

The Trajectory of Public Stigma Across the Stages of Recovery from a Substance Use Disorder



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INTRODUCTION

- Public stigma towards people with SUDs creates a barrier around accessing treatment and maintaining successful recovery
- Public stigma has 3 dimensions:
 - 1) Negative attributes (stereotypes)
 - 2) Negative emotional reactions (prejudice)
 - 3) Negative behaviors (discrimination)
- Do these dimensions of stigma decrease as the length of time someone is in recovery from SUDs increases?

METHODS

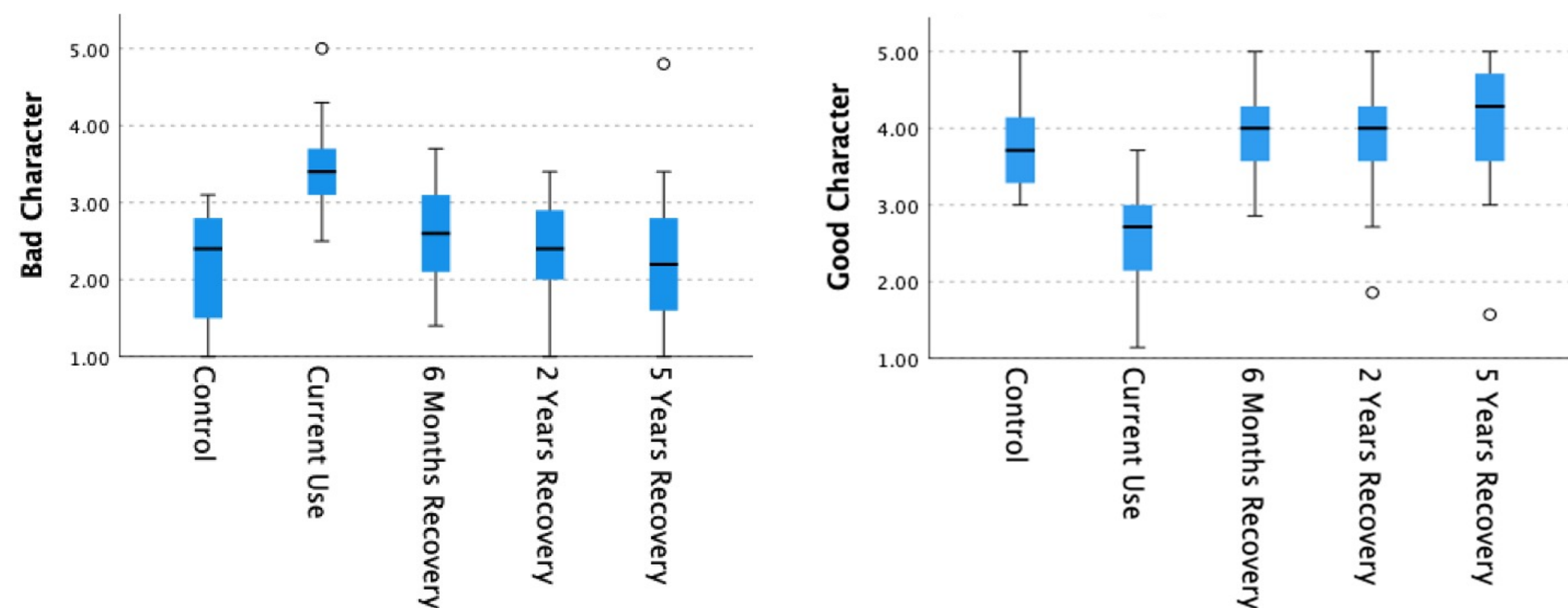
- Derived outcome measures from past studies that looked at stigma towards SUDs
- Data collected from RIC students and Prolific.co recruiting website (N = 185)
- Participants randomly assigned to read 1 of 5 stories about a woman who either: 1) never used drugs before, 2) currently using heroin, 3) in stage 1 of recovery [6 months], 4) in stage 2 of recovery [2 years], or 5) in stage 3 of recovery [5 years]
- Data analyzed using Kruskal Wallis H-tests

