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Please Feel Free to Intervene: A Longitudinal Analysis of the Consequences of Bystander Behavioral Expectations

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Bias incidents in the workplace can create a pattern of behavior that damages organizational climate not only for victims but also bystanders who witness these incidents. Using incivility and threat ridigity research as a guiding framework, we explore the mitigating potential of bystander intervention on the relationship between bias incidents and witnesses' perceived workplace climate and intention to leave. We developed and tested a moderated mediation model using time-lagged ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with data from organizational climate surveys administered annually from 2014 to 2017. Results confirmed that bias incidents increase turnover intentions through their negative effect on workplace climate. More importantly, the expectation that faculty colleagues will intervene if a bias incident occurs mitigates the negative impact of bias incidents on workplace climate. Our findings suggest that raising awareness about bias incidents, encouraging colleagues to intervene when bias incidents occur, and, most critically, fostering a culture in which intervention is expected have great potential for improving workplace climate and reducing employee turnover. This is the first research study that provides empirical evidence of the potential for bystander intervention expectations to mitigate the negative effect of bias incidents on workplace climate.

Keywords: workplace incivility, workplace climate, bystander intervention, bias incidents, academic workplace

Universities across the country have prioritized diversity for decades, yet for many, diversifying the ranks of faculty remains a rather elusive goal (Taylor et al., 2010). There are numerous reasons why diversity initiatives have often not translated into a more diverse faculty, but increasingly campus climate has come under greater scrutiny.[1] Since women and other historically underrepresented groups typically constitute less than 20% of university departments' faculty, they often experience a particularly chilly climate on campus (Greene et al., 2010; Maranto & Griffin, 2011). In addition to underrepresentation, workplace incivilities, particularly bias incidents, can play an essential role in creating an inhospitable campus climate (Carnes et al., 2012). Given the negative impact of these incivilities and bias incidents on climate, recent work focuses on how to mitigate them and highlights the role that bystanders (such as colleagues) can play to interrupt these incidents.

Over the last two decades, workplace incivility, or "rude, condescending, and ostracizing acts that violate workplace norms of respect" (Cortina et al., 2017, p. 299), has increased steadily. In 2016, 62% of surveyed workers—7% more than a mere 5 years earlier—reported personally experiencing incivility at least once per month (Porath, 2016). The consequences of incivility have long been documented and include, but are not limited to, deteriorating climate (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), declines in mental health and well-being (Lim et al., 2008), and individual and team performance decrements (Porath et al., 2015; Porath & Pearson, 2010). Further, individuals need not personally experience incivility for their work attitudes and behavior to be affected. Those who simply witness incivility report less organizational trust and identification (Dunford et al., 2015) along with increased turnover intentions (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004). Acts of incivility are most often committed by people who feel a sense of power over targets, who tend to be minoritized based on their gender, race, or ethnicity (Cortina et al., 2013). In studies of campus climate, faculty who identified as women, people of color, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) were significantly more likely to report witnessing a bias incident at their university (Shea et al., 2018). This article focuses on one particular type of workplace incivility perpetrated against individuals because of their social group membership status, which we label *bias incidents*.

Failure to interrupt bias incidents in the academic workplace may set up a vicious cycle, which eventually affects the organization as a whole and becomes baked into its structure and culture. Literature on bullying helps illuminate the pernicious effects such

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[1] For a discussion of other factors, such as university financial health in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, see Taylor et al. (2010).

bias incidents can have. For example, Swearer and Espelage (2003) adopt a social-ecological perspective in explaining the broader impact of bullying in schools cascading from the individuals involved, to their families, the school, the community, and the culture that encourages or acts as a deterrent to more bullying. Similarly, bias incidents in the academic workplace do not occur in isolation between the perpetrator and the victim. Rather, they are encouraged or inhibited by implicit or explicit values and norms that guide behavior within the complex relationships among those individuals and their immediate colleagues, and members of their colleges, the broader institution, and the larger community, and the prevailing culture. Failure to interrupt bias incidents can activate a downward spiral where bias begets bias and the academic workplace and its environment becomes more and more toxic (Porath, 2016; Rosen et al., 2016).

While research in the areas of workplace incivility and interpersonal bias have amassed a great deal of evidence pointing to the need to address them, less empirical work has focused on factors that may mitigate the negative consequences associated with them (see Hershcovis et al., 2017 for an exception). In this study, we aim to address this gap by employing a multi-wave, time-lagged design to explore how workplace norms and expectations regarding bystander intervention may subsequently impact the consequences of witnessing bias incidents. Conceptualizing bias incidents as a threat, we first replicate the negative detrimental effects associated with the threat (e.g., constriction and withdrawal behaviors) when one witnesses a bias incident. Then, we test the mediating role of climate at the most proximal organizational level between witnessing bias and turnover intentions. Finally, we test, and find strong support for, the mitigating effect of coworker expectations and norms regarding bystander intervention on both climate and turnover intentions 1 year later.

