

**ABSTRACT**

**THESIS:** Perspective-Taking and Mentioning: Can These Strategies Increase the Romantic and Sexual Desirability of People with Observable Disabilities?

**STUDENT:** Joshua Smith

**DEGREE:** Master of Arts in Psychology

**COLLEGE:** College of Health

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Previous research has demonstrated that stigmatization of people with disabilities (PWDs) has negative consequences for their romantic opportunities. It has been well established that the cognitive task of perspective-taking of another person has the capacity to alter perceptions of various minority groups for the better. Acknowledging or mentioning a disability has also been shown to have positive social consequences. The present study explored the possibility that romantic or sexual attraction to someone with an observable physical disability could potentially be enhanced through these two processes—perspective-taking and mentioning. A statistically significant interaction emerged between prior interaction experience with people who have disabilities, gender of the target, and perspective-taking. The nature of this interaction was such that participants who did not have experience with people with disabilities and who engaged in perspective-taking with a female target rated her more sexually/romantically desirable than people who rated a male target, regardless of whether they took his perspective, had disability experience, or both. However, because this effect was small and no other analyses revealed significant effects of perspective-taking, caution is warranted when interpreting these results.

## Perspective-Taking and Mentioning

Unexpectedly, mentioning one's disability actually reduced romantic desirability for the target, although this effect was also small. Limitations and suggestions to improve upon this methodology in future research are discussed along with commentary on the use of perspective-taking manipulations more generally.