



Campus Climate of Diversity: Passive Experiences & Active Actions of those with Disabilities

Background

A diverse student body and faculty are associated with better learning outcomes (e.g., Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004). Moreover, student perceptions and experiences of the campus climate predict their overall success in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) of the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) conducts an annual nationwide Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey of college students. The survey contains 17 reliable scales.

Multi-Faceted Statistical Models

We predict the 17 climate scales using forward step-wise hierarchical linear regression with 42 predictors. This statistical technique allowed us to avoid any preconceived notions about which variables would matter most. We produced models that accounted for the greatest percentage of variance possible while using the fewest predictors. That is, we sought to understand how we could explain as simply as possible how students' experience diversity and a sense of belongingness. Our predictors included gender, ethnicity, major, religion, LGBTQ status, political identity, GPA, and disability-status (e.g., self-reported physical disability, learning disability, depression, chronic medical condition).

Participants

At California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB), 1189 students completed the HERI during the 2014-15 academic year. Consistent with the campus as a whole, they were a diverse sample: 38% Latino, 35% White, 11% Asian, 7% Black, 9% Other, 76% Women, & 15% LGBTQ. Their average GPA was 3.26 ($sd = 0.64$). Though most students identified as politically moderate, the average was somewhat liberal.

Hierarchical Linear Regressions

Hierarchical linear regression models accounted for between 2.1% and 13.9% of variance (median: 4.7%) as measured by total adjusted R-squared. The models incorporated 3 to 11 of the predictors (median: 7). Many findings are consistent with prior research and expectations, such as the importance of ethnicity in predicting 10 of the 17 scales. One pattern that is particularly noteworthy, and perhaps less anticipated, is the pervasiveness of disability in predicting 13 of the 17 scales. Results were consistent with main effects (i.e., see graphs at right).

Prevalence of Disability

Kind of Disability	Answering "Yes"
Learning Disability (e.g., Dyslexia)	9%
Disability of Attention (e.g., ADHD)	8%
Physical Disability (e.g., Speech, Sight, Mobility, Hearing)	6%
Chronic Illness (e.g., Cancer, Diabetes, AIDS)	5%
Psychological Disability (e.g., Depression)	19%
Other Disability	7%
Any Disability ("yes" to any above)	35%

Passive Students with a Disability?

When those with disabilities reflect on their *passive* experience of campus climate, they express *negativity*. They are especially negative when considering themselves in light of the way others might see them: less sense of belonging, poorer academic self-concept, and less validation from faculty, staff, and the campus. A long-standing belief is that people form their self-concepts by absorbing the view other people have of them (Cooley, 1902). Is the campus harming some students' self-esteem? Research suggests a person's self-concepts can be quite distinct from this 'generalized other' (Srauger & Schoeneman, 1979). Rather self-concepts coincide with what we *believe* others believe about us. Can we show campus community members with disabilities that they are valued?

Students with disabilities say they experience harassment, discrimination, and bias to a comparable or greater extent than any other demographic, including ethnic minorities. However, they report only nominally fewer positive interactions with peers of other ethnic groups. Additional research is needed to understand their experience of bias.

Disabilities among Participants

Men and women were equally likely to have any disability, $\chi(1)=0.997, p=.525$.

Disabilities were more common among:
LGBTQ community $\chi(1)=18.997, p<.0005$
Liberals $t(1150)=2.818, p=.005$
Lower GPA $t(1150)=2.553, p=.011$

Latino and Asian students were less likely to have a disability, Black students were average, and Caucasian and Other students were more likely to have a disability, $\chi(7)=28.873, p<.0005$

