes toward people with a disability (Antonak & Livnech, 1988; Yuker & Hurley, 1987). An extensive review of the disability-related literature by the authors of the ATDP scale was conducted to identify descriptions of disabled persons that may be applied when forming the construct statements adopted for the ATDP (Yuker, Block, & Youngg, 1966, 1970). The content validity of the ATDP scale was established by having multiple psychologists carefully review the descriptors of disability extracted from the literature by the authors to determine the extent to which they were relevant and could be utilized in the scale.

Yuker and Hurley (1987) reported that scores on the ATDP have shown acceptable split half reliabilities that ranged from .79 to .81 and alpha estimates that range from .79 to .89. They reported the scores on the ATDP have been shown to remain stable over a five-week period with scores having a test-retest reliability of .84 but noted the test-retest reliability dropped to .68 in studies that extended over four months. Antonack (1980), using a sample of 326 undergraduate and graduates students, found scores on the ATDP Form-O to have a split half reliability of .75, a standard error of measurement of 6.43, and to be stable with a two factor structure that explained 77% of the variance in scores.

### **Demographic Data Form**

The demographic data form used in the study (Appendix E) permitted the collection of information on the age, gender, race/ethnicity, and classification in college (undergraduate/graduate) of each participant. Based upon self-described race/ethnicity, participants were placed into one of four categories--white, black, Hispanic, and other.

In addition, the demographic data form provided the participant with the Prior Contact with Disability Scale (PCD) developed for this study. The PCD allows participants to indicate the extent of their prior contact with people on a single four-point, ordinal-level scale. Each point along the scale is defined as

follows: 1 (Almost no contact with a person or people having a disability); 2 (Occasional contact with a person or people having a disability); 3 (Frequent contact with a person or people having a disability; and 4 (Almost daily contact with a person or people having a disability).

Antonak and Livnech (1988) reported that scores on the ATDP scales have been correlated with a variety of demographic and personality measures. Prior investigations have found that there tends to be no relationship between the age of the respondent and their acceptance or rejection of a person with a physical disability. An analysis of gender differences found that females tended to demonstrate a greater acceptance of individuals with physical disabilities than their male counterparts (Antonak & Livnech). The acceptance of the physically disabled person has also been positively related to one's educational level (Antonak & Livnech).

### **Collection of the Data**

Initially, the Dean's Office for the College of Business at the subject university was contacted for permission to access their faculty and students. After permission was granted by the dean's office, they were provided, at their request, a formal letter of introduction containing a brief description of the proposed research. This information was then forwarded via e-mail to the graduate and undergraduate faculty. All subsequent arrangements to collect data were coordinated directly with each faculty member.

Students from six classes, five undergraduate and one graduate, were given the opportunity to participate. In each class students were encouraged to participate by their instructor through extra credit. In addition, students who elected to participate in the study were entered into a \$200 lottery. Students electing to participate in the study were randomly assigned by class to one of the two groups previously described.

Those students electing to participate in the study were given a general overview of the study as well as an informed consent form to sign and date. After all the informed consent forms had been signed and collected, each participant was issued a packet containing two envelopes labeled A and B.

The participants were instructed not to open the contents of the packets until instructed. To protect the identity and privacy of each participant, each packet was without an identifying feature. However, the contents of the two envelopes inside the packet were coded with an identification number in order to assure proper assignment to participant coding when compiling data.

The participants were then instructed to assume the role of a key business manager that had been asked by their employer to evaluate the credentials of a prospective employee. Each participant was then instructed to remove and open envelope A from their packet and carefully review the enclosed job description and job applicant resume. The participants were granted approximately 10 minutes to review the job description as well as the credentials and qualifications of the job applicant.

After all the participants affirmed they had enough time to review both the functional job description and the job applicant's resume, they were then instructed to view a five-minute segment of the job applicant's interview. Participants assigned to Group A viewed the video production depicting the job applicant in a wheelchair while participants assigned to Group B viewed the video depicting the job applicant unaided by any form of mobility device. After viewing the interview the participants were asked to rate the job applicant on the enclosed Job Applicant Rating Form (JAR). They were instructed to again give careful consideration to the job description and resume of the job applicant but to also consider the job applicant's presentation in the interview. Once the Job Applicant Rating Form was completed, the participants were instructed to place all the documents back into the envelope marked A.

Next, the participants were asked to remove and open the envelope marked B in their packet. This packet contained the demographics questionnaire, the PCD and the ATDP. The participants were given as much time as needed to complete the ATDP. They were instructed to place all the contents of envelope B back in the envelope once they had finished providing all the information requested on each of the documents. Once all the participants indicated they were finished, the packets were collected and the participants were dismissed.

## Data Analysis

All variables and their corresponding levels of measurement are listed in Table 3.1. Since the videos were shown to classes as a group (i.e. one class saw one video, another class saw one video, etc.), a variable called “class” was created to help determine if there was a group effect on the dependent variable. There were six classes in all, but two classes were eliminated from analysis per the previous discussion--the classes that were composed of (1) students who were all graduate students and (2) students who were all in the technology tract.

### Univariate Analyses

The mean, standard deviation, range, skewness and kurtosis were determined for the primary dependent variable (applicant rating) as well as for the non-categorical independent variables (ATDP, prior contact, and age).

Table 3.1. Variable list.

Variable	Variable Name	Level of Measurement
Disability status of job applicant	Video	Nominal (dichotomous)
Class participant was in	Class	Nominal (4 categories)
Age of participant	Age	Ratio
Gender of participant	Gender	Nominal (dichotomous)
Race/ethnicity of participant	Race/ethnicity	Nominal (4 categories)
Rating given job applicant for employment	Applicant rating	Interval
Prior contact participant has had with people with a disability	Prior contact	Ordinal (4 levels)
Attitudes of participant toward people with a disability	ATDP	Interval

### Bivariate Analyses

To examine the demographic data of the participants by video viewed, the dependent variable was disability status (video) and the independent variables were gender, race/ethnicity, and age. Chi square analysis was conducted with the categorical variables, gender and race/ethnicity; a t-test was conducted with the ratio-level variable, age.

In addition, bivariate analysis was conducted with the primary, focal dependent variable, applicant rating. The independent variables were disability

status (video), ATDP, and prior contact. Control variables were gender, race/ethnicity, and age. Applicant rating was measured on a 6-point scale, with –3 being “don’t hire” and +3 being “must hire.” Although this was technically measured on an ordinal scale, it is conventional to treat ordinal variables with 5 or more levels as interval variables. T-tests were conducted with dichotomous independent variables, one-way ANOVA was conducted with nominal independent variables with more than 2 categories, and Spearman correlations were conducted with ordinal, interval, and ratio level independent variables.

It is important to note that although “attitudes” was intended to be measured as a stable, pre-existing characteristic of each participant, attitudes were measured *after* the participants had viewed the videos; and there was concern that the attitudes of those seeing the qualified applicant in a wheelchair might be swayed by watching the video. Therefore, “attitudes” was also tested as a dependent variable. Attitudes were measured by the ATDP, yielding a score on an interval scale. T-tests were conducted with dichotomous independent variables, one-way ANOVA was conducted with nominal independent variables with more than 2 categories, and Spearman correlations were conducted with ordinal, interval, and ratio level independent variables. When results from one-way ANOVA were found to be significant, the Tukey test was conducted to determine which groups were significant at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level.

### **Multivariate Analyses**

Multiple regression analysis procedures were conducted to test the hypotheses under the three main focal areas of the study while controlling for the effects of the multiple independent variables.

**Focus 1.** Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if the job applicant’s disability status, the participants’ attitudes toward people with a disability, and the participants’ prior contact with people with a disability were associated with the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment, controlling for each of the other variables as well as gender, race/ethnicity, and age of the participant. The model tested applicant rating as the dependent

variable; with the independent variables being disability status (video), ATDP, and prior contact; and the control variables being gender, race/ethnicity, and age.

**Focus 2.** To determine if the extent of prior contact with people with a disability and attitudes toward people with a disability moderate the association between the job applicant's disability status (video) and the strength of the rating given the job applicant for employment (applicant rating), multiple regression analysis was conducted. Testing for moderation involves two steps: (1) the first model would include all independent variables including the control variables, and (2) the second model would include all of the variables included in the first model plus an interaction variable created between the main, focal independent variable and the moderating variable. Effect modification would exist if the interaction term is found to be statistically significant.

Variables were created to describe the interaction between the job applicant's disability status and each of the possible moderating variables (ATDP and prior contact). The first interaction term created was the interaction between video and attitudes (video\*atdp). The second interaction term created was the interaction between video and a dichotomous version of prior contact (video\*prior). Of the original four-point scale used to measure prior contact, levels 1 and 2 were coded as "0" or "having no prior contact with people with a disability" and levels 3 and 4 were coded as "1" or "having had prior contact with people with a disability."

