

HULT RESEARCH



On Course to Inclusion

Changing Attitudes towards Disability,
from the Waves to the Workplace.

Authors: Grace Brown and James Moncrieff
Contributors: Viktor Nilsson

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank all those who participated in focus groups, interviews and surveys in order to provide the data for this report. The research findings were enriched by the openness and honesty of their contributions.

The Jubilee Sailing Trust provide life-changing experiences for individuals with and without disabilities, we hope this report shines a light on the transformative nature of what they do.

© Ashridge Executive Education 2018

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism or review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrievable system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Ashridge.

For more information about this research, or to take part, please contact grace.brown@ashridge.hult.edu

Hult International Business School
Ashridge House, Berkhamsted
Hertfordshire, HP4 1NS, UK
ISBN: 978-1-910025-27-7

Table of contents

p4	Executive Summary
p6	Introduction
p8	The Context
p12	What Workplaces are doing to be Inclusive
p15	Integration and Intergroup contact
p16	The Intervention
p17	Research Aims
p19	Findings
p21	How did attitudes change?
p40	Implications for Workplaces and Employees
p41	Summary and Conclusion
p42	Appendix
p44	References

Executive Summary

Introduction

Having a diverse workforce has individual, organizational and societal benefits. Fulfilling work is important for an individuals' social and psychological wellbeing, the inclusion of diverse individuals is associated with higher employee engagement, innovation and creativity, and increasing employment has innumerable benefits for society. However, despite the market wide emphasis on corporate diversity, people with disabilities still face obstacles with recruitment and employment. In addition, companies that recognise the value of diversity spend thousands on programmes to change attitudes, with often limited success. This research examines the impact of an alternative to diversity training on executives' attitudes towards people with disabilities. The intervention integrated able-bodied people and individuals with disabilities to form a crew of sailors on a voyage around the UK with The Jubilee Sailing Trust.

What we did

This project used a mixed-methods approach using quantitative tests and a questionnaire combined with qualitative in-depth interviews and focus groups. 39 able-bodied participants (19 women, 20 men) were sampled from a population of Barclays bank employees. All took part in the Corporate Social Responsibility activity run by The Jubilee Sailing Trust.

- Quantitative data were collected using the Multidimensional Attitudes Scale towards persons with disabilities (MAS) and the Implicit Associate Test (IAT). Scales were completed pre and post intervention. A self-report questionnaire completed post-intervention comprised three scales to measure affective response, behavioural response and cognitive response.
- Qualitative data collected through interviews and focus groups aimed to gain insight into participants experiences on board, specifically how attitudes changed and what learning could be applied to the workplace. 11 semi-structured, post-intervention interviews explored participants expectations and feelings about the voyage and whether they felt the intervention had an impact. Two focus groups were conducted six months post intervention with an emphasis on applicable learning in the workplace.

What we found

The accessible, out-of-comfort-zone contact intervention aboard the Lord Nelson voyage led to an improvement of attitudes towards diversity. Participants self-reported attitudes towards disability were more positive after the voyage, and their feelings, behaviours and thoughts about disability were all significantly more favourable post-intervention. It was also found that participants' underlying associations with disability were improved. Qualitative investigation found that this attitude change was facilitated by certain conditions on board the ship, namely the lack of environmental barriers, the out-of-comfort-zone elements of the experience and the requirement of teamwork. These conditions paved the way for interpersonal processes to occur which shaped able-bodied executives' attitudes towards disability. Therefore, this research demonstrates that in the context of disability, this type of contact intervention as part of a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative helped develop inclusive attitudes and intended behaviours and is therefore a viable alternative to existing methods of diversity training.

Key recommendations for practice

- Consider Equal-Status Integration as an alternative or addition to Diversity and Inclusion training – working in close proximity with individuals with a disability is a powerful challenge to unconscious bias.
- Provide accessibility beyond reasonable adjustment – foster a universal design mindset, whereby spaces are designed to cater for people of all abilities.
- Self-awareness and awareness of others – change comes from understanding the origins of one's own strengths and weaknesses and those of people around them.
- Foster positive team support – better teams are made up of individuals who feel invested in their teammate's personal success.
- Provide flexibility – allow employees the opportunity to contribute to tasks that may not be directly within their remit but align with their skillset.
- Do not assume or rely on what is 'appropriate' – only by approaching and connecting with people with a disability do individuals learn to question what they each need in terms of support. This is much more beneficial than acting on assumptions about what is politically correct or not.

Having a diverse workforce has individual, organizational and societal benefits.

Supported and fulfilling work is important for both social and psychological wellbeing. Working is associated with better health, improved quality of life, full participation in society, independence and reduced chances of social exclusion¹.

In addition, including diverse individuals in the workplace is associated with higher employee engagement, innovation and creativity (approximately 20% higher) and is now widely recognised as being crucial for competitive advantage². On a societal level, public assistance costs are reduced and tax payments increase each time a previously unemployed person joins the labour market^{3,4}.

However, despite the market wide emphasis on corporate diversity and inclusion, people with disabilities still face obstacles with recruitment and employment. Those with disabilities are twice as likely as able-bodied people to be unemployed; the 32% disability employment gap has stood at roughly the same level for the past 10 years⁵.

Some physical or psychological impairments restrict individuals from participating in full time employment. Yet for those who are able to work, accessibility issues and cultural and attitudinal factors prevent them from fulfilling their potential and contributing to organizations.

Companies that recognise the value of diversity spend thousands on training programmes and workshops aimed at changing attitudes and creating inclusive cultures with varied and often limited success⁶.

Therefore, this project:

- Examines the impact of an alternative to diversity training; a unique CSR activity, viewed in this research as an intervention, which involved integrating able-bodied individuals and individuals with disabilities to form a crew of sailors aboard a tall ship voyage around the UK.
- Investigates the experience of the able-bodied crew members to assess whether the intervention changed their attitudes towards disability.
- Highlights implications for organizations who are looking to increase their levels of inclusion both at the strategic and team levels, with regard to disability and diversity more broadly.
- Concludes that in the context of disability, this type of interpersonal contact helps develop inclusive attitudes and intended behaviours, and is therefore a viable alternative to existing methods of diversity training.

The Context



Disability Defined

There is no single agreed upon definition of disability. This research views disability in part as a social construction, “not as an attribute of an individual, but as restrictive social relationship between people with physical impairments and society”⁷.

Discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes towards people with impairments interact with environmental factors such as transport and infrastructure, which cater for the able-bodied majority. This has a disabling effect on those with impairments⁸.

Disability is not purely socially constructed in this way however, in some cases biological impairments can have physical or psychological implications which may also restrict activity, for example chronic fatigue or pain⁹.

Therefore, this research views disability as; An experience in which an individual with a physical or psychological impairment faces

barriers to full participation in society, either due to physical or mental limitations or as a result of the social interaction between their impairment and the social or physical environment.

Disability and the Workplace

People with disabilities are twice as likely as able-bodied individuals to be unemployed, 48.3% of people with disabilities are in work, compared to 80.5% of non-disabled people. Statistics are similar for the American workforce. In 2015, 34.9% of people with disabilities in the US ages 18-64 living in the community were employed compared to 76.0% for people without disabilities – a gap of 41.1 percentage points¹⁰.

These statistics attest to a systemic inequality within hiring practices and employee retention. Impairments make employment difficult for some, but for many, negative attitudes and exclusive culture of employers are to blame¹¹.

Attitudes

Some of the largest barriers that individuals with disabilities face when joining the workforce are the attitudes of colleagues and management¹². Negative attitudes in this context may manifest as stereotypical views, lowered expectations, or feelings of awkwardness. The UK disability charity Scope highlight the prevalence of these attitudes.

According to their data:

- 67% of the British public feel uncomfortable talking to people with disabilities
- 36% of people tend to think of people with disabilities as less productive than everyone else
- 85% of the British public believe that disabled people face prejudice
- 24% of people with disabilities have experienced attitudes or behaviours where other people expected less of them because of their disability¹³.

These perceptions may result in behaviours of avoidance, exclusion, or discrimination.

Of those 3.4 million people with disabilities who are now in the UK workforce, many experience inequality of opportunity and face stigma in their workplaces. Scope found that 15% of people with disabilities surveyed said that they would most like to see a change in employer’s attitudes. Among people with disabilities who said they have faced problems with workplace attitudes or behaviours, the clear majority identified employer’s attitudes (76%), followed by those of colleagues (51%). Concerns about the competency and performance of employees with a disability are common^{14 15}. These underestimations can reduce the tendency to hire people with disabilities¹⁶. Research found that applicants disclosing their disability in their application documents were invited less frequently to job interviews than able-bodied applicants with a similar profile¹⁷. This recruitment bias exists alongside a common lack of knowledge concerning disabilities in general: “employers are often not aware of the workers’ needs and are not informed about how to accommodate them at work”¹⁴.

Intentions

It may not be negative attitudes that result in difficulties for people with disabilities. Often able-bodied people have very good intentions when it comes to supporting colleagues or employees with diverse needs. However, good intentions may sometimes inadvertently result in exclusive practice. For example, an able-bodied manager who avoids giving an impaired employee new responsibilities to avoid putting them under pressure, subsequently restricting opportunities for development. As such, attitudes towards disability need not be negative to have detrimental impacts¹⁸.

