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Influence of the label intellectual disability on trainee disability service providers' impressions

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**INFLUENCE OF THE LABEL “INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY”
ON TRAINEE DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS’
IMPRESSIONS**

By

Dianne R. McKillop

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of
Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) Honours
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USE OF THESIS

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Abstract

Labels can be identifiers of deviance from social norms and values as well as cognitive heuristics. Labelling theory proposes that deviancy labels create a perception of a stereotypical *master status* (Becker, 1963), which biases perceivers' impressions. The master status principle of labelling theory is analogous to the schema-based models of impression formation proposed by social psychology. The opposing view is that individual characteristics influence social perception to a greater extent than labels. The present study investigated the master status prediction of labelling theory using a social psychological framework. Empirical and theoretical evidence suggests that the perceptions of the people who play a part in the lives of people with the "intellectual disability" label has the power to influence their behaviour, and their social identity. Trainee disability service providers ($n=107$, 24 males, 83 females) rated their affective responses and cognitive impressions in relation to one of six written vignette descriptions of a stimulus person. In a 2×3 (label \times individual characteristics) design, the stimulus person was described as having the intellectual disability label or no explicit label, and personal and social characteristics that have been identified as positively socially valued, normative, or negatively valued. Participants were randomly assigned to the resulting six experimental groups. The study was conducted under conditions that have been shown to promote schematic processing of information. Principal components analysis of responses revealed cognitive impression dimensions of agreeableness, trustworthiness, and competence. MANOVA analysis of results showed no influence of the intellectual disability label on participants' impressions, $F(4,92) = 1.38$, $p = .245$. A significant main effect for individual characteristics on impression was demonstrated $F(8,186) = 3.31$, $p = .001$. Post hoc stepdown comparisons showed that affective responses and attributions of competence were increased by descriptions of positively valued characteristics. Results are discussed in relation to differences

between attributes of the purposive sample and the general population. Implications for disability service provision and for the social identity of people who have an intellectual disability were examined. Suggestions were made for empirical modifications, and for use of integrated perspectives on social information processing in future field research.

DECLARATION

"I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text."

Signed:

Date: 21.9.95

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Categorisation and labelling are fundamental to human interaction. Categories allow people to feel that they understand their world. They ensure, “some sense of prediction and control, which is essential to our well-being” (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 97).

Labels are frequently used as cognitive heuristics, as shortcuts to perceptions of the world. They access schematic constructions of similar objects, people, or events that have been encountered on previous occasions and allow perceivers to be *cognitive misers* (Taylor, 1981). Schematic processing of information is facilitated by holistic perception of a labelled stimulus, rather than attention to its component parts (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Deviancy Labelling

Labels also identify deviance from culturally normative standards. Deviance from norms may be statistical deviance, when something varies too widely from the average (Mercer, 1973); rule-breaking deviance, involving failure to obey society’s rules (Becker, 1963); or dysfunctional deviance, in violation of the implicit values of a culture (Goffman, 1963; Scheff, 1984).

Norm violations are often identified and classified by labelling and categorisation for benign purposes; to identify needs for ameliorative interventions and services, for example. However, labelling can also have negative consequences

for people who are stigmatised by labels that signify membership in categories that are negatively valued in a culture (Goffman, 1963).

The assignment, maintenance, and consequences of deviancy labels have been explored by sociologists with the group designation of *labelling theorists*. Briefly, labelling theory proposes that deviance is created by society, in interaction with the deviant person, because society defines the rules that the deviant person breaks.

It is a premise of labelling theory that a stigmatising label creates what Everett C. Hughes (1944) called a *master status*. A master status is one that subsumes any possible alternative interpretation of a person's social identity. Howard S. Becker (1963) explained that, as a master status cue, a deviancy label has, "a generalised symbolic value, so that people automatically assume that its bearer possesses other undesirable traits allegedly associated with it" (p. 33).

According to labelling theory, a consequence of labelling and master status is biased treatment, which results in internalisation and acting out of a deviant role (Schur, 1971). Opponents of labelling theory (e.g. Knutsson, 1977) claim that it is a labelled person's deviant appearance, behaviour, or social characteristics, and not the label, that determines the negative responses of others.

Disability Labels

The label at the focus of the present study was "person with an intellectual disability". As a group, people with intellectual disabilities have historically been negatively valued in Western cultures. Wolfensberger (1992) discussed negative historical stereotypes of people who have an intellectual disability in terms of societal

values. He stated that when a culture prizes competence, independence, intellect, physical beauty, and manifest productivity, it is axiomatic that intellectual disability will be socially devalued. The historical stereotypes identified by Wolfensberger (1992) included people with intellectual disability as objects of pity, burdens of charity, objects of ridicule, and as non-human.

In a simpler, more pragmatic context, Jones et al. (1984) stated that the frequent appearance in conversation of the word "stupid" as a derogatory label makes it difficult to avoid negatively stereotyping people who have an intellectual disability.

Social Perception of People Who Have a Disability

Although dramatic progress has been made in the treatment of people with disabilities in the past quarter-century (Scheerenberger, 1987), Dovey and Graffam (1987) have stated that the concepts of deviance and social devaluation still, "characterise fairly concisely how disability is experienced within the context of our society" (p. 154). Murray (1988) also cautions against a comforting belief that attitudes towards people with disabilities have been, "a triumphal march toward the enlightened present" (p. 93). These claims are supported by the fact that use of historical stereotypes of people with an intellectual disability continues in mass media portrayals of disability (see Zola, 1985, for a discussion).

Wolfensberger (1992) warned that social perceptions of people with disabilities as, for example, pitiful, needy, ridiculous or less than human, have the potential to influence the actions of perceivers and labelled people to the degree that the original perceptions are confirmed as true.

The way that people think and feel about people who have an intellectual disability is also regarded as an important influence on their quality of life. Schalock (1993) developed a service model for use in disability policy development. The model identified the perceptions of significant others as one of the three key aspects of life experience which contribute to the quality of life of people who have an intellectual disability.

The assumption that intellectual disability labels predict negative social perceptions of labelled people is a guiding principle of the operations of the People First self-advocacy organisation in North America (Worrell, 1988). Pat Worth, the president of People First in Ontario, explained:

That label has been hanging over my head for a long time. People are labelled mentally retarded and that label stops us from getting jobs. It's a label because of our disability. People don't think about the ability we have because we are labelled disabled. (Worrell, 1988, p. 5)

One of the aims of the People First organisation is for people with disabilities to be recognised as people, rather than as dehumanised manifestations of their diagnostic labels. People First's leadership training manual (Worrell, 1988) promoted reference to "people with [whatever disability]" when referring to people who have a disability instead of, for instance, "the intellectually disabled".

Locally, the "See the person, not the problem" campaign by the Cerebral Palsy Association of Western Australia (Seabourne, 1993) urged perceivers to see people with cerebral palsy as individuals who happen to have a disability rather than as a category of impaired, disabled people.

Social Psychological Perspective

Social psychological explanations support labelling theorist's claims of a perceived master status and its impact on interpersonal interaction. The social cognition perspective of social psychology presents evidence of holistic perception and processing of information that is strongly influenced by the theories that observers have about the people they encounter. Such theories are represented in cognition as schemas and their activation is cued by prominent information such as category labels (Baron, Byrne, & Suls, 1988; Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

As in labelling theory, social cognition proposes that preconceived categorical impressions influence the behaviour of the perceiver and the labelled target person. Self-fulfilling prophecies that link social perception and social behaviour are explained in social cognition by a *behavioural confirmation effect* (see Darley & Oleson, 1993, for a discussion). There has been extensive research in social psychology that supports the existence of schema-driven social perception and cognition, and subsequent behavioural confirmation (see Hamilton, Sherman, & Ruvolo, 1990, for a review).

Theoretical Relevance of the Present Study

An investigation of the impression that results from the influence of the intellectual disability label is a departure from recent trends in social psychological research. Zebrowitz (1990) stated that attempts to discover the "what" of influences and outcomes of perception have lately been outweighed by investigations of the "how" of social information processing.

In addition, Parmenter (1992) has stated that, "increasingly disability is being studied from sociological perspectives" (p. 264). Thomas Scheff (1984), a sociologist, stated that he believed that historical and psychological investigations of responses to deviance were needed to complement sociological understanding. Such an investigative integration can be addressed by the use of principles of social cognition to examine sociological predictions about the impact of labels on social perception.

Recent empirical psychological investigations of the effects of labels on social perception have focussed on the influence of the label "ex-mental patient" on rejection of adults (see Link, Cullen, Frank, & Wozniak, 1987, for a review) and on the effect of the label "mentally retarded" on impressions and behaviours of teachers and peers towards labelled school children (PsycLIT database, 1992; 1994).

Integration of social psychological explanations of analogous predictions of labelling theory provides a cross-disciplinary, theoretical enrichment of an area that is often studied for illumination of cognitive processes, or for applied reasons alone.

Disability Service Ideology

Eighteen per cent of the Australian population is estimated to have some degree of disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1994) and 2.3 % are estimated to have an intellectual disability (Cocks, 1989). People with disabilities often live in supported accommodation where they are assisted by disability service providers known as social trainers. Disability service providers receive training in the practical assistance of people with disabilities in their daily lives and in social issues connected with disability.

The dominant ideologies governing services to people with intellectual disabilities in Western Australia are the principles of normalisation (Wolfensberger, 1972) and its successor, Social Role Valorisation (Wolfensberger, 1983).

The concept of normalisation was developed in Scandinavia in the 1960s. It focuses on enabling people with an intellectual disability to experience a normal rhythm of life (Cocks, 1989). Social Role Valorisation (SRV) evolved from normalisation in the early 1980s. The most recent definition of SRV is: "the enablement, establishment, enhancement, maintenance, and/or defence of valued social roles for people - particularly for those at value risk - by using, as much as possible, culturally valued means" (Wolfensberger, 1992).

The underlying assumption of SRV is that deviant, negatively-valued social roles assigned to people with intellectual disability can only be overcome by replacing them with roles and characteristics that are highly valued in a culture (Wolfensberger, 1992). This assumption is embodied in the *conservatism corollary* of SRV. The conservatism corollary is based on the presumption that maintenance of normative roles and characteristics for people with intellectual disability, as opposed to promotion of highly positively valued roles, is not sufficient to overcome the devaluation that results from the label.

Social Role Valorisation is a more optimistic perspective than labelling theory on the interaction of people with intellectual disability and the wider society. It assumes that enhancement of individual qualities has the power to counteract the effects of a stigmatising label on social perception. Although SRV acknowledges the influence of a labelled person's individual characteristics on social perception, it

differs from the view of opponents of labelling theory in that it also acknowledges the detrimental effects of disability labels.

Applied Relevance of the Present Study

The connection between judgements of people, and behaviour toward them, is well-documented in psychological literature (e.g. Darley & Oleson, 1993). Therefore, the perceptions disability service providers have of people who have an intellectual disability is a potential influence on the service they provide.

Disability service providers have the capacity to influence the physical settings and activities that are connected with people who have an intellectual disability, their clothing and appearance, and the language used to describe and address them. Wolfensberger (1992) lists these areas of influence as powerful contributors to the image people have in their society.

Social perception of people and groups also influences their *social identity* (who they are seen to be in relation to their society). Sarbin and Scheibe (1983) stated that social identity is, "ratified through actual or symbolic interaction with occupants of complementary positions" (p. 8). Therefore, the close involvement of Disability Service Providers with the lives of people with disabilities influences, not only the service they provide, but also the social identity of the people they assist.

The applied value of information about trainee disability service providers' impressions of people who have an intellectual disability was judged to outweigh the complexities and non-generalisability produced by the use of a purposive sample in the present study.

Explanation of Key Terms

Reference to *intellectual disability* in the present study refers to adults with that label who have been classified as having statistically less-than-average intellectual and adaptive ability (Grossman, 1983). The level of intellectual disability intended by the term is that of the vast majority so-classified, that is, mild intellectual disability with no physical impairment and no known cause (Cocks, 1989). Reference to *labels*, for the purpose of this paper, implies deviancy labels unless otherwise specified.

The terminology *person with an intellectual disability* (as opposed to “the disabled” or the “mentally retarded”) is promoted by key disability organisations (Worrell, 1988) and preferred by people with disabilities themselves (Scott, 1993). For this reason, it is used throughout this paper.

The term *trainee disability service provider* refers to students of a Certificate or an Advanced Certificate in Human Service (Disability) at a College of Technical and Further Education (TAFE). These students may either be studying full-time, or studying part-time and working in the disability field.

Frequent reference to the concept of *schema* is made in this paper. Although the dictionary listing of the plural of schema is “schemata” (The Macquarie Library, 1991), this paper follows the recommendation of the “Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association” (APA, 1994) in its use of the plural term “schemas”.

The stimuli shown to participants in the present study were *vignette descriptions* which systematically varied characteristics of a fictitious person.

Vignettes are brief characterisations of a person or a social situation which contain precise references to important factors in the decision-making processes of respondents (Alexander & Becker, 1978).

Outline of the Study

The introduction to this paper has described the view that labels can be used as cognitive heuristics and that labels which indicate categories of people that are socially devalued can have detrimental effects on social perception. This second view is shared by adherents of labelling theory and of a dominant disability service ideology, Social Role Valorisation. Opponents of labelling theory have stated that individual characteristics, and not labels, influence impressions of labelled people. The importance of individual characteristics is also acknowledged in the principles of SRV.

The present study utilises concepts from social cognition to investigate the predictions of labelling theory in relation to the question:

What is the influence of the label "intellectual disability" on trainee disability service providers' impressions?

Experimental investigation of this research question called for comparisons of trainee disability service providers' impressions of a description of a person with the intellectual disability label, and an identical description of a person with no explicit label.

However, the people encountered by participants possess more characteristics than labels alone. Although the present study is an investigation of the predictions of

labelling theory that labels create a master status that leads to negative impressions, considerations of realism and opposing views prompted inclusion of a second independent variable: individual characteristics.