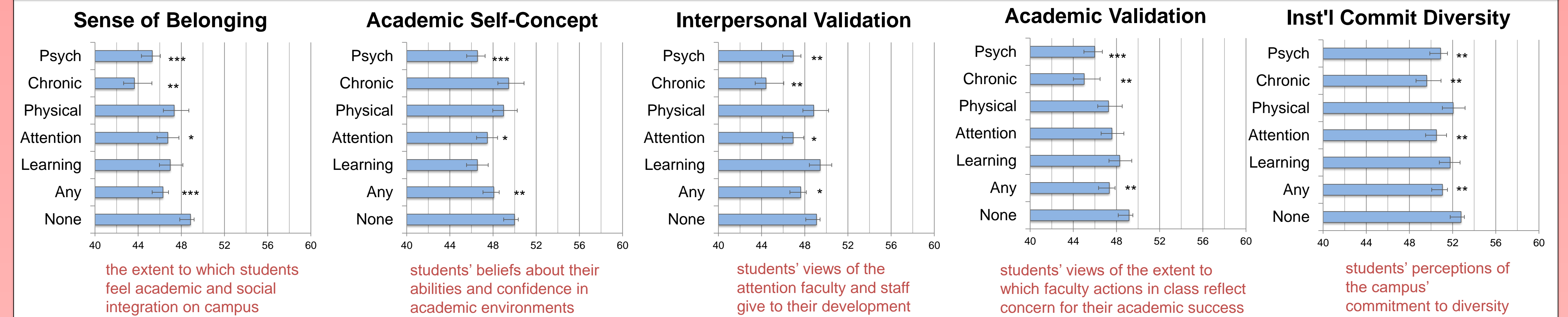
Active Students with a Disability!

Students with disabilities are similar with peers when reflecting on their internal mental processes that foster their learning, such as: appreciating diversity, making connections across concepts, and challenging their own beliefs.

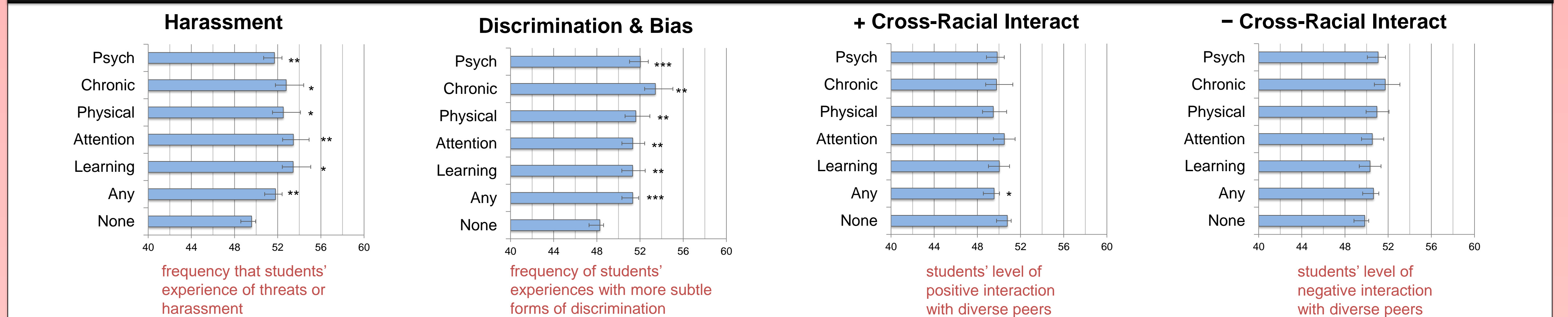
When those with disabilities describe their concrete *active* role in campus climate, they express *positivity*. They seek out learning beyond the classroom, talk about diversity with peers, enroll in classes emphasizing diversity, participate in extra-curricular activities promoting diversity, and engage civically.

Perhaps the disparate results offers a solution. Highlighting the concrete steps those with disabilities take that enhance campus might positively impacts others' perceptions and be 'mirrored back' in self-perceptions on future studies of campus climate.

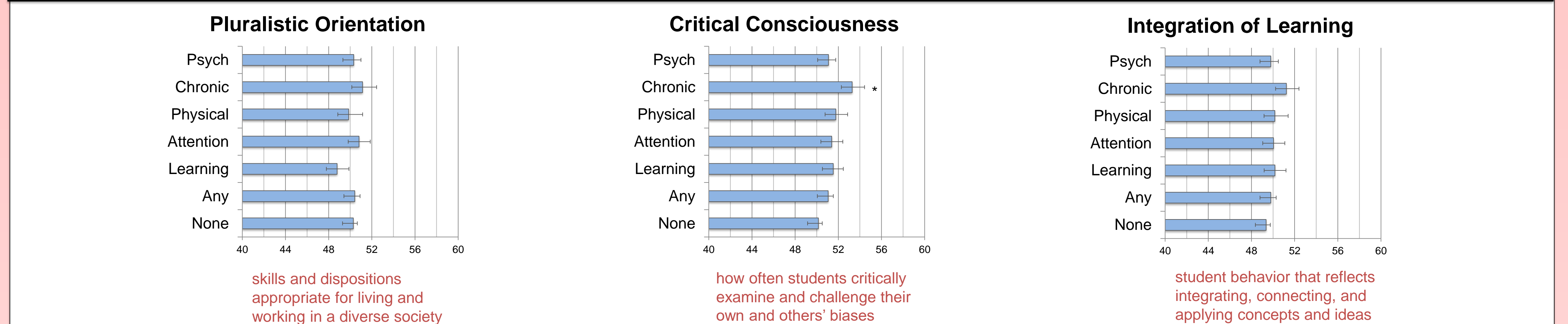
How I See Myself in what Others See in Me



