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Attitudes of Recognizable and Unrecognizable Disabilities in Various Contexts

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Attitudes of Recognizable and Unrecognizable Disabilities in Various Contexts

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INTRODUCTION

- One in four adults have a disability (Okoro et al., 2018)
- Recognizable v. Unrecognizable Disabilities
  - **Recognizable disabilities**— a disability or health condition that is observable.
  - **Unrecognizable disabilities**— a disability or health condition that is not immediately observable or easily identified.
- Categorizing people into groups is unavoidable and underlie attitude and prejudice formation (Allport, 1954)
- When considering disability attitudes, does context matter?
  - Hergenrather and Rhodes (2007): attitudes differ when contexts differ (i.e. dating, marriage, and work)
    - But did not investigate the type of disability or explore the classroom context

THE CURRENT STUDY

- **The purpose of the study is to explore whether undergraduate student attitudes toward persons with disabilities vary according to disability type and the context**
  - **Extends Hergenrather and Rhodes's** research by **specifying different disability types:** recognizable (e.g. uses a wheelchair, is Deaf and/or Blind), unrecognizable psychological disability (depression/anxiety), and unrecognizable neurological condition (ADHD).
  - Also **adds classroom context**, creating four situational contexts (i.e., dating, marriage, work, and classroom).

HYPOTHESES

Main Hypotheses
- **H1: Disability type X Context**
  - **Work Context**
    - Recognizable >Unrecognizable Mental > Unrecognizable Neurological
  - **Classroom Context**
    - Recognizable >Unrecognizable Mental > Unrecognizable Neurological
  - **Dating Context**
    - Unrecognizable Mental > Recognizable > Unrecognizable Neurological
  - **Marriage Context**
    - Unrecognizable Mental > Recognizable > Unrecognizable Neurological
- **H2: Main Effect: Disability type**
  - Recognizable Disabilities > Unrecognizable Disabilities
    - Mental disabilities (e.g. anxiety, depression) > Neurological disabilities (e.g. ADHD)
- **H3: Main Effect: Context**
  - Work = Classroom > Marriage > Dating

Exploratory Factors expected to impact the main hypotheses
- **Role of Gender**
  - Female participants will have more positive attitudes than males
- **Role of Sexual Orientation**
  - Sexual minorities will have more positive attitudes than heterosexuals
- **Role of Disability Status**
  - Disabled participants will have more positive attitudes than non-disabled participants

METHOD

Participants
- 258 undergraduates enrolled at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt
- **Gender**: 173 female, 54 male, 31 non-binary
- **Sexuality**: 131 Straight, 127 LGBTQ+
- **Disability Status**: 129 Yes, 129 No

METHOD (cont.)

Measure
- **Modified Disability Social Relations Generalized Scale (DSRGD; Grand et al., 1982)**
  - 4 contexts measuring one's willingness to Date, Marry, and Work (job/classroom) on a 4-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 4= Strongly Agree)
  - **Example Dating Question**

> "When dating a person who/with *[uses a wheelchair, is Deaf, and/or Blind; depression and/or anxiety; Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD)]* I would not feel uncomfortable if people would stare."

  - **Example Work/Class Question**

> "In the [workplace; classroom], I would not expect a co-worker who/with *[uses a wheelchair, is Deaf, and/or Blind; depression and/or anxiety; Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD)]* to require extra help and attention that would disrupt normal activities."

Design
- 3 Disability Type X 4 Context within-subjects design
  - **3 Disability types:** recognizable (e.g. wheelchair users, Deafness and/or Blindness), unrecognizable mental/psychological (depression and anxiety), unrecognizable neurological (ADHD)
  - **4 Contexts:** Dating, Marriage, Work, Classroom

Procedure
- Participants completed the modified DSRGD questions followed by a demographic questionnaire via an online Qualtrics link for approx. 30min.

RESULTS

Data were analyzed using R (R Development Core Team, 2009) and the R packages lme4 (Bates & Maechler, 2009) and languageR (Baayen, 2009; cf. Baayen, 2008).

Main Analysis
- Disability type X Context analysis = Non-significant

Exploratory Analysis
All models started with the highest level interaction. Non-significant interactions and main effects (provided they were not part of a larger interaction) were removed until only significant terms were present.