Our study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, we merge work in incivility and bystander intervention (Fischer et al., 2011; Latané & Rodin, 1969) with threat-rigidity theory (Staw et al., 1981) to understand if and when the expectation that a colleague would intervene on one's behalf affects climate and turnover intentions. To our knowledge, neither the psychological impact nor the benefits of bystander intervention expectations have been considered in the broader literature. By bringing these areas together, we gain a greater understanding of the power of workplace bystanders and the mechanisms through which they may positively impact organizations beyond direct behavioral intervention. Second, by using a time-lagged, longitudinal design embedded within a workplace, we causally establish the impact of informal workplace expectations regarding bystander intervention during bias incidents in context. This study highlights the critical role of bystander expectations in an era in which uncivil behavior continues to increase year over year (Porath, 2016). Third, more practically, this effort provides insight into actions that organizations, especially institutions of higher education, can take to manage an increasingly diverse workforce. Research regarding diversity and fault lines within organizations has produced mixed results regarding group outcomes (see McKay & Avery, 2015 for review). Here, we draw attention to the individual-level outcomes that may derive from organization-level policy and expectation setting—a framework that requires little financial investment to result in potential turnover cost savings and significant climate improvements for faculty retention.

Bias Incidents as Threat Appraisals

Drawing from research on unconscious and implicit bias, we consider most bias incidents as flowing from an unconscious, stereotypical, prejudicial belief, or oversimplified generalization about a person or group (McCauley et al., 1980). For example, bias incidents might include degrading comments about an individual's sex, gender identification, race, and ethnicity; jokes about people with different abilities or sexual preferences; or comments that misrepresent the customs of a particular religion. Bias incidents have particularly acute consequences for women and other underrepresented groups at universities, who are much more likely to witness, recognize, and experience these incidents (Shea et al., 2018; West, 2019).

In addition to inflicting personal harm on their immediate targets, bias incidents may trigger a threat appraisal in those who witness the incidents. Per threat-rigidity theory (Staw et al., 1981), threat appraisals provoke feelings of anxiety and stress, resulting in less sharing of information or control (Gladstein & Reilly, 1985). In line with the core characteristics of workplace incivility as outlined in Pearson et al. (2001), bias incidents are generally considered low-level or subtle violations of social norms that are carried out with ambiguous intentions (Montgomery et al., 2004). Also like other types of incivility (Cortina et al., 2013; Estes & Wang, 2008; Lim et al., 2008; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Porath & Pearson, 2012), bias incidents can result in strong emotional reactions, including anxiety and fear (Flanders, 2015; Wang et al., 2011), suggesting that bias incidents, like other forms of incivility, are interpreted through a threat lens.

Threat-rigidity theory also suggests that those who perceive threat become more cognitively constricted, psychologically withdrawn, and behaviorally domineering in response to threat (Staw et al., 1981; Thiel et al., 2018). Previous considerations and examinations of incivility more broadly provide support for this assertion. For instance, Porath et al. (2015) found that, in general, constriction of cognitive resources occurs as a function of incivility, and others have found that witnessing undermining behavior has negative consequences for social exchange relationships (Duffy et al., 2006; Marks, 1996). Further, in their seminal piece, Andersson and Pearson (1999) theorize that when incivility is experienced, it leads to more incivility in the future—a "spiral of incivility." Later, empirical work supported this phenomenon and provided additional information about the mechanism—reduced individual cognitive functioning—through which the incivility spiral operated (Rosen et al., 2016). Further, empirical investigations of withdrawal behaviors associated with incivility, including absenteeism, burnout, turnover, and turnover intentions (Han et al., 2016; Oyeleye et al., 2013; Rahim & Cosby, 2016; Sliter et al., 2012), provide support that witnesses interpret incivility as a threat and that this framework offers a path forward for exploring and understanding the consequences of the particular type of incivility—bias incidents—that we explore here.

In the following sections, we consider bias incidents through a threat-rigidity perspective. Specifically, we narrow in on psychological withdrawal and intention to behaviorally withdraw following bias incidents before turning to the potentially mitigating impact of workplace norms and expectations of bystander intervention as a means of counteracting cognitive constriction associated with threat appraisals.

Bias Incidents and Workplace Climate

While there is clear evidence that bias incidents harm the direct targets of bias, they also damage workplace climate and critical organizational attitudes and behavioral intentions more broadly (Carnes et al., 2012; Harvey et al., 2007). Studies conducted specifically at universities echo these findings and demonstrate how bias incidents can undermine university attempts to recruit and retain faculty from underrepresented groups. For example, in a study of 353 science and engineering faculty members, Settles et al. (2012) found that organizational sexism toward women had a significant negative impact on job satisfaction, and this impact was mediated by a chilling of workplace climate for both women and men.