A range of personal and social characteristics were represented in descriptions of a stimulus person. Three sets of characteristics were formulated. They were: personal and social characteristics that are negatively valued in Western society (those that could be associated with a stereotype of a person with a mild intellectual disability or with a person without a disability label); 'normal' characteristics (based on a vignette description by Phillips [1963], which is frequently used in this research context); and positively valued characteristics (congruent with the conservatism corollary of SRV).

Factorial combination of two levels of the labelling variable (the presence of the intellectual disability label and its absence) and the three levels of the individual characteristics variable produced six vignette stimuli of a fictitious person who was named Louise.

In a completely randomised factorial design (Keppel, 1991) participants were randomly assigned to six experimental groups, each of which received one of the six vignette descriptions. They were asked to complete two rating scales in relation to their impression of Louise. Participants' first task was to rate how they felt about interacting with Louise in specified social situations and, secondly, they were asked to rate to what degree they attributed positively-valued modes of conduct to Louise.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter contains reviews of theoretical literature, accounts of empirical investigations, and literature on the methodology used in the present study.

The review of theoretical literature integrates a social psychological perspective on perception, categorisation, cognitive processes, and impression formation with the sociological perspective proposed by labelling theory. Alternative theoretical approaches which introduce the perspective that individual characteristics are stronger determinants of social perception than labels, are briefly addressed.

Theoretical literature on the relationship of affect and cognition is discussed in the context of the multidimensional nature of impression. Similarly, theory relating to self-fulfilling prophecy is briefly examined in the context of implications of labelling theory.

Empirical reports of research on the impact of labels and schemas on social perception and behaviour are reviewed in this chapter. Participants in the present study were required to complete a scale based on the Rokeach Value Survey (1973) and an instrument with social distance-type items in order to rate their response to vignette descriptions of a stimulus person. Therefore, the strengths and limitations of these methodologies are also reviewed.

This chapter concludes with an integrative summary of the reviewed literature in relation to variables and research questions of the present study.

Theoretical Literature

Labelling Theory

The perspective known as labelling theory was a product of the integration of the study of deviance and mainstream sociological theory in the early 1960s (Becker, 1964). It incorporated an interactionist perspective into sociology which led to an interpretation of deviance as socially labelled social rule-breaking, rather than the product of an intrapersonal deficit (Moore & Hendry, 1982).

Deviance.

Howard Becker's (1963) succinct description of the way in which social forces contribute to the creation of individual deviance is frequently quoted in the literature. He stated that, "*social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance*" (p. 9, original italics).

Thomas Scheff (1984) had a similar perspective on deviance. He proposed that, as well as the violation of the explicit rules of a society, deviance is labelled when *residual rules*, implicit rules that are deeply entrenched in a culture, are broken. Goffman (1963) referred to residual rules in terms of the general identity-values of a society; a common value-system which is not written down but which "can cast some kind of shadow on the encounters encountered everywhere in daily living" (p. 153).

Edwin Schur (1971), another prominent labelling theorist, proposed that deviance is not a static entity, but the dynamic outcome of complex, ongoing societal interactions.

Intellectual Disability as Socially Constructed Deviance.

Support for the concept of disability as socially constructed deviance has been found in cross-cultural research. The degree of deviant, normative or even socially valued status that is assigned to people with an intellectual disability appears to be dependent on the amount of stigma attached to intellectual impairment in a particular culture (see Manion & Bersani, 1987, for a discussion).

Parmenter (1992) discussed a social systems perspective on disability in the context of symbolic interactionism. He stated that it is a basic principle of the symbolic interactionist approach that human experience, including the formulation of identity, is interpreted through interactions with others. Therefore, the label “disability” is not a symbol of a condition that is inherent in the labelled person, it represents the reactions of others.

Consequences of Deviancy Labelling.

According to Becker (1963), the effect of a deviancy labels on the way a person is perceived by others was the creation of an over-riding master status. This term was originally used by Hughes (1944) and he intended it to mean that: “a master status-determining trait tends to overpower, in most crucial situations, any other characteristics which might run counter to it” (p. 357). Becker (1963) regarded deviancy labels as such master status traits. He proposed that a labelled person with a deviant master status was automatically presumed to have the auxiliary traits characteristic of anyone bearing that label (Becker, 1963). The controlling master status subsumed any possible alternative social identity and this dictated the labelled person’s place in, and interaction with, his or her society.

Goffman (1963) considered the master status effect of stigmatising labels to be an “undesired differentness that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he [sic] meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us” (p. 15). Schur (1971) claimed that the interpersonal consequence of discounting stigma-inconsistent attributes was stereotyping: “a tendency to jump from a single cue or a small number of cues in actual, suspected, or alleged behavior to a more general picture of the ‘kind of person’ with whom one is dealing” (p. 52).

Schur (1971) also described the intrapersonal consequences of deviancy labelling for the labelled person. He stated that the concept of master status was central to the role engulfment that resulted from the in-built salience of the deviant role for the individual. The result of this role engulfment has been called a *deviant career* (e.g. Becker, 1963; Wolfensberger, 1992). A deviant career was said to result from internalisation of the deviant role, reinforcement of compliance with expected deviant role behaviour, and from limited opportunities for out-of-role behaviours. Therefore, it was the product of the interaction of the labelled person and his or her perceivers.

A description of the social psychological processes which underlie formation of a deviant career is included in the section of this paper that addresses self-fulfilling prophecy.

A diagrammatic representation of an integrated model of the major theorists’ perspectives on labelling and deviance appears in Figure 1.

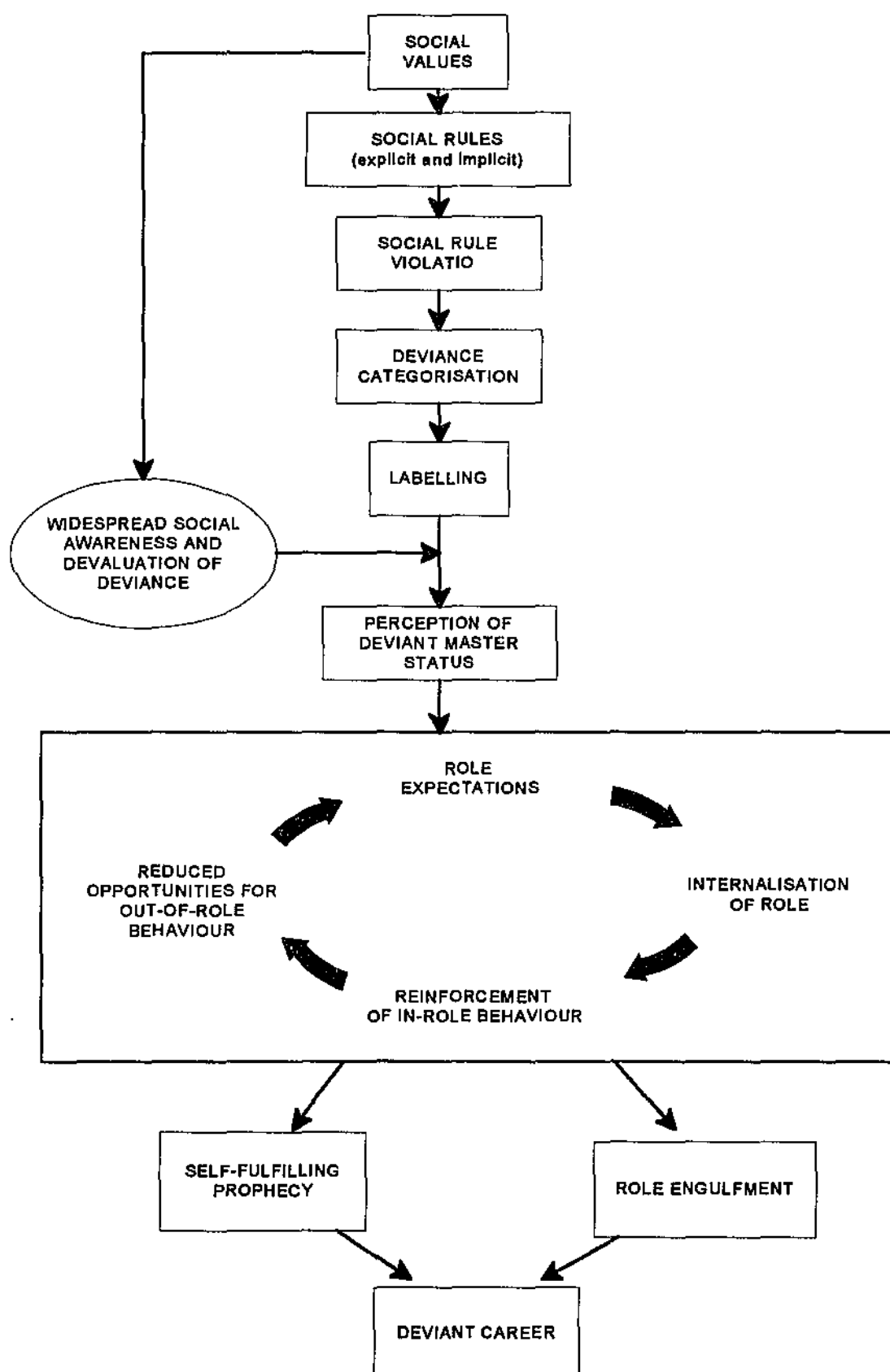


Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of an integrated model of sociological perspectives on deviance (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963; Scheff, 1984; Schur, 1971).

Contemporary Support for Labelling Theory.

The underlying assumptions of labelling theory are evident in contemporary social justice strategies. For example, Goffman (1963) made the statement that:

the attitudes we normals have towards a person with a stigma, and the actions we take in regard to him [sic], are well known, since these responses are what benevolent social action is designed to soften and ameliorate. (p. 15)

Evidence supporting Goffman's (1963) assertion that social action attempts to remedy negative social perceptions and actions toward people who are stigmatised appeared in a recent newspaper article. The author quoted Australian Medical Association president, Brendon Nelson's, description of the contribution of socially stigmatising labels to the low self-esteem of people who are unemployed ("Don't knock jobless", 1995). The article reported that an intended publicity campaign would feature posters with photographs and with captions such as: "Some call me a dolebludger, some call me unemployed, but my name is Michael" (p. 24).

Criticisms of Labelling Theory.

The main criticism of labelling theory has come from those who disagree that deviancy labels are the most important factor in determining negative social perceptions. Critics of labelling theory (e.g. Kirk, 1974; Knutsson, 1977) have claimed that perceivers react to deviant or inappropriate behaviour of labelled people rather than to the labels themselves.

Link et al. (1987) investigated this criticism in the context of studies that have assessed the relative influence of mental illness labels and behaviour on social acceptance or rejection. They found that ten out of the twelve published studies they

examined showed a significant effect for behaviour that was stronger than the influence of the mental illness label.

Link et al. (1987) were concerned that this empirical evidence was contradictory to previous support for the belief that people with a psychiatric disability would be rejected, even if their behaviour was normal. They hypothesised that the source of the discrepancy was the different meanings attached to labels by different groups. Link et al. (1987) subsequently conducted research which found strong labelling effects in participants who believed that people with mental illness were dangerous. The results indicated that the behaviour of a stimulus person had less influence on social acceptance or rejection when participants had strong beliefs based on the person's label.

Summary of Labelling Theory.

The three tenets of labelling theory are: social construction of deviance; that labels create a perception of stereotypical master status; and that labels and master status result in the self-fulfilling prophecy of a deviant career.

It is the master status prediction of labelling theory (that perceptions of labelled people disregard their individual characteristics, and that they are stereotypically negative) that forms the theoretical basis of the investigations of the present study. The third tenet of labelling theory, that behavioural confirmation is a consequence of negative perceptions cued by labels, is an important practical implication for the results of the present study.

Analogous Social Psychological Concepts

Social Cognition.

Social cognition is the study of how people make sense of their social environment and themselves (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). It applies the models of cognitive psychology to social settings in order to illuminate the influence of cognitive processes on social behaviours. Hamilton, Devine, and Ostrom (1994) state that social cognition is more than an application of cognitive psychology to social psychological topics; it is an information processing perspective that applies across all domains of psychology.

Two main approaches are taken in social cognition. The first is the elemental approach which analyses parts of a stimulus, combining smaller pieces into larger ones. In contrast, the holistic approach to social cognition looks at the entire pattern of relationships amongst the parts of a stimulus (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). People who disagree with labelling theory, those who have claimed that behaviours, rather than labels, influence social perception, would favour the elemental perspective on social cognition. In the elemental view, a deviancy label would be one of many perceived characteristics to be weighted, according to its contribution to an impression formation equation (Anderson, 1965).

The holistic approach of social cognition provides a social psychological analogue to the processes proposed by labelling theorists. The basis of the holistic approach is the belief that pieces of a stimulus are analysed within the context of their inter-relationships. This belief was developed by Gestalt psychologists who perceived that entire configurations had properties that were both unable to be predicted by, and

not discernible from, their isolated elements. The Gestalt view, that “the whole is more than the simple combination of its parts” (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 99), has similarities to the concept of master status. The individual characteristics of a person, weighed up and totalled, are not necessarily the same as the holistic impression constructed from a combination of categorical information and pre-existing cognitive configurations.

Fiske and Taylor (1991) state that the introduction of Gestalt principles into social psychological research placed new emphasis on perceivers’ subjective interpretation as an organising construct in social perception.

Categorisation and Schemas.

Social categorisation is the process of organising and simplifying information received from the environment, by fitting it to a background of existing cognitive structures, for the purpose of making decisions about action (Tajfel, 1978). These existing cognitive structures are schemas: representations of general knowledge, beliefs, feelings, and expectations about people and events (Baron et al., 1988; Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

A consequence of categorisation is that additional information, expected as a result of the schema, is automatically attributed to the perceived person. This results in an unfavourable impression of the target person when the schema is stereotypical, that is: overgeneralised, widely shared, and containing negative beliefs (Jones et al., 1984). For example:

the set of expectancies that comes to mind when we learn that a person is disabled constitutes the stereotypes that we hold of disabled people. Some of these expectancies undoubtedly will be correct, but not all of them will be, and few if any of them will be true of all disabled people. (p.156)

Therefore, although people believe that their perceptions of the world are an instantaneous, literal copy of their environment (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), those perceptions can be strongly influenced by existing schemas.