- **Final Model:** lmer(Rating ~ Stimulus.Context*GenderID*SexualityID + Stimulus.Disability.Type*GenderID*SexualityID + Stimulus.Disability.Type*DisabilityStatus + (1+ GenderID1+SexualityID1+DisabilityStatus1|Subject) + (1|QuestionType), dat = data)
  - **Gender X Sexuality X Stimulus Disability Type**
    - $\beta = 1.81e\text{-}01$, *Std. error* = 8.78e-02, *t-value* = 2.06, *p* < 0.04, **See Fig. 1**
    - Straight Males: have more positive attitudes for Unrecognizable disabilities (i.e. ADHD) as compared to Recognizable physical disabilities.
  - **Gender X Sexuality X Stimulus.Context**
    - $\beta = 2.90e\text{-}01$, *Std. error* = 1.01e-01, *t-value* = 2.89, *p* < 0.004, **See Fig. 2**
    - LGBTQ females have more positive attitudes concerning marriage with a disabled person than straight females.
    - LGBTQ males have more positive attitudes concerning dating a disabled person than straight males.

Figure 1. Gender X Sexuality X Stimulus Disability Type

RESULTS

Figure 2. Gender X Sexuality X Stimulus.Context
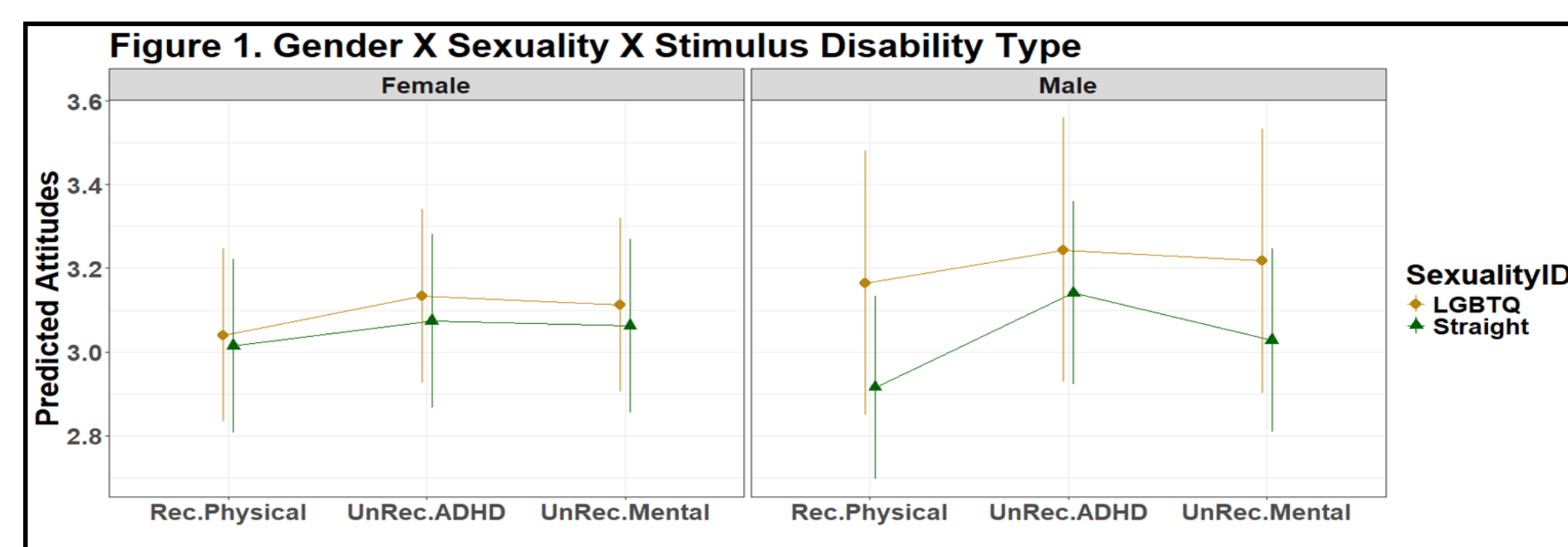
- **Stimulus.Disability.Type X Disability Status**
  - $\beta = 6.45e\text{-}02$, *Std. error* = 3.03e-02, *t-value* = 1.26e+4, *p* < 0.03, **See Fig. 3**
  - Persons who do not have a disability have more negative attitudes towards persons with recognizable physical disabilities than disabled persons