Employees' perception of their workplace climate stems from several factors: observations of standard operating procedures, perceptions of decision-making processes, and what is viewed as acceptable behavior in organizations. Most modern organizations require employees to openly and frequently share information in order to harness their collective expertise, creating a strong sense of purpose and cohesion. When individuals experience threat within their workplace, they share information and communicate less (Mesmer-Magnus & Dechurch, 2009), take fewer risks (Staw et al., 1981), and fail to establish an agreed upon collective identity, which is critical for both performance (Evans & Dion, 1991) and psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999).

Bias incidents, like threat appraisals, negatively affect work attitudes (e.g., job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment) and behavioral intentions (e.g., turnover intentions) not only of their direct victims but also observers of those incidents (Low et al., 2007; Maranto & Griffin, 2011; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Turner, 2002; Vartia, 2001). Research has found that witnessing discriminatory or bias-driven interactions leads to increased turnover intentions (Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2012; Glomb et al., 1999; Sims et al., 2005), and we expect to replicate this finding in relation to witnessing bias incidents.

The explanatory mechanism through which turnover intentions are affected more broadly may lie in what Harvey et al. (2007) referred to as *social contagion*, how behavioral norms and expectations are disseminated and reinforced throughout the organization. However, social contagion may have unintended consequences in terms of climate. For instance, Turner et al. (1999) reported that isolated racial and ethnic bias contributed to a chilly climate for racial minorities in general. In their theoretical framework of social contagion, Harvey et al. (2007) suggest that standard operating procedures, norms of behavior, rules of conduct, and shared values may encourage or inhibit bias incidents at the organizational level. In other words, bias incidents are more likely to occur if the offender feels that (s)he has the implicit or explicit blessing or support of superiors and other coworkers to behave in such a manner (Einarsen, 1999). Similarly, in their study of the effect of observed hostility toward women and perceived organizational unresponsiveness at a public university, Miner-Rubino and Cortina (2007) found that, even after controlling for negative affectivity and personal mistreatment experience, the vicarious experience of hostility toward women and the perception of the organization as unresponsive to sexual harassment negatively affected attitudinal outcomes of both men and women.

Finally, employees may be driven to leave an organization as a result of dissonance between their perception of organizational climate and their performance aspirations (Randhawa & Kaur, 2014). In their study involving city government, law enforcement, and military personnel, Cortina et al. (2013) found that gender and race affected vulnerability to uncivil treatment on the job, which in turn predicted intent to leave that job. Thus, working to understand and improve workplace climate may be an effective way to reduce turnover intentions. Bearing in mind the previous body of research in this area, we expect to replicate the mediating relationship between bias incidents, climate, and turnover intention in a university setting. Specifically, we expect that department-level organizational climate will mediate the relationship between bias incidents and turnover intentions. This is a critical first step to empirically demonstrating that bystander intervention expectations do indeed serve as a moderator of this previously established relationship, which we more fully explore in the follow sections.

Mitigating the Impact of Bias Incidents Through Bystander Intervention Expectations

Similar to those experiencing threat rigidity in other forms, victimized employees may avoid responding to bias incidents against them for various reasons (e.g., fear of reprisal, doubt the institution will respond, or minimizing the incident; Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). However, third parties—bystanders—who witness these acts of incivility and bias may be able to help (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008, 2014; Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). Harvey et al. (2007) identify bystander intervention as one way to diffuse the impact of bias incidents in organizations. When observers intervene, they can offset the incident's corrosive effects and help create a more inclusive climate. Bystanders have the potential to shift norms and expectations, transforming the climates that have been implicated as contributing to the causes of ongoing bias incidents. In service to this point, there is some evidence that simply understanding what is involved in being an active bystander is empowering to potential witnesses (e.g., Banyard et al., 2009). The Latané and Darley (1970) situational model of bystander intervention is perhaps the most well-established model of bystander action. The authors contend that bystander intervention occurs through several key decision steps: recognizing that there is a problem; experiencing a sense of responsibility for intervening; weighing the risks and costs associated with intervention; and assessing the skills required to intervene successfully. Piliavin's arousal cost–reward model describes how people are motivated to act prosocially by emotions stirred when they witness someone being harmed (Penner et al., 2005). Both of these theories are beginning to be applied to the workplace (Jensen & Raver, 2020).