The first model tested was the model with only the main effects (video, ATDP, and prior contact) and the control variables (gender, race/ethnicity, and age). Dummy variables were created for race/ethnicity, with "white" being the reference variable left out of the model. The second model tested added the first interaction variable (video\*atdp) to the first model. The third model tested added the second interaction variable (video\*prior) to the first model.

**Focus 3.** To determine if attitudes toward people with disability, measured *after* viewing the job applicant video, mediated the relationship between disability status and applicant rating, multiple regression analysis was conducted. Testing for a mediating relationship involves three steps: (1) testing the direct effect

between the focal independent and dependent variables, leaving the proposed mediating variable out of the model, but including all other variables as controls, (2) adding the proposed mediating variable to the first model, and (3) testing the mediating variable as the dependent variable. Mediation would be said to exist if the multiple regression coefficient changes significantly when the mediating variable is added to the model.

Therefore, the first model tested the direct effect only (disability status as measured by video viewed), including the control variables, gender, race/ethnicity, and age. The dichotomous version of prior contact was also included as a control variable at this point. Dummy variables were created for race/ethnicity with “white” being the reference variable left out of the model. The second model was the same as the first with the addition of the potential mediator, ATDP. Finally, the third model tested the mediator (ATDP) as the dependent variable with disability status as the independent variable, and included the control variables.

### **Summary**

The research questions and hypotheses investigated in this study have been discussed in this chapter. Of particular interest in this study was the comparison of the strength of the job applicant rating or hiring recommendation submitted by the participants comprising the two described groups after they gave careful consideration to the requirements of a posted job opening, the credentials of the qualified job applicant, and the viewing of a segment of the job applicant’s interview. The extent to which the participants’ measured attitudes toward people with a disability as well as the extent the participants’ prior contact with disability moderate the association between the job applicant’s disability status and the job applicant rating was also investigated. Attitudes toward people with a disability was also investigated as a dependent variable and mediating variable between the job applicant’s disability status and the job applicant rating. Select demographic information was collected and controlled for in this investigation. Instrumentation has been discussed and when available reliability and validity data was provided.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

In this chapter the analysis of data collected for this study will be discussed. This will include a review of univariate and bivariate procedures as well as the multivariate analyses conducted to address the research questions and related hypotheses previously outlined.

#### Univariate Analyses

Descriptive statistics for non-categorical variables are listed in Table 4.1 below. The mean for the dependent variable, applicant rating, was 1.323 on a scale of -3 (don't hire) to +3 (must hire). The dependent variable was not normally distributed, but the statistical procedures employed are generally robust to violations of the normality assumption. Participants tended to rank the applicant favorably, with no ratings (0%) of -3 ("don't hire") and only one rating (1%) of -2 ("very weak applicant"). The most commonly reported ranking was +2 ("very strong applicant;" n = 61; 49%), followed by +1 ("good applicant;" n = 45; 36%), -1 ("poor applicant;" n = 13; 10%), and +3 ("must hire;" n = 4; 3%). The average level of prior contact with persons with a disability was 2.049 on a scale of 1-4, with 4 being the most contact. The average ATDP score was 85.161, with a low of 55 and a high of 114. The average age of the participants was 21.339.

Table 4.1 Univariate data for select variables (n = 124).

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Low	High	Skewness	Kurtosis
Applicant Rating	1.323	1.008	-2.000	3.000	-1.315	1.425
Prior Contact	2.049	0.795	1.000	4.000	0.407	-0.249
Attitudes	85.161	12.031	55.000	114.000	-0.139	-0.209
Age	21.339	1.492	20.000	34.000	5.387	42.388

## Bivariate Analyses

Demographic data by video viewed are listed in Table 4.2 below. A total of 78 students (52 female, 26 male) watched the video of the job applicant *not* in a wheelchair, and 46 students (28 female, 18 male) watched the video of the job applicant *in* a wheelchair. Of those who saw the video of the job applicant not in a wheelchair, 59 were white, 9 were black, 7 were Hispanic, and 3 were classified as “other.” Of those who saw the video of the job applicant in a wheelchair, 31 were white, 6 were black, 6 were Hispanic, and 2 were classified as “other.” The average age of the “no wheelchair” and “wheelchair” groups were 21.46 and 21.13 years, respectively. There were no significant differences between the two video groups on gender, race/ethnicity, or age.

Table 4.2 Demographic data by video viewed (n = 124).

Variable	Video Viewed		Statistic	p value
	No Wheelchair	Wheelchair		
<b>Gender</b>				
Females (n)	52	28	$X^2 = 0.4248$	p = 0.5146
Males (n)	26	18		
Total	78	46		
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
White (n)	59	31	$X^2 = 0.7913$	p = 0.8515
Black (n)	9	6		
Hispanic (n)	7	6		
Other (n)	3	2		
<b>Age</b>				
Age (average)	21.46	21.13	t = 1.32	p = 0.1880

Results of bivariate analysis with the dependent variable being applicant rating have been provided in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 below. T-tests were conducted with dichotomous variables, one-way ANOVA was conducted with nominal variables with more than 2 categories, and Spearman correlations were conducted with ordinal, interval, and ratio level variables.

Table 4.3 T-tests and one-way ANOVA with “applicant rating” as dependent variable (n = 124).

Variable	Average Applicant Rating	Statistic	p value
<b>Video</b>			
No Wheelchair	1.295	t = -0.40	p = 0.6920
Wheelchair	1.370		
<b>Class</b>			
1	1.311	F = 0.52	p = 0.6686
2	1.273		
3	1.579		
5*	1.222		
<b>Gender</b>			
Females	1.363	t = 0.59	p = 0.5544
Males	1.250		
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White	1.278	F = 0.38	p = 0.7708
Black	1.467		
Hispanic	1.538		
Other	1.200		

\*Classes 4 and 6 were eliminated from analysis per previous discussion.

Table 4.4 Spearman correlation with “applicant rating” as dependent variable (n = 124).

	Age	Prior Contact	ATDP
<b>Applicant Rating</b>	0.0968	0.0302	-0.0358
p value	0.2848	0.7389	0.6929

There were no significant findings with “applicant rating” as the dependent variable. Those viewing the video of the applicant in the wheelchair ranked the applicant as favorably as those viewing the video of the applicant *not* in a wheelchair. There were no differences on applicant rating between the groups. Females and males ranked the applicant similarly, as did the various race/ethnic groups. Applicant rating was not correlated with age, prior contact, or with attitudes.

Results of bivariate analysis with the dependent variable being attitudes toward people with a disability are listed in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 below. T-tests were conducted with dichotomous variables, one-way ANOVA was conducted with nominal variables with more than 2 categories, and Spearman correlations were conducted with ordinal, interval, and ratio level variables.

Table 4.5. T-tests and one-way ANOVA with “attitudes” as dependent variable (n = 124).

Variable	Average ATDP Score	Statistic	p value
<b>Video</b>			
No Wheelchair	82.282	t = -3.64	p = 0.0004*
Wheelchair	90.043		
<b>Class</b>			
1	**80.956	F = 4.87	p = 0.0031*
2	84.090		
3	**90.263		
5	**89.888		
<b>Sex</b>			
Females	85.575	t = 0.51	p = 0.6076
Males	84.409		
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
White	84.044	F = 2.31	p = 0.0798
Black	84.867		
Hispanic	93.154		
Other	82.800		

\*statistically significant

\*\*class 1 significantly lower than class 3 and class 5

Table 4.6. Spearman correlation with “attitudes” as dependent variable (n = 124).

	Age	Prior Contact	Applicant Rating
ATDP I	0.0528	0.1263	-0.0170
p value	0.5858	0.1622	0.8516

Attitudes toward disability were found to be significantly higher in the group that had seen the video of the qualified applicant in the wheelchair than in

the group that saw the same applicant *not* in a wheelchair (90.043 vs. 82.282, respectively,  $p = 0.0004$ ). There was a significant difference between classes in attitude scores, and post hoc analysis revealed that class 1 had significantly lower scores than class 3 and class 5 (80.956 vs. 90.263 and 89.888, respectively;  $p = 0.0031$ ). Otherwise, there were no significant differences between classes on ATDP scores. It should be noted that classes 1 and 2 saw the video of the applicant *not* in a wheelchair and had the lowest scores on the ATDP, while classes 3 and 5 saw the video of the applicant in a wheelchair and had the highest scores on the ATDP. Therefore, these group effects are consistent with the finding that those participants who saw the video of the qualified applicant in a wheelchair later scored higher on the attitude scale than did those who saw the same applicant *not* in a wheelchair. These results confirm the concerns of measuring attitudes towards people with a disability *after* the participants have had the opportunity of seeing a qualified job applicant with a disability. “Class” was dropped as a variable from further analysis since it seemed to be redundant—reflecting only which video was viewed.

Although bivariate analysis did not yield any significant findings with applicant rating as the dependent variable, it was determined that multivariate analysis would be conducted since there is always a possibility that some variables may suppress the association between the primary independent and dependent variables.