Furthermore, many people are aware that even positive intentions can result in discrimination, and are cautious about how to support or work with an impaired colleague. This can manifest in self-consciousness or uncertainty about how best to behave without causing offense or appearing patronising. In some cases, able-bodied people may avoid approaching people with disabilities all together.

All of these attitudes and their resulting behaviours contribute to the differential treatment of people with disabilities in the workplace, thereby contributing to the employment gap and low retention rate.



What Workplaces are doing to be Inclusive



Regardless of the business case, inclusive practice is good practice.

Despite the money spent on 'diversity training' since the mid 90's, experts are yet to identify any consistent positive outcomes.

The Benefits of Diversity

Diverse workforces have proven to have a positive impact on innovation and creativity¹⁹. However, in order to reap the benefits of diversity, every employee, regardless of social difference (i.e physical ability, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion etc.) must be welcomed, encouraged, given equal opportunities considering their differences, and have their perspectives considered as part of organizational decision making at all levels. In a word, the working environment must be **inclusive**.

Certain cultural factors can aid inclusive practice. Openness to new ideas, high levels of flexibility and collaboration and an appreciation of different thinking styles for example. Inclusion is now deemed crucial at a strategic level to boost employee engagement, performance, brand reputation and talent acquisition. Inclusive workplaces retain productive and committed employees and even create wider customer appeal. Businesses are increasingly recognising the importance of diversity and inclusion. The Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey reported that 78% of respondents now believe that Diversity and Inclusion Training (D&I) is a competitive advantage². Regardless of the business case, inclusive practice is good practice, as recognised by organizations who value more than just their bottom line.

Diversity and Inclusion Training

Consequently, many organizations have invested in their D&I strategies. Business schools and training providers now offer a range of workshops and programmes aimed at raising awareness of unconscious bias. Organizations now have specific roles or teams dedicated to managing affirmative action and policy aspects related to D&I. Many seek to embed inclusive policies and practice throughout all business areas. Others commission D&I consultants to develop new HR and recruitment practice or to run inclusive culture change programmes. In addition, workforce analytics are increasingly being used to identify potential bias in hiring practice and problems with retaining certain social groups.

Research which reviewed almost 1000 studies of D&I related programmes and training concluded that whether this sort of training works is still unknown, and that we are still far from informed about how to best design and create conditions to successfully foster workplace inclusion⁶. Other researchers have identified cases where diversity training seems to have compounded exclusive practice and reinforced stereotypes²⁰.

For members of minority groups, attending diversity training which focuses specifically on raising awareness of social difference has the potential to

Uncertainty, unfamiliarity and even fear can be key barriers to the equal treatment of people with disabilities.

heighten the awareness of their own diverse identity, and highlight the bias of others, both of which are unlikely to result in positive feelings of belonging. In this sense, paying specific attention to social difference may actually increase feelings of alienation.

The long standing disability employment gap suggests that D&I efforts have not yet improved the situation for many individuals with disabilities. In the UK the gap has remained at just over 30% for the last 10 years²¹. Purple, an organization that provides bespoke advice to employers and found that 45% of UK businesses remain nervous about hiring someone with a disability, citing concerns about the interview process, not knowing whether to help with tasks such as opening doors or pulling out chairs, and falling foul of discrimination law¹³. Similarly,

Scope suggest, "much of the discomfort people feel about disability may stem from a lack of understanding. Not enough people know a disabled person – nearly half (43%) of the British public say they do not know anyone who is disabled – and many are concerned that they will do or say the wrong thing when talking to disabled people or about disability²²".

These findings reveal uncertainty, unfamiliarity and even fear as key barriers to the equal treatment of people with disabilities. Short-term diversity training, focused on educating and revealing unconscious bias, may not be sufficient to alter such feelings, thoughts and behaviours towards people with disabilities. Therefore, this research investigates the impact of a different approach; **Integration**.

Integration and Inter-group contact

Unlike D&I training, integration has had consistently positive impacts. Evidence supporting this claim comes from social psychology research into intergroup contact. A wealth of studies have looked into what happens when individuals with different social or individual characteristics come together.

Early studies on intergroup contact in the 1940's were focused on reducing racial prejudice²³ and in 1954 Allport published the contact hypothesis, this states that:

“stigma, unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual, may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals”²⁴.

Extensive research on intergroup contact has identified a number of conditions which lead to greater attitudinal change. Intergroup contact is particularly effective at positively changing attitudes when it is:

- Free from competition
- Based on equal status
- In pursuit of common goals
- Perceived as important by those involved
- Balanced in terms of the number of majority to minority group members
- Free from negative emotions such as anxiety²⁵.

Intergroup contact situations have also been found to be particularly impactful when they allow for the formation of friendships and intimacy²⁶.

Overall, evidence shows that when people come together in situations which meet the above conditions, they are likely to experience a reduction in prejudice towards those who are different from themselves. Researchers conducted a major review of all studies of intergroup contact in the 20th century, and concluded that greater contact is “routinely associated with less prejudice”, with 94% of studies reporting the positive impacts of integration²⁷.

In the context of workplace inclusion, these findings suggest that integration may be a more powerful route to changing attitudes than diversity training or workshops. This research looks specifically at whether contact between able-bodied executives and impaired individuals can change the attitudes of able-bodied employees, thereby helping to remove the disabling barriers created by unhelpful attitudes.

The focus of this research is a CSR activity of Barclays bank which brought together able-bodied executives and individuals with impairments. This integration took place in a unique situation provided by the Jubilee Sailing Trust in which participants became crew on a tall ship and were required to work together to successfully navigate and sail around the UK. This project investigates the impact of this unique intervention.

The Intervention



The Intervention

The Jubilee Sailing Trust is a registered charity, which provides the opportunity for people of all abilities to sail tall ships on the open sea. They own two tall ships that are fully accessible; modifications to the ship include (but are not limited to), wide decks and aisles for ease of movement, lifts between decks, braille signage, vibrator pads fitted to beds to alert those who are hearing impaired and fixing points for wheelchairs in rough weather.

Up to 40 voyage crew members of which up to 50% live with a disability, come together to form one team. Able-bodied and impaired crew members are paired up to encourage teamwork and the pursuit of a common goal. Everyone forms part of the crew to actively participate in the day-to-day running of the ship. The entire crew is divided into four watches who take turns to keep a look out. Crew members learn to navigate and steer the ship, work on deck, climb the masts, set the sails, brace the yards and help cook meals.



Research Aims

Research Aims

As we have identified previously, attitudes of able-bodied employers and colleagues can create significant disabling barriers to employment for those with impairments. In addition, many organizational D&I efforts have yet to be successful in combating exclusion, particularly where disability is concerned.

This research aimed to:

Assess the impact of the voyage on able-bodied executive's attitudes towards people with disabilities.

People can consciously control their answers to self-reported questionnaires, and present themselves in a more socially desirable way. Therefore, we also wanted to look at implicit attitudes—those attitudes that reflect our uncontrolled automatic associations

Identify whether intergroup contact might be a more useful way to develop workplace inclusion than existing methods.

As well as looking at attitudinal change, we also sought to identify any learning or behaviour change that could be associated with inclusive workplace practice.