While the majority of bystander intervention research has focused on the antecedents and consequences of physical intervention, more attention has recently been paid to the role of employee *expectations* about their workplace and coworkers in reducing the impacts of uncivil behavior. For instance, in their exploration of the penalties of witnessing workplace bullying, Sprigg et al. (2019) present empirical evidence that contextual workplace factors (e.g., supervisor support) can mitigate the detrimental health and performance outcomes associated with bullying. Likewise, research exploring factors with the potential to alleviate or entirely avoid the incivility spiral report that individuals' *expectation* that others would support them or intervene on their behalf in some way attenuates the negative effects associated with incivility spirals (Taylor et al., 2018). These findings suggest that (a) the expectation that colleagues would intervene follows from workplace norms, standards, and

expectations and (b) a deduction in threat-rigidity cognition and behavior can derive solely from those workplace norms, standards, and expectations. In short, in psychologically safe workplaces or those that have inclusive norms and behavioral expectations in place, those who witness bias may be less likely to experience threat rigidity following an incident because of the ingrained expectation that employees who hold biased views are the exception, and that perpetrators can learn and improve in the future (Rattan & Dweck, 2018). Bearing this in mind, we propose the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis:* Expectations of bystander intervention will mitigate the effect of bias incidents on department-level organizational climate such that negative effects following from bias incidents will decrease among those who report that their colleagues are likely to intervene when bias incidents occur.

The relationships among the variables of interest are depicted in Figure 1.

Method

Sample

We administered a Qualtrics survey annually over a period of 4 years to faculty at a mid-sized university in the northeast United States. In addition to demographic indicators, respondents were asked questions about (a) witnessing bias incidents, (b) expectations regarding colleagues intervening when bias incidents occurred, (c) perceptions regarding department-level organizational climate, and (d) intention to leave the organization. We sent faculty members three email reminders (once per week during the last 3 weeks of the survey) and postcards along with a small gift (e.g., pen, thumb drive, lanyard) halfway through the survey. As an additional incentive, respondents had the option of entering a drawing for a $1,000 research/development grant on a separate website after completing the survey. We employed a time-lagged design to analyze the data, which resulted in 3 years of data for each of the "pre" independent variable measurements and "post" dependent variable measurements.

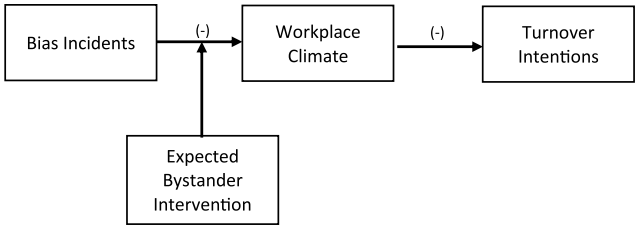
The total number of faculty at this institution averaged approximately 950 for each of the 4 years of the survey, and response rates averaged about 40% each year. Table 1 reports descriptive statistics on demographics and academic characteristics of the samples for each year of the survey. As Table 1 indicates, while other choices were included in the survey, all respondents identified as "female" or "male," with women being slightly overrepresented in the sample (approximately 53% of respondents on average), compared to their representation within the faculty population in general (45%).[2] Given the demographics of the public university campus under study, the sample is predominantly White. On average, 84% of our respondents identified as White across the 4 years, compared to 2% identifying as Latinx, 1% as Black, and 4% as Asian. These numbers make clear that our survey is not representative of faculty nationally, and we note the importance of this limitation when discussing our results.[3] In this sample, 7% of respondents identified as LGBTQ and 91% as heterosexual.[4] In terms of academic characteristics, 47% of our sample was tenured across the 4 years, 17% was on the tenure track but not yet tenured, and 36% was nontenure track. These percentages were consistent with their representation in the faculty population in general. One third of the sample represented departments in the liberal arts and social sciences, one fifth represented departments in engineering and physical sciences, with smaller percentages hailing from health and human services, life sciences and agriculture, the business school, and the law school.

Table 1
Demographic and Academic Characteristics of Sample[a]

Percentages identifying as . . .	2014	2015	2016	2017
Female	54	52	53	54
Male	46	48	47	46
Non-White Latinx	2	2	2	2
Black	1	2	1	1
Asian	4	3	5	3
White	83	84	83	84
LGBTQ	9	6	7	8
Heterosexual	91	93	91	90
Untenured, but tenure track	16	15	17	21
Tenured	50	53	44	41
Nontenure track	34	32	39	39
Faculty in engineering and physical science	22	20	19	15
Faculty in health and human services	11	11	15	14
Faculty in liberal arts	32	35	31	30
Faculty in life sciences and agriculture	12	11	11	16
Faculty in business and economics	8	8	9	9
Faculty in law school	3	4	4	4
N	340	384	489	354

[a] As some questions had options to identify as "other," some totals will not reach 100%.

Figure 1
Hypthesized Relationships



Measures

Witnessing and identifying bias incidents in the workplace is a necessary precondition to bystander intervention. Thus, our goal in measuring experience with bias was to assess the extent to which respondents observed bias in their workplace. We measured bias by

[2] We measured gender with the following survey question: "What is your primary gender identification? (1) male; (2) female; (3) other." Respondents who selected "other" were given the option to record their gender identification qualitatively.