### **Multivariate Analyses**

#### **Focus 1**

The multiple regression model is represented in Table 4.7, the correlation matrix is provided in Table 4.8, and the results of multiple regression analysis are provided in Table 4.9.

Table 4.7 Multiple regression model to test Focus 1 hypotheses.

<b>Model</b>	<b>Dep. Var.</b>	<b>Independent Variables</b>
Model 1	applicant rating =	video atdp prior gender age black Hispanic other

Table 4.8 Correlation matrix (n = 124).

	Video	ATDP	Prior	Gender	Age	Black	Hisp	Other	AppRa
Video	1.000								
ATDP	0.313*	1.000							
Prior	0.119	0.060	1.000						
Gender	0.059	-0.047	-0.014	1.000					
Age	-0.108	-0.097	0.002	0.239*	1.000				
Black	0.022	-0.009	0.007	0.035	-0.085	1.000			
Hisp	0.064	0.228*	-0.082	-0.144	-0.131	-0.127	1.000		
Other	0.012	-0.040	-0.121	-0.066	0.036	-0.076	-0.070	1.000	
AppRa	0.036	-0.036	-0.024	-0.054	0.057	0.053	0.074	-0.025	1.000

\*p < 0.05

Table 4.9 Results of multiple regression analysis (n = 124).

Model	DF	R <sup>2</sup>	F Value	p Value	Variable	Parameter Estimate	SE	p Value
Model 1	8	0.0263	0.39	0.9253	Video	0.1430	0.2047	0.4860
					ATDP	-0.0060	0.0084	0.4733
					Prior	-0.0594	0.2159	0.7838
					Gender	-0.1574	0.2024	0.4385
					Age	0.0636	0.0653	0.3326
					Black	0.2197	0.2886	0.4480
					Hispanic	0.3017	0.3197	0.3474
					Other	-0.1449	0.4792	0.7630

A review of the correlation matrix reveals that disability status (video) was correlated with ATDP ( $r = 0.313$ ,  $p = 0.0004$ ), with the job applicant having a disability being positively correlated with the participants' more positive attitudes toward people with a disability. In addition, being Hispanic was positively correlated with ATDP ( $r = 0.228$ ,  $p = 0.0108$ ). Age was positively correlated with gender ( $r = 0.239$ ,  $p = 0.0074$ ), with older students more likely to be male. There was no evidence of multicollinearity when diagnostic tests were run.

The results of multiple regression analysis indicate that, as a set, the independent variables did not explain a significant amount of the variance in the dependent variable, applicant rating ( $R^2 = 0.0263$ ,  $p = 0.9253$ ). Controlling for all

other variables, disability status (video) was not associated with applicant rating, nor were ATDP or prior contact with disabilities associated with applicant rating. None of the independent variables individually explained a significant amount of the variance in applicant rating. Multivariate analysis confirmed the findings of bivariate analysis, but controlled for the effects of multiple independent variables.

## Focus 2

The main effect and interaction models are represented in Table 4.10 below, and the results of multiple regression analysis are provided in Table 4.11.

Table 4.10 Multiple regression models to test moderating effects.

Model	Dep. Var.	Independent Variables
Model 1	applicant rating =	video atdp prior gender age black Hispanic other
Model 2	applicant rating =	video atdp prior gender age black Hispanic other video*atdp
Model 3	applicant rating =	video atdp prior gender age black Hispanic other video*prior

Table 4.11 Results of multiple regression analysis of moderating effects (n = 124).

Model	DF	R <sup>2</sup>	F Value	p Value	Variable	Parameter Estimate	SE	p Value
Model 1	8	0.0263	0.39	0.9253	Video	0.1430	0.2047	0.4860
					ATDP	-0.0060	0.0084	0.4733
					Prior	-0.0594	0.2159	0.7838
					Gender	-0.1574	0.2024	0.4385
					Age	0.0636	0.0653	0.3326
					Black	0.2197	0.2886	0.4480
					Hispanic	0.3017	0.3197	0.3474
					Other	-0.1449	0.4792	0.7630
Model 2	9	0.0282	0.37	0.9480	video*atdp	0.0087	0.0181	0.6306
Model 3	9	0.0263	0.34	0.9590	video*prior	0.0112	0.4518	0.9802

None of the models yielded significant results, and the R<sup>2</sup> value did not change considerably when either of the interaction terms was added to the main effect model. These results would indicate that, again, controlling for the other variables in the model, there was no association between the applicant's disability status and the strength of the rating given the job applicant. Introducing the interaction terms did not change this finding, indicating that neither attitudes toward people with a disability nor prior contact with people with a disability moderated the association between disability status and strength of rating given the job applicant.

### Focus 3

The main effect and mediating effect models as well as that model with attitudes listed as the dependent variable are represented in Table 4.12, and the results of multiple regression analysis are reported in Table 4.13 below.

Table 4.12 Multiple regression models to test mediating effects.

Model	Dep. Var.	Independent Variables
Model 1	applicant rating =	video prior gender age black Hispanic other
Model 2	applicant rating =	video prior gender age black Hispanic other atdp
Model 3	atdp =	video prior gender age black Hispanic other

Table 4.13 Results of multiple regression analysis of mediating effects (n = 124).

Model	DF	R <sup>2</sup>	F Value	p Value	Variable	Parameter Estimate	SE	p Value
Model 1	7	0.0219	0.37	0.9177	Video	0.0993	0.1950	0.6117
					Prior	-0.0656	0.2153	0.7612
					Gender	-0.1531	0.2019	0.4500
					Age	0.0651	0.0652	0.3202
					Black	0.2183	0.2879	0.4500
					Hispanic	0.2539	0.3121	0.4176
					Other	-0.1355	0.4781	0.7773
Model 2	8	0.0263	0.39	0.9253				
Model 3	7	0.1459	2.83	*0.0092	Video	7.2895	2.1737	*0.0011
					Prior	1.0345	2.4000	0.6672
					Gender	-0.7151	2.2508	0.7513
					Age	-0.2481	0.7263	0.7333
					Black	0.2326	3.2098	0.9424
					Hispanic	7.9547	3.4792	*0.0241
					Other	-1.5524	5.3291	0.7713

\*statistically significant

Consistent with earlier analyses, the main effect model did not yield significant results ( $R^2 = 0.0219$ ,  $p = 0.9177$ ), indicating that there is no association between the job applicant’s disability status (video) and the strength of the rating given the job applicant. Introducing ATDP in model 2 did not change this finding ( $R^2 = 0.0263$ ,  $p = 0.9253$ ), indicating that the variable “attitudes toward people with disability” is not a mediator of any association between the disability status of the applicant and the strength of the rating given the job applicant.

Model 3 tested the association between the job applicant’s disability status (video) and the participants’ attitudes toward people with a disability (ATDP) measured after the participants watched the videos, controlling for all other variables. Results revealed that the entire set of variables explained a significant amount of the variation in the dependent variable ATDP ( $R^2 = 0.1459$ ,  $p = 0.0092$ ). The results were consistent with the bivariate model, showing a significant association between video and ATDP, controlling for prior contact with people with a disability, gender, age, and race/ethnicity ( $\beta = 7.2895$ ,  $p = 0.0011$ ). Being Hispanic was also found to be significantly associated with attitudes, with Hispanics significantly more likely than whites to have a more favorable attitude toward people with a disability, controlling for video watched, prior contact with people with a disability, gender, and age ( $\beta = 7.9547$ ,  $p = 0.0241$ ). None of the other variables were significantly associated with attitudes when controlling for the others.

Table 4.14 summarizes the decisions to either reject or fail to reject the null hypotheses.

Table 4.14 Rejecting or failing to reject the null hypotheses

Null Hypothesis	Reject/Fail to Reject
1. There is no association between the job applicant’s disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant.	Fail to reject
2. There is no association between attitudes toward people with a disability and the strength of rating given the job applicant.	Fail to reject

Table 4.14 continued

<p>3. There is no association between the extent of prior contact toward people with a disability and the strength of rating given the job applicant.</p>	<p>Fail to reject</p>
<p>4. The variable “attitudes toward people with a disability” is not a moderator of the association between the job applicant’s disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant.</p>	<p>Fail to reject</p>
<p>5. The extent of prior contact with people with a disability is not a moderator of the association between the job applicant’s disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant.</p>	<p>Fail to reject</p>
<p>6. There is no association between the job applicant’s disability status and the participant’s attitudes toward people with a disability.</p>	<p>Reject</p>
<p>7. The variable “attitudes toward people with a disability” is not a mediator between the job applicant’s disability status and the strength of the rating given the job applicant.</p>	<p>Fail to reject</p>

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

This chapter provides a summary of the rationale and purpose of this study. A presentation of the principle findings and conclusions drawn from this investigation are contrasted with those from previous studies. The implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research are also presented.