Research Questions

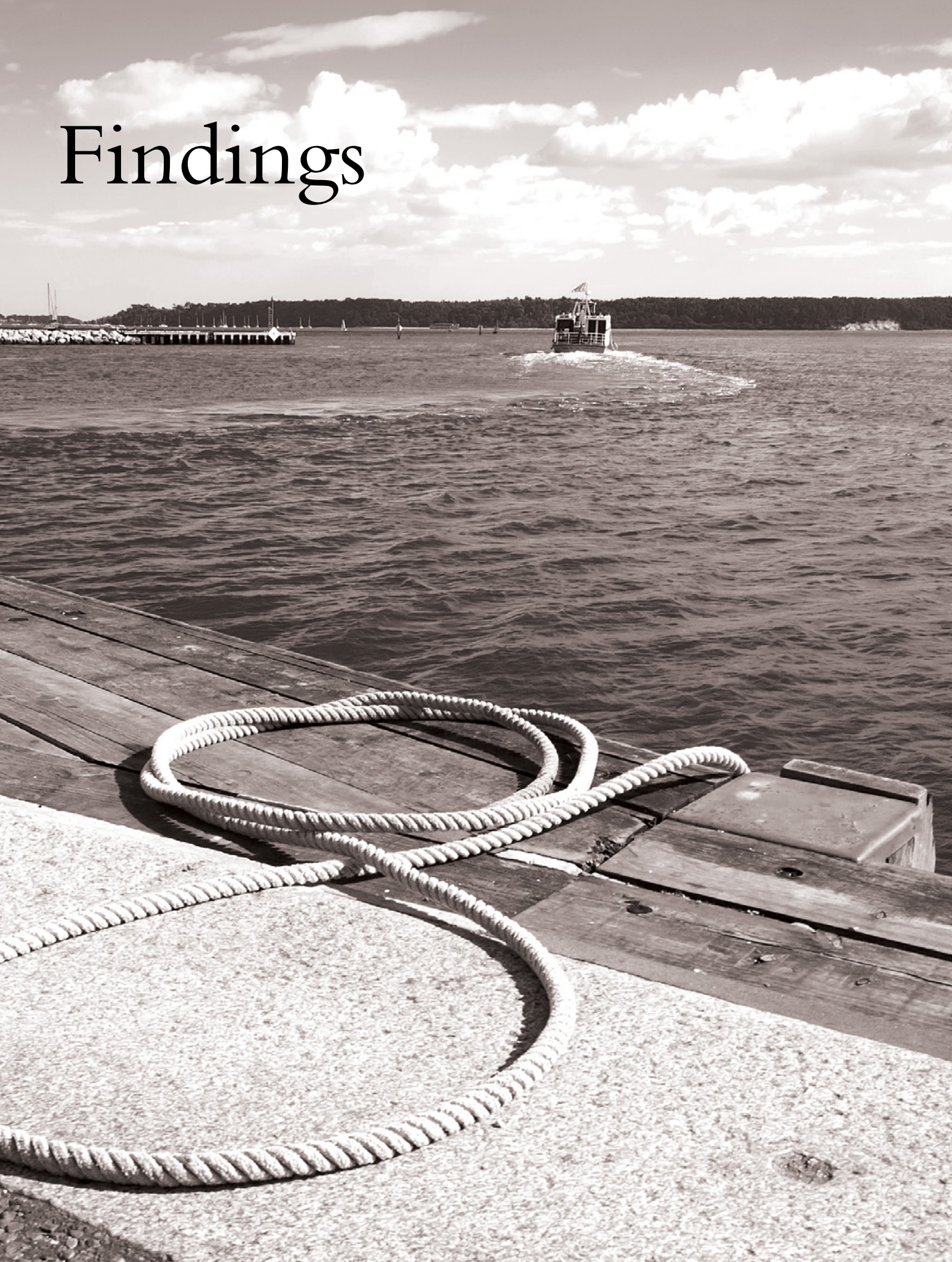
A number of research questions were investigated:

1. Did self-reported attitudes towards disability change after the intervention? To what extent?
2. Did implicit attitudes towards disability change after the intervention? To what extent?
3. If attitudes were changed, how did this change happen?
4. Was there any personal learning gained from the experience which can be applied back in the workplace?

Research Method

This project used a mixed methods approach using quantitative tests and a questionnaire combined with qualitative in depth interviews and focus groups. The sample, instruments and procedure are detailed in the Appendix.

Findings



Findings

Did self-reported attitudes towards disability change after the intervention? To what extent?

Quantitative Results

Due to the effectiveness of contact on reducing prejudice shown by previous research, it was expected that self-reported attitudes towards disability might change after spending two to five days on board a ship with people with disabilities as members of the same crew.

The self-report questionnaire comprised three scales of participants responses to measure attitudes comprehensively: Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive.

Each construct was analysed to assess any change that may be attributed to the intervention:

Affective Response

The affect facet of an attitude encompasses the emotional responses to the attitude object in this case an individual with a disability.

Results of a mixed design ANOVA on the MAS data showed a significant main effect of time, $F(1,24) = 27.63$, $p < .000$, $\eta^2 = .535$: participants self-reported less favourable affective responses pre voyage intervention ($M=2.89$, $SD=0.55$) compared to post voyage intervention ($M=2.16$, $SD=0.75$). **This indicates that the intervention had a positive impact on participant's affective responses towards disability.**

Behavioural Response

The behaviour aspect of an attitude consists of a person's tendency to behave in a particular way towards an attitude object.

There was also a significant main effect of time $F(1, 24) = 7.68$, $p = 0.007$, $\eta^2 = .266$: participants reported less favourable behavioural responses towards disability at baseline ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 0.72$) compared to post intervention ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 0.62$). **This indicates that the intervention had a positive impact on participant's behavioural responses towards disability.**

Cognitive Response

The cognition element of an attitude includes the beliefs, thoughts and opinions we have about the attitude object.

Similarly there was a significant main effect of Time, $F(1, 24) = 8.04$, $p = .009$, $\eta^2 = .221$. Participants self-reported less favourable cognitive responses towards disability at baseline ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 0.75$) compared to post intervention ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 0.49$). **This indicated that the intervention had a positive impact on participant's cognitive responses towards disability.**

These results show that participants self-reported attitudes towards disability were more positive after the voyage. Participant's feelings, behaviours and thoughts about disability were all significantly more favourable post intervention. Interestingly the affective (emotional) responses showed the largest positive change compared to the behavioural and cognitive responses.

Did implicit attitudes towards disability change after the interventions? To what extent?

IAT Results

The IAT scores were analysed to test whether the voyage intervention had an impact on implicit attitudes towards disability. Results from a mixed factorial analysis showed there was a significant main effect of time, $F(1, 18) = 29.66, p < 0.000, \eta^2 = .622$, participants implicit attitude scores decreased significantly between baseline ($M = 0.90, SD = 0.30$) and post intervention ($M = 0.55, SD = 0.42$) indicating **more favourable implicit attitudes post-intervention.**

The fact that attitudes had significantly improved after the voyage suggests that their experience on board the ship had a positive impact. In accordance with the self-reported attitudes, implicit attitudes also showed a positive change between pre and post voyage to a significant extent. We might expect self-reported attitudes to change since these can be adjusted consciously to reflect our experience. However, the positive results shown by the IAT data indicate that implicit attitudes, those which are not consciously controlled to the same extent, also changed between the pre and post voyage time points. This is particularly important because IATs are reported to be resistant to social desirability bias²⁸.

From these results, we can reason that participants were not only claiming to have more positive attitudes after the voyage, but that their underlying associations with disability were also improved. This is an important finding, since more positive attitudes foretell more positive behaviours.

Qualitative Results

Interviews and focus groups were designed to explore participants' experiences on board. They aimed to gain an insight into:

1. How attitudes changed?
2. What learning can be applied to the workplace context?

Questions were deliberately open to allow participants to share anything they felt was significant in terms of memorable experiences, challenges, realizations or learning. Analysis of the data involved coding transcribed data and then arranging these codes into broader themes. All of the data were analysed in this way to capture a comprehensive picture of participants' experiences on-board resulting in a large number of codes and themes.

Next, the research questions above were used as filters to identify which themes could explain how attitudes changed, and what learning could be applied to the workplace context. The following findings section is organised under these key questions. It highlights key themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis, and translates them into the following implications for organizations and able-bodied colleagues.

How did Attitudes change?

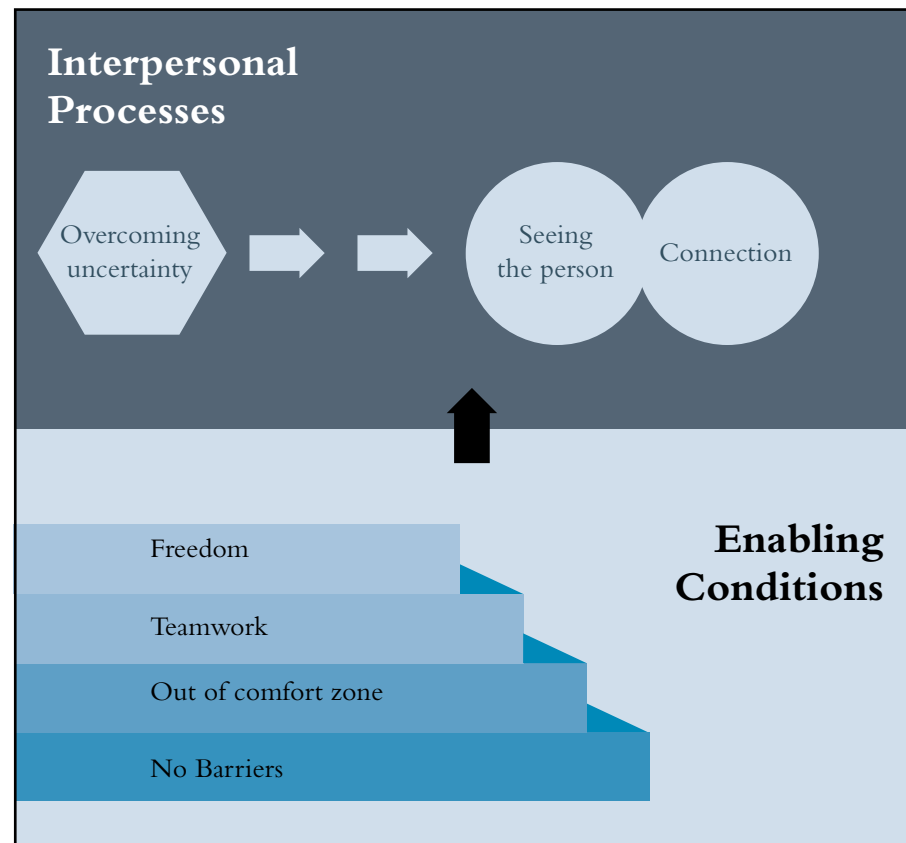


According to qualitative analysis, two broad themes contributed to attitudes changing:

1. **Enabling Conditions**
2. **Interpersonal Processes**

Within Enabling Conditions and Interpersonal Processes, more focused themes and subthemes emerged.