[3] We measured race and ethnicity with the following survey question: "What is your race and ethnicity? Please check all that apply." Respondents who identified any race or ethnicity other than White or Caucasian were grouped as "non-White." In the pooled sample, 1.5% of respondents identified with more than one race and/or ethnicity.

[4] "What is your sexual orientation? (1) bisexual; (2) gay/lesbian; (3) heterosexual; (4) questioning; (5) other." Respondents who identified as bisexual, gay/lesbian, and questioning were grouped as LGBTQ.

using the mean of three items adapted for the current context from measures of bystander intervention in interpersonal violence (Banyard et al., 2014; Brown et al., 2014; McMahon et al., 2017). Specifically, respondents identified how often, on a scale from 1 = *never* to 4 = *often*, they:

1. had heard a faculty colleague make insensitive or disparaging comments about someone because of their gender, disability status, sexual orientation, and race or ethnicity;
2. had witnessed someone raising issues about the unequal treatment of underrepresented minorities (based on gender, disability status, sexual orientation, and race or ethnicity); and
3. had heard a coworker seem to imply that underrepresented minorities (based on gender, disability status, sexual orientation, and race or ethnicity) are not as strong in their field.

These items loaded on a single factor with Cronbach's α scale reliabilities ranging from .70 to .77 over the 4 years of the survey, exceeding the 0.7 hurdle established by Nunnally (1978).

We measured expectations of bystander intervention by asking respondents how likely, on a scale from 1 = *very unlikely* to 4 = *very likely*, their colleagues would intervene if they witnessed the three bias incidents described above. These items also loaded on a single factor and reliability analysis yielded acceptable Cronbach's α's above .9 each year.

Research attempts to accurately operationalize organizational climate have yielded upwards of 80 survey items capturing various dimensions as disparate as job autonomy, job involvement, pressure to produce, and clarity of organizational goals (Schneider et al., 2013). To improve the reliability and validity of organizational climate research, experts advocate an approach that focuses on the specific organizational-level aspects of climate that most closely relate to the research context and predicted outcomes (Schneider et al., 2013).

For guidance about operationalizing climate for faculty, we relied on Hagedorn (2000) conceptualization of faculty job satisfaction and August and Waltman (2004) study of career satisfaction among female faculty. They theorized that faculty job satisfaction, a strong predictor of turnover, is determined through the mediation of demographics, motivators, and environmental conditions, including institutional climate. In the present study, we focus on department-level organizational climate, as it is the context where the most important decisions affecting faculty are made (e.g., faculty workload and program offerings) and on aspects that are most likely to be affected by incivility. We asked respondents 10 questions, with scale-based response options ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*, the extent to which:

1. They have influence on the overall climate in their department
2. **They feel included in informal department networks**
3. **It is safe to take risks in their department**
4. **They feel that they fit in the department**
5. The evaluation of scholarly performance is fair
6. **The process and criteria for promotion and tenure are fair**
7. The department conducts its meetings to allow for participants to share their views
8. The department promotes programs to balance faculty work and family responsibilities
9. **The department's leadership creates a cooperative and supportive environment**
10. The department's leadership treats faculty in an even-handed way.

In our analysis, we used a subset of these items that loaded on one factor with Cronbach's α's ranging from .91 to .92 each year of the survey (i.e., Items 2, 3, 4, 6, and 9, which are bolded above). The retained items related to inclusion, fairness, and safety aspects of climate that are relevant to workplace bias.

Given our goal to capture intention to quit as a result of the negative effect of bias incidents on workplace climate, we asked respondents to indicate, on a scale from 1 to 4, the extent to which they have considered leaving the organization to find a more supportive work environment elsewhere.

Our data set consists of a total of 1,324 responses over 4 years, ranging from 282 to 423 each year, that included all possible demographic data. While we lack an identifier on the individual level that would allow us to track each participant's responses over time, we were able to utilize certain time-invariant characteristics to identify unique groups of individuals and derive repeated measures for all variables over the 4-year sample period. A total of 132 unique groups of similar individuals were created based on common gender, race/ethnicity, rank, and college. From these 132 groups, 85 groups (206 observations) had data for 2 or more consecutive years and constituted the group-level sample that we utilize in our regression analysis. Specifically, 65 groups at Time 1 have data for the dependent variables at Time 2, 73 groups at Time 2 have data for Time 3, and 68 groups at Time 3 have data for Time 4. Descriptive statistics are presented in Tables 2–5. Tables 2 and 3 show individual- and group-level summary statistics and Tables 4 and 5 provide individual- and group-level correlation matrices.