#### **Rationale**

The most recent census count in the United States identified approximately 50 million people with some form of long lasting condition or disability. Research has shown that most unemployed people having a disability in the United States would prefer to be working. However, their employment rate is far below that of people not having a disability. Of those individuals with a disability that have succeeded in securing employment, many report having faced some form of workplace discrimination that they feel has limited their opportunities for advancement in a chosen career. In addition, the reported earnings for people with a disability in this country that do work fall well below the earnings of people not having a disability. Wheelchair users, a focus of this investigation, have been noted to be among the most visible members of the disability community and are reported to have one of the lowest levels of employment for people with a disability (Kaye, Taewoon, & LaPlante, 2002).

#### **Purpose of the Study**

This study examined the extent to which select employer- (participant-) as well as job-applicant-related factors or variables influence hiring decisions. These factors or variables were identified through a review of the literature. They included the disability status of the job applicant, employer attitudes toward people having a disability, prior contact with people having a disability, and the demographic variables of age, gender, and race/ethnicity of the participants.

Disability status of the job applicant was operationalized in this study by the use of two videotaped segments of the applicant's job interview. One video portrayed the job applicant using a wheelchair for mobility while the second video presented the job applicant as unaided by any form of mobility device. Qualifications of the job applicant were presented through a functional resume and job interview segment. The demands of the job were reflected on a functional job description. The propensity to hire the job applicant was operationalized by the strength of rating given the applicant's overall application.

There were three focal areas that comprised this investigation. The first, and what could be viewed as the primary focal area of this study, examined whether the selected variables of disability status of the job applicant, the attitudes of the participant toward people with a disability, and the extent of the participant's prior contact with people with a disability influence the rating for employment given the job applicant for employment by the participant. The second focal area examined the moderating effects of both attitudes toward people with disability and prior contact with people with disability on the association between the disability status of the job applicant and the job applicant's rating for employment. The third focal area examined the association between disability status and attitudes toward people with disability, and examined the potential mediating effect of attitudes between disability status and the job applicant's rating for employment.

## **Principle Findings and Conclusions**

### **Focus 1**

The results of bivariate and multivariate analysis with the dependent variable being the strength of rating given or the propensity for hiring the job applicant after completing the application and job interview process were not statistically significant. Although these findings were not of statistical significance, they are viewed as having practical significance to the field of vocational rehabilitation. It is an important observation that a qualified job applicant presented using a wheelchair was rated equally as favorable as when that same applicant presented without a noticeable disability. However, it is also important

to recognize the findings of this investigation are contradictory to current disability-related employment data. That data clearly reflects that people with a disability as a whole are disproportionately unemployed compared to those without disabilities. Therefore, there are several factors that should be given consideration when examining the findings of the present study.

The findings of this investigation may be attributed to the research design. The job applicants in this study were presented as equal in *employability* by design, and the findings of this investigation would suggest that they had equal chances of *placeability* as defined by Weed and Field (1994). In general terms, employability is more reflective of the knowledge, skills, and abilities an individual may present to a given employment opportunity; while placeability is more reflective of the probability of an applicant being offered employment for a position for which they are fully qualified (Weed & Field).

A recent study by Gilbride et al. (2003) noted the importance of *job match*. The findings from their investigation of employers identified as being open to hiring people with a disability noted four focal areas or characteristics comprising the *job match* characteristic that were a part of the employers' decision making process when considering a job applicant with a disability. These included: (1) focusing on the capabilities of the applicant and effectively matching the applicant with the job requirements, (2) obtaining input directly from the applicant concerning their capabilities of performing the duties required of the job in question while including the applicant in all discussions concerning reasonable accommodations, (3) focusing on the essential functions of the job in question as opposed to giving great concern to marginal functions, and (4) what was identified as "internships," or what might be considered trial work periods, were sometimes offered that often lead to employment.

Given that in the current investigation the very same job applicant--and one that was clearly qualified to perform the essential functions of the job in question--was presented to both experimental groups, the participants were able to focus on the capabilities of the applicant while minimizing any concerns the use of a wheelchair may impose. That is to say that they appeared to focus on

the applicant's ability to perform the essential functions of the job in question and did not seem to focus on any physical limitations that did not pose a threat to satisfactory job performance.

One of the theoretical foundations of this study lends further support to the job match concept and may offer another explanation for the findings of this investigation. The Theory of Work Adjustment postulates that for there to be increased probability of successful employment, there needs to be *correspondence* between what an individual seeks to achieve or maintain in a work environment and that which the work environment (or employer) demands or needs (Dawis et al., 1964; Dawis et al., 1968; Lofquist & Dawis, 1969, 1984, 1991). Correspondence is achieved when the work environment is meeting an individual's needs or matches their work personality and the individual is meeting the demands or needs of the work environment.

As previously noted, both the disabled and non-disabled job applicant in this investigation presented with identical resumes, and their job interview segments were in fact the same video production. The only difference between the two video portrayals of the job applicants was their disability status, portrayed by an approximate 5-second segment at the beginning of the job interview during which one applicant presented in a wheelchair, and the other presented without any noticeable disability. While it cannot be said from this investigation that the participants' intent was to offer either job applicant employment, the results suggest that the applicants were viewed equally for the position in question. Had the applicants been rated differently, this might have suggested that the participants perceived a difference in the ability of the disabled and non-disabled applicants to meet the employer's needs. The results of this investigation would suggest that there was correspondence between the needs of the applicant and needs of the employer as presented in this study.

The findings from this investigation are based on one disability type, a mobility impairment requiring the use of a wheelchair. Therefore, these findings cannot be generalized to all disability types. It is interesting that wheelchair users have been identified as having one of the lowest levels of employment for people

with a disability (Kaye, Taewoon, et al., 2002). Yet, in the present study the applicant in the wheelchair was equally as likely to be offered the position as the applicant without a noticeable disability. With the exception of showing the applicant in a wheelchair navigating through doors to greet the interviewer, the video did not show the applicant's ability to navigate through the workplace nor did it portray the applicant with any impairment that would affect activities of daily living. It would be interesting to note how the findings of the study would have differed had the applicant presented with a disability that resulted in more limited mobility.

The issue of social desirability should not be minimized when considering the findings of this study. There is a tendency for individuals responding to a questionnaire, especially those having questions addressing issues such as attitudes and behavioral intent, to present what is generally viewed to be the socially desirable response. The phenomenon is well documented in the literature (Edwards, 1957; Feinberg, 1967; Marini, 1992). As aptly noted by Hernandez et al. (2000), the existence of a measured favorable attitude or the expressed willingness to hire a job applicant with a disability is more reflective of global attitudes and does not necessarily reflect the true intent or behavior of the potential employer. Wilgosh and Skaret (1987) also observed evidence that there is a marked discrepancy between what employers are willing to express about a potential job applicant and their actual hiring decision.

There have been at least two previous studies that adopted the use of video to portray the disability status of a job applicant. Christman and Slaten (1991) used video to present three job applicants, two with impaired mobility and one without a visible disability. They found that persons who presented with disabilities tended to be rated higher for hiring than a person without a disability. Given the positive ratings reflected on measures of attitudes toward disabled people coupled with the ratings reflected on a scale of employment characteristics, they surmised that the employers comprising the study were "positively oriented toward people with a disability" (p. 467).

Marchioro and Bartels (1994) portrayed through video two equally qualified job interviewees. One interviewee was portrayed with a disability (wheelchair user) and the other interviewee was without a visible disability. Results indicated the interviewers' measured attitudes toward people with a disability (positive or negative) and the interviewee's *disability condition* (non disabled or disabled) had no influence on the interviewer's perception of the interviewee's job competence or the number of offers for employment extended to the interviewee.

Christman and Slaten (1991) and Marchioro and Bartels (1994) suggested that one explanation might be the participants in their investigations were merely presenting socially desirable responses. Christman and Slaten also noted, given that the participants in their study were actual employers, socially acceptable responses were given for fear of litigation if they rejected a person with a disability. Hernandez et al. (2000) surmised that the use of a videotaped interview is more representative of an actual job interview than if the interview were presented as a written scenario. It was their view that the more realistic portrayal through video may in some way account for the difference in findings from previous research.

While each of the explanations reflected above could conceivably have some application to the present study, another explanation would be that employers are in fact willing to offer employment to people having a disability when they clearly exhibit the knowledge, skills, and abilities inherent in the job for which they have applied. This view is bolstered even more when the job applicant presents with an extended successful work history directly related to the job for which they are applying.

## **Focus 2**

The second focal area of the present study addressed whether attitudes toward disabled people and/or prior contact with people viewed as having a disability moderate the association between job applicant disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant for employment. Both the main effect

model and the two interaction models were tested. None of the three models yielded significant results.

These findings suggest there is no association between the job applicant's disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant by the participant. The findings further suggest that neither measured attitudes toward people with disability nor the extent of prior contact with disability moderate the association between disability status and the strength of rating given the job applicant.