The qualitative themes identified are visualised in the model below:



Enabling Conditions

Data interpretation revealed the Enabling Conditions as aspects of the intervention which provided fertile ground for the Interpersonal Processes to occur. As mentioned previously, existing research into the contact hypothesis has identified a number of conditions that encourage optimal effects of interpersonal contact.

We identified some additional Enabling Conditions which were perceived as important by the participants in this particular study.

The Enabling Conditions identified encompassed both physical and social aspects of the environment and situation on-board. These were coded as, “**No Barriers**”, “**Out of comfort zone**”, “**Team work**” and “**Freedom**”.

No Barriers

In terms of its physical environment, the ship was very different to society in terms of accessibility. It had none of the physical barriers that people with disabilities frequently come up against in the communal and public spaces of

wider society. Due to its modifications (wheel chair lifts next to stairs, wide doorways and braille markers on hand rails to signify the bow or stern of the ship) crew with disabilities could do exactly the same tasks as able-bodied crew members, because they were not disabled by the environment. As one participant described,

“It’s pretty much, they can do exactly what you can do. So, we had a couple of crew members who were blind, or had very limited sight, and so, sometimes they had a little bit of guidance but not a lot. Then we had an amputee, and we had someone with cerebral palsy down the one side of their body, and they could still do all the climbing – maybe a little bit slower, but they still did it. So yeah, I don’t think there’s really anything –I wouldn’t say there’s anything that I could’ve done on there, that someone with a disability couldn’t have done.”

Being in close proximity with people with disabilities in this environment had an effect on some of the participants in terms of their expectations of what people with disabilities are able to do, this was particularly the case for those without previous contact with disability:

“So, I think it’s made me feel not to think of it as a something bad, it’s just different.”

“You can have a disability that prevents you from doing something, but you can have an able body and not able to be doing something.”

“Whether you’re able-bodied or not, I thought you would have boundaries of what you can and can’t do. So, even for me with quite an open mind and, without any feelings against, disabled people, it still changed my mind. Literally anybody could do anything on that whole sailing trip, from steering to pulling the ropes, to doing mess duty, absolutely everything.”

“He didn’t really need anyone. Like, he was a young guy, which,— well, obviously he’s counted as disabled, but he wasn’t to me, ‘cause he was able to do absolutely everything probably better than me, and he did have one arm, yeah, a young lad and really capable of anything. So, yes, I was [helping him], but I wasn’t, so I was helping other people more than him, really ‘cause he can — him being so young and so active, he was mingling with everyone and, yeah, that was it, yeah.”

“I see it [disability] differently in that I definitely feel that, this sounds terrible, but I didn’t feel this before, that we’re just all equal, and we really are. It’s just, okay, some people have disabilities that are not able to do some things, but then, there’s some things I can’t do, you know what I mean? It’s just a difference, we’re all the

same everyone’s got differences in different ways. Because that showed that we’re all able, even with disabilities, they were all capable of doing things that beforehand, I wouldn’t’ve thought that they would have been able to do, but they could. So, thinking of people as more, you know, equal, but different. You can have a disability that prevents you from doing something, but you can have an able body and not able to be doing something. So, it’s just different people in different ways are able to do things. So, I think it’s made me feel not to think of it as a something bad, it’s just different.”

Seeing and working with very capable individuals with impairments also opened participants’ eyes to the environmental barriers in wider society. Seeing what people with disabilities can do when the environment allows gave participants a new perspective on how disability is often environmentally constructed. Their eyes were opened to the view that it is often not the individuals’ impairment that is disabling, rather the way buildings and spaces have been designed:

“I think a lot of it challenged my perception of people with disabilities. I think you tend to be protective of people that have a disability and I don’t think that’s the right way to go, because they are actually capable of doing more than you think, and you should just let them tell you their limitations and not have a preconceived idea of what those limitations are.”

Learning and implications for organizations

“I think the most important thing is — that made me — probably more for the future and my life now, is, when I walk down high streets and look at things and look at buildings and that and I realise how this world, from a default, is really disabled unfriendly and that, you know, we could make it very friendly to the disabled, if we just started somewhere different. But we started where we started, which was basically, people that were never catered for and now gradually, it’s getting better, but it’s nowhere near what is acceptable.”

Seeing that people with disabilities can do much of what able-bodied people can do when the playing field is levelled, challenged participants’ low or stereotyped expectations³⁰ of the capabilities of people with disabilities. This is important since lower expectations of the abilities of people with disabilities can impact the way they are treated. In the workplace context this could manifest in reduced responsibilities or development opportunities and begin a cycle of reduced performance and further lowered expectations. The change in expectations observed in interviews and focus groups is a notable positive change in attitude, with the potential to influence participants’ behaviour and treatment of people with disabilities in future.

These findings highlight the positive impact that the removal of physical and environmental barriers can have. As demonstrated by participant accounts, seeing people with impairments as enabled rather than disabled by their environment exposed them to a new perspective of the capabilities of those conventionally described as ‘disabled’:

“There were no disabled people on that boat. There was no such word as ‘disability’, but there are still barriers in the rest of the world that we need to, get rid of”

Accessibility beyond reasonable adjustment

The physical environment is largely fixed and most organizations rely on reasonable adjustments, ramps up steps for instance or large disabled parking spaces. Wherever possible though, organizations should use principles of universal design to negate the need for these add on’s, so that the environment is as accessible as possible from the outset. Things like on the door key pads can be replaced with ID card scanners, for example. In terms of assistive technology, organizations should invest in accessible packages for those with neurological differences such as dyslexia to use if they wish. Small things like keeping spaces around tables large enough for wheelchairs to manoeuvre, and having plug sockets available in easy to reach places can make a big difference to those with limited mobility.

Generally participants were all mentally, physically or emotionally tested by the experience at some point, this aspect brought their own weaknesses into sharper focus:

“A colleague of mine struggled to climb the mast. She got about halfway up and then her fear of heights kind of got the better of her”

It is not only the workspace that should be designed using universal principles, as this research demonstrates, it is the connection between people that leads to more effective team working and relationships. Therefore, it is crucial that leisure and communal areas are accessible for mixed abilities.

The same can be said for Learning and Development. Training must be offered in an accessible way, having considered the requirements of employees with disabilities from the outset, rather than using bolt on adjustments after the fact.

Out of Comfort zone

The fact that disabling barriers had been removed did not mean that challenges didn't occur. Sailing a ship was a new task for most crew members. The out of comfort zone nature of the experience had an interesting effect on participant's self-awareness. Generally participants were all mentally, physically or emotionally tested by the experience at some point, this aspect brought their own weaknesses into sharper focus:

“I think just because it was a brand new experience, so you're thinking, am I going to be good at this, or am I going to be capable of this? Like, climbing the mast was – I was really looking forward to the climbing before I went, and I don't have a problem with heights, but it turns out, I have a massive problem with upper body strength.”

“I think it might have changed my own attitude – some of the things I would have thought that I would have handled quite well and perhaps didn't. I think that's the key thing I got out of it was that – I was surprised that there was some things I thought wouldn't have been an issue for me, actually were.”

In setting sails, navigating and climbing the rigging as well as the day-to-day running of the ship, there were often times when people needed assistance, but the difference was that crew members needed assistance in different areas regardless of whether they had impairments or not. One participant describes how the effect of seasickness was something that acted as a leveller in this sense:

“I'd guess probably 50% of the crew were seasick during that period. So it wasn't, an hour or two, it was probably two days of the journey that people were struggling for. So, a lot of people were just horizontal in their bunks. So, everybody that wasn't feeling quite as bad, everyone was feeling pretty rough, but those that were still able were having to do more and more as a result of it. So, everyone was really pulling together, from that point of view. And again, seasickness, you know, there was no, discrimination one way or the other, you know, for able-bodied and disabled. You know, if you got seasick, you were seasick, that was it. So, everybody had to support each other on that part of it.”

When taken out of an ablelist environment and into one which was not their comfort zone, participants experienced something different.

“I think in the end, we just all treated each other the same. We didn't view our buddies as someone with a disability. We just worked together”

We know that everyone has unique strengths and weaknesses, yet the social label of 'disability' implies weakness, limitation or lack of ability over strength. In the majority of cases able-bodied people, having interacted with a majority of able-bodied people throughout their lives, will possess unconscious bias which reflect this negative framing of disability, as one participant describes:

“I'd say it's [disability] a bit of a categorization. I suppose, it's almost like social structure is built to define disability or disabled people as different, even from, you know, we have three different types of toilets, male, female and disabled. You have a lift here, but it can only be used by disabled people, but the minute you use that lift, you're instantly singling yourself out. So, I think it is a negative connotation in society and I think it's, it's the complete opposite of ability, isn't it, which is a positive word. So, I think it's a tag given to people, for me to say that they're not as – well, obviously not as able as other people. And that's defined for me, I think it was done for a positive reason, don't expect that person to do that, or don't, try and put them in an uncomfortable position, but in a way, it just tags them as different and somebody not like you. So, I think it has quite a negative connotation in society.”