Impression Formation.

A perspective of impression formation theory that is analogous to the master status premise of labelling theory is that of schema models of impression formation that originated with the work of Solomon Asch (Zebrowitz, 1990).

Asch (1946) investigated the way that people give meaning to their perceptions of others by applying the predictions of Gestalt theory to the process of impression formation. He proposed that trait information about a person was integrated into a Gestalt configuration in which each trait affected the meaning of others. Asch (1946) believed that certain characteristics of traits influenced the meaning attributed to the trait configuration and, hence, the perceiver's impression. He found that initial information in a sequence of trait descriptors had a greater effect on impression than later information. This *primacy effect* indicated that the meaning of later elements of a description was interpreted in a way that was congruent with the initial information (Baron et al., 1988).

Zebrowitz (1990) called schema models of impression formation a more extreme development of the holistic approach of Asch. According to such models, perceptions and impressions are driven by perceivers' theories about others, and target person characteristics can be modified or reinterpreted to fit a particular theory. Perceivers' theories include cognitive representations of the "kind of people"

members of a particular category are, that is, a perceivers' stereotypes or schemas (Zebrowitz, 1990).

Labelling theory's prediction of master status-biased social perception of labelled people is analogous to extreme cases of purely schematic information processing. Fiske and Taylor (1991) characterise these as: "glossing over important details, as stubbornly refusing to see the information in front of them, and as maintaining their schemas at any cost" (p. 98).

Primacy is a key factor in schema models of impression formation. Fiske and Taylor (1991) stated that information encoded early in impression formation is likely to cue relevant schemas and that schematic processing effects are stronger when people have an organising structure from the outset. According to Fiske and Taylor (1991), two additional predictors of schematic processing are *salience*, the use of distinctive features as schema cues, and *accessibility*, the use of schemas that are either used frequently or that are already on the perceiver's mind (*primed*).

Holistic Versus Elemental Perspectives.

The emphasis of this paper on the holistic approach to social cognition and impression formation, to the exclusion of the elemental perspective, is not indicative of a position in social psychology's "molar-molecular debate" (Leyens & Fiske, 1994, p. 43). The holistic approach is pursued in this research because it is analogous to the processes of labelling theory. Conversely, the elemental approach supports the view of opponents of labelling theory who argue that behaviour, appearance, or other individual characteristics are the primary determinants of social perception and cognition.

The holistic-elemental controversy in social psychology has produced several “mixed models” of impression formation (Zebrowitz, 1990, p. 48). These include Fiske and Neuberg’s (1990) continuum model, which suggests that impression formation progresses along a process continuum that is anchored by categorical processing of stimulus information and, at the opposite end, processing of individual stimulus elements. Briefly, Fiske and Neuberg (1990) propose that categorical processing is attempted first, recategorisation is attempted if stimulus characteristics do not match the initial category, and that piecemeal integration of stimulus attributes is tried if categorisation fails.

Affect and Cognition

Studies of impressions and other social perceptions of people with disabilities have included multidimensional investigations of perceivers’ beliefs, evaluations, dispositional intentions, and behavioural reactions (Antonak & Livneh, 1988). Zebrowitz (1990) provided an example of evaluative-dispositional and belief-related dimensions of impression in her statement that: “first impressions influence not only our willingness to interact with a person, they also influence our inferences about unspecified traits that we associate with the known qualities” (p. 44).

The present study’s use of social cognition to investigate predictions of labelling theory precludes discussion of affective and motivational influences on the process of impression formation. However, it is acknowledged that impressions are more than cognitive responses.

The measures of participants' response to the stimulus person described in the present study were affective responses to social interaction scenarios, and cognitive responses of attributions of modes of behaviour. It was anticipated that participants' affective responses would indicate the way they feel about people who have an intellectual disability, and that their cognitive responses would reflect their schema for the category of "people who have an intellectual disability".

The independence and primacy of affect versus cognition has been debated in psychology for some years (e.g. Lazarus, 1984; Zajonc, 1984). The position taken in the present study is that affective evaluations can occur separately from, and prior to, cognitive information processing. Support for this position is provided by evidence of the evolutionary survival value of affective reactions, evidence that some common behaviours that appear to be based solely on affective decision-making, and of the occurrence of affective reactions without conscious attention (Zajonc, 1980).

In view of this position, steps were taken to ensure that participants of the present study responded to the measure of affective impression before they completed the cognitive measure.

Self-fulfilling Prophecy

It has been noted previously in this paper that the applied relevance of the present study is the practical implication of its results in the light of evidence that impressions and schemas influence the behaviour of perceivers and target persons.

The concept of self-fulfilling prophecy was originally defined by Merton (1948) as false perception which evokes the kinds of behaviour that make that

perception come true. This, in turn, convinces the perceiver that their original perception was correct. Labelling theory describes the consequences of this effect as a deviant career (Schur, 1971).

In their review of the influence of self-fulfilling prophecy research on social psychology, Darley and Oleson (1993) described the link between social perception and social behaviour in terms of expectancies and their confirmation.

Darley and Oleson (1993) identified four closely related effects as the psychological components of Merton's concept of self-fulfilling prophecy. These effects occur as a result of schema-based expectancies, and in conjunction with perceiver behaviour. The first was the *perceptual confirmation effect*, that is, the influence of expectancies on judgements of target person behaviour to the extent that behaviours that do not fit the expectancy are discounted. In addition, ambiguous information is reinterpreted as consistent with expectations, and expectancy-consistent actions are regarded as particularly characteristic of the person..

Darley and Oleson (1993) described the second component of the self-fulfilling prophecy as a *correspondence bias*, the fundamental attribution error identified by Ross (1977). Correspondence bias is the tendency to see a person's dispositional factors, rather than their situation, as the cause of behaviour. The third perceiver effect that Darley and Oleson (1993) proposed led to a target person's behavioural confirmation of their original expectation. The fourth effect was the perceiver's ignorance of the impact of his or her own behaviour on a target person's expectancy-confirming behaviour: a *perceiver-induced constraint bias*.

Darley and Oleson's review (1993) identified two implications of self-fulfilling prophecies for the target person. They stated that a target person's roles and personality traits, as well as his or her behaviour, may come to reflect a perceiver's schema. Expectancies conveyed by the interaction of target and perceiver may develop into distinct roles, and the target person may conclude that in-role behaviour reflects his or her personality.

A diagrammatic representation of a model of Darley and Oleson's (1993) social psychological perspective on self-fulfilling prophecy, with the inclusion of links to the concepts of schema and impression, appears in Figure 2.

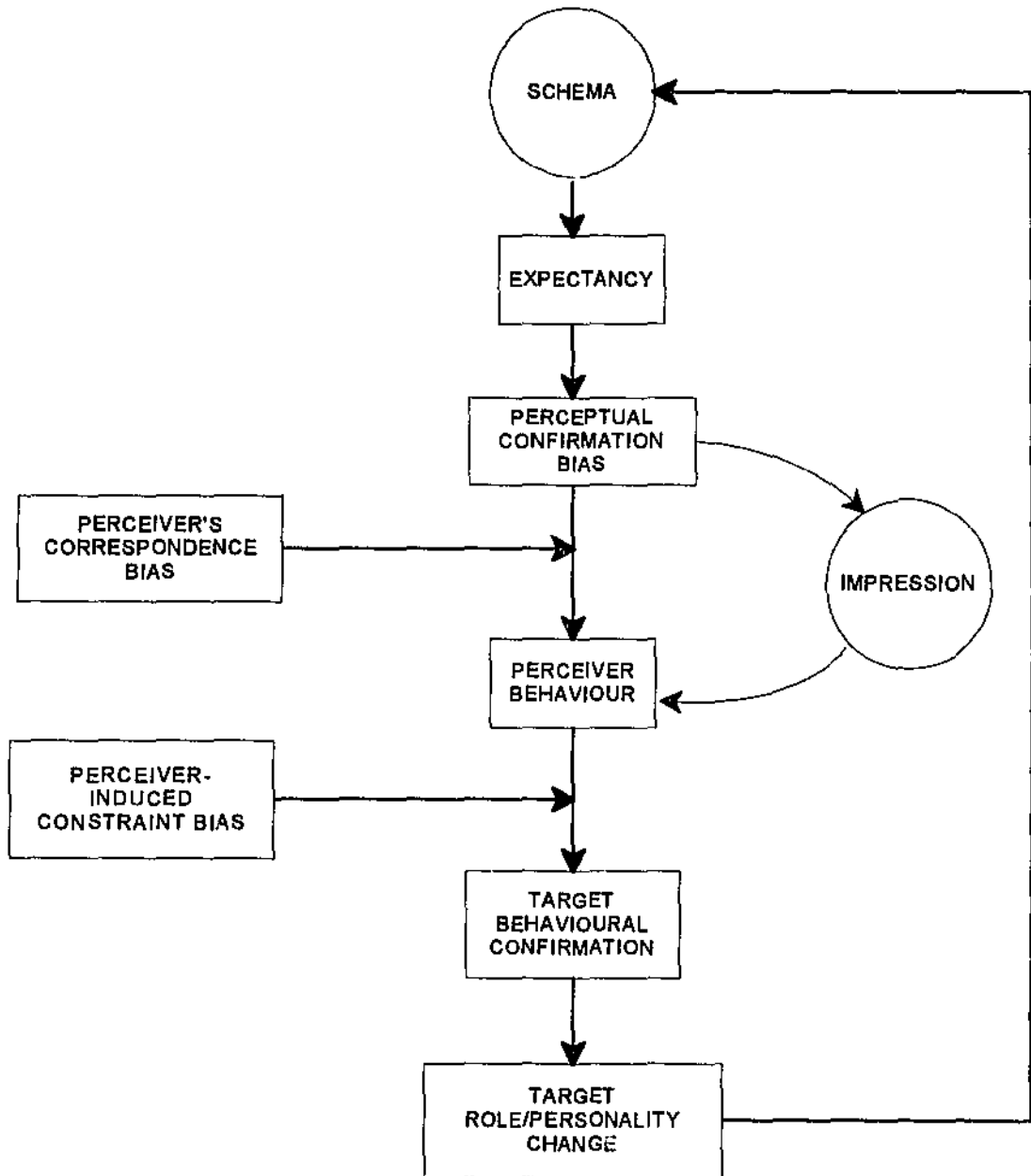


Figure 2. Diagrammatic representation of a social psychological model of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Summary of Theoretical Literature

A comparison of the perspectives taken by labelling theory and social psychology on the influence of labels appears in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of Labelling Theory and Social Psychological Perspectives on the Influence of Labels

Labelling Theory	Social Cognition
• labels cue stigmatised master status	• labels and social categorical information cue schema
• master status contains expectations of auxiliary traits	• schema-based expectancies
• claims of other attributes broken	• perception biased
• disconfirming characteristics discounted	• information processing biased: more extensive when information is schema-consistent; ambiguous information is reinterpreted; inconsistent information is discounted
• biased treatment results in self-fulfilling prophecy	• perceiver behaviour (plus fundamental attribution error and ignorance of power to influence target) results in behavioural confirmation
• deviancy career	• target person role change may also result
• role engulfment	• personality change may result from belief that role reflects underlying traits

Labelling theory proposes that possession of a deviancy label leads to a holistic perception of the labelled person that matches the commonly held negative stereotype. Consequences of labelling are said to include internalisation and acting out

of deviant-role expectations by the bearer of the label, and treatment by others that elicits stereotypical behaviours. It is the influence of labels on the impressions and schemas and, by implication, the behaviour of others that is the focus of the present study.

The link between labelling theory and social cognition can be explained in terms of holistic processing of information about a person, in which the label is the salient trait which cues the perceiver's schema for a person with that label. The schema is the organising construct upon which the perceiver bases his or her impression of the labelled person. According to labelling theory, the schema cued by a deviancy label would reflect the societal devaluation of the social category to which the labelled person belongs.

Conversely, the elemental perspective of social psychology emphasises the influence of individuating characteristics of a stimulus, rather than categorical information, in impression formation. Recently developed models of social cognition and perception integrate this structuralist approach with the holistic, constructivist approach that supports the processes proposed by labelling theory (Zebrowitz, 1990).

Empirical Literature

In this section, literature on research into the influences of labels and schemas on perceptions and behaviours is reviewed. The term "perception" is frequently used in a generic sense in this review. The use of this term was an attempt to avoid potential confusion by interchangeable reference to the concepts of impression, attitude, evaluation, social judgement, and more, in the literature.

Negative Influences of Labels

D. L. Rosenhan's (1973) "On Being Sane in Insane Places" is a classic study that provides empirical support for the proposition that labels, rather than behaviour, influence impressions and perceiver behaviour.

Eight volunteer participants were admitted to psychiatric facilities on the basis of their false reports of auditory hallucinations. Although the volunteers immediately stopped faking any abnormal behaviour, their normal behaviour, such as note-taking, was recorded as a symptom of their disorder. Therefore, although the initial deviance which caused the assignment of the label was no longer present, Rosenhan's (1973) confederates were treated as deviant and hospitalised for an average of 19 days.

More recently, Socall and Holtgraves (1992) found empirical support for labelling theory in the negative influence of a mental illness label on measures of social acceptance and belief about predictability and social outcomes. Their stratified sample of 600 American adults were more rejecting and had more negative beliefs about a person described as having anxiety or a depressive disorder, or schizophrenia than they were towards a person with similar symptoms but no mental illness label.

Anthropological research provides support for the premise of labelling theory that, in complex Western societies, labels can lead to the self-fulfilling prophecy of a deviant career. Raybeck (1991) studied small-scale, interdependent societies and found that they were tolerant of deviance and reluctant to label rule-breakers. These societies applied labels to specific actions rather than to offenders and Raybeck (1991) concluded that this was causally linked to the fact that deviant role enactment, or deviant careers, were uncommon.

Inconsistent Outcomes of Labelling Studies.

Empirical investigations of the principles of labelling have yielded inconsistent, and often contradictory, results. Williams (1986) conducted a principal components analysis to determine the underlying structure of perceptions of people with the label "mentally retarded". His sample of 373 American college students were shown a list of positive adjectives which had been derived from the Rokeach Value Survey (1973). They were asked to rate, on a six-point scale, the degree to which they thought that each of these adjectives characterised people with an intellectual disability, more (6,5,4) or less (3,2,1) than they characterised "persons of 'normal' intelligence" (p. 14).