In regards to attitudes toward people with a disability, there have been numerous studies that have investigated the relationship between attitudes towards people with a disability and employment. However, there is a marked absence of research that has examined the moderating effect of attitudes on the association between the disability status of the applicant and the hiring decision of the employer. Marchioro and Bartels (1994) found that even when there existed a marked difference in attitudes toward people with a disability (positive versus negative), there was no significant difference between groups in the competence rating given a job applicant having a physical disability and the rating given a job applicant presenting without a disability.

In regard to the extent of prior contact with people having a disability, this factor has often been incorporated into studies investigating or examining the various aspects or perceptions of disability. Levy et al. (1993) surveyed managers from companies in the state of New York that were identified as being responsible for making hiring decisions. Their investigation revealed that those managers having had favorable prior contact with persons with a disability had more favorable attitudes toward people with a disability. Their findings were consistent with those of earlier studies conducted by Bluhm (1977), Gruenhagen (1982), and Yuker and Hurley (1987). Unfortunately, the relative absence of standardized instruments that offer valid and reliable measures of this construct make it virtually impossible to compare the findings between studies. As in the present study, most "prior contact" measures have been tailored by the researcher conducting the investigation.

### **Focus 3**

The third focal area of this investigation was designed to examine two primary areas. The first examined if there was an association between the job applicant's disability status and the participant's attitudes toward people having a disability. The second examined if the participant's attitudes toward people with a disability were influenced by the disability status of the job applicant and, in turn, examined if the strength of the job applicant rating was influenced by the participant's attitudes.

Three models were posed. Model 1--the main effect model--examined if there was an association between the job applicants' disability status, as portrayed in one of the two videotape segments of the applicant's job interview, and the strength of rating given the job applicant. The results of this analysis were not statistically significant, indicating there was no association between the job applicant's disability status as portrayed in the video and the strength of rating given the job applicant.

Model 2--the mediating effect model--examined whether the variable "attitudes toward disabled people", as measured by the ATDP (Yuker et al., 1960), was a mediator to any association between the disability status of the job applicant and the strength of rating given the applicant. The result of this analysis was not statistically significant indicating that the variable "attitudes toward people with disability" is not a mediator of any association between the disability status of the applicant and the strength of the rating given the job applicant. As has been previously noted, Christmas and Slaten (1991) suggested that attitudes toward people with a disability is a mediator between disability status and hiring decisions of employers, yet they did not appear to test this mediating effect.

Model 3 introduced attitudes toward disabled people as the dependent variable. This was done because the research design adopted for this investigation required the measure of attitudes toward disabled people to occur after the participant had examined the job requirements, the applicant's qualifications, viewed one of the two video representations of the job applicant's interview and disability status, and rated the applicant for employment. The

association between the job applicant's disability status and the participant's attitude toward people with a disability (ATDP score) were tested. Results from this initial analysis revealed that the entire set of variables explained a significant amount of the variation in the dependent variable ATDP ( $R^2 = 0.1459$ ,  $p = 0.0092$ ). The individual variables that explained a significant portion of the variance in ATDP were disability status ( $\beta = 7.2895$ ,  $p = 0.0011$ ) and being Hispanic ( $\beta = 7.9547$ ,  $p = 0.0241$ ). Those participants who saw the video of the job applicant in a wheelchair were significantly more likely to have a more favorable attitude toward people with a disability than those who saw the video of the job applicant not in a wheelchair, controlling for prior contact, gender, age, and race/ethnicity. Hispanics were significantly more likely than whites to have a more favorable attitude toward people with a disability, controlling for disability status, prior contact with people with a disability, gender, and age.

In sum, the third focal area of the present study addressed attitudes toward people with a disability as both a dependent variable and as a mediating variable between disability status and the strength of rating given the applicant for employment. Results of the bivariate as well as multivariate analysis revealed that attitudes toward people with a disability were significantly related to disability status, with attitudes being more favorable among those who saw the video of the job applicant in a wheelchair than those who saw the non-disabled job applicant. However, attitudes were not associated with the applicant rating, and attitudes did not appear to mediate any association between disability status and job applicant rating.

This investigation was not designed to measure change in attitudes but rather the difference in attitudes between two experimental groups. Without a measure of attitudes prior to introducing the participants in this study to the qualified job applicant, it is impossible to determine if their introduction to a qualified job applicant having a disability had a positive impact on measured attitudes toward people with a disability. Yet it is interesting that those participants in this study that viewed a qualified job applicant with a disability had significantly higher global attitudes than those participants that viewed a qualified

job applicant without a disability. This finding may certainly drive future research interests. In addition, it may also serve as evidence supporting a fundamental basis for promoting vocational rehabilitation program strategies that recognize the importance of creating employer awareness of the capabilities of people with a disability while minimizing barriers.

### **Implications**

There are several important implications that can be drawn from the present study. The first implication derived from this study comes both from the preliminary review of disability-related employment data as well as from the findings of the various statistical analyses that comprised this investigation. In this investigation a qualified job applicant who used a wheelchair was viewed as equally qualified for a desired employment opportunity as an equally qualified job applicant not having a visible disability. Yet employment-related research would suggest people that use a wheelchair have among the lowest employment participation rates of all disabilities. This tends to highlight the importance of collecting disability employment related data with more functionally defined definitions as opposed to generalized and vague definitions that characterize most of our current sources of disability data.

There is significant disagreement and varying opinions as to the appropriate methodology that should be adopted for collecting disability-related employment data. Yet, there is general agreement in recognizing that there are significant gaps in labor market participation rates and earnings for people with a disability when compared to people not reporting a disability. One of the most glaring problems with current disability data is the failure to account for those individuals with disabilities that have given up on finding suitable gainful employment, discontinued their job search, and are no longer considered a labor market participant.

The findings from the present study support the premise that when people having a disability are able to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to successfully perform in a given occupation or job setting, they are more likely to be viewed favorably by a potential employer. This view is bolstered

even more if the job applicant having a disability presents as having an extended successful work history as portrayed in this investigation.

The research of Gilbride et al. (2003) lends support to the view that one of the characteristics of employers open to hiring individuals having a disability is the fit of the applicant to the job in question or what they identified as the *job match* characteristic. The current findings support the view of vocational rehabilitation, particularly vocational evaluation and job placement efforts, focusing on what a person with a disability can do rather than placing too much emphasis on what a person with a disability cannot do. After all, it is one's capabilities that must be applied in the competitive labor market to succeed. When developing and implementing job placement plans with consumers, it is imperative rehabilitation service providers demand assessment services that place an emphasis on identifying consumer capabilities and not focus solely on consumer limitations or needs.

The findings of Gilbride et al. (2003) may be utilized as a basis for developing a model for assessing the vocational capabilities of a person with a disability. Vocational evaluations and employment-related services for people with a disability in general should be guided by five primary questions: (1) what are the capabilities of the consumer, (2) with an emphasis placed on the essential functions required for success in a job, what jobs in the community align with the consumer's capabilities and thus present as viable vocational options, (3) what are the consumer's views or concerns in regards to the jobs determined to be viable vocational options, (4) has the consumer been included in all discussions and have all consumer concerns been addressed in regard to reasonable accommodations that may enhance the likelihood of success in a given work environment, and, (5) have employers willing to offer "internships" or "trial work periods" been identified in the community?

Findings of this study also have implications for the promotion of timely and accurate vocational assessments for people with a disability. This is particularly true for individuals nearing working age and for those forced by their disability to identify new career opportunities. The overall work personality of the

consumer must be given consideration in rehabilitation planning as well as the needs of the employer. As has been noted, the vocational evaluation process should focus on identifying the overall strengths of the individual as well as assist the individual in identifying occupations that align with their overall vocational preferences or work personality. The same effort should be placed in identifying specific employer needs, the essential factors inherent in the job in question, and the needs of the labor market in general that surrounds the consumer being served. The integration of valid and reliable vocational information into the overall rehabilitation plan will help establish a sound foundation upon which employment related services can be based.

Findings from this investigation suggest viewing a qualified job applicant with a disability has a positive impact or effect upon expressed attitudes toward disabled people. Furthermore, the results of this study suggest advocates for persons with disabilities should promote interventions that expose employers to qualified job applicants with a disability. While it is important to educate a potential employer of any tax related credits that may be earned as a result of their hiring a person with a disability, the real savings or earnings most employers are concerned with are those that come from the production of a qualified and efficient worker. That is, the rehabilitation placement specialist should place emphasis on what the worker is capable of doing for the employer as opposed to focusing on incentives to the employer that are not directly related to the production capabilities of the qualified applicant.