This is reinforced when people with disabilities are perceived as less able when faced with obstacles in a society designed for the able-bodied. When taken out of an ablelist environment and into one which was not their comfort zone, participants experienced something different; the combination of seeing the aptitudes of impaired individuals, and the fresh awareness of their own limitations, led to a renewed appreciation of everyone's unique strengths and weaknesses, and crucially, a new perspective and consciousness of disability:

“The thing that struck me the most was, the general feeling of there was no differences on board. It didn't matter if you were able bodied, or the term 'disabled', there were no disabled sailors on board. There were no disabled crew. We just found different ways of doing things, and even then, it wasn't even noticeable, and I think that was the thing that was most, I guess, refreshing for me”

“Once you're working away with them, it's a bizarre experience. So, I think that's going to be the biggest shift, is that you're usually quite conscious of something like that, but then, once you're in the environment and you're working with them, you just don't notice”

The responses show that for the able-bodied participants, the experience of working alongside crew with disabilities in an environment without disabling barriers, meant that the label of ‘disability’ was no longer a defining feature.

The themes, “No Barriers” and “Out of Comfort Zone” were physical and environmental characteristics of the intervention context, which set the scene for expectations to be challenged and awareness to be altered, as demonstrated by the previous quotes. They also combine to create a level playing field upon which individuals of equal status could work together.



Learning and Implications for Organizations

Self awareness and awareness of others

In terms of the comfort zone nature of the experience, it provided a renewed awareness of participants’ personal limitations, whether related to confidence, physical strength or a fear of heights. Where one crew member needs assistance climbing the rigging due to paralysis of their lower body, another needs assistance due to a phobia of heights. In both of these situations the person needs assistance getting to the top. However these limitations come from starkly different origins and are experienced very differently. As such, the assistance provided must be personalised accordingly. Where one might need extra reassurance and encouragement, another might need some extra hands on the rope which is bearing their weight. The intervention put people in situations which highlighted the need to understand people’s limitations in order to support them in the appropriate way.

This lesson is easily applied to the workplace; know your own strengths and weaknesses, and understand those of your colleagues. This way you will be equipped with an awareness of others, which will enable you to strategically place individuals in alignment with particular tasks, and a self-awareness, which will enable the targeting of specific areas in need of improvement for professional development.

Feeling sufficiently supported in the workplace is connected to how valued employees feel at work³¹. Therefore understanding where individual team members might need extra supervision, training or someone to be their sounding board, can be an important way to engage team members and increase organizational commitment. This research serves as a reminder that what one employee needs in terms of support is likely to differ from another.

Having a refreshed perspective of the strengths and weaknesses of their team members during the voyage was common. Interestingly, what people generally chose to do with this new perspective was also similar across all participants; they chose to focus on strengths:

“I was going to say, with Mary, what she couldn’t do was climb the stairs in rough seas holding a cup of tea, ‘cause she couldn’t hold a cup of tea and the handrail at the same time.

But what she could do was, lead a group of people really, really well and...she did. She was a fabulous, fabulous leader, completely unassuming and yet, everybody knew what they needed to do. They were all in the right place at the right time.”

A focus on strengths was something that participants planned to take back into their workplaces, particularly in the context of leading their teams:

“We’ve just been asked about an upcoming Area Business Manager development day. And someone said, “What would you like to be covered in the day’s agenda?” And I said, “I want to do some stuff on personality profiling. So, I want to understand more about the team that I work with, understand what their strengths are, what their development areas are” ‘Cause I think on a day-to-day basis, you work with a team of people and you lead a team of people and you think you know them, but do I really, really know them? And so, I want to get to know my team better and I want to do some personality profiling on my team and I want to understand how I lead that. And then, once I’ve identified their profiles, how I maximise them as individuals and how I’d bring the best out of them and how I create the environment that they thrive in, so... You know, everybody’s got strengths and the team I’ve got are fantastic, everybody contributes to the team in very different ways. But I’m thinking am I just looking at the tip of the iceberg, in terms of their ability here? You know, am I doing as much as I can do to understand them better, understand everything they’ve got to contribute? So, I think I’m probably thinking about things deeper now than I was previously.”

Team Work

The third enabling condition was Teamwork. The way that the voyage intervention was set up was such that people had to work together to complete different tasks which culminated in the successful running of the ship. Certain tasks such as evacuation drills or setting the sails cannot be accomplished without effective teamwork as one participant describes:

“In the evacuation drill, I was in a group that was dealing with evacuating the one wheelchair user that was on the ship, so we were learning to use the ropes, how to get the wheelchairs up the stairs, and stuff. But then again, the teamwork around the ropes, I mean, it takes at least eight or nine of you on one side of the ship, to successfully do something with one of the sails, so you’re all involved in that. You need to get your timing right to make sure you’re pulling together, and moving at the same speed.”

Participants commonly reported a feeling of community on board. Different groups worked on different tasks in a way that promoted working together to reach the common goal of successfully steering and sailing the ship, in this context it was not difficult for crew members to find common ground:

“The way that rotation worked, you were meeting other people at different times, but you had that familiarity, and because you had that shared experience of doing the same tasks, it was – you know, you’ve actually got that common gelling element. So, it wasn’t difficult to gel with people after a day or so, ‘cause suddenly people were going, “Oh, actually, we can all talk about the same things, we’ve had the same experience.”

The fact that it was a CSR activity attended by crew members voluntarily meant that people on board were keen to experience something new, benefit the disability charities involved and have fun. This showed through at the interpersonal level during the contact intervention. Crew were very considerate and supportive of their team members, and keen to have a positive inclusive experience:

“Nobody was excluded. You know, if anybody wanted to help or get involved then, space was made. If they were in a wheelchair, people moved to one side to make space, so they could get involved with what was going on. And, you know, being aware if you were in the way as well, so the wheelchair could get through, yeah, people were very responsive to making, the space available.”



Prior research into the contact hypothesis has identified a common goal as being important to facilitating prejudice reduction and attitude change due to its ability to bring people together and prevent competition. The unity and teamwork occurring during the voyage intervention was undoubtedly helped by this. However the groups’ aim to achieve a common goal does not sufficiently explain all of the interactions that occurred on board; one activity cited as the largest challenge and the most significant highlight of the voyage, was the opportunity for each person to climb the mast. This involved climbing up to the top of the crow’s nest either independently or with assistance:

“So, it was just fantastic to see it from the front of the boat all the way down, everybody working together, everybody cheering each other on. There was nobody, sort of, sat inside doing other things, everybody was out together and it was really fantastic to see on both masts people being able to go up, with absolutely all different abilities. And also, there was some able-bodied crew that felt that they needed assistance going up as well, so it wasn’t just the people with the disabilities going up assisted. It was just really nice that everybody was there together.”

“Simon was unable to get out of the wheelchair to do the climb, so everybody pulled together on that day. I think it was literally, all hands on deck. And I feel quite emotional about it again, because every single person pulled, whether they were the volunteers, the Barclays crew, other disabled and able-bodied people, the crew, every single person was up there helping him and we were pulling the rope and we were behind the back of the boat and we couldn’t see what was going on. The next thing, we just saw him up, hauled up, and people – I think everyone said in unison, “He’s up there!” And that was just, the lot of us, I don’t think we stopped crying that whole afternoon, the emotion and the achievement of absolutely everyone was just second to none”

The act of supporting each other was not confined to the climbing of the mast, it was a theme running throughout the intervention,

“We took a bit of an approach where, whoever was around at any given time, if someone needed some support, everyone was jumping in and supporting each other.”

Implications for Leadership

Foster positive team support

The testaments above suggest that it was more than a common goal underpinning these interactions. It was not simply the result of everyone making their contribution for shared success, it was the investment that each crew member had in each other's individual success. Where one person succeeded, the rest of the crew shared their achievement, which in this context was very powerful. By integrating diverse colleagues for non competitive tasks and encouraging supportive behaviours, this relationship can be nurtured in the workplace context.

The fact that the successful running of the ship relied on each individual to succeed in their respective tasks reduced any competitive friction between individual team players. This meant that each individual was not solely focused on the success of their own tasks, but felt to some extent accountable for the tasks of others too. The desire to see their team members succeed encouraged team members to offer support if needed and strengthened their collective performance.

“For me, it was a turnaround, in terms of my thoughts on, while there are certain things we won't be able to do individually, there was nothing that we weren't able to do as a crew, and that was so refreshing.”

Important to this end is the openness and psychological safety needed for people to feel able to ask for or offer support. Managers of teams can encourage open exchange of 'needs and offers' so colleagues become comfortable with asking for help, offering help and declining help.

Freedom

The final enabling condition which was present aboard the Lord Nelson was the freedom that all crew members felt to get involved with whatever tasks they wanted to. Many reported being pleasantly surprised at the little control that the captain exerted over the crew, and had not expected to be as responsible for as much as they were.