Analysis

In testing the hypothesis outlined above, we took advantage of the longitudinal data provided by the annual surveys and analyzed panel data consisting of 206 group-level observations measured over the 2014–2017 sample period.[5] In particular, we estimated ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions with standard errors clustered at the group level and robust to heteroskedasticity. To mitigate endogeneity concerns and ensure the causal interpretation of the results, we included lagged explanatory variables in all OLS specifications and a calendar year fixed effect to capture the influence of any aggregate

[5] Since our estimation models include lagged independent variables, each group of individuals needs to have at least 2 consecutive years of nonmissing data to be included in the sample. Eighty-five groups (206 observations) fit that criteria. Of those 85 groups, 53 (159 observations) had data for all 4 years, 15 groups (30 observations) had 3 consecutive years of data, and 17 groups (17 observations) had 2 consecutive years of data.

Table 2
Individual-Level Descriptive Statistics

Year	No. of observations	Bias incidents	Workplace climate	Expected bystander intervention	Intention to quit
		M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
2014	287	1.56 (0.69)	1.42 (0.58)	1.39 (0.61)	1.40 (0.58)
2015	332	2.94 (0.60)	2.95 (0.59)	2.93 (0.61)	2.96 (0.59)
2016	423	3.00 (0.75)	3.04 (0.75)	3.05 (0.79)	3.06 (0.80)
2017	282	1.52 (0.43)	1.50 (0.39)	1.51 (0.37)	1.54 (0.43)

time series trends in the variables. We also performed an additional robustness check and estimated a fixed effects model in the panel data, which allowed us to control for any potential bias caused by time-invariant omitted variables. The fixed effects model relies only on within-group variation and is thus unaffected by any unobservable, time-invariant factors that might simultaneously affect the regression's dependent and independent variables. The fixed effects estimation procedure confirmed the robustness of the results reported in the study.

Results

Hypothesis Testing

In line with past work linking bias to climate and turnover, we first established that department-level organizational climate mediated the relationship between bias incidents and the outcome variable, intention to quit. Before testing this model, we first verified that bias incidents led to increased intentions to turnover, as previous research has suggested (e.g., Glomb et al., 1999). As shown in Table 6, we do find a relationship between bias incidents and intention to quit in the expected direction, $\beta = 1.110$, $t(84) = 3.06$, $p = .003$. Additionally, as expected, we also find that bias incidents negatively affect department-level organizational climate, $\beta = -1.415$, $t(84) = -4.62$, $p = .000$. Finally, as anticipated based on prior work, we find that department-level organizational climate fully mediates the relationship between witnessing bias incidents and intention to quit, $\beta = -0.798$, $t(84) = -10.66$, $p = .000$. In addition, the mediated model explains a significant portion of the variance in intention to quit ($R^2 = .50$, $p = .000$) and explains a substantially larger portion of the variance in the dependent variables than the unmediated model (i.e., $R^2 = .50$ vs. .14). Taken together, these results fully replicate previous findings and allow us to explore our hypothesized moderating mechanism.

Our hypothesis predicting the moderating effect of bystander expectations is also supported (see Table 6). Expectations that colleagues will intervene moderate the relationship between bias incidents and department-level organizational climate, $\beta = 0.418$, $t(84) = 3.59$, $p = .000$. When those witnessing bias incidents harbor expectations that others will intervene, their perceptions of department-level organizational climate are less negatively affected by witnessing bias.

Discussion

Extensive research has been conducted on prosocial behavior including organizational citizenship (prosocial actions toward others in the organization; Rioux & Penner, 2001) and bystanders to incivilities or emergencies (see Dovidio et al., 2012 for a comprehensive treatment of the subject). Most of this work, including social psychological studies of variables in the workplace, investigates when and why people step in (Jensen & Raver, 2020). In this article, we merely scratch the surface of the impact that prosocial behavior can have on the climate for faculty in the academic workplace. We focus on bystanders to bias incidents in academia and more specifically on how expectations of colleagues as helpful bystanders can have positive impacts on faculty perceptions of department climate.

Our findings both confirm and build on past work in an important way. We replicate past research, finding that faculty who witness incivility in the form of bias incidents in the workplace experience behaviors in line with threat rigidity (Staw et al., 1981), including deteriorating perceptions of department-level organizational climate and increased intention to quit. Hearing disparaging remarks or becoming aware of unfair treatment of someone based on their social identity negatively impacts department-level organizational climate by affecting the extent to which faculty feel that they fit within their department and that their department's policies and practices are fair. Building on this past work, our results also indicate that encouraging colleague intervention as a workplace norm and expectation has the potential to alleviate the negative impact of bias incidents on department-level organizational climate. It appears that, in line with Harvey et al. (2007), workplace expectations and norms surrounding intervention can play a large role in whether a