The disability portrayed by the applicant in the current study was one of an individual having impaired mobility. Yet, the strength of rating given her overall presentation for a mid-management/professional level job opening was equal to that given to her when presenting without a disability. Yellin and Trupin (2000) surmised that the high employment growth areas such as those found within the professional services and the wholesale/retail trade areas could afford people with a disability many viable avenues to suitable gainful employment. It should be noted that many occupations within these arenas are sedentary in nature thus require minimal physical strength to successfully perform. The findings of the

present study lends further support for targeting jobs within this occupational arena for those with significant mobility impairments as long as it can be clearly demonstrated through vocational evaluation and/or a successful work history that the applicant retains the knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the needs of the employer.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of the present study pertains to the extent the findings derived from this investigation can be generalized to other populations. The participants in this study were drawn from a sample of convenience and comprised of undergraduate students. As such they were not representative of actual employers, had minimal work experience, and those having work experience would not have likely been employed in positions that require making hiring decisions.

Another factor that could be viewed as a limitation of this investigation is the sample size. A total of 124 undergraduate business majors participated in this investigation. However, power analysis revealed that the sample size was adequate to detect the desired effect size.

Another limitation concerns the informed consent procedure stipulated by the university which required disclosure of the nature of this investigation to the participants prior to collecting data. This was viewed as possibly introducing bias and fostering the possibility of participants rendering socially acceptable responses in both the job applicant rating as well as the subsequent measure of attitudes toward people with disability.

The use of the Attitude Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP) Form - O (Yuker, Block, & Campbell, 1960) could also be viewed as a limitation of this study. The ATDP provides a summated measure of global attitude. One of the limitations of using such measures is the propensity of respondents falsifying the reporting of information. They may endorse only those statements that they feel present themselves in a socially acceptable way (Antonak & Livneh, 1988). Edwards (1957) referred to this tendency as the social desirability variable in personality or the social desirability response style. The concept of social

desirability also has application to the Job Applicant Rating form adopted for this study.

The research design may also have limited this study since it called for the measurement of the participants' attitudes toward disabled people to occur *after* the participants had the opportunity to observe the job applicant's disability status. Therefore, it is unknown whether the attitude scores obtained in this study accurately reflect or are representative of inherent attitudes toward people with a disability held by the participants prior to being introduced to the qualified job applicant.

Lastly, this study looked at only one form of disability, impaired mobility operationalized by the use of a wheelchair. Prior research indicates the difficulty of employer hiring decisions when considering a job applicant with a disability for employment varies depending on the type or nature of their disability (Gilbride et al., 2000). Therefore, results of this investigation cannot be generalized to all disabilities nor to all disabilities that have been classified as impaired mobility.

### **Future Research**

There are a number of factors stemming from the present study that should be given careful consideration when designing future research focused on assessing the employability and placeability of people having a disability.

The participants used in this study represented a sample of undergraduate business students. Future research may seek to draw upon a more representative sample of actual employers. Participants may be full-time managers enrolled in distant learning programs in a university business school or may be drawn from an established employer base such as a Chamber of Commerce or manufacturers' directory. It is important that ready avenues to employers be cultivated and shared among researchers.

In some cases deception may be a justifiable option that may be adopted in future research to limit participants' knowledge of the true purpose or nature of the investigation. In future investigations it may be possible to convince the Institutional Review Board to allow nondisclosure of the nature of the investigation, as doing so would present no risk to study participants and may

limit the bias introduced. Another option where the nature of the investigation may not need to be revealed is when collecting data through on-line surveys. In most instances in online research, informed consent is implied and the actual signing of a formal informed consent document that would have disclosed the study purpose is not necessary.

Consideration should also be given as to whether the findings of this investigation would have been different if the wheelchair user had been presented differently. One scenario would be the presentation of a qualified job applicant having only recently become a wheelchair user yet maintaining the skills to continue in a chosen career path. The career of an accountant or attorney may exemplify such an individual. Yet another scenario would be the presentation of a job applicant using a wheelchair or having any other defined disability with a severity that forces them to make a significant career change due to the onset of the disability. In the latter instance, there may be more unknowns that may concern a potential employer. For example, even when a wheelchair user presents favorably to a potential employer, the lack of a proven work history since the onset of the disability may impede access to the labor market. The required duties of a truck driver, heavy equipment operator, nurse, and chef exemplify careers that may be ended due to significant restrictions in mobility and/or overall physical functioning due to the onset of a disability. Future research should expand on disability types represented by qualified job applicants. In addition, consideration may also be given to gender differences.

Future research efforts should also consider the impact of catastrophic injury. Often such injury results in severe disfigurement. Also, such injuries often result in physical liabilities that may impede access to occupations for which an applicant may otherwise be qualified. Had the disabled applicant been presented with a more serious disability—one which impacted more on functional capabilities—there may have been a difference in the job applicant rating given the two applicants due to a perception that the disability might affect the ability of the applicant to meet the employer's needs.

It is important to note that this study portrayed job applicants who were clearly qualified for the job for which they were applying. Consideration was not given to employer response to applicants that may have a more limited or even non-existent work history. Future research may portray one or more applicants with a disability having limited work experience or having experienced a forced change in a career path due to the onset of an acquired disability.

Future research in regards to the impact prior contact with disability has on employer decision making should be conducted. Research designs may consider incorporating scenarios that address the impact of both negative as well as positive prior contact. Additionally, the development of a standardized measure of prior contact is needed in order to accurately compare the findings from future investigations.

Given the design of this study, it is not clear whether attitudes toward people with disability actually changed in response to viewing a qualified applicant with a disability. However, there was a significant difference in ATDP scores between the two groups examined in this investigation. Future research should incorporate a research design that permits examining the impact positive as well as negative exposure to people with a disability have upon employer attitudes and their perceptions in general of people with a disability.

Finally, researchers in the field of vocational rehabilitation may want to look more closely at research in other disciplines that have addressed employment issues affecting people with disabilities. This would include, but not be limited to, those areas directly related to business and industrial management.

### **Summary**

There are two theoretical foundations that have application in the present study--the first, the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) as postulated by Dawis, England, and Lofquist (1964) and the second, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as postulated by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). In very general terms, the TWA addresses the importance of fit between the needs of a worker and the needs of the work environment or employer. The TRA addresses the concept of attitudes and behavioral intent. This has application in the present study from the

standpoint that what may be recorded as a global attitude or stated intention may be very different from the actual behavior that is implemented. More pointedly, employers may express a willingness to hire a person with a disability yet in reality not offer employment to a job applicant having a disability.

The findings of this study suggest that when a job applicant having a mobility impairment is viewed as having the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to successfully perform the essential functions of a given job, the strength of rating or hiring recommendation submitted by a participant of that applicant for employment will be equal to that given a non-disabled job applicant having the same qualifications. While the use of a sample of undergraduate business students in this study warrants caution in generalizing this finding to employers, it does suggest the importance of adopting procedures in vocational rehabilitation services delivery that place great emphasis on identifying and matching the capabilities of those we serve with those employers needing workers with similar identified capabilities.

In addition, the results of this study suggest that positive contact or experiences with people having a disability may actually result in more positive attitudes toward people with a disability. The implication is that employers may be more likely to hire a person with a disability if they are exposed to qualified job applicants, although this conjecture was not supported by the findings of this study.

The present study also highlights the need for a better means of collecting and compiling disability-related employment data. Identification of occupations as well as employers that offer suitable opportunities for employment to people with a disability is needed. It is imperative researchers have access to at least one reliable source of unbiased employment data that is reflective of important disability-related information. Until such a mechanism is in place, there will continue to be significantly varying and conflicting opinions in regards to the impact of disability on employment-related factors such as labor market participation and earnings.

APPENDIX A  
JOB DESCRIPTION

## **Assistant Manager of Purchasing**

### Job Description

Performs office management duties as directed by the department manager including the planning, supervision, and coordination of workers involved in the procurement of goods and services.

#### **Tasks include:**

Computes figures, such as balances, totals, and commissions.

Analyzes financial activities of establishment or department and assists in planning budget.

Plans, prepares, and revises work schedules and duty assignments according to budget allotments, customer needs, problems, work-loads, and statistical forecasts.

Compiles reports and information required by management or governmental agencies.

Consults with supervisor and other personnel to resolve problems, such as equipment performance, output quality, and work schedules.

Evaluates subordinate job performance and conformance to regulations, and recommends appropriate personnel action.

Examines procedures and recommends changes to save time, labor, and other costs and to improve quality control and operating efficiency.

Maintains records of such matters as inventory, personnel, orders, supplies, and machine maintenance.

Reviews records and reports pertaining to such activities as production, operation, pay roll, customer accounts, and shipping.

