

Inclusive Learning Environments: Modeling a Relationship Between Validation, Campus Climate, and Sense of Belonging

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Introduction

- Landscape of higher education is growingly diverse – including students attending in nontraditional ways
- More recent and inclusive models of student persistence include sense of belonging and validation, but relationship between the two has not been empirically explored

Internal Psychological Processes

- Validation

- > Enabling, confirming and supportive processes initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that foster academic and interpersonal development (Rendon, 1994)

- Sense of Belonging

- > Perceived social cohesion to various groups or environments (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990)

Purpose

- Model the relationship between campus climate, validation, and sense of belonging – drawing from Nora's Model of Student Engagement
- Examine the extent to which academic and general interpersonal validation mediate the effect of a negative climate on students' sense of belonging

Data and Sample

- Diverse Learning Environments 2010-2011
- 34 institutions
 - > 16 public (including 3 community colleges)
 - > 18 private
- n= 20,460 students
 - > 0.3% American Indian
 - > 27.4% Asian American
 - > 2.9% African American
 - > 20.5% Latina/o
 - > 41.6% White
 - > 7.3% Multiracial

Analysis

- ◎ Structural Equation Modeling in EQS 6.1
 - > Two-construct model for direct effect
 - > Full model
- ◎ Robust Maximum Likelihood
- ◎ Variables
 - > Exogenous: Discrimination and Bias
 - > Key DV: Sense of Belonging
 - > Mediating: Academic and General Interpersonal Validation

Results

- ◎ $\chi^2 = 6823.25$, $df = 209$
- ◎ RMSEA = 0.06
- ◎ CFI = 0.92
- ◎ NFI = 0.91

Measurement Model: Discrimination and Bias ($\alpha = .89$)

Survey Item	Coefficient
Experienced discrimination type: verbal comments	0.81
Experienced discrimination type: written comments	0.74
Experienced discrimination type: offensive visual images	0.73
Experienced discrimination type: exclusion	0.73
Witnessed discrimination	0.71
Heard insensitive or disparaging remarks from: faculty	0.66
Heard insensitive or disparaging remarks from: staff	0.66
Heard insensitive or disparaging remarks from: students	0.61

Measurement Model: Academic Validation in the Classroom ($\alpha = .87$)

Survey Item	Coefficient
I feel like my contributions were valued in class	0.85
Instructors provided me with feedback that helped me judge my progress	0.84
Instructors were able to determine my level of understanding	0.77
Instructors encouraged me to ask questions and participate in discussion	0.77
Instructors showed concern about my progress	0.52
Instructors encouraged me to meet with them after or outside of class	0.47

Measurement Model: General Interpersonal Validation ($\alpha = .87$)

Survey Item	Coefficient
Faculty believe in my potential to succeed academically	0.80
At least one faculty member has taken an interest in my development	0.76
At least one staff member has taken an interest in my development	0.76
Staff recognize my achievements	0.75
Faculty empower me to learn here	0.62
Staff encourage me to get involved in campus activities	0.58

Measurement Model: Sense of Belonging ($\alpha = .89$)

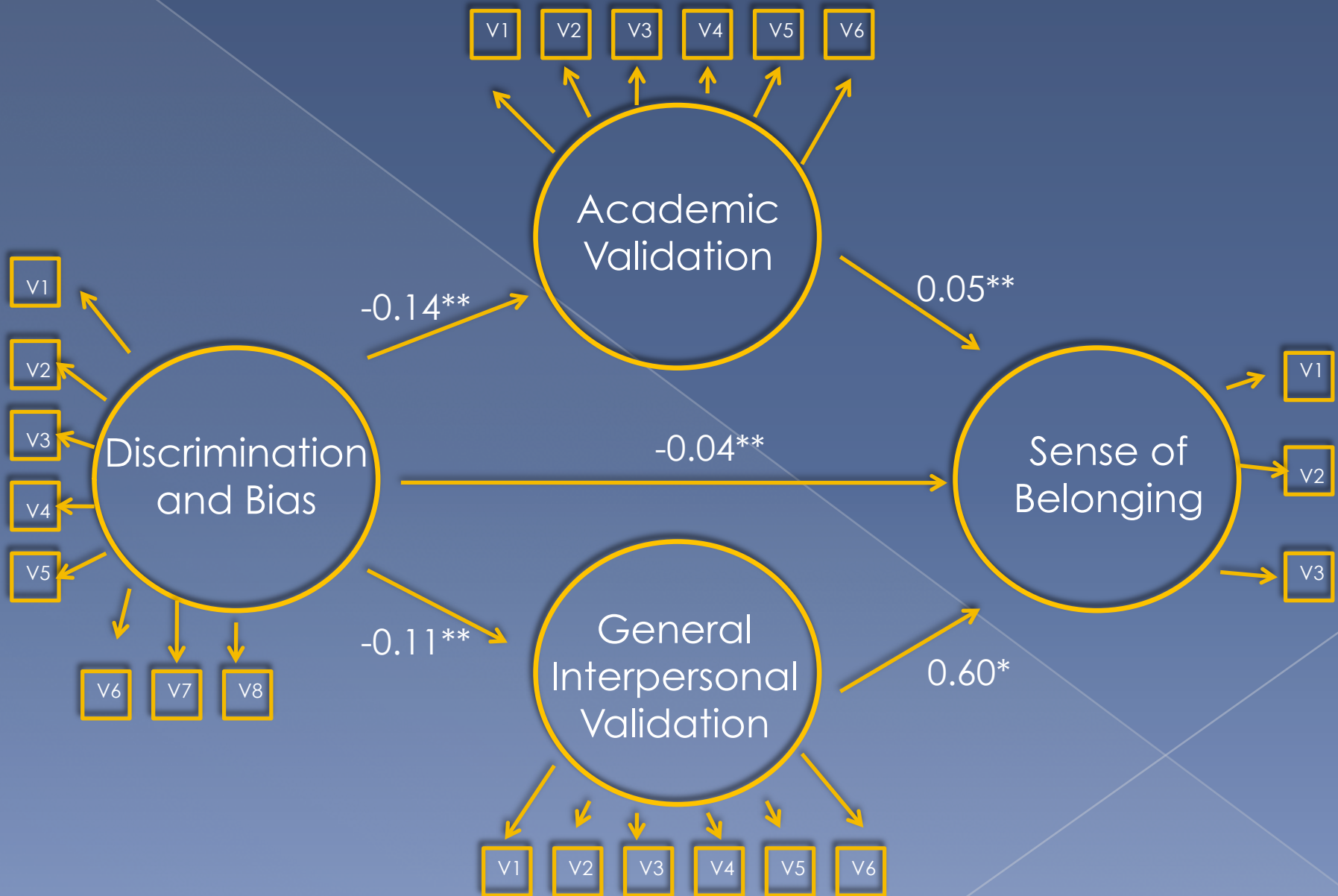
Survey Item	Coefficient
I feel I am a member of this college	0.86
I see myself as part of the campus community	0.85
I feel a sense of belonging to this campus	0.82

Two Construct Model



RMSEA = 0.03; CFI = 0.99; NFI = 0.99

Final Model



Discussion

- Validation positively influences sense of belonging
- Faculty and staff give cues about whether the educational environment is inclusive and welcome
- Validation can be used to mitigate direct relationship between negative experiences with climate and sense of belonging

Conclusion & Future Directions

- Results extend generalizability of previous studies of validation
- Validation and sense of belonging are two distinct concepts
- Future: Assess model across subgroups
- Future: Examine if sense of belonging and validation have distinct effects on completion

Contact Information

- Diverse Learning Environments Website
 - > www.heri.ucla.edu/dle