“ One particularly stormy day the boat was rocking about a bit and it was windy and rainy and stuff and so, it – they weren't just like, right, everybody down below, or strap yourself on, and stuff like this, you were still allowed to get involved and just go for it and do what you want and everything.”

“I was surprised though that, you know, it literally was if we need the sails up, everybody's all hands-on deck. Everybody grabs a rope, you know, it doesn't matter if we needed three people on one rope for a certain reason, it was – I thought that you would be more limited of what you could and couldn't do, for certain parts of it. So, me being not as strong or somebody else having a disability, I thought there were parts that we couldn't do. But you could literally do everything, so you were never not involved.”

The fact that there were no limits as to what you could do on the ship meant that people were able to fully contribute to every task, rather than being split into roles, people got involved based on their preferences and strengths.

Application to Workplace

Provide Flexibility

The freedom felt on board led to people exploring new areas and surprising themselves with their own unexpected abilities. In the workplace this can translate to high levels of flexibility and contribution. Providing employees with the opportunity and flexibility to contribute to tasks which may not be strictly within their remit but still aligned with their skillset, has two key benefits. The quality of the task will be improved due to the inclusion of new or diverse perspectives, and the individual employee will be better able to reach their full potential.

Interpersonal Processes

These processes are the interactions that occurred during the intervention which were mentioned frequently in interviews and focus groups, and were identified as important enablers of attitude change.

Connection

The theme of “Connection” encapsulated a number of codes referred to as interpersonal processes. Connection was the broad term used to refer to any evidence of the able-bodied participants connecting meaningfully with the crew members with disabilities in a way that was catalytic to attitudinal change. These forms of connecting include: **“Overcoming Uncertainty”** and **“Seeing the person”**.

Overcoming Uncertainty

Almost all of the participants reported feeling a sense of uncertainty, awkwardness or anxiety when trying to decide whether to assist people with disabilities. This was mentioned frequently during interviews and focus groups and became one of the largest themes in the data.

There were a number of thoughts reported surrounding whether or not to provide assistance. There was a mixture of conflict felt between wanting to assist, not knowing how to assist and not wanting to assist unnecessarily and therefore being patronising or taking away the agency of their crew member with a disability- thereby causing “offence”.

“We’re paralysed by our own fear of, to offend or not to offend, which is, kind of, preposterous, really, but understandable”

“I think it did challenge in that, well, for me personally, you sort of, don’t know how to be at the beginning, when, when you first start the trip, you don’t know how to be with people. ‘Cause I personally don’t know anybody closely that has a disability, so I was unsure how to be with people, how much to do and how much not to do. ‘Cause you – I felt conscious that I didn’t want to look as though I was over-helping them, which I’m sure would be really annoying. But then, not want to help if they did need help. So, it’s like, I didn’t know how to handle that and how to come across where it wasn’t condescending, you know”

“The first day certainly, you became aware of – there’s that case of when you offer to help somebody and when you don’t and it’s kind of, there’s that balance between am I doing the right thing? Am I being polite or am I actually causing offence because I’m trying to take over and do something, rather than letting them do it?”

These thoughts and feelings about whether or not to assist were not only informed by whether or not the person appeared to be in need of assistance, but were also governed by what is perceived as socially acceptable or appropriate. Some participants described this as being, “PC” politically correct. This tendency to default to searching for a socially acceptable response was stronger for those who were not used to interacting with people with disabilities. In the moment of uncertainty, particularly among those

without much previous contact with people with disabilities, the reliance on what is the appropriate or socially acceptable way to behave causes further tension because the focus is primarily on how one ‘should’ act or deal with the disability, rather than on how one should relate to the person:

“But we get that funny dance of what’s appropriate, that word is so problematic for this kind of dynamic. It’s like we shouldn’t be thinking about what’s appropriate and what’s not appropriate. We should be just figuring out, who is this person and how are they projecting this disability? How are they navigating it? How do they describe it? What are they talking about? And so, we all need to just be better at reading cues. It’s not about what’s appropriate, ‘cause what’s appropriate, infers what’s the social response? What’s the politically correct social response to be with someone who’s a T6 paraplegic? Rather than, what’s that person doing? Like, how are they communicating, you know, what their situation is? You know, how private are they about the different aspects of it and I’ll respond to that, take that as my cue, rather than trying to default to some sort of, preordained behaviours that are appropriate. I really think that word is a problem”

The process of figuring out how to behave and whether or not to assist began with uncertainty for all participants. Some responded by avoiding those with disabilities that they were not sure how to respond to, but for

Once people were aware of what people could and couldn’t do it became second nature to both assist and ask for assistance when necessary, and this became a natural element of the team dynamic.

most this feeling was temporary and was overcome by asking the person what they needed in terms of assistance:

“I think before, you’d have been frightened to ask people about it, ‘cause you’d think oh, I can’t ask them, because, you know, they’ll think I’m being non-PC and you’re not supposed to ask people about things like that. But we had to, didn’t we? It was only by asking what they needed and, you know, deferring to their requirements and saying, “Look, we don’t want to tell you what to do, but if you need us, tell us what you want.”

“One of the things we had to do was get his, I don’t know whether we were getting his belt on or his belt off and he had little movement in his arms, so I was helping him get his jacket on, which was really awkward at first. But I just said to him, “You tell me what I need to do and what I don’t need to do, because for me, I don’t know.” And so, he just told me and it was great. He just said, “Look, I need this, I need that, I don’t need that,” and we just did it.”

For those who overcame the uncertainty, the remaining interactions felt more ordinary, the feeling of awkwardness “melted away”. Once people were aware of what people could and couldn’t do it became second nature to both assist and ask for assistance when necessary, and this became a natural element of the team dynamic.

“I think people got on well and quite often, people were asking you, “Could you bring that lift up for me?” and things like that. So you tended to find that if you were walking past and you saw somebody was heading towards the lift, you’d almost automatically go and, you know, bring the thing up to get it there a bit quicker for them. So, I think things like that actually in the end you, sort of – you learn to adapt and sense what was happening around you.”

By connecting with the person rather than relying on assumptions about what is appropriate, participants knew whether, when and how to assist. As the above quote highlights, this knowledge resulted in a new awareness and consciousness of the needs of their crew members, which was reflected in their behaviour as they made adjustments to their actions. For example, bringing the lift back down to the ground floor for someone in a wheel chair to ascend, or moving aside to give people room to manoeuvre, these small acts ensured that the area remained accessible and preserved the space and autonomy of crew members with disabilities.

“All you can do is ask or take your cues from the person who is in that scenario, rather than making your own judgments about how you should behave around them. And I think that’s one of the most important lessons that there is”

Learnings and Implications for the Workplace Context

Don’t assume or rely on what is ‘appropriate’

When asked about whether the experience had changed their approach in the workplace, it was common for participants to report feeling more comfortable and confident when meeting people with disabilities. Participants felt they were more likely to ask people with disabilities what they needed in terms of support, basing their behaviour on this, rather than what is seen as ‘politically correct’.

“The confidence to approach them to say, “I don’t know what you want or need. If you need anything, tell me. I’m not going to try and, you know, dictate or boss you about, oh, you must do this or do that,” but, kind of, open the door...”

These behaviours and new approaches cited by participants could go some way to making the experience of disabled people in the workplace more positive.

“It’s given me real, real, real big confidence boost. I’ve done things since the boat trip that I wouldn’t have done beforehand. And I think if a disabled person was introduced to our team, I think I would be – well, I don’t think, I know, I’d be able to confidently approach that person, where the rest of the team would probably shy off and not know how to handle that person. Whereas, after the voyage, we’ve got the abilities now to know how to deal with that, a potential situation. I’d have

no problem in going up to a blind person, a person in their wheelchair, and chat to them and seeing what their needs were, whereas before the trip, I wouldn’t of. I would’ve held me hands up. I would’ve held back.”

The most crucial recommendation for able-bodied people in terms of approaching and connecting with people with a disability is summed up in the following participant’s quote:

“All you can do is ask or take your cues from the person who is in that scenario, rather than making your own judgments about how you should behave around them. And I think that’s one of the most important lessons that there is”

Seeing the person

Interview and focus group data provided evidence that contact and proximity with those with disabilities led to a reduction in out-group homogeneity bias³². This bias describes the tendency for majority or ‘in group’ members, to perceived minority or ‘outgroup’ members as having commonalities, or being alike in some way, based on their membership to that group, whereas majority group members tend to see themselves as different from one another. For example, able-bodied individuals may perceive people with disabilities in general to be brave. Out-group homogeneity bias is damaging due to its connection with stereotypical assumptions, particularly if the assumed commonality is negative.

“I think I’d try not to see the disability. They’re just a person. I think that’s what I’ve got from the experience.”

The code ‘seeing the person’ referred to accounts of able-bodied crew members mentioning the unique characteristics of their crew members with disabilities. In a similar way to the Enabling Conditions of the intervention context, the connections which formed between individuals meant that disability was no longer seen as the primary characteristic of a person, instead the focus was on the individual’s character.