**Knowledge required:**

Knowledge of administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing systems, filing and records management systems, stenography and transcription, forms design principles, and other office procedures and terminology

Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar

Job Details

<b>Job Location:</b>	Tallahassee, FL
<b>Starting Salary:</b>	\$ 35,000.00/year
<b>Hours/Week:</b>	40
<b>Minimum Education:</b>	Associates
<b>Degree or Training:</b>	Business support services
<b>Licenses, Certificates, or Registrations:</b>	Not Provided
<b>Years of Experience:</b>	2
<b>Position Start Date:</b>	ASAP
<b>Number of Positions:</b>	1
<b>Benefits Include:</b>	401k, Dental Insurance, Health Insurance, Holidays, Sick Leave, Vacation

APPENDIX B

RESUME

**Jen A. Bacon**  
**123 Downtown Street**  
**Tallahassee, FL 32312**  
**(987) 654 - 3210**

**Education**

Tallahassee Community College *Tallahassee, FL*  
Associates of Arts Degree: December 1997

**Work Experience**

Present      Professional Consulting Associates, Inc.  
*Tallahassee, FL*  
Office Manager

Manage office support for 5 company administrators which includes clerical support workers. Schedule and/or delegate the scheduling of appointments. Coordinate the implementation, organization, and scheduling of professional conferences. Coordinate the arrangement of all company related travel. Supervise customer service, purchasing, shipping, and payroll departments. Conduct periodic audits of all departmental computations as well as weekly, monthly, and annual reports as required.

1997 - 98      Professional Consulting Associates, Inc.  
*Tallahassee, FL*  
Purchasing Department Manager

Manage department of 3 purchasing agents. Reported directly to Office Manager. Served as liaison with customers as well as suppliers. Also was responsible for inventory control and procurement.

1994 – 97      Professional Consulting Associates, Inc.  
*Tallahassee, FL*  
Office Clerk (Full-time)

1992 - 94      Professional Consulting Associates, Inc.  
*Tallahassee, FL*  
Office Clerk (Part-time)

**Computer Skills:** Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, Power Point, Quicken Quickbooks

APPENDIX C

JOB APPLICANT EMPLOYMENT RATING FORM

## JOB APPLICANT EMPLOYMENT RATING FORM

Please provide your recommendation as to the strength of the applicant's candidacy for employment by circling one number along the scale provided below.

You are to base your recommendation solely upon the knowledge you have gleaned from your review of the:

- required knowledge, skills, and abilities as presented within the job description
- applicant's resume
- applicants job interview

**WEAK**  
**JOB APPLICANT**

**STRONG**  
**JOB APPLICANT**

(Circle only one)

- 3	- 2	- 1	+ 1	+ 2	+ 3
Don't Hire	Very weak applicant,	Poor applicant,	Good applicant,	Very strong applicant,	Must Hire
Strongly recommend not hiring this applicant	Overall a very weak applicant, questionable ability for job	Overall poor applicant, limited ability for job	Overall good applicant for job in question	Overall very strong applicant for job in question	Strongly recommend hiring this applicant

APPENDIX D

ATTITUDES TOWARD DISABLED PERSONS SCALE  
Form - O

**ATTITUDE TOWARD DISABLED PERSONS SCALE**  
**Form – O**

Directions: Using the machine scoreable answer sheet provided, please rate these twenty statements by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with each using the following scale:

- |     |    |                        |
|-----|----|------------------------|
| A = | -3 | I disagree very much   |
| B = | -2 | I disagree pretty much |
| C = | -1 | I disagree a little    |
| D = | +1 | I agree a little       |
| E = | +2 | I agree pretty much    |
| F = | +3 | I agree very much      |

1. Parents of disabled children should be less strict than other parents.
2. Physically disabled persons are just as intelligent as non-disabled ones.
3. Disabled people are usually easier to get along with than other people.
4. Most disabled people feel sorry for themselves.
5. Disabled people are the same as anyone else.
6. There should be special schools for disabled children.
7. It would be best for disabled persons to live and work in special communities.
8. It is up to the government to take care of disabled persons.
9. Most disabled people worry a great deal.
10. Disabled people should not be expected to meet the same standards as non-disabled people.
11. Disabled people are as happy as non-disabled people.

12. Severely disabled people are not harder to get along with than those with minor disabilities.
13. It is almost impossible for a disabled person to lead a normal life.
14. You should not expect too much from disabled people.
15. Disabled people tend to keep to themselves much of the time.
16. Disabled people are more easily upset than non-disabled people.
17. Disabled persons cannot have a normal social life.
18. Most disabled people feel that they are not as good as other people.
19. You have to be careful what you say when you are with disabled people.
20. Disabled people are often grouchy.

APPENDIX E  
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM

Ref. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Gender                      Female                      Male

Ethnicity  
\_\_\_\_\_

Classification  
In College:      Undergraduate                      Graduate

### Prior Contact with Disability Scale

Please circle the number below that corresponds to the descriptor best describing the extent of your prior contact with a person or people having a disability.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Almost no contact with a person or people having a disability.	Occasional contact with a person or people having a disability.	Frequent contact with a person or people having a disability.	Almost daily or daily contact with a person having a disability.
Example:  Never or less than 1 time per month on average.	Example:  At least 1 time per month but not every week.	Example:  At least 1 time per week but not daily.	Example:  Contact with a coworker or spouse.

APPENDIX F  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I freely and voluntarily and without element of force or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled “A Comparative Analysis of Business Majors’ Attitudes Toward Disability, Job Applicant Disability Status, and the Placeability of Persons with Disabilities.”

This research is being conducted by Felix Reginald Albritton, M.Ed., a doctoral candidate in the College of Education, at Florida State University. I understand the purpose of his research project is to better understand the relationship between business majors’ attitudes toward disability, a job applicant’s disability status, and the placeability of persons with disabilities.

I understand I was asked to complete a demographic questionnaire; review a functional job description; review a job applicant’s functional resume; view a videotaped segment of a job applicant’s interview; rate a job applicant’s presentation for employment; and respond to a 20 item survey of my beliefs about people with a disability. I understand the total amount of time commitment as a participant in this study was approximately 40 minutes.

I understand my participation is totally voluntary and I may stop participation at anytime. All my answers to the questions was kept confidential to the extent required by law and identified by a subject code number. My name will not appear on any of the results. No individual responses was reported. Only group findings was reported. Data collected was kept by the researcher in a secured/locked file cabinet in his office located at 1300 Executive Center Drive, Suite 117, Tallahassee, Florida. Data was archived for no longer than five years after collection and shredded at time of disposal.

I understand there is little risk involved if I agree to participate in this study. I might experience anxiety when thinking about people with a disability. The researcher was available to talk with me about any emotional discomfort I may experience while participating.

I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning the study. Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may contact Felix Reginald Albritton, M.Ed. and/or his Major Professor, Deborah J. Ebener, Ph.D. through the College of Education at Florida State University [850.644.1789] for answers to additional questions that may arise about this research or my rights. In addition, I understand I may contact the Office of Research, Human Subjects Committee at Florida State University [850.644.8673] for answers to questions concerning their approval of this research project. Group results from this study was sent to me upon my request.

I have read and understand this consent form.

---

(Subject)

(Date)

APPENDIX G  
IRB APPROVAL



Office of the Vice President For Research  
Human Subjects Committee  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763  
(850) 644-8633- FAX (850) 644-4392

### REAPPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 8/26/2004

To:  
**Felix Albritton**  
1580 Beech Road  
Monticello, FL 32344

Dept.: Human Services and Studies

From: John Tomkowiak, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Tomkowiak, M.D.".

Re: **Reapproval of Use of Human subjects in Research:  
A Comparative Analysis Of Business Majors Attitudes Toward Disability, Job Applicant  
Disability Status, and the Placeability Of persons with Disabilities**

Your request to continue the research project listed above involving human subjects has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee. If your project has not been completed by 7/28/2005 please request renewed approval.

You are reminded that a change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must report to the Chair promptly, and in writing, any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chairman of your department and/or your major professor are reminded of their responsibility for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in their department. They are advised to review the protocols of such investigations as often as necessary to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations

Cc: Deborah Ebener  
HSC No. 2004.491-R

APPENDIX H  
LETTER FROM INVESTIGATOR

**Felix R. Albritton  
1580 Beech Road  
Monticello, FL 32344**

Dear Business Faculty:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Rehabilitation Counseling program at Florida State University. To complete my work on my dissertation I need your help in collecting data. Thank you in advance for considering this research to be conducted in your Fall 2004 undergraduate and graduate classes.

I have worked for over 25 years in the field of vocational rehabilitation. My area of interest and expertise has been in the area of vocational evaluation and rehabilitation counseling which encompasses addressing employment issues that impact upon people with a disability. During my career I have developed a strong appreciation for and recognize the important role the business community plays in attaining successful rehabilitation outcomes. It is for this reason I am seeking access to students that I view as being most likely to become business leaders and in a decision making position in the business community.