Williams' (1986) analysis revealed three underlying factors of participants' responses. He called them competence, amiability, and restraint. People with intellectual disability were rated as less competent, more amiable, more amenable to social restraint, and less amenable to self-restraint than people of normal intelligence.

Analysis of the effects of subject variables on factor scores in Williams' (1986) study showed that, overall, students who had had the most contact with people with an intellectual disability had the highest, most positive scores on the measure of amiability. A significant statistical interaction showed that social science majors who had had the most contact with people with an intellectual disability credited them with the most competence.

The *contact hypothesis*, which states that prejudice can be reduced by increasing contact between social groups, has been prominent in social psychological

investigations of discrimination (Baron et al., 1988). However, empirical support for the contact hypothesis appears to depend on highly specific conditions of contact.

Further reports of positive effects of labels on perception appear in the literature. Gottlieb and Corman (1975) found that the principal underlying component of the attitudes of their 430 adult participants towards children with an intellectual disability was what they called "positive stereotype". Items which loaded highly on this factor were those which required ratings of the degree to which a child was seen as, for example, honest, kind, clean, happy, or useful.

Gottlieb and Corman (1975) found significant effects for their participants' sex, age, and level of education, but not for their level of contact with people with intellectual disabilities, on positive stereotype scores. Female high-school and college graduates indicated a more positive stereotype than males with the same education, but younger people (20 to 30), regardless of sex or education, were less likely than older respondents (over 50) to accept the positive stereotype.

Bak and Siperstein (1986) attempted to determine whether the mentally retarded label could protect children with an intellectual disability and poor social behaviour from the negative attitudes of their peers. Their results showed a significant statistical interaction of label and behaviour. Bak and Siperstein (1986) found that participants were more willing to befriend a child with an intellectual disability, and attributed more positive adjectives to her, when she was socially withdrawn, than when she was portrayed as: a withdrawn, non-labelled child; a child with an intellectual disability who was aggressive; or an aggressive, non-labelled child, respectively.

Bak and Siperstein (1986) concluded that the label did have a protective effect and that the effects of labels should be examined in conjunction with behaviour. Their findings contradict the arguments that either behaviour or labels alone are most influential in impression formation.

Research that took a multidimensional approach to examining perceptions of labelled people also provided inconsistent support for labelling theory. Graffi and Minnes (1988) examined cognitive, affective, and behavioural intention dimensions of attitude in their investigation of the impact of the physical appearance of a child with Down syndrome, and of the mentally retarded label, on other young children.

Graffi and Minnes' (1988) statistical analyses showed that the mental retardation label had a significant negative effect on participants' affective and cognitive attitude dimensions (measured as ratings of drawings of facial expressions, and attributions of adjectives). However, the label had no effect on the children's preparedness to interact with the child with an intellectual disability.

Link and Cullen (1983) proposed four levels of attitudinal response in their investigation of the effect of labels on social rejection. These levels were: ideal, socially correct attitudes; expressed attitudes; deep attitudes that are embedded in a culture; and attitudes that are acted upon. Link and Cullen (1983) manipulated the level of attitude accessed by participants by providing different instructions to each participant group. They found that ideal attitudes towards labelled people were more positive than expressed attitudes, and that these were, in turn, more positive than indicators of attitudes as acted upon and deep attitudes.

Specific characteristics of research participants may also influence labelling study outcomes. O'Connor and Smith (1987) found that trainee social worker participants' ratings of the deviance of a fictitious person who had the label "schizophrenic" were more tolerant than ratings provided by participants with no background in mental health. O'Connor and Smith (1987) concluded that idealism, or the fact that trainee social workers found the stimulus person more interesting, may have contributed to their greater tolerance.

Schemas, Impressions, and Implications for Behaviour

Social psychological literature provides a wealth of empirical evidence for the importance of schemas in impression formation and subsequent behaviour. For example, Hamilton et al. (1990) stated that their review of empirical research found support for the assumption that schema-based expectancies bias perception. They also found that such expectations constitute the basis for "inferences, attributions, and evaluative reactions that give further meaning to the facts that have been acquired" (p. 38).

Hamilton et al. (1990) stated that, in summary, their review of research on the effects of schema-based expectancies indicated that the influence of these expectancies was likely to be stronger when salient cues to group membership were present, and when the perceiver's expressions and behaviour were not constrained by social norms and structures.

Gibbons and Kassin (1987) investigated factors associated with schematic processing of information. They examined the effects of inconsistency with schema-based expectation and of perceptual set on social perception.

In a 2 x 2 x 2 design (painting quality x label x perceptual set), Gibbons and Kassin (1987) showed participants either high or low quality paintings which were attributed to either a "mentally retarded" child or a non-retarded child, and asked them either to form a general overall assessment of the painting they saw or to evaluate its specific characteristics. As a result of their earlier studies in the area, the researchers expected schema-based judgements to be negative.

Gibbons and Kassin's (1987) hypothesis, that schema-inconsistent information and perceiver attention to specific elements of a stimulus would interfere with schematic responding, was supported. Only work of low quality that was attributed to children with an intellectual disability, and assessed generally, showed schema-based responding.

In a second experiment, Gibbons and Kassin (1987) found evidence for the influence of time pressure on schematic information processing. Participants studied a high quality painting attributed to an artist with an intellectual disability for significantly longer than high or low quality paintings said to be by a non-disabled child. They spent the least amount of time looking at low quality work attributed to a child with an intellectual disability.

Gibbons and Kassin (1987) concluded that, as well as supporting claims for the influence of information consistency, perceptual set, and time pressure on schema-based processing of stimulus information, their research confirmed that negative

expectancies of people with the intellectual disability label pervade non-cognitive as well as cognitive domains.

A study by Darley and Gross (1983) is widely cited as evidence of the influence of labels on perceptual and interpretational bias in information processing (e.g. Bodenhausen, 1988; Hamilton et al., 1990; Williams, 1986). Two groups of participants in the study were asked to rate the ability of a child described in terms of demographic information that indicated either high or low socioeconomic status. Darley and Gross (1983) reported that participants showed reluctance to rate the child, and that response scores clustered closely around the only demographic information related to ability, the child's age-grade at school

A further two groups of participants received the same demographic information. These two groups then viewed a video-recording of the child responding to achievement test questions. This video-recording had been independently rated as an ambiguous indication of the child's abilities. However, participants subsequently cited it as evidence for their evaluations of her ability as either well above her grade level (high socioeconomic status information) or below her grade level (low socioeconomic status information).

The results of Darley and Gross's (1983) study confirm that stereotype labels influence the processing of information about a person in a way that leads to confirmation of expectancies.

Williams (1986) related the findings of Darley and Gross's (1983) study to perceptions of people who have an intellectual disability. He stated that, "regardless of the actual behavior that mentally retarded people may exhibit, people will selectively

interpret, attribute, or recall aspects of these behaviors in a manner ... that is consistent with their original perceptions and stereotypes” (p. 18).

Summary of Empirical Literature

This review of empirical literature revealed inconsistent support for the tenets of labelling theory. A review of labelling studies found some evidence for attribution of positive, as well as negative, traits to people with intellectual disabilities and for acceptance, rather than rejection, of them as a result of their label. A review of labelling studies described in a previous section of this paper revealed support for the influence of labelled people's behaviour, rather than labels, on social perception (Link et al., 1987).

Support for the impact of participants' sex, type of education, and level of contact with people who have an intellectual disability on social perception was found in the literature. The dimension of participants' response that was also shown to influence reactions to disability labels.

Reports of social psychological studies provided more reliable support for labelling theory. Schemas, and their consequent expectancies, which were cued by labels have been shown to bias social perception and processing of information to the degree that schema-based expectancies were confirmed.

Schematic processing of information appears to increase in the presence of time pressure; salient cues about group membership; information that is consistent with schema expectancies; absence of social constraints on perceivers; and general, rather than specific, attention to the stimulus.

Methodological Literature

The Vignette Method

Vignettes are brief descriptions or depictions of the salient characteristics of a particular person, group or situation. Systematic manipulation of variables in vignette descriptions, together with random assignment of participants' exposure to the resulting scenarios, permits causal inferences from differences in the responses of participant groups (Alexander & Becker, 1978). In surveys of attitudes and opinions, vignettes present a concrete, uniform stimulus that overcomes problems such as those involved in asking respondents what they think and feel about an abstract concept.

Vignettes can be used to simulate reality when field research would be impractical or unethical (Lanza, 1988). For example, vignettes can represent events that occur infrequently or that pose a danger to participants.

Disadvantages of the vignette method include artificiality of content and response process. Content validity must be carefully evaluated and respondents should be instructed to imagine themselves interacting with the vignette stimulus (Flaskerud, 1979). Parkinson and Manstead (1993) have stated that a particular limitation of vignettes, in studies of affective reactions, is that emotional reactions in real life are not necessarily mediated by symbolic processes. It is difficult to infer affective responses through the use of a cognitive process.

Link et al. (1987) discussed the problem of using vignette stimuli in investigations of social processes. Their study of the influence of labels on the rejection of ex-mental patients used vignette descriptions of labelled people. Link et al. (1987) cautioned that 'in daily interaction, information is likely to come from

different, perhaps contradictory sources thereby providing a more ambiguous picture The effects of labeling may be different, perhaps even more important, under such conditions of uncertainty" (p. 1489).

Social Distance Scales

The measure of affective impression developed for use in the current study contains social distance-type items. Shaw and Wright (1967) reported that social distance scales were originally developed to measure the degree of intimacy a person would permit members of a social outgroup. Social distance items were arranged in order of intimacy to determine the degree of acceptance that existed for various ethnic, racial, or religious groups.

Antonak and Livneh (1991) reported that responses on a social distance scale usually cover a continuum which ranges from complete favourableness (acceptance) to complete unfavourableness (rejection).

Rokeach's Instrumental Values

The Rokeach Value Survey (1973) is a measure of individual value systems. It asks respondents to rank the importance of two sets of values as guiding principles in their lives. Rokeach (1973) named the sets of values *terminal values* (desirable end-states) and *instrumental values* (desirable modes of conduct). Terminal values were either personal or social, and instrumental values were regarded as moral values (for example: polite, obedient) or competence values (capable, independent).

Values are important standards in the evaluations people make of themselves and others (Rokeach, 1973). Instrumental values from the Rokeach Value Survey, together with their antonyms, formed the basis for the semantic differential-type measure of cognitive impression used in the present study.

The Present Study

As outlined earlier in this paper, the present study sought to determine the influence of the label "intellectual disability" on trainee disability service providers' impressions. An integration of labelling theory and social cognition formed the theoretical basis for the research.

Labelling theory proposes a master status process by which labels negatively affect impression formation. This process is analogous to the categorisation and schema-based expectancy biases in information processing proposed by social psychology. Both theoretical perspectives propose that these processes impact upon the behaviours of labelled people and the people they encounter. However, labelling theory's proposal of master status explains the way that entire societies perceive people with stigmatising labels. Social cognition provides support for the cognitive processes involved in the creation of master status, but the content of the social perception that individuals or homogenous groups have of people with disabilities depends on their personal cognitive and affective representations. These may differ from those attributed to the wider society.

The purposive sample used in the present study differs from a representative sample of the wider population. They had more knowledge about the history and

sociology of disability and a greater degree of exposure to people who have a disability. Consequently, although labelling theory provided the theoretical framework for the present study, no directional hypothesis regarding the primary research question was proposed.

The research design of the present study assessed the influence of the intellectual disability label, by investigating the difference between participants' cognitive and affective impressions of people with an intellectual disability and their impressions of identical, non-labelled people.

Participants responded to a vignette description of a stimulus person under conditions which have been shown to increase schema-based information processing. They were under time pressure when asked to form general, first impressions of the stimulus person (Gibbons & Kassin, 1987). It was intended that descriptive, cognitive responses of the participants who read that the stimulus person had an intellectual disability would reflect their schema of people with intellectual disability. Similarly, affective responses to the stimulus person described as having an intellectual disability were intended to reflect the way participants feel about people with intellectual disability.

Independent Variables

Two variables were manipulated for the purpose of investigating the influence of the intellectual disability label on trainee disability service providers' impressions. The first was the label itself, and the second independent variable was the personal and social characteristics of a stimulus person description. This second variable was

intended to incorporate the reality that people encountered by participants are characterised by more than labels.

The manipulation of individual characteristics was also a concession to the body of theory and research that proposes individuating information as a stronger determinant of impression than categorical information. It should be remembered that Social Role Valorisation, a dominant disability service ideology, assumes negative influences of the intellectual disability label on social perception and moderating, positive influences of positively valued roles and individual characteristics.

The levels of the two independent variables were fully crossed (label x individual characteristics) to produce vignette descriptions of the stimulus person, "Louise". Keppel (1991) described such factorial manipulation in experimental research as more closely approximating the "real world" (p. 186).

Vignette descriptions which included the intellectual disability label were structured to enhance schematic information processing. The primacy of the label in the vignettes made it salient, and collecting the data from participants at their place of education meant that their schemas for people with disabilities were primed (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Additionally, an instruction to participants that there were "no correct answers" to the questions regarding the stimulus person was intended to de-emphasise social norms and structures which may have prompted socially correct responses (Hamilton et al., 1990).

The nature of the schemas cued by the vignette descriptions which contained no explicit label were not of direct concern to the aims of the present study. It was participants' impressions of the labelled descriptions that were regarded as important.

These were expected to differ from their impressions of the non-labelled vignettes in ways that trainee disability service providers' social perceptions of people with intellectual disabilities differ from their perceptions of people who do not have that label.

Dependent Measures

Although attitudes are the usual types of social evaluation studied in relation to disability (see Antonak & Livneh, 1988 for a review), impressions of vignette stimuli were investigated by the present study. These immediate responses were requested in an attempt to access participants' stable cognitive and affective representations of people who have an intellectual disability, without the biases that might have been present in response to direct questioning about attitudes.