“I have a lovely buddy, her name is Laura Simons. Laura is vivacious. She’s full of life and she has Parkinson’s disease, and she’s 33-years-old”

“I think I’d try not to see the disability. They’re just a person. I think that’s what I’ve got from the experience.”

As connections formed and disabilities were no longer viewed as large aspects of identity, the participants appreciated the personalities and uniqueness of the people with disabilities.

They got to know them on a personal level which helped to reduce their perception of people with disabilities as a homogenous group:

“You can’t assume that every person who’s got a disability that you meet will have a fabulous personality and want to be your friend. And that’s the same as, like every normal person who’s not got a – see, I’ve used the wrong word there [normal], shouldn’t say that, but you know, for people without a disability, there will be some not very nice people that you’ll meet. So, you can’t say that the disability explains their – it might have an effect, but it may or may not be their personality,

you know, that is interlinked with that. And we were very lucky that the people that we dealt with and met and enjoyed friendships with, they were just good personalities. But I agree, you can’t say that you know, you might meet another 18-year-old in a wheelchair with his mum and they just might not be positive people, and that may or may not be to do with their disability.”

The crew spent a number of days facing challenges in a situation of close contact where they were reliant on each other for both emotional and physical support through times of elation and achievement, and illness and anxiety. For the able-bodied individuals without previous contact with people with disabilities, and those with lots of previous contact with disability but in a narrow context (for example caring for a relative with a disability)- the experience of seeing and working with people in a rich variety of situations on board meant that their view of ‘disability’ was no longer purely informed by the inspiring athletes in the Paralympics, or the rare encounters they have had with disability in their lives, or even the unhappy experience of seeing a loved one face a debilitating illness. The voyage gave them exposure and contact with a diverse range of individuals with unique personalities and impairments, this broadened their knowledge and perception, and gave them a more nuanced interpretation of what ‘disability’ is, what it isn’t, and crucially how this may change depending on the lived experience of it.

Simply being in the proximity and working alongside people with disabilities led to stereotypical expectations and assumptions being challenged.

Implications for Organizations

Integrate diverse employees

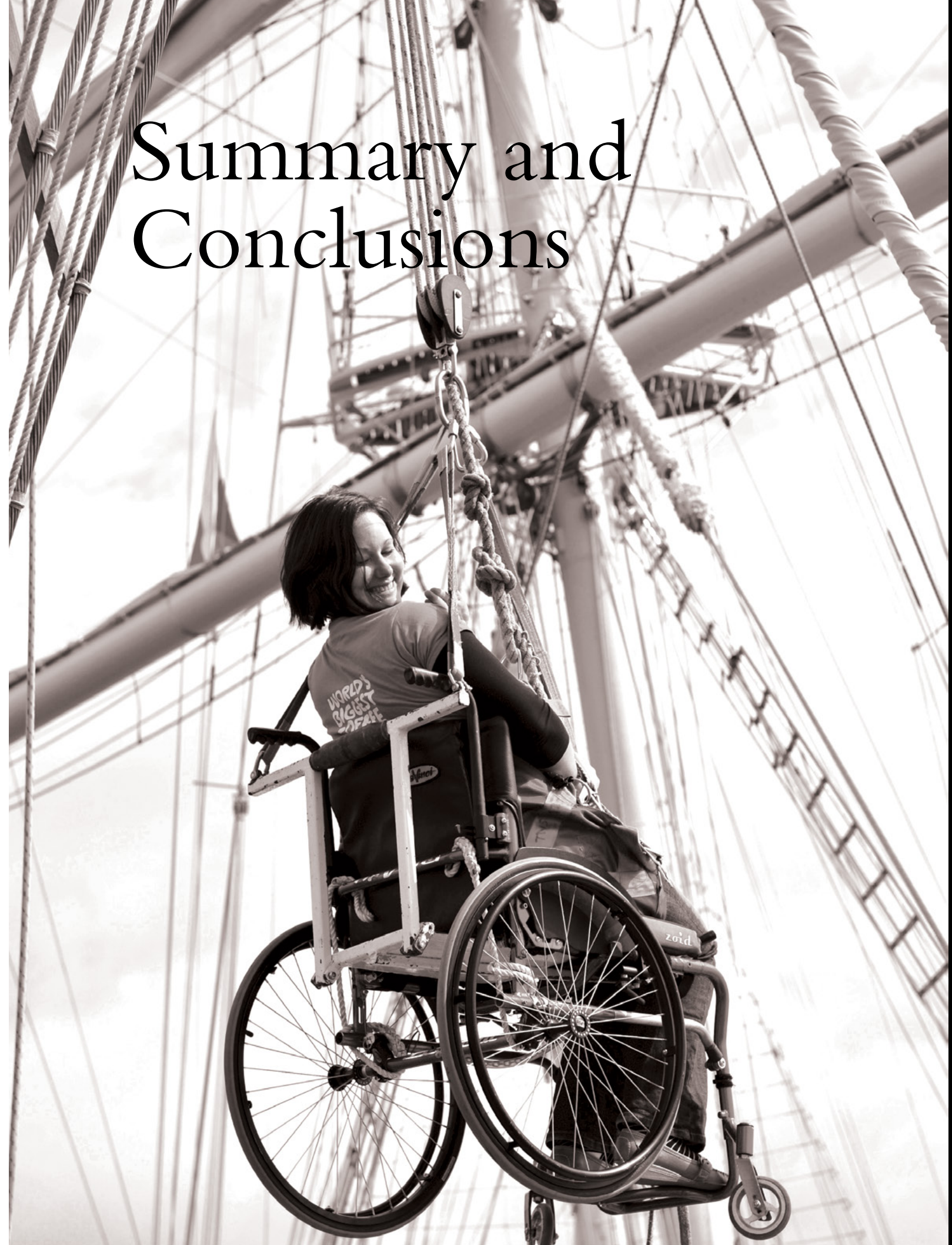
The findings showed that simply being in the proximity and working alongside people with disabilities led to their stereotypical expectations and assumptions being challenged. The key opportunity for organizations here is to recruit and integrate people with disabilities. The further people with impairments are represented in the workplace, the smaller and weaker social and attitudinal barriers will become.

In order to do this recruitment processes need to be made inclusive. Many organizations subscribe to equal opportunity legislation and have certain standards in place to reduce the impact of bias. Despite this, research previously mentioned in this report

showed that those with impairments who disclosed a disability in their job application documents, were less likely to receive contact from a recruiter. Further research suggests that this is not necessarily due to a prejudicial attitude (though it may be) but likely due to a lack of understanding of the implications of hiring someone with a disability. Recruitment often relies on an element of human decision-making, which is always susceptible to bias whether unconscious or not. Therefore it is crucial that those making decisions which could potentially include or exclude an applicant are fully educated and aware of the needs and capabilities of those with disabilities. Gatekeepers of organizations must be able to confidently accommodate those with disabilities into the recruitment process, providing them with an equal opportunity to showcase their ability to fulfil the job description.



Summary and Conclusions



Implications for Workplaces and Employees:

Despite the vast differences between tall ships and workplaces, many parallels can be drawn:

Accessibility

This research reminds organizations of the importance of accessibility, not only in the form of reasonable adjustments but in the form of a universal design mind-set, whereby spaces are not only designed to cater for the 'typical' person, but for people of all abilities.

Self Awareness and Awareness of Colleagues

Findings also tell us that simply knowing the strengths and weaknesses of colleagues and direct reports is not enough. In order to provide appropriate support, we must understand the *origins* of their strengths and weaknesses.

Teamwork

Good teams are made from individuals working to their strengths in order to achieve common goals, however this research highlights that even better teams are made of individuals who also feel invested in their team mate's personal success.

Flexibility

Qualitative findings also highlight the value of providing role flexibility in enabling employees to reach their full potential.

Behaviour

The interpersonal level findings show us what inclusive behaviours look like. In order to behave in ways that include colleagues with disabilities, able-bodied colleagues must abandon the search for appropriate or politically correct action and instead focus on relating to the individual and the cues they are sending.

Recruitment and Retention

Organizations need to do their utmost to dismantle any barriers in recruitment and selection processes in order to bring people with disabilities into their workforce.

Integration and Connection as key to Inclusion

The research shows that a powerful alternative to unconscious bias or diversity training is to provide the opportunity for people of all abilities to connect and work together on a level playing field. Finally, perhaps the most significant message of the research is the power of integration.

"I think more people in our workplace should actually go on this adventure and meet people with different disabilities and actually see what people can, you know, push themselves to do and how positive people are. I think some people would benefit from that experience."

Summary Implications and Conclusion

In summary, results of this research showed that the accessible, out of comfort zone contact intervention aboard the Lord Nelson voyage, led to an improvement of attitudes towards disability. Quantitative tests showed that both self reported and implicit attitudes were significantly more positive after the voyage compared to before.

Qualitative investigation found that this attitude change was facilitated by certain conditions which were present on board the ship. Namely the lack of environmental barriers, the out of comfort zone elements of the experience and the requirement of teamwork. These conditions paved the way for interpersonal processes to occur which shaped able-bodied executives' attitudes towards disability. These interpersonal processes included the initial overcoming of uncertainty and political correctness and led them away from their preoccupation with the social label of disability towards a focus on the individual's unique personality, strengths and character. Disability was no longer a defining feature.