Figure 3. Disability Status X Stimulus Disability Type
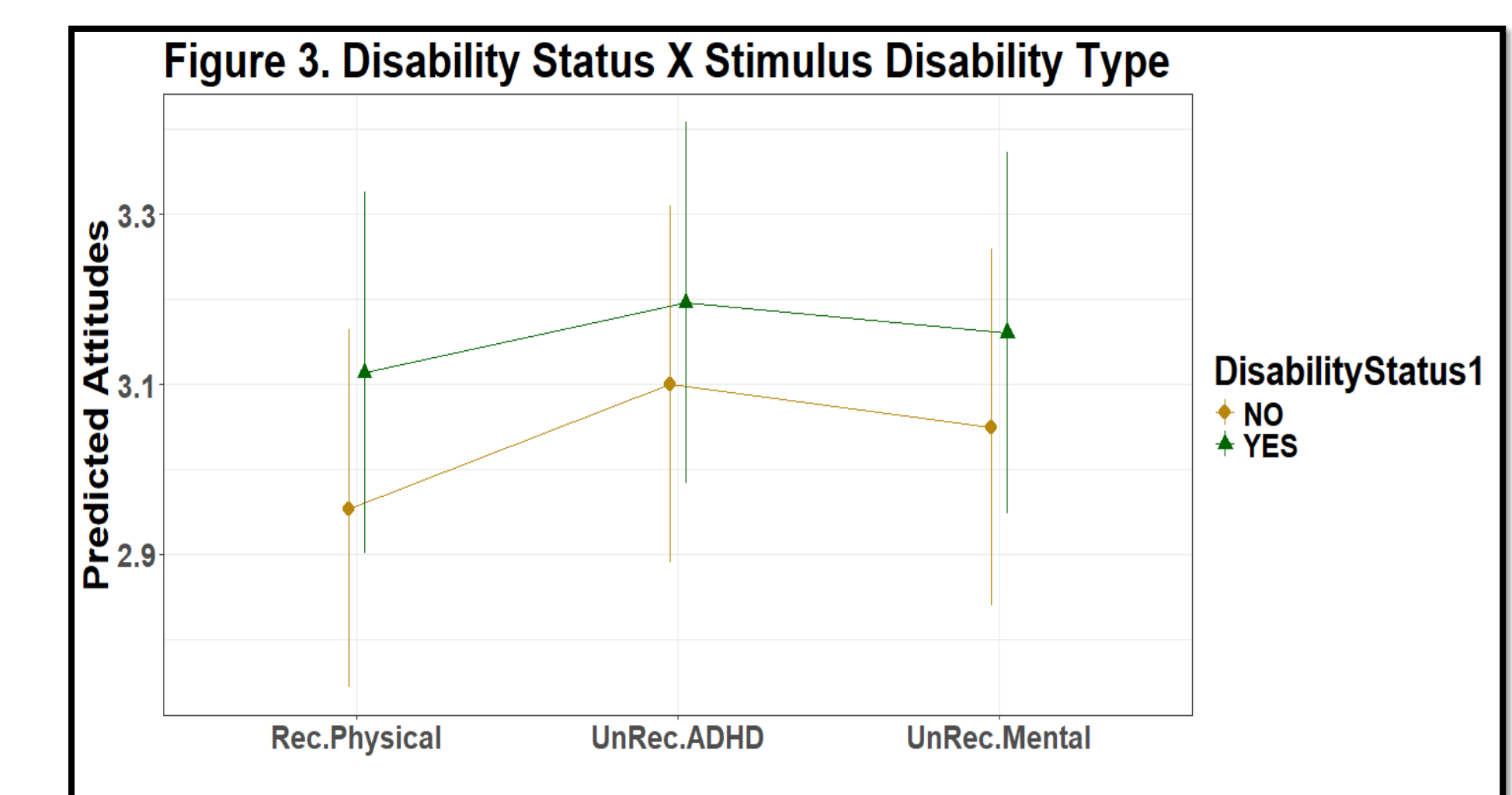
DISCUSSION

- Research in the varied nature of disabilities, especially unrecognizable disabilities is under studied.
- Main hypotheses not supported, but
- **Exploratory analysis revealed that the relationship context, disability type, gender, sexuality, and disability status of the rater impact one's attitudes towards those with disabilities.**

- **Limitations and Future Directions**
  - **Contact and Knowledge:** not controlled, but may play a role in attitudes
  Disability status and type: One's own disability may impact attitudes towards others for the same, different disability differently
  - **Disability type:** This research highlighted two types of unrecognizable disabilities (psychological and neurological). It is not expected that the results will generalize to all types of psychological or neurological disabilities.
    - E.g. Depression and Anxiety may be is seen more favorably than schizophrenia; ADHD may be seen as more favorable than Autism.

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