DISCUSSION

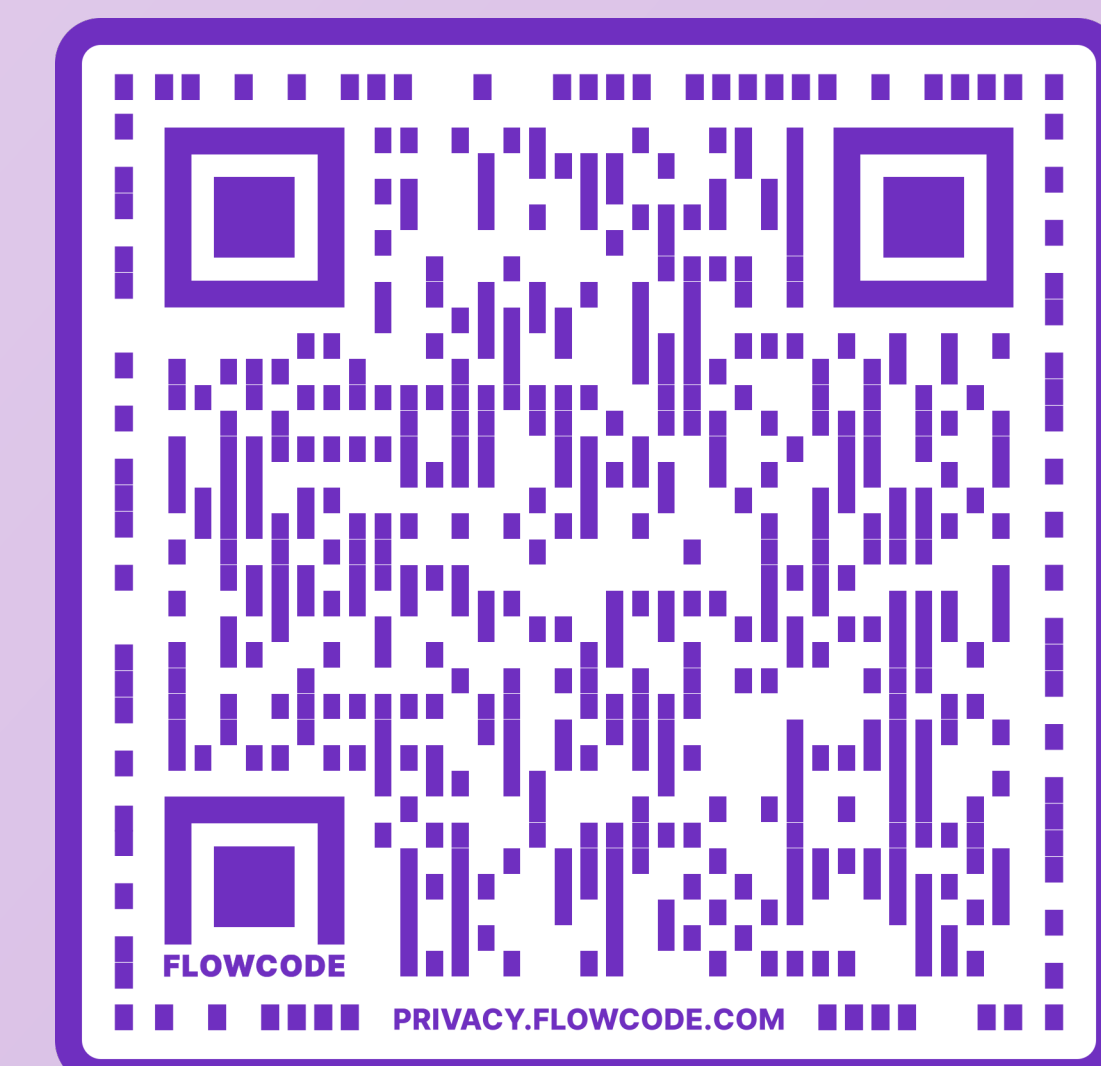
- Some dimensions of stigma (bad character, discrimination, & dehumanization) declined rapidly even with just 6 months in recovery when compared to the control condition
- Whereas other dimensions of stigma (worthless, slander, & criminality) declined more slowly for earlier stages of recovery
- Positive attributes & emotions (good character & hopeful) steadily increased as length of time in recovery increased

Public stigma declines as the length of time in recovery from substance use increases

TYPICAL FINDINGS OF PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT OF NEGATIVE & POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES



Legend for Box & Whisker Plots: Factor on Y-axis, Experimental Conditions on X-axis. The blue box represents the interquartile range, with the top of the blue box representing the 75th quartile and the bottom of the box representing the 25th quartile. The black line represents the median or 50th quartile. Whiskers on the top represent variability in responses for the upper quartile range and whiskers on the bottom represent variability in responses for the lower quartile range. **o** represents outliers in the sample.



