



# Impact of the Framing Effect on Perceptions of Physical Disability

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of frame, the way in which information is presented, on attitudes toward physical disability. Four hypothetical vignettes describe individuals who vary based on ability (physical disability versus no physical disability) and activity level (physically active versus not physically active). Two validated scales (Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons and competence/warmth stereotype content) assess attitudes. It is predicted that active disability conditions will relate to more positive scores. Results found significant increase in warmth and competence for physically active conditions, with disability-active vignettes scoring the highest. No significant difference was detected on ATDP.

## INTRODUCTION

The framing effect dictates that the way a topic is presented affects the opinions an individual holds of it. This concept has been applied to the study of disability perception, specifically relating to participation in sport. Previous studies suggest participation in physical activity may correlate to more positive views of individuals with physical disabilities. However, the extent of this effect conflicts, and few studies have examined the potential of the framing effect to impact attitudes toward the disability community.

## METHODOLOGY

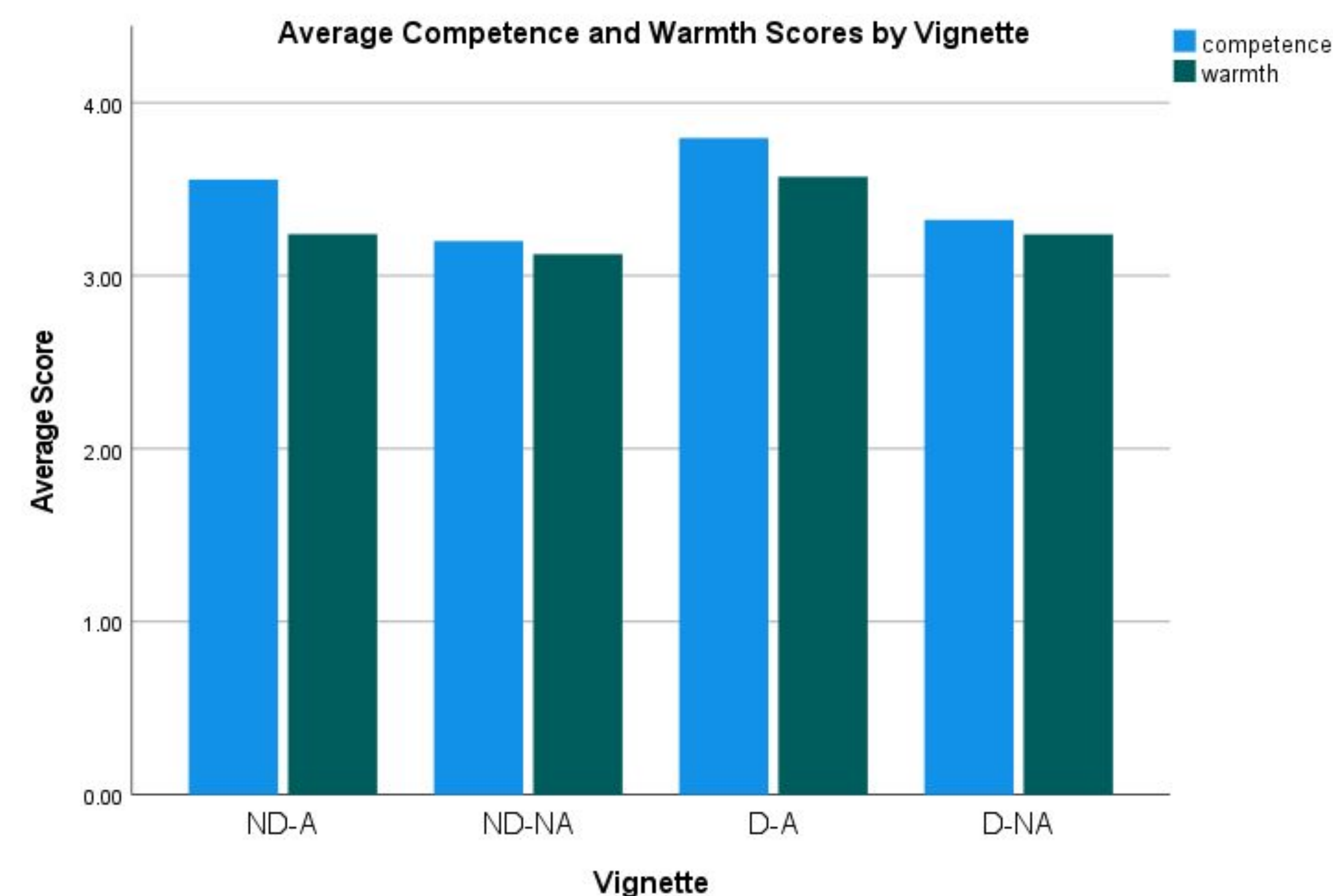
### Participants:

- 232 respondents to online survey
- Age ranged from 18-59 (M=26.9, SD=7.8)
- 62.5% female, 34.5% male
- 69.0% Caucasian, 19.4% Asian, 4.3% Black; 6.0% Hispanic

### Measures:

- *Competence and Warmth (Stereotype Content Model)* - 10 item survey rating personal attributes of vignette character on 5-point Likert scale
- *Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons (ATDP)* - 20-item survey rating extent of agreement with broad statements about disability using 6-point Likert scale

## RESULTS



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- Significant effect of vignette on competence ( $F(3, 228) = 9.491, p = .000$ ) and warmth ( $F(3, 228) = 4.148, p = .007$ ) scores.
- No statistically significant effect on ATDP scores ( $F(3, 228) = 1.527, p = .208$ ),

## CONCLUSION

Results suggest that consistent with previous literature, physically active depictions of individuals with disabilities correlate to more positive perceptions of the specific individual. No evidence was found in support of these descriptions influencing ATDP scores, or overall attitudes toward the larger, general community of individuals with disabilities.

These findings may suggest that athleticism is a significant factor in forming beliefs about a singular individual, attitudes towards larger populations are learned at a younger age and are less susceptible to change based upon one example. Future research may consider impacts of prolonged and/or in-person interactions. Continuing work with this data set aims to evaluate the impact of demographic factors. Future studies may consider other forms of disability (i.e. developmental/intellectual, mental/psychiatric, vision, or hearing) as well as alternative activities (participating in arts, politics, or volunteer work).