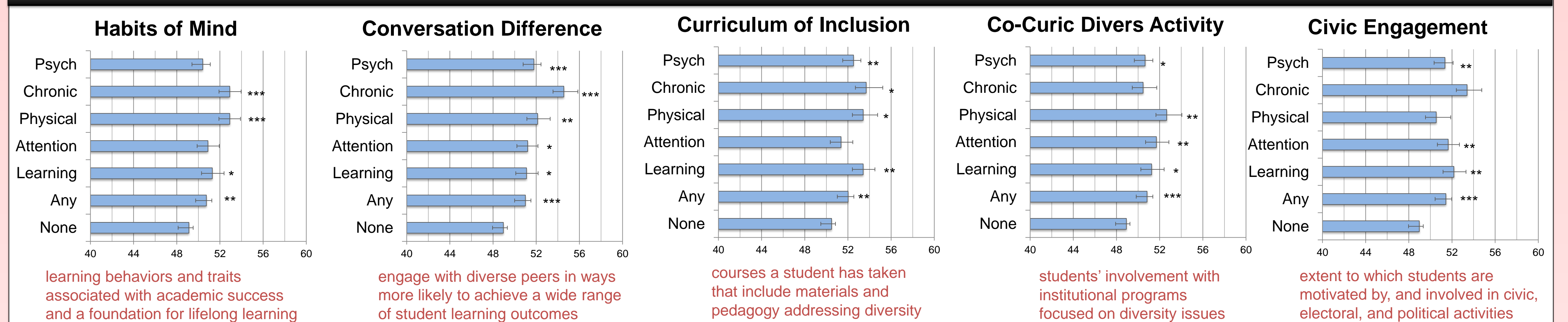
How Others Treat Me



Internal Mental Processes for my Learning



Concrete Actions I take for my Learning



Citation and Abstract

A diverse student body and faculty are associated with better learning outcomes (e.g., Hale, 2004; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2004). Moreover, student perceptions and experiences of the campus climate predict their overall success in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) of the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) conducts an annual nationwide Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey of college students. They provide 19 reliable scales that measure students' perceptions (e.g., how much administration prioritizes diversity issues), student engagement (e.g., participation in co-curricular activities), student intellectual experiences (e.g., civic engagement, scholarly 'habits' like inquiry), and potentially harmful experiences (e.g., discrimination, harassment).

At California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB), 1711 students completed the HERI during the 2014-15 academic year. We refined the dataset to predict the 19 climate scales using forward step-wise hierarchical linear regression with 42 predictors. This statistical technique allowed us to avoid any preconceived notions about what would matter. We produced models that accounted for the greatest percentage of variance possible while using the fewest predictors. That is, we sought to understand how we could explain as simply as possible how students' experience diversity and a sense of belongingness. Our predictors included gender, ethnicity, major, religion, LGBTQ status, political identity, GPA, and disability-status (e.g., self-reported physical disability, learning disability, depression, chronic medical condition).

Hierarchical linear regression models accounted for between 2.1% and 13.9% of variance (median: 4.7%) as measured by total adjusted R-squared. The models incorporated 3 to 11 of the predictors (median: 7). Many findings are consistent with prior research and expectations, such as the importance of ethnicity in predicting 12 of the 19 scales. One pattern that is particularly noteworthy, and perhaps less anticipated, is the pervasiveness of disability in predicting 15 of the 19 scales. Most striking, mental health concerns such as clinical depression predicted negative responses on 7 of the scales.

Our findings suggest the importance of reaching out to students with disabilities, not only for their benefit, but for the overall college culture of learning, diversity, and engagement. We describe best practices identified by many colleges and universities.

Katie Hope Grobman, Danielle
Burchett, & Patti Hiramoto
kgrobman@csumb.edu
CopernicanRevolution.org

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The widespread associations of a campus climate of diversity
and engagement with diversity, from mental health to chronic
illness. Poster presented at the Annual California State
University Symposium on University Teaching, San Jose, CA.