The present study investigated the effects of a label and individual characteristics on two dependent variables. These were: a measure of the degree of pleasure participants felt in response to specified social interactions with the stimulus person, and the degree to which they attributed positively valued modes of conduct to her. It is acknowledged that it is only possible to measure indications of these implicit dimensions of covert processes.

The first dependent variable could be regarded as a measure of conative (readiness to behave in a certain manner) impression, rather than an affective measure. It could also be regarded as a cognitive indication of impression because cognitive processing is required to put a name to feelings (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). However, because participants were required to rate the way they felt about interacting with

Louise, the position is taken that an indication of affect was indirectly measured by the instrument. Therefore, the two dependent measures have been termed affective and cognitive measures of dimensions of impression, respectively.

It was anticipated that, because affective and cognitive responses are held to be independent, participants' feelings about the stimulus person, and their schemas of the category of people she belonged to, may be different. The possibility that participants' education may have influenced their beliefs about people with disabilities, but not their feelings towards them, was also entertained.

Theoretical Predictions

Support for the master status prediction of labelling theory and schema-models of impression formation was expected if results of the present study showed an effect for the intellectual disability label and no difference between impressions of the three labelled vignette descriptions. Additional support would be provided for labelling theory if the effect of the label on impression was negative.

The position of opponents of labelling theory (and of adherents of the elemental perspective of social cognition) would be supported by a main effect for individual characteristics on participants' impressions. A statistical interaction of the two factors, where positively valued individual characteristics reversed the negative effect of the intellectual disability label, would support the principles of Social Role Valorisation.

Summary

In summary, the present study was undertaken because understanding of trainee disability service providers' cognitive representation of people with intellectual disability, and of the way they feel about them, has the potential to influence the actions of both groups.

The present study was designed to determine the influence of the intellectual disability label on affective and cognitive dimensions of trainee disability service providers' impressions. The design also permitted investigation of support for the alternative view, that people react to individual characteristics, not labels, and for any interaction of these variables.

CHAPTER THREE - METHOD

The research instrument used in the present study was validated by a panel of experts, and pretested on two samples of students of disability before administration to the main purposive sample of trainee disability service providers.

Participants were requested to take part in an impression formation task. Ethical considerations of voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and debriefing were addressed. Feedback about the research was provided to participants.

Participants

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college students who were studying for a Certificate or an Advanced Certificate of Human Services (Disability) formed the purposive sample who participated in this research.

Rationale

The rationale for selection of a purposive sample was that these students have a more homogenous degree of exposure to disability labels than the general population. It was presumed that this would reduce the amount of individual difference in intellectual disability schemas that could be expected in the wider population.

The applied value of the research, that is, practical implications of information about the perceptions that future disability workers have of a client group, was judged

to outweigh the inability to generalise findings beyond the sample. The selection of trainee workers was intended to illuminate contemporary and future perspectives on disability workers' social perceptions.

The Sample

The Senior Lecturer of the TAFE Human Service (Disability) course identified class groups which contained the total student population enrolled in the course, without duplication. Each student who attended college on the days that the study was conducted was invited to participate. Thirteen of the 120 students were absent.

The 107 respondents were 24 males and 83 females. As no demographic data was required for analysis, none was requested from participants. However, the researcher noted that the majority of participants appeared to be aged between 20 and 30 years. Class details supplied by the course coordinator indicated that 43 participants were part-time students employed in the disability field, and 64 were full-time students who may, or may not have worked in the disability area. Full-time students had completed field experience as part of their course. All students had received instruction in the sociology and history of disability, in the service ideologies of normalisation and Social Role Valorisation, as well as in the practical assistance of people with disabilities.

Participants were randomly assigned to equal-sized groups which represented the six experimental conditions. There were five groups of 18 students and one group of 17.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were assured that participation in the study was not a component or a condition of their course. They were informed that their response was voluntary and that they could opt to withdraw from participation at any stage.

The students were told that their responses were not identifiable as those of individual participants, and that they would be confidential to the researcher.

Materials

Vignette Validation

Vignette descriptions were created of a stimulus person who had factorial combinations of either negatively-valued, normative, or positively-valued personal and social characteristics. The stimulus person had either the intellectual disability label, or no explicit label. The resulting six vignettes underwent many changes as a result of expert review.

The descriptions were initially based on clinical literature (for example, American Association on Mental Retardation, 1992) and the researcher's personal experience. The vignettes were subsequently examined and, following incorporation of suggested modifications, validated as realistic by eight academic staff in university Psychology and Human Services Departments. These validators had extensive theoretical and practical experience of people who have an intellectual disability and/or experience of vignette construction.

Questionnaire Pretest

Two pretests were conducted on the questionnaire designed for use in the present study. Although only one pretest was originally planned, the number of changes that resulted from the first administration of the pretest instrument necessitated modifications prior to pretesting it with the remainder of the pretest sample. Characteristics of the pretest samples and conditions under which the questionnaire was administered were similar to those of the main study.

The pretests gave participants an opportunity to comment on their reactions to individual questions and to the instrument as a whole. A copy of the pretest feedback sheet is included in Appendix A.

The first pretest was conducted with the assistance of 11 Certificate of Human Services (Disability) students from the Midlands College of TAFE. Modifications made as a result of their comments included changing the sex of the person described in the vignettes. Some participants stated that they were suspicious of the motives of the stimulus person, "John", when they were asked how they felt about interacting with him in various social situations. As the nature of their concerns made it clear that gender was a contributing factor, John was changed to "Louise".

Further changes to the questionnaire which resulted from the first pretest included instructions designed to counteract a potential social desirability bias, and a reluctance to judge the stimulus person on the basis of little information. Collaboration observed between participants in the first pretest resulted in the addition of an instruction for respondents to work independently.

Participants in the second pretest were 17 Bachelor of Social Science (Disability Studies) students from Edith Cowan University. Although these participants did not express the reluctance to judge that was found in the first group, some students reported concern about giving an opinion of a person they did not know.

This concern resulted in the replacement of the phrase, “describe what you **THINK** of Louise” with the more circumspect, “give your impression of the kind of person you **THINK** Louise might be”.

Modifications in layout and question style were also made in response to difficulties reported by pretest groups.

The Research Instrument

Materials for the present study included a questionnaire which consisted of instructions to participants, one of six different vignettes that described a person named Louise, and two rating scales of affective and cognitive responses to Louise. Other materials were a written introduction to the research, an information sheet which acquainted participants with the aims of the research, and written feedback on preliminary findings.

Standard Introduction.

A written introduction to the research was read to each group of participants. Students were requested to participate in an impression formation task. The introduction also included information about the researcher, assurances of ethical

research practices, and broad instructions for completing the questionnaire. A copy of this introduction is included in Appendix B.

Questionnaire Instructions.

An instruction sheet formed the cover of each questionnaire. Respondents were thanked for their participation, and the assurances contained in the verbal introduction were repeated. The instructions indicated the need for participants to work through the questionnaire sequentially, and independently. Participants were asked to place completed questionnaires in a box at the front of the room, and to collect an information sheet on the way out. A copy of this cover sheet appears in Appendix C.

Vignettes.

The second page of each questionnaire contained one of the six vignette descriptions of the fictional person, Louise. Three vignettes described Louise, a person with an intellectual disability, in terms of employment, financial status, appearance, friendships, and interpersonal behaviours that were either negatively-valued, normative, or positively-valued. In the other three vignettes, Louise was not explicitly labelled and she was also described in terms of one of the three sets of differentially-valued characteristics. These characteristics are described in Table 2.

Copies of the complete vignette descriptions are included in Appendix D.

Instructions which appeared at the top of the questionnaire page that contained the vignette description told participants to: "Please read the description of 'Louise' which appears below. Then complete Task One and Task Two." Tasks one

and two were the instruments designed to measure cognitive and affective dimensions of participants' impression of Louise.

Table 2

Three Sets of Personal and Social Characteristics of the Stimulus Person (Louise)

Experimental Condition	Characteristics
negatively valued	works in a recycling factory poorly paid old-fashioned clothes few friends calls out [inappropriately] to passersby
normal characteristics ^a	happy and cheerful a "good enough" job, fairly well-satisfied with it always busy quite a few friends getting married in a few months
positively valued	a really good job well-paid great clothes all sorts of friends appropriately friendly to passers-by

^a Based on a "normal man" description by Phillips (1963).

Affective Impression Measure.

In addition to the instruction sheet and a vignette describing Louise, the research questionnaire contained an instrument that indirectly sought affective responses to Louise, by asking participants to rate their feelings about interacting with her.

The eight-item affective impression instrument asked participants to rate their feelings on a seven-point, Likert-type scale from *very negative* (described as “displeased or disagreeable”) to *very positive* (“pleased or agreeable”) in response to imagining themselves in specified social interactions with Louise. As a result of pretest feedback, instructions in bold type advised: “It is important to respond according to the way you actually feel, rather than how you think you should feel.”

The social interactions were modified versions of those used in a study by Link et al. (1987) which, in turn, was originally based on a social distance scale (Shaw & Wright, 1967). The situations ranged in intimacy from sharing club membership with Louise, to allowing her to babysit a respondent’s children or (to account for the event that they had no children) their nieces or nephews.

The realism and relevance of the scale items was established in consultation with the panel of experts previously referred to in this paper, and by pretests of the instrument. Several changes were made before the instrument was judged to have satisfactory face validity.

The internal consistency of the affective impression instrument was established by calculation of a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient based on responses from participants of the main study. The alpha coefficient (.91) indicates a relatively unidimensional instrument which is suitable for use in research with group data (DeVellis, 1991).

Cognitive Impression Measure.

An 18-item cognitive impression instrument sought participants' descriptive response to Louise by asking them to rate the kind of person they thought Louise might be. It used a seven-point semantic differential-type scale with bipolar adjectives as anchors.

As a consequence of a concern of several pretest participants, instructions reassured respondents that describing their impressions of Louise did not mean that they were being judgemental.

The adjective pairs were the 18 positively-valued modes of conduct which Rokeach (1973) called instrumental values, and their antonyms. Examples of items included dependent-independent, dishonest-honest, irresponsible-responsible. The negative-positive order was reversed for six items.

Face validity was established by expert validation and pretesting. Calculation of a Cronbach's alpha coefficient (.87) showed that this scale had sufficiently high internal consistency for research use (DeVellis, 1991).

Copies of the instruments for measuring indications of participants' affective and cognitive dimensions of impression are included in Appendix E.

Debriefing Information.

The information sheet collected by participants after completing the questionnaire is included in Appendix F. Participants were told about the purpose of the research and that students had seen six different descriptions of Louise. They were also informed about the information that people use to form impressions, and that

their responses would help the researcher to find out more about the way in which people think and feel about others.

Respondents were thanked for their participation and told that they would receive feedback about the research. They were encouraged to telephone the researcher with any queries.

Procedure

Obtaining the Main Study Sample

The Senior Lecturer in charge of the Human Services (Disability) course at Perth College of TAFE was informed of the aims and purpose of the present study. She gave permission for students of the course to be invited to participate.

The Senior Lecturer agreed that, when advising participants of the proposed research, she would refer to the researcher as a psychology student, rather than as someone who was interested in disability issues. In this way it was hoped to minimise social desirability response sets and to avoid alerting participants to the purpose of the study.

Administering the Questionnaire

Over a one week period the questionnaire was administered to each of the nine classes of students in the course. This shortest feasible duration was chosen to reduce contamination effects between the groups.

In order to prevent participants from considering their responses at length, the study was conducted during a fifteen minute period prior to the end of each class.

The researcher gave a standard verbal introduction to the study to the nine classes of students. The introduction addressed the voluntary nature of participation; assurances of anonymity and confidentiality; and instructions that first impressions were required. In an attempt to elicit honest, undeliberated responses, participants were instructed that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions, and that they should work quickly. They were requested to place completed questionnaires in a box at the front of the room and to collect an information sheet before leaving.

Although the instruction sheets that formed the cover of the questionnaires were identical, the instruments had been sorted so that each of the six stimulus vignettes was represented sequentially, and repeatedly. Therefore, distributing the number of questionnaires that corresponded to the number of volunteer participants constituted random assignment of students to the experimental groups.

After completing the questionnaire, participants deposited them in the box provided and the researcher ensured that each student took a copy of the debriefing information sheet. Students were advised to contact the researcher if they had any queries. No further contact eventuated.

Response Rate

Of the 107 individual students present on the days the study was conducted, 100 per cent responded. This did not prompt concerns about the voluntary nature of participation because of the repeated emphasis on ethical considerations. Some respondents were later found to have exercised their right to discontinue participation by not completing the whole questionnaire.

Scoring

Responses to the measure of the affective dimension of participants' impressions were scored *very negative* (1) to *very positive* (7). Each student's total affective impression score was obtained by summing these ratings. The decision not to reflect the degree of intimacy of the different types of specified social interactions in the scoring of this instrument was supported by the small range of the mean item scores (from a low score of $M=4.50$, $SD=1.65$ for the babysitting item, to a high score of $M=5.70$, $SD=1.34$ for the club membership item).

Ratings on the measure of cognitive dimensions of impression were also scored from one to seven, according to the number circled by the participant. The exception was the reverse scoring of the word pairs: loyal - disloyal, clean - dirty, honest - dishonest, imaginative - unimaginative, logical - illogical, and self-controlled - impulsive, which were listed with the positively-valued mode of conduct first.

The total cognitive impression score for each participant was the sum of the scores for each instrumental value - antonym pair.

Feedback to Participants

In accordance with the agreement made with pretest and main study participants, feedback was provided about broad, preliminary findings of the research.

Feedback sheets for Midlands College of TAFE Human Services (Disability) pretest students, Edith Cowan University Human Service (Disability Studies) pretest

students, and the Perth College of TAFE students who participated in the main study are included in Appendices G, H, and I, respectively.

No further contact has been received from participants.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS

All data screening and data analysis procedures used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Data Preparation

Estimation of missing data was made necessary by some participants' refusal to respond to specific items, ambiguous responses, and apparent accidental omission of some responses. Missing values were not regarded as problematic because the pattern of the missing data was random and the data set was not small (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989).