Table 3
Group-Level Descriptive Statistics

Year	No. of observations	Bias incidents	Workplace climate	Expected bystander intervention	Intention to quit
		M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
2014	65	1.57 (0.55)	1.48 (0.54)	1.44 (0.52)	1.49 (0.64)
2015	73	2.92 (0.41)	2.94 (0.45)	2.82 (0.44)	2.83 (0.52)
2016	68	2.93 (0.56)	2.99 (0.61)	3.01 (0.57)	2.96 (0.67)
2017	68	1.53 (0.54)	1.52 (0.55)	1.55 (0.43)	1.60 (0.63)

Table 4
Individual-Level Correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Bias incidents	—					
2. Department climate	−0.347***	—				
3. Expected bystander intervention	−0.296***	0.377***	—			
4. Intention to quit	0.353***	−0.615***	−0.251***	—		
5. Gender	0.212***	−0.169***	−0.050	0.098***	—	
6. Race/ethnicity	0.221***	−0.007	−0.153***	0.049	0.003	—

Note. For gender, female was coded as 1 and male was coded as 0. For race/ethnicity, non-White was coded as 1 and White was coded as 0.
* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$. *** $p < .000$.

witness of bias develops a negative view of department climate, a risk factor for faculty turnover, and other negative effects. Perceiving a norm of prosocial behavior has been shown in other studies to be related to intention and actual helpful bystander behavior (Banyard et al., 2020). Organizations should take care to ensure that, should one of their employees witness bias, they have reason to believe it is uncommon, and something that others would address. Considering that employees may be more likely to engage in incivility if they have been victims of workplace aggression themselves (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013), expecting a colleague to "have your back" may act as a check on such behavior in the workplace and prevent tit-for-tat incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Some very promising findings emerge when we examine the interaction effect between bias incidents and expectations of colleague intervention. Specifically, if respondents expected their colleagues to intervene when bias incidents occurred, then bias incidents had far less impact on department-level organizational climate. This finding implies that universities should consider actively encouraging and training their faculty to intervene when they witness incivility and bias incidents in order to promote positive climate and insulate against the negative effects of incivility.

Our data aligns with past work in that department-level organizational climate has a significant negative effect on intention to quit. Since faculty who are underrepresented in their discipline are more likely to witness incivility in the form of bias incidents in the workplace, these incidents are counterproductive to fostering a positive and inclusive climate. Thus, in line with our findings regarding the moderating effects of bystander intervention expectations, establishing norms and championing training that encourage and prepare employees to successfully intervene when bias incidents occur can reduce the number and the detrimental effect of bias incidents on climate and turnover.

Specifically, workshops and training should go beyond raising awareness of bias in the workplace and provide employees with specific skills for successfully addressing incivility in a manner that will not negatively impact their career. This present study on climate suggests that such training might be best facilitated within departments or workgroups so that peers can witness other peers becoming active and willing bystanders, potentially shifting social norm perceptions. What is more, such training can also be a forum for reinforcing department priorities (e.g., Harvey et al., 2007) related to colleague actions and help correct norms and misperceptions that can occur when individuals think their peers are less in favor of bystander action than they actually are. For example, in the field of sexual assault prevention, a shift to training that helps individuals see themselves as active bystanders rather than as victims or perpetrators of an assault has led to a paradigm shift in engaging all potential stakeholders (e.g., Banyard et al., 2007). While promising, future research is needed to evaluate such training's effectiveness as applied to workplace colleagues.

Limitations

While this study was designed and conducted with methodological and analytical rigor, several limitations exist. First, because our data analysis relies upon the survey method, common method bias could impact our results, particularly by increasing the correlation among our variables (Doty & Glick, 1988). However, Meade et al. (2007) found that the magnitude of such an increase is often minor. Second, while our measure of witnessing bias incidents had a great deal of internal reliability, it may not capture the full range of possible bias incidents that can occur in the workplace. Qualitative research might be particularly valuable to address this limitation, particularly if such research allows respondents to describe in their

Table 5
Group-Level Correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Bias incidents	—					
2. Department climate	−0.442***	—				
3. Expected bystander intervention	−0.385***	0.391***	—			
4. Intention to quit	0.413***	−0.680***	−0.343***	—		
5. Gender	0.286***	−0.184***	−0.113	0.112***	—	
6. Race/ethnicity	0.329***	−0.022	−0.212***	0.036	0.058	—

Note. For gender, female was coded as 1 and male was coded as 0. For race/ethnicity, non-White was coded as 1 and White was coded as 0.
* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$. *** $p < .000$.