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DETAILED RESULTS

Table of Factors, Factor Items, & Range of Factor Loadings

Factors	Factor Items	Factor Loadings
Negative & Positive Attributes		
Bad Character	Mary is... Poor, selfish, blames others for problems, impulsive, is the one to blame, liar, dependent on others, uncontrollable, unpredictable, & self-destructive	0.41 - 0.80
Worthless	Worthless, hopeless, loser, cheater, & inadequate person	0.41 - 0.95
Criminality	Felon, criminal, reckless	0.41 - 0.85
Slander	Junkie, dope fiend, crackhead	0.53 - 0.80
Good Character	Hardworking, motivated, honest, hopeful, clean, strong, & takes responsibility for actions	0.44 - 1.01
Substance Use Disorder	Person with SUD, Person with HUD, drug user, person who uses drugs, substance abuser, drug abuser, substance user, recurrence of use, likely to relapse, desperate for a fix, free from addiction, unreliable, drug free person, & hit rock bottom	0.41 - 1.01
Recovery	Recovering from substance use, recovering addict, person in recovery, person in long-term recovery, & survivor	0.53 - 1.00
Abstinence	Substance free, sober, & abstinent from drugs	0.56 - 0.77
Emotional Reactions		
Antipathy	I feel... Disgust, hatred, anger, paranoid, weary, fearful, & resentment	0.51 - 0.85
Sympathy	Sadness, worried, & pity	0.64 - 0.90
Hopeful	Hopeful for Mary, & inspired by Mary	0.48 - 1.00
Discriminatory Behaviors		
Discrimination	It is okay to... Not hire Mary as an employee, lacks job potential, watched closely, unable to keep job, deny apartment for rent, marry into your family, work closely with in office, ignore in public	0.42 - 0.86
Dehumanization	It is okay to... Dismiss Mary during conversation, reject socially, avoid in public, think less of them, Mary deserves... The same freedom as others, as many opportunities as others, as many chances as others,	0.42 - 0.99

Table of Means, Standard Deviations, Mean Ranks, and Kruskal Wallis Tests for Dependent Variables

Factors	Experimental Conditions							
	M	SD	Control	Current Use	6 months	2 years	5 years	H
Negative & Positive Attributes								
Bad Character	2.58	.788	65.27 ^a	147.24 ^b	90.35 ^a	80.80 ^a	70.45 ^a	56.79
Worthless	1.72	.728	85.61 ^a	123.51 ^b	91.32 ^{ab}	86.23 ^a	70.30 ^a	21.01
Criminality	2.14	.928	69.53 ^a	130.03 ^b	97.42 ^{ab}	80.29 ^a	77.58 ^a	30.63
Slander	2.04	1.08	35.92 ^a	141.76 ^b	91.03 ^a	98.14 ^b	86.89 ^a	71.31
Good Character	3.65	.852	92.90 ^a	24.78 ^a	107.43 ^a	106.96 ^a	124.39 ^a	80.89
Substance Use Disorder	3.10	1.16	19.47 ^a	160.12 ^b	101.15 ^a	84.01 ^a	81.68 ^a	124.14
Recovery	3.55	1.44	28.55 ^a	39.74 ^a	112.54 ^b	121.91 ^b	142.08 ^b	134.97
Abstinence	3.40	1.36	123.18 ^b	20.20 ^a	96.34 ^a	105.33 ^a	116.47 ^a	91.76
Emotional Reactions								
Antipathy	1.31	.442	53.82 ^a	124.38 ^b	101.23 ^{ab}	93.75 ^{ab}	78.03 ^a	37.39
Sympathy	2.37	.938	26.69 ^a	134.77 ^b	100 ^a	95.29 ^a	89.93 ^a	74.18
Hopeful	2.76	.866	92.77 ^a	42.81 ^a	105.85 ^a	97.21 ^a	118.59 ^a	45.97
Discriminatory Behaviors								
Discrimination	2.10	.902	59.13 ^a	150.51 ^b	85.15 ^a	84.09 ^a	64.09 ^a	70.71
Dehumanization	1.53	.707	79.55 ^a	120.41 ^b	84 ^a	89.93 ^a	73.58 ^a	19.52

Note: ^{a, b, c} indicate patterns among statistical significance between mean ranks for each factor. Mean ranks with the same superscript letter did not differ significantly between conditions, whereas mean ranks with differing superscript letters did differ significantly. Bonferroni adjusted significance, $p < .001$. KW tests for every factor were $p < .001$.

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