

Differences in Perceived Competence and Desired Social Distance between Those Who are and are Not Hard-of-Hearing



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Introduction

Stereotypes and Prejudices

- Stereotypes are traits perceived to be characteristic of a particular group that quickly come to mind; prejudices are negative attitudes towards a group (Stangor, 2016).
- Stereotypes and prejudices may lead individuals to make unfair judgements and actions towards a group of which they are not well-informed (see Stangor, 2016).
- ~56.7 million people in the US have disabilities, comprising a group universally agreed to be adversely affected by prejudice and at a disadvantage (United States Census Bureau, 2016).
- Disabled people are perceived by others as having attributes reducing their worth compared to others without disabilities (Goffman, 1963).
- Attitudes of employers towards disabled persons were examined, as well as the importance of work to disabled persons (Nota, Santilli, Ginevra, and Soresi, 2013).
 - It was found that people with psychological problems were rated the most negatively overall and that people with sensory disabilities were not rated the most negatively, but not rated the most positively overall.
 - This suggests some stereotype or prejudice associated with sensory disabilities (see Nota, Santilli, Ginevra, and Soresi, 2013).

Competence

- Competence is defined in the present study as one's capability of exerting control over their life, effectively coping with problems and making changes to their behavior and environment (American Psychological Association, 2018).
- There is a possibility of disabled people being perceived as lacking competence (see Coleman, et al., 2014).

Social distance

- Social distance is the degree of intimacy willing to be had between two individuals (Coleman et al., 2014).
- There is a possibility of disabled people facing greater social distance from their peers (see Coleman et al., 2014)

Saliency

- The hard-of-hearing condition is listed as a physical condition in most studies, however, it is most often cited as an invisible condition to people who are hard-of-hearing (Cuevas, Chen, Vang, & Saladin, 2019).
- The discrepancy could be due to the saliency of the condition.
- People tend to adjust their behavior more quickly to a person with a more salient physical disability since their awareness of the disability is higher.

Methodology

Participants

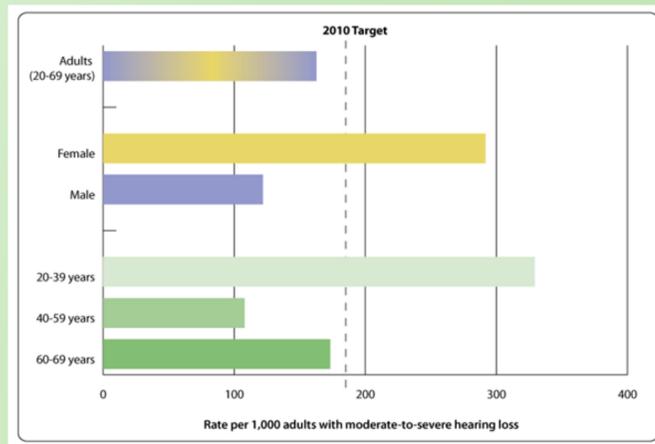
- $n = 46$
- $M_{age} = 20.09$
- $SD_{age} = 4.87$
- $Age\ range: 15-42\ years$
- Recruited from a Southern California community college

Procedure

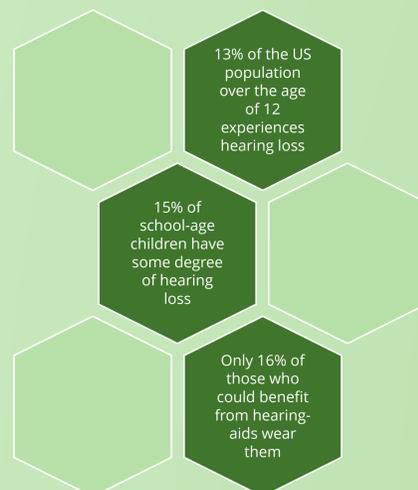
- Participants completed an online survey that assessed their perceptions of an individual that was described as either hearing or hard-of-hearing

Sample Target Person Description:

Jordan is a 21 year-old college student with a moderate hearing disability. Jordan lives in Southern California with both of their parents and two siblings. Jordan prefers to sit towards the front of the classroom so they can better pay attention. Jordan is currently enrolled in four courses at their college. Jordan's professors often describe Jordan as quiet and self-controlled. Jordan sees a peer tutor twice a week. Jordan works part-time as a waiter in a restaurant to make extra money.



From the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders



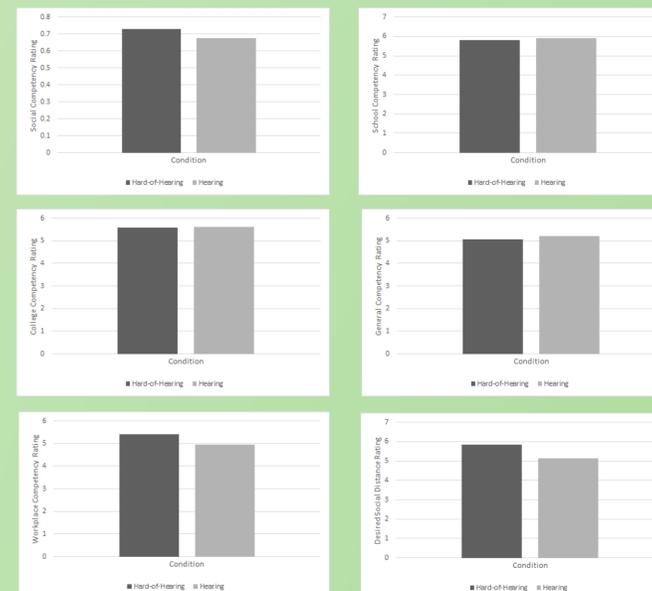
Hypotheses and Results

Hypotheses

1. HOH people would be rated less competent overall than H people.
2. HOH people would be rated less competent in school than H people.
3. HOH people would be rated less competent socially than H people.
4. HOH people would be rated less competent in college preparedness than H people.
5. HOH people would be rated less competent in the workplace than hearing people.
6. Individuals would desire a greater social distance from HOH individuals than H individuals.

Results

1. No significant differences between the two groups on perceptions of general competence
 - $t(44) = -0.63, p = ns$
2. No significant differences between the two groups on perceptions of school competence
 - $t(44) = -0.41, p = ns$
3. No significant differences between the two groups on perceptions of social competence
 - $t(44) = 0.65, p = ns$
4. No significant differences between the two groups on perceptions of college competence
 - $t(44) = -0.12, p = ns$
5. No significant differences between the two groups on perceptions of workplace competence
 - $t(44) = 2.17, p = ns$
6. No significant differences between the two groups on desired social distance
 - $t(44) = 1.92, p = ns$



Group differences on competency and desired social distance ratings

Conclusion

The present study does not support previous research regarding prejudice against disabled people. In addition, the present study does not support the idea that someone with a hearing disability faces greater social exclusion. However, those studies used disabilities that were more salient and are typically stigmatized, such as psychological disabilities. Participants may not have seen the hard-of-hearing disability as something that made someone less competent, but as something that the individual had to accommodate and overcome. The saliency of the disability could play a role in forming initial impressions of individuals, which in turn may or may not lead to biased assessments. Due to the invisibility of the hard-of-hearing condition, those with a hearing disability may not face prejudices and discriminations similar to those with other, more pronounced, disabilities. Therefore, because of this, hard-of-hearing people may be perceived as equally competent to others who are hearing and thus not treated differently based on their condition. Future research would benefit by manipulating the salience of disabilities to examine changes possible changes in attitudes and behavior, as well as examining expressed attitudes and behaviors in real-life interactions as opposed to hypothetical ones.

References

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