No cognitive impression score was recorded for six participants. Two failed to respond to any cognitive item, two answered the only the first item, one stopped responding after the first six items, and one stopped after nine items.

Full details of missing data, and of the methods used to deal with it, are reported in Appendix J.

Principal Components Analysis

Previous research using the Rokeach Value Survey has described several underlying dimensions to the set of instrumental values which formed the basis for the cognitive impression scale used in the present study (Rokeach, 1973). In addition,

Rokeach (1973) himself claimed that instrumental values are either moral values related to interpersonal behaviour or competence values related to self-actualisation.

Data from the cognitive impression measure were screened to assess suitability for principal components analysis. Necessary conditions of normality and linearity were met. In accordance with a recommendation by Tabachnick and Fidell (1989), scores that were univariate outliers (identified from stem and leaf diagrams) were recoded to values one unit larger or smaller than the next most extreme score. Although some scores were still extreme after this procedure, further modification was not performed in order to avoid artificially reducing the spread of scores, and thereby compromising intercorrelations between variables.

A principal components extraction with varimax rotation was performed on the 18 cognitive items. Four factors were extracted. Using a cut-off point of .45 for inclusion of an item in the interpretation of a factor, the relatively simple structure of the solution was illustrated by the fact that only three variables loaded highly on more than one factor.

Three of the four factors extracted (Factors 1, 2, and 4) proved to be stable and interpretable. However, the only pure variables to load highly on Factor 3 were “courageous” and “broadminded”. Interpretation of the construct underlying Factor 3 was further complicated by complex variable loadings of the items “forgiving” and “capable”. It was decided to exclude the factor from the analysis on the grounds of instability and lack of interpretability.

The remaining factors, one, two, and four, accounted for 52.2 % of the variance in the set of variables. They were labelled agreeableness, trustworthiness, and competence, respectively.

The factor loadings for the principal components solution of the cognitive impression measure used in the present study are shown in Table 3. The fact that the items in the scale are well-defined by the solution was evident in the high communality values.

Factor scores for each participant were estimated by summing their scores on variables that had a loading of greater than .45 on each of the three labelled factors. Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) have stated that this simple method is entirely adequate for variables with roughly equal standard deviations.

Data Screening

Data were screened to evaluate assumptions for conducting a two-way factorial (label x individual characteristics) MANOVA on four dependent variables: affective impression, agreeableness, trustworthiness, and competence.

Stem and leaf diagrams showed nine univariate within-cell outliers. These were modified by recoding scores to one unit smaller or larger than the next most extreme score. Noticeably, all outliers occurred in the labelled, negatively valued cell (Cell 1), and eight were scores on trustworthiness.

Table 3*Factor Loadings of Cognitive Impression Measure Items*

Item	F ₁ ^a	F ₂	F ₃	F ₄	<i>h</i> ²
Obedient	.87	.15	.01	.04	.78
Polite	.85	.14	.06	.22	.80
Loving	.79	.14	.27	.05	.71
Helpful	.78	.09	.37	.12	.76
Responsible	.64	.15	.21	.44	.67
Forgiving	.59	.11	.54	.01	.65
Clean	.07	.83	.03	.09	.70
Honest	.16	.81	.02	-.03	.68
Loyal	.02	.77	.12	-.12	.62
Self-controlled	.39	.60	.01	.33	.62
Imaginative	.18	.56	.37	-.04	.49
Logical	.08	.53	.07	.51	.56
Courageous	.19	.02	.76	.17	.64
Broadminded	.22	.20	.69	.12	.57
Capable	.09	.04	.47	.70	.72
Ambitious	.10	.04	.31	.68	.57
Independent	.16	-.17	-.23	.62	.49
Intellectual	.31	.39	.39	.46	.61
Percent of Variance	21.8 %	17.9 %	12.7 %	12.5 %	64.9%

^a Factor labels:F₁ - agreeablenessF₂ - trustworthinessF₃ - was deemed not interpretableF₄ - competence

Modification of extreme scores on trustworthiness caused normality of the distribution of that dependent variable, already marginal, to be violated. Normality was also violated in the labelled, normative characteristics condition (Cell 2) on the distribution of agreeableness. Shapiro-Wilk's statistics indicate compromised within-

cell normality of two further dependent variables: trustworthiness ($W = .047$) in Cell 2 and agreeableness ($W = .04$) in Cell 6 (no label, positively valued).

Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) have stated that, although it is not yet clear if the robustness of relatively large sample sizes to violations of normality in ANOVA also applies to multivariate analyses, larger sample sizes and an absence of outliers is likely to reduce the impact of non-normality. Therefore, no attempts were made to normalise distributions.

Calculation of Mahalanobis distance values for data from the present study revealed no multivariate outliers at $\alpha = .001$, or even at $\alpha = .025$. Scatterplots showed satisfactory linearity and there was no indication of multicollinearity.

The assumption of univariate homogeneity of variance was violated for trustworthiness but was met for the other three variables. Homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was satisfactory.

Mean scores and standard deviations of affective impression, agreeableness, trustworthiness, and competence are shown in Table 4.

MANOVA Analysis

A 2×3 (label \times individual characteristics) between-subjects MANOVA was conducted on the dependent variables affective impression, agreeableness, trustworthiness, and competence. Pillai's criterion was chosen as the appropriate statistic due to its reported robustness (Bray & Maxwell, 1985).

The combined dependent variables were significantly affected by the individual characteristics variable, approximate $F(8, 186) = 3.31, p = .001$, but not by label,

$F(4,92) = 1.38$, $p = .245$, nor by their interaction, approximate $F(8,186) = 0.96$, $p = .468$.

The results reflected a moderate association between the manipulation of individual characteristics and the combined dependent variables, $\eta^2 = .24$. That is, 24 % of the variance in the best linear combination of affective impression, agreeableness, trustworthiness, and competence was accounted for by assignment to levels of individual characteristics.

Table 4

Mean Scores for Participants' Affective Impressions and Attributions of Agreeableness, Trustworthiness, and Competence to Louise^a

<i>DV</i> LABEL	INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS							
	Negatively Valued		Normative		Positively Valued		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD (n)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD (n)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD (n)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD (n)</i>
<i>Affective Response</i>								
I.D. Label	37.65	7.94 (17)	44.72	8.83 (18)	43.69	6.91 (16)	42.01	8.43 (51)
No Label	38.09	8.93 (17)	44.00	9.16 (17)	43.71	7.86 (16)	41.90	8.94 (50)
Total	37.87	8.32 (34)	44.37	8.86 (35)	43.70	7.28 (32)	41.97	8.64 (101)
<i>Agreeableness</i>								
I.D. Label	32.21	5.97 (17)	32.94	5.98 (18)	34.63	4.59 (16)	33.23	5.56 (51)
No Label	30.65	5.97 (17)	33.47	5.06 (17)	30.06	5.70 (16)	31.42	5.68 (50)
Total	31.43	5.99 (34)	33.20	5.48 (35)	32.34	5.59 (32)	32.33	5.66 (101)
<i>Trustworthiness</i>								
I.D. Label	24.94	1.82 (17)	28.17	5.06 (18)	26.68	8.99 (16)	26.63	5.98 (51)
No Label	25.68	5.97 (17)	29.20	6.93 (17)	26.94	5.58 (16)	27.28	6.25 (50)
Total	25.31	4.36 (34)	28.67	5.97 (35)	26.81	7.36 (32)	26.95	6.10 (101)
<i>Competence</i>								
I.D. Label	17.97	4.73 (17)	19.86	4.35 (18)	22.69	2.44 (16)	20.12	4.25 (51)
No Label	18.35	3.59 (17)	21.65	3.16 (17)	20.75	3.47 (16)	20.24	3.63 (50)
Total	18.16	3.94 (34)	20.73	3.87 (35)	21.72	3.11 (32)	20.18	3.93 (101)

^a Louise is a fictitious stimulus person described in terms of the presence or absence of the label "intellectual disability" and negatively valued, normal, or positively valued characteristics.

The present study was an experimental investigation of the influence of the intellectual disability label on trainee disability service providers' impressions, rather than a survey of their perceptions of the people they assist. However, it is relevant to the aim of the study to note that all within-cell mean ratings of Louise's agreeableness, trustworthiness, competence, and her social acceptability reflected mean item ratings within the range of the mid-point rating of (4) and the penultimate positive rating of (6).

Stepdown Analysis

Stepdown analysis was chosen as the appropriate univariate statistical test for a number of reasons. Statistically, analysis of univariate ANOVA effects would be compromised by the relationship between the dependent variables (see Table 5). In addition, a case for the independence and primacy of affective response has already been made and, for that reason, the affective impression measure has logical priority in a hierarchical analysis.

Table 5

Combined Within-Cell Correlations for Affective, Agreeableness, Trustworthiness, and Competence Dependent Variables

Within Cells	Correlations With <i>SD</i> on Diagonal			
	Affective	Agreeableness	Trustworthiness	Competence
Affective	8.331			
Agreeableness	.475	5.583		
Trustworthiness	.232	.399	6.074	
Competence	.365	.445	.247	3.647

A further, practical consideration of the set of dependent variables was made using Rokeach's (1973) sub-classification of the moral and competence dimensions of instrumental values. This indicated that, although Louise's perceived agreeableness and trustworthiness may have been a reflection of participants' feelings towards her, her perceived competence was a separate issue. Consequently, the order of priority of

the dependent variables for stepdown analysis was: affective impression, agreeableness, trustworthiness, competence.

Homogeneity of regression was satisfactory for all components of the stepdown analysis. A Bonferroni-type adjustment ($\alpha=.0125$), recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (1989), was made to control the increased probability of Type I error due to multiple testing.

Affective impression, stepdown $F(2,95) = 6.25, p = .003$, indicated a unique effect of the influence of different descriptions of Louise's individual characteristics. Post-hoc comparisons ($\alpha=.017$, Bonferroni-adjusted for three comparisons) showed that participants felt significantly more positive about interacting with Louise when she was described in terms of positively valued characteristics than when her characteristics were negatively valued ones, $t(101) = -3.025, p = .003$. Similarly, they felt more positive about interacting with Louise when she had normative, rather than negatively valued characteristics, $t(101) = -3.132, p = .002$.

There was no significant difference between the way participants felt about interacting with Louise depending on her description in terms of normal or positive characteristics, $t(101) = 0.084, p = .933$.

Effects for individual characteristics on agreeableness, stepdown $F(2,94) = 0.30, p = .744$, and trustworthiness, stepdown $F(2,93) = 1.46, p = .237$, were not unique, indicating that they were explained by prior effects on affective impression.

Competence, stepdown $F(2,92) = 5.60, p = .005$, however, did show a unique effect for the impact of individual characteristics. Participants thought that Louise was

significantly more competent when she was described with positively valued, rather than negatively valued characteristics, $t(101) = 3.347, p = .001$. However, there was no difference in the amount of competence they attributed to Louise depending on whether her assigned characteristics were negative or normal,

$t(101) = 1.812, p = .073$; or normal or positive, $t(101) = -1.605, p = .112$.

A summary of stepdown analysis results for the effect of individual characteristics on a hierarchical ordering of the dependent variables is shown in Table 6. Details of univariate analyses are included as supplemental information.

Table 6

Tests of the Stepdown and Univariate Effects of the Individual Characteristics Independent Variable

IV	DV	Stepdown <i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Univariate <i>F</i>
Individual Characteristics	affective	6.25*	2/95	6.25 ^a
	agreeableness	0.30	2/94	0.88
	trustworthiness	1.46	2/93	2.67
	competence	5.60*	2/92	8.48 ^a

^a Significance level can not be evaluated but would reach $p < .0125$ if dependent variables were orthogonal.

* $p < .0125$

Summary of Results

The label "intellectual disability", on its own or in combination with individual characteristics of varying social values, had no effect on the way participants felt about interacting with Louise. In addition, the label did not affect their perceptions of Louise in terms of her agreeableness, her trustworthiness, or her competence.

Conversely, the individual characteristics ascribed to Louise did influence participants' responses. Specifically, the way in which Louise was described affected how positive participants felt about interacting with her in various social situations, and it influenced the amount of competence they attributed to her.

Trainee disability service providers felt more positive about interacting with Louise, and they thought of her as more competent, when she had positively valued characteristics than when her personal and social characteristics were described as negatively valued. They also felt better about interacting with her when her characteristics were normative, rather than negative.

CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to investigate the influence of the label “intellectual disability” on trainee disability service providers’ impressions. Analysis of participants’ responses to vignette descriptions of a stimulus person showed that their impressions were not influenced by the label. However, individual characteristics of the stimulus person did have an effect on participants’ impressions. There was no interaction effect of the independent factors, label and individual characteristics.

Acquisition of information about impressions of non-labelled people was not an aim of the present study. Therefore, discussion will be confined to results that relate to trainee disability service providers’ impressions of people who have an intellectual disability.

Results in Relation to Theoretical Predictions

The results of the present study provided no support for the prediction of labelling theory that deviancy labels create a perception of a deviant master status. The intellectual disability label did not break the claims of Louise’s individual characteristics (Goffman, 1963), nor were characteristics that disconfirmed the stereotype for the label ignored (Hughes, 1944).

Conditions, instructions, and stimuli that have been demonstrated to maximise schematic information processing (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Gibbons & Kassin, 1987; Hamilton et al., 1990) were included as part of the present study. Nevertheless,

Louise elicited responses which differed according to her individual characteristics, and which were not affected by her label. These results discounted predictions of the holistic perspective of social cognition that the label would cue schema-based expectancies, and consequent perceptual and information processing biases.

Not only did the intellectual disability label fail to influence participants' processing of information about Louise, it did not have the negative effect on impression that was predicted by labelling theory and the principles of Social Role Valorisation. The label did not cause trainee disability service providers to respond to Louise as if the label signalled that she possessed auxiliary negative traits (Becker, 1963). Similarly, the intellectual disability label did not elicit responses based on negative historical roles or societal devaluation (Wolfensberger, 1983, 1992).