This research successfully answered its research questions by showing a significant change in attitudes towards disability (on the part of able-bodied executives) and outlining a number of conditions and processes that underpinned and facilitated this change. Through connecting with people with disabilities on a level playing field, able-bodied executives had realizations about the disabling nature of the environment, and showed a better self-awareness of how their behavior can contribute to exclusion. Therefore this research demonstrates that in the context of disability, this type of contact intervention as part of CSR initiative helped develop inclusive attitudes and intended behaviours, and is therefore a viable alternative to existing methods of diversity training.

Methodology

Participants

39 able-bodied participants (N=39; 19 women and 20 men) were sampled from a population of Barclays banks employees taking part in a CSR activity run by the Jubilee Sailing Trust. The sample's age ranged from 26 to 60 years old. All of the participants were involved in the intervention voluntarily and consented to participate in the research. Of the sample, 100% were able-bodied, and 38% had a close friend or family member with a mental or physical disability.

Instruments

Quantitative data collection

When it comes to measuring attitudes to disability, it is important to consider potential social desirability bias; the likelihood that people will report more positive attitudes because it is perceived as socially unacceptable to hold negative views towards disability. In order to get a full picture of attitudes in this research, we measure both self-reported attitudes using a scale, and implicit (sometimes called indirect) attitudes using an implicit association test (IAT). Implicit attitudes are those which guide our unconscious automatic associations, therefore IAT's are seen as a good way to capture data on individuals' genuine attitudes rather than what they report their attitudes to be.

The Multidimensional attitudes scale toward persons with disabilities (MAS)

The MAS was used as a measure for self-reported attitudes towards disability due to its inclusion of the affective, emotional, cognitive and behavioural aspects of attitude. The respondent chooses the degree to which they are likely to respond in a certain way by choosing a number from 1 to 5. Once necessary scores are reversed, lower numbers indicate more favourable attitudes towards disability.

Implicit Association Test (IAT)

An IAT was used to measure implicit attitudes towards disability. The IAT works like a timed sorting task and is a measure of the relative strength of association between concept-attribute pairs, for example emotive words or images. The time it takes for participants to associate certain words and images together for example, the word 'joy' and a disability symbol, is measured and converted into a score which represents the respondents' attitude towards disability. Because participants must do this on sight as quickly as possible there is no time for introspection thus overcoming social desirability bias.

Qualitative data collection

Interviews

Qualitative data was collected using 11 one to one semi structured interviews, the interview topic guide explored participants' expectations and feelings about the voyage, accounts of teams working together and whether they felt the intervention had impacted them in terms of their self-awareness, awareness of others and their thoughts about disability.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted, one with eight participants and another with two participants, the focus of these was similar to the interview topic guide above, but with an emphasis on whether learnings could be applied back in their workplace.

Participants were encouraged to record their experience whilst on board via vlogs or written diary entries, this was to encourage reflection and the resulting data was offered to researchers voluntarily. One diary was obtained from a crew-member and was added to the qualitative data corpus.

Procedure

Pre voyage intervention:

Participants were fully informed about the research aims, the use and security of their data, their right to withdraw, and volunteered their consent to participate.

Prior to embarking on their voyage, each participant was sent the links to complete the MAS and IAT instrument to obtain their baseline attitudes towards disability.

Voyage intervention:

Participants were involved in 11 different legs of the voyage.

Participants' voyage intervention lasted between two and five days depending on which leg of the voyage they were on board.

2 weeks Post voyage:

Once they had returned home from the voyage intervention, participants were sent an email containing identical MAS and IAT instruments. They were required to complete their post instruments within two weeks of completing the intervention.

All participants were contacted to organise telephone interviews, again within two weeks of them completing the voyage intervention, in order to collect immediate reactions to the experience.

Focus groups with participants who were on the same leg of the voyage were conducted six months' post intervention to explore any impacts of the intervention on organizational behaviour.

- ¹Waddel, G., & Burton, K. (2006). *Is work good for your health and well-being?* London: TSO
- ²Bourke, J., Garr, S., van Berkel, A., & Wong, J. (2017, February 28) Diversity and Inclusion, the Reality Gap. Retrieved from <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends/2017/diversity-and-inclusion-at-the-workplace.html>
- ³Bruyère, S. M., & Barrington, L. (2012). *Employment and work* (Vol. 5). Sage.
- ⁴Hedley, D., Uljarević, M., Cameron, L., Halder, S., Richdale, A., & Dissanayake, C. (2017). Employment programmes and interventions targeting adults with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review of the literature. *Autism*, 21(8), 929-941.
- ⁵Scope. (2017, August 16) Disability Employment Gap remains static. Retrieved from: <https://www.scope.org.uk/press-releases/disability-employment-gap-static#EmZpMjPGj5OxODJf.99>
- ⁶Paluck, E. L., & Green, D. P. (2009). Prejudice reduction: What works? A review and assessment of research and practice. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 339-367.
- ⁷Finkelstein, V. (1980). Attitudes and disabled people: *Issues for discussion* (No. 5). World Rehabilitation Fund, Inc.
- ⁸Hughes, B., & Paterson, K. (1997). The social model of disability and the disappearing body: Towards a sociology of impairment. *Disability & Society*, 12(3), 325-340.
- ⁹Oliver, M. (2017). Defining impairment and disability. *Disability and Equality Law*, 3.
- ¹⁰Kraus, L. (2017). 2016 Disability Statistics Annual Report. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire. Retrieved from: https://disabilitycompendium.org/sites/default/files/user-uploads/2016_AnnualReport.pdf
- ¹¹Goodley, D. (2013). Dis/entangling critical disability studies. *Disability & Society*, 28(5), 631-644.
- ¹²Coletta, A., & Bruyère, S. M. (2011). *Disability and employment: New directions for industrial and organizational psychology*.
- ¹³Scope Current attitudes towards disabled people. October 2016, Closing the disability employment gap, Retrieved from: <http://diversemag.co.uk/closing-disability-employment-gap/>
- ¹⁴Vornholt, K., et al., (2018). *Disability and employment—overview and highlights*. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 27(1), 40-55.
- ¹⁵Louvet E., Rohmer O., & Dubois N. (2009). Social Judgment of people with a disability in the workplace: how to make a good impression on Employers. *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, 68, 153-159.
- ¹⁶Henkens, K., Remery, C., & Schippers, J. (2008). Shortages in an ageing labour market: an analysis of employers' behaviour. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 19, 1314-1329.
- ¹⁷Pearson, V., Ip, F., Hui, H., & Yip, N. (2003). To tell or not to tell? Disability disclosure and job application outcomes. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 69, 35-38.
- ¹⁸Deal, M. (2007). Aversive disablism: Subtle prejudice toward disabled people. *Disability & Society*, 22(1), 93-107.
- ¹⁹Page, S. (2007). *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- ²⁰Anand, R., & Winters, M. F. (2008). A retrospective view of corporate diversity training from 1964 to the present. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 7(3), 356-372.
- ²¹Aiden, H., & McCarthy, A. (2014). Current Attitudes Towards Disabled People Scope: About Disability. Accessed 28/7/15. Retrieved from: <https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Images/Publication%20Directory/Current-attitudes-towards-disabled-people.pdf?ext=.pdf>
- ²²Aiden, H., & McCarthy, A. (2014). Current Attitudes Towards Disabled People Scope: About Disability. Retrieved from: <https://www.scope.org.uk/Scope/media/Images/Publication%20Directory/Current-attitudes-towards-disabled-people.pdf?ext=.pdf>
- ²³Lee, A. M., & Humphrey, N. D. (1968). *Race riot, Detroit 1943*. New York: Octagon Books., 1968 [c1943]
- ²⁴Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. New York: Doubleday Anchor
- ²⁵Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., & Tredoux, C. (2005). Beyond the optimal contact strategy: A reality check for the contact hypothesis. *American Psychologist*, 60(7), 697.
- ²⁶Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2013). When groups meet: *The dynamics of intergroup contact*. Psychology Press.
- ²⁷Pettigrew, T. F., Tropp, L. R., Wagner, U., & Christ, O. (2011). Recent advances in intergroup contact theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(3), 271-280.
- ²⁸Greenwald, A. G., Poehlman, T. A., Uhlmann, E. L., & Banaji, M. R. (2009). Understanding and using the implicit association test: III. Meta-analysis of predictive validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(1), 17.
- ²⁹Kraus, S. J. (1995). Attitudes and the prediction of behavior: A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21(1), 58-75.
- ³⁰Stone, D. L., & Colella, A. (1996). A model of factors affecting the treatment of disabled individuals in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 21(2), 352-401.
- ³¹Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: a review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(4), 698-714.
- ³²Simon, B. (1992). The perception of ingroup and outgroup homogeneity: Reintroducing the intergroup context. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 3(1), 1-30.

Hult Research

**Ashridge Executive Education at
Hult International Business School**

Berkhamsted

Hertfordshire HP4 1NS

United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)1442 841246

E: research@ashridge.hult.edu

hult.edu/research