The title of my proposed research is:

**A Comparative Analysis of Business Majors' Attitudes Toward Disability, Job Applicant Disability Status, and the Placeability of Persons with Disabilities**

The purpose of this study is to explore how business student's view of people with a disability and the impact a job applicant's disability status has upon the student's recommendation for employment of the job applicant. The participants was asked to provide basic demographic data, review a functional job description of an advertised job opening, review the resume of the job applicant, and view a videotaped 5-minute segment of the interview of the job applicant. However, the participants in the study will not be made aware that some of them will have viewed a video showing the job applicant utilizing a wheelchair while other participant's will not see the job applicant using a wheelchair. After providing a rating of the job applicant's application for employment, the participants was asked to complete a 20-item questionnaire that addresses attitudes toward disability.

I would be most grateful if you would allocate time at the end of at least two of your Fall 2004 class periods for me to invite students from the College of Business to participate in this study. The introduction to the study and the collection of data will take 30 minutes or less to complete.

Those students who choose to participate in the study was asked to sign a consent form that describes any risks inherent in the study. Since anonymity was assured as participants are requested **NOT** to provide names on the on any of the materials they complete and the information provided is in more of a straightforward survey-type format, there are no risks involved in this study.

A summary of the results of the study should be available by January 2005. A copy of the results was sent to each faculty member having given me access to one or more of their classes.

If you should have any questions about this study, please contact me at the above address, by e-mail [RAlbritton@aol.com](mailto:RAlbritton@aol.com), or by telephone at (850) 894-0280. You may also contact my major professor Dr. Deborah Ebener at Florida State University by telephone at (850) 644-1789.

Again, thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Felix Albritton

APPENDIX I

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS DESCRIBING STUDY

Dear Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate at Florida State University interested in identifying various factors that contribute to the hiring decisions made by business managers.

You were selected for this study because you are a business major. As such, your current/future career in the business world will likely place you in a position to make hiring decisions as part of your management duties. It is very important to identify those factors upon which employers place the most weight when reviewing the qualifications of a job applicant.

The job description as well as the job applicant's demographic information and resume utilized in this study have been designed so you can review them quickly. You will also review a brief segment of the applicant's job interview.

Once you have had an opportunity to consider the requirements of the job as well as the job applicant's overall qualifications for that position, you should complete the enclosed job applicant rating form and questionnaire. It is estimated the total time to review and complete all the materials comprising this study will take no more than 30 minutes.

You can be assured that all of the information you provide was held in strict confidence to the extent allowed by law. No individual was identified and the responses you provide was combined with those of many others and was used only for statistical analysis.

If you should have any questions concerning this study, I can be contacted at (850) 894-0280 or you may contact the Florida State University, Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research Involving Human Subjects at (850) 644-8673. Written inquiries to the IRB may be sent to:

Florida State University  
Institutional Review Board  
2035 E. Paul Dirac Drive, Box 15  
100 Sliger Bldg., Innovation Park  
Tallahassee, Florida 32310

I sincerely appreciate your contribution in time and your opinions that make this study possible. Thank you for your help.

Felix Albritton

APPENDIX J  
VIDEO PRODUCTION TRANSCRIPT

## Video Production

### Note to producer:

You are being asked to provide two videotaped productions of a job interview. The only difference in the two productions was at the very beginning of the video where the job applicant is seen being greeted by the interviewer.

One greeting production records the job applicant *using a wheelchair* for mobility when greeted by the interviewer.

The second greeting production records the job applicant *walking* when greeted by the interviewer.

Each of the videotaped greeting segments should be spliced separately at the beginning of the single interview production i.e. one production has the applicant in a wheelchair when greeted -- the second production has the applicant walking when greeted.

A transcript of the greeting as well as the job interview follows. It is important that the camera angle used for taping the actual job interview segment of this production is one that does not make it possible to distinguish whether the job applicant is sitting in a chair or wheelchair during the job interview. This angle should be maintained throughout the job interview as well as the closing of the interview.

### Video Transcript

#### Greeting Segment

Interviewer: Hi, you must be Jen Bacon?

Applicant: Yes.

Interviewer: I'm Joyce Nickelson.

Applicant: Nice to meet you.

Interviewer: Nice to meet you.

## Job Interview Segment

Interviewer: Jen, I know you've had a chance to chat with some of my colleagues here, because I've been getting some really good reports back.

Applicant: Oh, good.

Interviewer: I wish I had a lot of time to spend with you; I don't, but I'd like to take advantage of the time we do have. Why don't you start out by telling me something about yourself.

Applicant: Well, I went back to school and back to work after having my children--got them started in school, and then I started back to work. Um, I've been working in my present job for over 10 years now, and I really enjoy that position. I've been working as the office manager there. And now I'm just looking for another position so I can start trying to spread my wings a little bit.

Interviewer: So what do you do in your present job?

Applicant: Well, as I said I'm the office manager there. I have about 5 people that I report to. I schedule a lot of their appointments. We have conferences, and I schedule those conferences and arrange for the travel for people to come to those conferences. I keep track of the budget. I would say that I have some sort-of secretarial duties, but not very much because I have a secretary that works for me, so I manage her. So she handles most of the letter writing and that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Okay. So, I understand you're interested in some growth opportunities. How did you come to hear about us?

Applicant: Well, I did a search on line. I was doing a job search, and your name popped up, and I did see where your company is growing.

Interviewer: Yes, we got a couple of new contracts recently, and we are going to be hiring up for those. Yeah, our company prides itself on the quality of our work that we do for our customers. To do that, we rely on a lot of teamwork. So, we're going to be hiring a bunch of people, but they're all going to have to be team players. Are you a team player?

Applicant: Well, yeah, I am a team player, and I'm glad to hear that your company values that. That's one of the things that I'm sort of regretting in leaving my current employer because we work so well together as a team. We're a small family-run business, and everybody just gets along together so well and everybody just chips in when we need to help each other. I'm certainly a team player and I enjoy working as part of a team.

Interviewer: (Nodding with approval) Mm-hmm. Well, let's see. I've been reviewing your credentials here--your resume, and it looks very strong; and I've been getting all of these good reports back. What are your weaknesses?

Applicant: (Smiling) Oh, um, well I'd have to say probably my biggest weakness is that I'm a perfectionist. I don't want to sound like I'm bragging about myself because you wouldn't think that being a perfectionist is a weakness, but it can be a weakness when you're under deadlines and trying to get a product out that's flawless. (Subtle giggle) Sometimes that can be a weakness for me, because I don't like to see products go out that aren't absolutely perfect.

Interviewer: (Nodding with approval) That's okay. Uh, to wrap up here, can you sort of summarize why you think we should hire you?

Applicant: Well, I think I have all of the skills that you're looking for. And for me, I think your company is growing. I think--I know that I'm looking for a position where I can grow personally and professionally, and so I just think we're a good match for each other.

Interviewer: (Nodding with approval) Mm-hmm. Okay, well you'll be hearing something from us in the next few days one way or another. And I appreciate you taking the time to come in and chat with us.

Applicant: Well thank you for your time.

Interviewer: Bye.

## REFERENCES

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Felix Reginald Albritton III was born on January 11, 1953, in Selma, Alabama. Known as "Reg" to his friends and family, he is the son of Mr. and Mrs. F. R. Albritton and grew up in nearby Camden. He attended public schools there and received a diploma from Wilcox County High School in 1971.

Reg attended Jacksonville State University in Alabama from 1971 until 1973 where he studied criminal justice. He transferred to Auburn University obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in rehabilitation services in 1976 and the Master of Education degree in rehabilitation services in 1980. While at Auburn, his studies focused on applying vocational evaluation and career counseling to people that are disadvantaged or have a disability. He was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree from Florida State University in 2005. There he majored in rehabilitation counseling with a specialty in Community Transitions for Persons with Disabilities.

Reg has over 25 years' experience in the field of vocational rehabilitation. He is a Certified Vocational Evaluator and a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. During his career he has been employed with the Alabama Department of Youth Services, Auburn University, Texas Tech University, Paul M. Deutsch and Associates, Nancy Sapp and Associates, Rebound, Florida State University, and Goodwill Industries. He has adjunct teaching experience at Thomas University and Florida State University.

Reg has given guest lectures in the vocational rehabilitation programs at Auburn University, Florida A & M University, Florida State University, Texas Tech University, and Thomas University. In addition, he has given presentations to members of professional organizations at national, state, and local conferences and workshops.

For the past 20 years Reg has worked extensively in private sector rehabilitation. His private practice has included workers' compensation case management, vocational evaluation services, the provision of comprehensive vocational rehabilitation assessments, and life care planning. He has been

recognized by the courts as an expert in matters related to employment and vocational rehabilitation and has rendered expert testimony on numerous occasions.

While Reg's educational and professional experiences in vocational rehabilitation have been numerous and broad, it is his worklife experiences outside his career in rehabilitation that he has often drawn upon as a vocational rehabilitation professional. He was fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in his parents' family businesses that included farming, a full-service gasoline station, and a gasoline distributorship. Over the years Reg has worked as a laborer in a warehouse, performed various jobs in residential and commercial construction, and worked as a daily newspaper carrier.