Several additional effects of the intellectual disability label on trainee disability service providers' impressions could have been expected as a result of precedents in the theoretical and empirical literature. The results of the present study did not support previous evidence for: a positive stereotype based on the label (Gottlieb & Corman, 1975); for differences between dimensions of evaluation of labelled people (Graffi & Minnes, 1988); nor for an interaction of the effects of the intellectual disability label and a person's individual characteristics (Bak & Siperstein, 1986; Wolfensberger, 1983, 1992).

Opponents of labelling theory (e.g. Kirk, 1974; Knutsson, 1977) have taken the position that individual characteristics, such as behaviour, influence responses to labelled people. This stance was supported by the results of the present study. Personal and social characteristics that have been identified as positively valued by

Western cultures had a positive effect on trainee disability service providers' feelings about interacting with Louise. Positively valued characteristics were also related to attributions of greater competence than negatively valued characteristics.

Normative characteristics elicited more favourable anticipations of interaction with Louise than those that were negatively valued.

Evaluation of Research Findings in Relation to Labelling

It has been previously noted in this paper that the predictions of labelling theory were made in relation to the general population. In addition, participants of the present study have been identified as having characteristics in common that distinguish them from the wider community. The most obvious of these characteristics is their education in social issues surrounding disability.

Participants' Education

At the time that they responded to the present study, participants had all received some degree of instruction in the history and sociology of disability. Information about the social bases of attitudes and behaviour towards people who have a disability may have reduced any negative effect of labels on participants' impressions.

Participants' education may also have been related to their resistance to conditions that promote schema-based information processing.

Values

Research by Link et al. (1987) showed negative effects for a deviancy label on social perception only in those participants who associated strong negative beliefs with the label. Labelling theory proposes that strong negative evaluations are attached to deviancy labels because they signal violation of social rules (Becker, 1963) and values (Goffman, 1963; Scheff, 1984). According to Wolfensberger (1992), strong negative evaluations are attached to the intellectual disability label because of its association with negative historical roles, and due to the high social value placed on intellectual proficiency.

The absence of a negative influence of the intellectual disability label on trainee disability service providers' impressions indicates that their values about disability may differ from those attributed to the wider society.

Education in the history and sociology of disability may have been a factor in a change in students' values. Alternatively, the absence of a negative effect for the intellectual disability label may have been a result of values and attitudes that participants possessed before enrolling in the disability course. It is conceivable that such values influenced their choice of vocation.

Contact With People Who Have Disabilities

Nearly half the participants in the present study worked with people with disabilities, and the rest had had field experience as part of their education. One participant commented on this contact after reading the debriefing information about the present study. He asked if results were going to be compared to other groups

because, "our results are likely to be very positive because we work with people with disabilities" (anonymous respondent, September 6, 1994).

The contact hypothesis, which proposes that association between social groups reduces prejudice (Baron et al., 1988), has been mentioned previously in this paper. Investigations of the contact hypothesis have produced contradictory findings. Support for the contact proposal appears to depend on the nature and context of contact.

Empirical research on the influence of the intellectual disability label has also provided inconsistent evidence for the contact hypothesis. In Williams' (1986) sample, contact with people with disabilities was related to comparatively positive evaluations. However, Gottlieb and Corman (1975) found no statistical effect for contact with children with an intellectual disability on social perception.

Therefore, the extent of present study participants' contact with people with disabilities may, or may not, have been related to their lack of discrimination on the basis of the intellectual disability label. Collection of demographic information about relationships with people with disabilities in future, similar research may clarify the influence of the interaction of labels and contact on social perception.

Reluctance to Stereotype

It has been speculated that participants' education, values, and contact with people with disabilities may have favourably influenced the formation and the content of their impressions. As a consequence, the question of why there was no positive effect for the label arises. Previous evidence of a positive stereotype for the

intellectual disability label has been reported (Gottlieb & Corman, 1975). However, Gibbons and Kassim (1987) have pointed out that the positive stereotype of people with disabilities is associated with outdated attitudes of patronisation.

Presumably, the characteristics of trainee disability service providers that made them reluctant to attach the negative intellectual disability stereotype would have made them as resistant to the imposition of a positive stereotype on perceptions of Louise.

Summary Evaluation of Findings for Label

In summary, it is speculated that three characteristics that make the participants of the present study a homogenous group, and which distinguish them from the general population, may account for the absence of an effect for the intellectual disability label on impressions. The characteristics of this purposive sample that have been discussed in relation to non-discriminatory perceptions of Louise's agreeableness, trustworthiness, competence, and of the affective impression she elicits are education, values, and contact with people with disabilities.

Evaluation of Results for Individual Characteristics

Mean ratings of the various dimensions of impression of Louise represented responses that were in the range of the neutral mid-point of ratings, and the rating equivalent of "quite positive", across all conditions. However, she was perceived as significantly more competent, and participants felt significantly more positive about

interacting with her, when she was described in terms of positively valued personal and social characteristics.

Discussion of the results of the present study has prompted speculation that aspects of participants' values may differ from those of the general population. However, trainee disability service providers are also members of the wider society. Consequently, it is not surprising that characteristics that have been identified as positively valued in a society should elicit comparatively positive responses from members of that society. Nor is it surprising that the dimensions of impressions concerned were affective impression and perceptions of competence. Socially valued characteristics could be expected to affect how perceivers feel as well as their perceptions of a person in terms of a characteristic that is highly prized by the society (Wolfensberger, 1992).

Descriptions of Louise in terms of positively valued, normative, or negatively valued characteristics did not make a difference to her perceived agreeableness or trustworthiness. In addition, there was no difference between impressions of Louise, on any dimension, as a result of her normative or positively valued characteristics.

Practical Implications of the Research

Disability service providers play an important part in the lives of many people who have an intellectual disability. People with disabilities often live in accommodation serviced by disability agencies. Many others access specialised education, employment, and recreation programmes.

Several behaviour and identity outcomes have been related to perceptions of people with disabilities that are held by other people in their lives. Schalock (1993) related the perceptions of significant others to quality of life outcomes. Darley and Oleson (1993) described the processes that underlie behavioural confirmation, and possible role and personality change, that may result from perceivers' expectancies of a target person.

The perceptions of people who are important in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities have also been related to influences on their social identity. Sarbin and Scheibe (1983) stated that social identity is ratified through interactions with people in complementary roles. The image that people have in their society is also influenced by the imagery of their physical settings, activities, clothing and appearance, and by the way they are spoken to, and spoken of, by others (Wolfensberger, 1992).

The Intellectual Disability Label

The results of the present study have positive implications for the future of disability service. It has been implied that a lack of stigmatisation on the basis of the intellectual disability label has the power to favourably influence social identity. Perceptions of the equality of people who have an intellectual disability may result in the promotion of a physical environment, activities, appearance, language, and other imagery that signals this equality to the wider community.

In their capacity as direct care providers, social trainers are responsible for the everyday application of disability policy, including the provision of opportunities for

development. Results of the present study indicate that participants' perceived people with intellectual disabilities as individuals who do not differ from non-labelled people on important dimensions. Consequent expectations of "normality" should lead to provision and reinforcement for normative developmental opportunities.

Individual Characteristics

The fact that Louise was perceived as significantly more competent, and that participants felt more positive about interacting with her, when she was described in terms of positive, rather than negatively valued characteristics is particularly relevant to the present study.

One of the aims of the present study was to gather information about trainee disability service providers' perceptions of people who have an intellectual disability. The negatively valued characteristics described in the present study were those of a stereotypical person with a mild intellectual disability. Whether as a consequence of the dynamics of role expectancy and self-fulfilling prophecy, or for another reason (such as institutionalisation and modelling), some people with intellectual disabilities do have stereotype-consistent characteristics. They have low-status, low paying jobs; some dress poorly and have few friends; and they do sometimes behave in ways that are not socially appropriate.

The present study has indicated that possession of stereotypical characteristics results in a person appearing less competent and less socially acceptable to trainee disability service providers. This perception has the potential to affect services such as the provision of opportunities for participation and integration with the wider

community. Consequently, enhancement of positively valued roles to people with an intellectual disability appears to be as important to their social identity and acceptance as Wolfensberger (1983, 1992) has claimed.

Theoretical Implications

The results of the present study failed to support predictions of labelling theory. However, those results were obtained from the responses of a purposive sample of the population and they were not generalisable to the wider society. Labelling theory may provide a more useful framework for investigation of the influence of the intellectual disability label on social perceptions at the level of the general population.

Trainee disability service providers' responses provided no evidence for the use of schema-models of impression formation. However, a significant effect for the individual characteristics of the stimulus person supported predictions of the elemental approach of social cognition and social psychology.

Evidence in support of this individuated information processing has been discussed in the context of participants' educational background. Results of the present study may also be a manifestation of the relevance of the concluding comments of Darley and Oleson's (1993) paper on interpersonal perceptions.

Darley and Oleson (1993) concluded that the social psychological community's acceptance of social constructionist processes has been almost universal. They claimed a need for a more balanced perspective and that, "the task for future

researchers is to conceptualise the workings of social constructionist principles in interaction with what we might call *social-perceptual facts*" (p. 59, original italics).

Limitations of the Research

Important practical implications of the results of this research for people who have an intellectual disability and for disability service provision have already been discussed. It is not possible to generalise the results of the present study to the wider population. It has been explained that reduced external validity was accepted as necessary compromise for the applied relevance of this research. However, there must be confidence in the external validity of the setting and conditions that produced the research findings for such implications to be legitimate.

Participants' positive evaluations of people who have an intellectual disability were measured in the educational setting where they have been taught about the social issues of disability, that is, a setting conducive to such responses. This setting may have resulted in responses which came from what Link and Cullen (1983) called the ideal level of attitude, evaluations that reflect social correctness. This is the type of idealistic response bias that was found by O'Connor and Smith (1987), under similar conditions, in their sample of trainee social workers.

In addition, participants responded to a description of an individual with intellectual disability. Williams (1986) reported that perceptions of labelled individuals have been demonstrated to be more favourable than perceptions of the groups to which they belong. He stated that perceptions of groups are more

influenced by social norms and stereotypes than impressions of individuals. Consideration of this effect raises a question of the generalisability of the absence of an effect for the label on impressions of Louise, to perceptions of people with intellectual disabilities as a social category.

Limitations relating to the artificiality of vignette descriptions as stimuli, and of responses to them, have already been considered in conjunction with an explanation of their unique value as a research tool.

Future Directions

Empirical Directions

It has been suggested that collection of demographic information about the type of contact trainee disability service providers' have had with people who have an intellectual disability may clarify the relevance of the contact hypothesis to results of future studies of this type. Information about participants' stage of education and period of employment in the disability area will also illuminate the influence of sample characteristics on research findings.

Confidence in the real-world generalisability of a lack of effect for the intellectual disability label will be enhanced if replication of the results of the present study is found in results of field research. Use of participant observation or ethnographic methods in field research will address the need for realistic stimuli and interaction processes. Inclusion of information about participants' values will increase confidence in generalisation of findings to the general population

If vignette descriptions are chosen as representations of information about categorical and individual characteristics in future experimental research, several improvements could be considered. Qualitative input from people with disabilities, their families, advocates, or service providers will provide more, realistic information for vignette descriptions. In addition, ethically sensitive video simulation or role playing of the stimulus person is suggested.

Theoretical Directions

Results of the present study indicated participants' use of individual characteristics, rather than cognitive representations of social categorical information, to form impressions. However, it has been argued that specific attributes of the purposive sample that distinguish them from the general population may have been responsible for this effect.

Darley and Oleson (1993) called for an integration of perspectives on the influence of social constructionism and perceptual reality in investigations of social perception and interpersonal interaction. Combination of approaches that presently focus exclusively on either stereotype-based expectations or perceptual facts may be addressed by "mixed models" of social perception (Zebrowitz, 1990, p. 48). For example, Fiske and Neuberg's (1990) continuum model of impression formation integrates holistic, category-based approaches to social perception with elemental perspectives based on consideration of individual characteristics.

The use of such a theoretical model would permit concurrent investigation of the effects of different types of information on social perception.

Applied Directions

Although the intellectual disability label did not influence trainee disability service providers' impressions of Louise, her individual characteristics affected the way they felt about interacting with her, and the degree of competence they perceived.

The fact that positively valued characteristics had a positive effect on impressions provides support for Social Role Valorisation as a dominant service ideology. The detrimental influence of negatively valued characteristics on perceptions of Louise's competence and social acceptability may point to a need for wider understanding of the causes of devalued personal attributes.

Conclusions

Information about the perceptions that trainee disability service providers have of people with intellectual disabilities has been advanced by the results of the present study. It has been suggested that the combination of service providers' personal and educational background, and their contact with people with disabilities, may be related to resistance to unfavourable categorisation of people who have an intellectual disability. In addition, it was found that individual characteristics of people with intellectual disabilities influenced participants' perceptions of their competence and social acceptability. Results of the present study provided support for the principles of a dominant disability service ideology, which asserts that positively valued characteristics are important to favourable social perception of people with intellectual disabilities.

The present study has also contributed to the theoretical enrichment of intellectual disability research. It used a social psychological framework to investigate a sociological perspective on social deviance. This integrated, theoretical perspective provided cross-disciplinary evidence for the importance of social perception to the social and personal identity of people who have an intellectual disability.

A psychological approach to research on the holistic, categorical effects of a social deviance label permitted rigorous, experimental investigation. The research design also enabled results to indicate support for the opposing, elemental viewpoint that was common to both disciplines.

In conclusion, the results of the present study indicate that investigation of the complex processes of social perception may benefit from theoretical models that combine extreme holistic and elemental approaches to information processing. Personal and social attributes of perceivers should also be taken into account.

The present study was a small-scale, quantitative investigation conducted in an academic setting under experimental conditions. Nevertheless, it provided empirically and theoretically worthwhile information about the influence of the intellectual disability label on the impressions of a purposive sample of trainee disability service providers.

Having the identity of a person who has an intellectual disability is not valued in Western society. The intellectual disability label signals deviance from social norms and values, and the characteristics of a stereotypical person with an intellectual disability (whether actual or attributed) are negatively valued.

Information about the way in which characteristics of people with intellectual disabilities and characteristics of members of the wider society combine to influence social perception has the potential to effect improvements in the social identity of people with intellectual disabilities. The real value of the present study may be to inform competent field research into the influence of the intellectual disability label on the social perception of members of the general population.

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Appendix A

Pretest Comments and Feedback

Please answer the following questions and use the space provided to make any other comments you feel are relevant.

1. Was the questionnaire easy to understand? Yes/No

2. Was the questionnaire easy to answer? Yes/No

3. Did you find the questionnaire too intrusive? Yes/No

4. What do you think was the purpose of the questions?

5. If you had to describe Louise in your own words, how would you describe her?

6. Please feel free to make any further comments.

Thank you once again for taking part in this study. Please place your completed questionnaire in the box provided and then collect an information sheet about this research.

Appendix B

Standardised Introduction

Hello, my name is Dianne McKillop.

I'm studying psychology at Edith Cowan University and, for my Honours research, I'm trying to find out what are the characteristics of a person that have the most influence on the way other people respond to that person.

Your lecturer has given me permission to ask you to participate in this research and I'll be asking you to complete a questionnaire that I'll be handing out shortly. There are no identifying marks on the questionnaire so your responses will be completely anonymous. It is overall impressions I'm interested in, not your individual responses. I also want to stress that no-one but me will have access to the completed questionnaires, so they will also be confidential.

Participation in this study is voluntary, it is not a requirement of your course. You are free not to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time.

There are instructions on the questionnaire and you can start as soon as you like after I've handed you your questionnaire. Work on it as quickly as you like, it should take you less than ten minutes. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. It is your first impressions that I'm interested in. When you've finished, fold the questionnaire over and deposit it in this box. I will then give you an information sheet about the research. The sheet includes my phone number in case there's anything you want to discuss with me later.

Are there any questions before we start?

Appendix C
Questionnaire Cover Sheet

IMPRESSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire. Your time and effort are very much appreciated.

Participation in this study is voluntary and your responses are anonymous and confidential.

I am interested in the characteristics that influence the way people respond to others. People differ in their impressions of others and it is important that the answers you give reflect your **FIRST IMPRESSION**.

Don't be afraid to work through the tasks quickly, these are not the kinds of questions that have right or wrong answers.

Please work through the tasks sequentially (start at the beginning and don't go back) and work on your own.

When you have finished the questionnaire, please place it in the box at the front of the room. The researcher will then give you an information sheet.

Please now turn the page to start the questionnaire.

Appendix D

Vignette Descriptions

Vignette 1 - Labelled, negatively valued.

Imagine that you are having coffee with a friend. She is telling you about a woman with an intellectual disability who has moved into her street. She says:

"Louise moved in a few weeks ago. I think she works in the recycling factory. She mustn't get paid much because her clothes are pretty old-fashioned.

I don't think she has many friends. Sometimes she stands in her front yard and calls out to passersby."

Vignette 2 - Labelled, normative.

Imagine that you are having coffee with a friend. She is telling you about a woman with an intellectual disability who has moved into her street. She says:

"Louise moved in a few weeks ago. She is happy and cheerful, has a good enough job, and is fairly well satisfied with it. She is always busy and has quite a few friends. I think she's getting married in a few months."

Vignette 3 - Labelled, positively valued.

Imagine that you are having coffee with a friend. She is telling you about a woman with an intellectual disability who has moved into her street. She says:

"Louise moved in a few weeks ago. She has a really good job and it must pay well because she wears great clothes.

She seems to have all sorts of friends. She has nodded or smiled a few times when I've passed her house."

Vignette 4 - No explicit label, negatively valued.

Imagine that you are having coffee with a friend. She is telling you about a woman who has moved into her street. She says:

"Louise moved in a few weeks ago. I think she works in the recycling factory. She mustn't get paid much because her clothes are pretty old-fashioned.

I don't think she has many friends. Sometimes she stands in her front yard and calls out to passersby."

Vignette 5 - No explicit label, normative.

Imagine that you are having coffee with a friend. She is telling you about a woman who has moved into her street. She says:

"Louise moved in a few weeks ago. She is happy and cheerful, has a good enough job, and is fairly well satisfied with it. She is always busy and has quite a few friends. I think she's getting married in a few months."

Vignette 6 - No explicit label, positively valued.

Imagine that you are having coffee with a friend. She is telling you about a woman who has moved into her street. She says:

"Louise moved in a few weeks ago. She has a really good job and it must pay well because she wears great clothes.

She seems to have all sorts of friends. She has nodded or smiled a few times when I've passed her house."

Appendix E

Affective and Cognitive Impression Scales

Task One: Answer the following questions according to how you **FEEL** about Louise. Imagine yourself in each of the following situations and put a cross in the box that best describes how **negative** (displeased or disagreeable) or **positive** (pleased or agreeable) you feel about it. It is important to respond according to the way you **actually** feel, rather than how you think you should feel.

For example, if the idea of seeing Louise at your local shopping centre makes you feel quite pleased you would answer a question about that like this:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very negative	quite negative	slightly negative	neutral	slightly positive	quite positive	very positive
(displeased, disagreeable)					(pleased, agreeable)	

Task One Questions

1. How would you feel if Louise joined a club or group of which you are a member?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very negative	quite negative	slightly negative	neutral	slightly positive	quite positive	very positive

2. If Louise sat next to you on the bus, how would you feel?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very negative	quite negative	slightly negative	neutral	slightly positive	quite positive	very positive

3. How would you feel if Louise sat down at your table in a café?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
very negative	quite negative	slightly negative	neutral	slightly positive	quite positive	very positive

continues

4. If Louise moved next door to you, how would you feel?

☐ very negative
 ☐ quite negative
 ☐ slightly negative
 ☐ neutral
 ☐ slightly positive
 ☐ quite positive
 ☐ very positive

5. How would you feel about going to Louise's for afternoon tea?

☐ very negative
 ☐ quite negative
 ☐ slightly negative
 ☐ neutral
 ☐ slightly positive
 ☐ quite positive
 ☐ very positive

6. If Louise started working behind the counter of your local lunch bar, how would you feel?

☐ very negative
 ☐ quite negative
 ☐ slightly negative
 ☐ neutral
 ☐ slightly positive
 ☐ quite positive
 ☐ very positive

7. How would you feel about Louise babysitting your children or your nieces or nephews?

☐ very negative
 ☐ quite negative
 ☐ slightly negative
 ☐ neutral
 ☐ slightly positive
 ☐ quite positive
 ☐ very positive

8. If Louise married into your family, how would you feel?

☐ very negative
 ☐ quite negative
 ☐ slightly negative
 ☐ neutral
 ☐ slightly positive
 ☐ quite positive
 ☐ very positive

Task Two: In this task you are asked to give your impression of the kind of person you **THINK** Louise might be. This doesn't mean you are being judgemental. All you are asked to do is circle the number between each of the following pairs of words that most closely describes your first impression of Louise.

As a hypothetical example, if there was a word pair that has "non-religious" and "religious" at each end and you think that Louise is likely to be slightly non-religious, you would circle number 3 like this:

non-religious 1 2 **3** 4 5 6 7 religious

continues

Task Two Questions

unambitious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	ambitious
narrow-minded	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	broad-minded
incompetent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	capable
loyal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	disloyal
clean	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	dirty
cowardly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	courageous
unforgiving	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	forgiving
unhelpful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	helpful
honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	dishonest
imaginative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unimaginative
dependent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	independent
non-intellectual	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	intellectual
logical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	illogical
unloving	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	loving
disobedient	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	obedient
impolite	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	polite
irresponsible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	responsible
self-controlled	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	impulsive

Thank you once again for taking part in this study. Please place your completed questionnaire in the box provided and then collect an information sheet about this research.

Appendix F

Debriefing Information

INFORMATION SHEET ON IMPRESSION RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to find out more about what influences the way people feel and think about others.

Previous research has shown that people sometimes use information they already have about groups, for example stereotypes, to form their impressions of people. At other times they respond to information such as a person's appearance or behaviour. People also use a mixture of the two types of information.

The questionnaires for this research contain six different descriptions of "Louise".

The differences came from combinations of:

- (1) the label "person with an intellectual disability", or no label, with
- (2) individual characteristics that were either consistent with the stereotype of a person with a mild intellectual disability, inconsistent, or neutral.

These different questionnaires were randomly distributed to your group. After I have collected more information from other groups, I will let you know about the general trends identified by this study. If you have any questions about this research, please don't hesitate to call me on 398 7744.

Thank you.

Dianne McKillop

6 September, 1994

Appendix G

Pretest 1 Feedback

ATTENTION: CERTIFICATE OF HUMAN SERVICES (DISABILITY) STUDENTS

Honours Research Feedback

You will remember that you participated in this study in August this year for the purpose of providing comments and feedback on the research questionnaire. Your responses were very useful to me and they resulted in a more accurate and "user-friendly" questionnaire.

As promised, I want to briefly tell you about the results of the main study which was carried out in September.

Participants in the main study were also students of Human Service. Like you, they were given one of six versions of a questionnaire. Each questionnaire version contained a different description of a person and participants were asked to rate:

- how they felt about interacting in different social situations with the person described in the questionnaire, and
- what they thought about that person in terms of positive and negative adjectives.

Preliminary results show that whether the person described in the questionnaire had the label "intellectual disability", or not, it made no difference to the way the students thought or felt about them.

What did make a difference to participants' impressions of the person was whether he or she had the characteristics associated with the stereotype of a person with a mild intellectual disability. Stereotypical characteristics were described in terms of a low status, low paying job, old fashioned clothes, few friends, and inappropriate behaviour ("sometimes she stands in her front yard and calls out to passersby"). In general, participants had less positive feelings and thoughts the more closely the person fitted the stereotype.

I am still investigating possible explanations/implications of these results and I would be pleased to hear from you if you have any comments or questions. I can be contacted on 398 7744. Thank you once again for your valuable input into this research. Good luck with your studies and your chosen career.

Dianne McKillop
B.A. (Psych) Hons Candidate
Edith Cowan University
Joondalup Campus
16 November, 1994

Appendix H

Pretest 2 Feedback

ATTENTION: EARLY INTERVENTION AND HABILITATION STUDIES STUDENTS

Honours Research Feedback

You will remember that you participated in this study in August this year for the purpose of providing comments and feedback on the research questionnaire. Your responses were very useful to me and they resulted in a more accurate and "user-friendly" questionnaire.

As promised, I want to briefly tell you about the results of the main study which was carried out in September.

Participants in the main study were also students of Human Service. Like you, they were given one of six versions of a questionnaire. Each questionnaire version contained a different description of a person and participants were asked to rate:

- how they felt about interacting in different social situations with the person described in the questionnaire, and
- what they thought about that person in terms of positive and negative adjectives.

Preliminary results show that whether the person described in the questionnaire had the label 'intellectual disability', or not, it made no difference to the way the students thought or felt about them.

What did make a difference to participants' impressions of the person was whether he or she had the characteristics associated with the stereotype of a person with a mild intellectual disability. Stereotypical characteristics were described in terms of a low status, low paying job, old fashioned clothes, few friends, and inappropriate behaviour ("sometimes she stands in her front yard and calls out to passersby"). In general, participants had less positive feelings and thoughts the more closely the person fitted the stereotype.

I am still investigating possible explanations/implications of these results and I would be pleased to hear from you if you have any comments or questions. I can be contacted on 398 7744. Thank you once again for your valuable input into this research. Good luck with your studies and your chosen career.

**Dianne McKillop
B.A. (Psych) Hons Candidate
16 November, 1994**

Appendix I

Feedback To Main Study Sample

HONOURS RESEARCH FEEDBACK TO PARTICIPANTS

Influence of the Label "Intellectual Disability" On Cognitive and Affective Impressions

You will remember that you participated in this study in September of this year. The purpose of the study was to see if the label "intellectual disability" made a difference to impressions of a person with that label. Other personal characteristics that were thought to influence impressions were also investigated.

You were given one of six different versions of a questionnaire and asked to rate:

1. how you felt about interacting with "Louise" in different social situations, and
2. what you thought about Louise in terms of positive and negative adjectives.

As promised, I want to briefly tell you about some results of the research.

Preliminary results show that whether Louise had the label "intellectual disability", or not, it made no difference to the way Perth College of TAFE Human Services (Disability) students felt or thought about her.

What did make a difference to impressions of Louise was whether she had the characteristics associated with the stereotype of a person with a mild intellectual disability. Stereotypical characteristics were described in terms of a low status, low paying job, old fashioned clothes, few friends, and inappropriate behaviour ("sometimes she stands in her front yard and calls out to passersby"). In general, ratings showed less positive feelings and thoughts and, therefore, less favourable impressions, the more closely the description of Louise fitted the stereotype.

I am still investigating possible explanations/implications of these results and I would be pleased to hear from you if you have any comments or questions. I can be contacted at the university or by ringing 398 7744.

Thank you once again for your valuable input into this research. Good luck with your studies and your chosen career.

Dianne McKillop
B.A. (Psych) Hons Candidate
Psychology Department
Edith Cowan University
Joondalup Campus
16 November, 1994

Appendix J

Missing Data Procedures

Five of the 107 participants experienced difficulty answering the item "How would you feel about Louise babysitting your children or your nieces or nephews?" on the affective impression measure. Two participants (numbers 21 and 31) circled two responses to the item, two (64 and 96) refused to respond on the grounds that they did not know Louise well enough, and one (102) failed to respond to the item.

As these participants were from three different experimental groups, difficulties with the babysitting item were regarded as a reflection of its intimacy and the lack of information about Louise, rather than as a nonrandom aberration in the data. Accordingly, the mean of the two responses given by participant 21, and by participant 31, was recorded and, following a procedure suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (1989), the group mean for the item was assigned to the other three participants.

On the cognitive measure, two participants failed to respond to two items and six omitted responses to one item. Group mean item scores were substituted for these participants.

No cognitive impression score was recorded for six participants. Two (45 and 49) failed to respond to any cognitive item and gave no reason. Participants 10 and 67 answered the first item before writing that they could not make a judgement (10), or that there was not enough information to form an impression (67). Participant 87 stopped responding after the first six items because he or she felt they did not know Louise. Participant 96 stopped after nine items and gave no reason.