Table 6
Longitudinal OLS Regression Analysis of the Effect of Bias Incidents and Expected Bystander Intervention on Workplace Climate and Intention to Quit

Outcome variables	Workplace climate$_{t+1,i}$	Intention to quit$_{t+1,i}$	
		Without climate	With climate
Independent variables			
Bias incidents$_{t,i}$	−1.415***	1.110**	−0.019
	[.306; −4.62]	[.362; 3.06]	[.297; −.06]
Expected bystander intervention$_{t,i}$	−.510**	0.351	−0.556
	[.182; −2.79]	[.222; 1.58]	[.168; −.33]
Workplace climate$_{t+1,i}$			−0.798***
			[.075; −10.66]
Interaction			
Bias incidents$_{t,i}$ × Expected bystander intervention$_{t,i}$	.418***	−.286*	0.048
	[.116; 3.59]	[.126; −2.27]	[.103; .46]
Covariates			
Gender$_i$	−0.093	0.025	−0.049
	[.073; −1.26]	[.087; 0.28]	[.068; −.73]
Race/ethnicity$_i$	0.252	−0.240	−0.039
	[.099; 2.55]	[.099; −2.44]	[.091; −.43]
R^2	R^2 = .23***; F = 14.37	R^2 = .14***; F = 5.53	R^2 = .50***; F = 21.31
Number of observations	206	206	206

Note. For gender, female was coded as 1 and male was coded as 0. For race/ethnicity, non-White was coded as 1 and White was coded as 0. Values are given as β [*SE*; *t*-stat].
* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$. *** $p < .000$.

own words the full array of bias incidents they have witnessed. Such an exhaustive list of bias incidents could be used to create a longer, more detailed inventory for future study.

Our study does not take into consideration that there are many ways to intervene (see, for example, Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005; Sue et al., 2019), and that direct and immediate confrontation may not always be the best strategy. In an academic workplace where peer evaluation occurs frequently and has an outsized impact on individuals, those who intervene may do so at their own career and personal risk. Further research is needed to examine the risks associated with various intervention strategies for faculty at various stages of their careers and of different genders and race/ethnicities, and whether specific workplace policies can help protect colleagues who step in. In a similar vein, qualitative research could also be useful in identifying the full range of possible interventions that bystanders can employ to confront bias and gaging the degrees and types of risk these possible interventions carry. Such a comprehensive taxonomy of intervention behaviors would be a valuable tool for developing specific training materials to confront bias in the workplace.

In the absence of individual identifiers, we used demographics that are least likely to change over time in the grouping process. This minimizes possible within-group variation, which may be overlooked in the analysis. However, the results are robust for the social identity characteristics used to establish the groups.

Finally, turning to the demographics of the university where the survey was conducted, the sample is predominantly White and thus not representative of faculty nationally. To test the robustness of our hypotheses further, it is imperative to replicate these results at different universities, especially those with greater diversity. This would lend credence to the generalizability of our findings, as well as provide an opportunity to study the intersectionality of identities. While we reported demographic statistics separately in Table 1, we recognize the intersectionality of these demographics, and in the future, aim to engage more fully the literature on intersectionality, and how it could shape patterns of bystander intervention. Critical race theory might also be able to provide more nuance to our understanding of how other key dimensions, such as organizational structure and institutional policies in higher education, may influence both bystander intervention and the conditions under which it can promote a positive departmental climate (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016). Given the impact of colleague intervention we detect here, the extension of our analyses to other workplace contexts is a very promising avenue for future research.

Conclusion

To mitigate the impact of incivility in the form of bias incidents on climate, our study identifies a powerful tool: expectation of colleague intervention. When respondents perceived that their colleagues would intervene in bias-related incivility, the impact of these incidents on department-level organizational climate diminished. Thus, colleague intervention may be a powerful tool to improve workplace climate. As our findings link department-level organizational climate to intention to quit, it is clear that creating a positive climate is essential for retaining employees. To retain a more diverse workforce, especially fields in which gender, race, ethnicity, and LGBTQIA+ underrepresentation is prevalent, bystander intervention training programs may be a promising innovation. Consistent with the social-ecological perspective (Swearer & Espelage, 2003), encouraging bystander intervention behavior that interrupts bias in the academic workplace may more broadly impact the university, the larger community, and the surrounding culture and feed a virtuous cycle that becomes embedded in policies, structures, and cultures that further encourage intervention and diminish the incidence of biased behavior.

Given universities' stated commitments to diversity, it is imperative that they invest in initiatives that encourage intervention in bias

incidents. Faculty from historically underrepresented groups are more likely to report negative experiences, less influence, and unfair treatment (Shea et al., 2018). If universities aim to retain faculty from historically underrepresented groups, particularly in the STEM disciplines where such underrepresentation is most acute, it is vital to understand the causes and effects of a chilly climate. Our research finds that bystander intervention can be a powerful tool in disrupting the ability of bias to pervade and taint campus climate. Furthermore, data suggest that when bystander training is designed to be interactive and engaging, participants' reactions to such programming are positive (Shea et al., 2019). Such programming can increase the likelihood that bystanders will recognize a bias incident when it occurs (Shea et al., 2018), a critical first step in a faculty member's decision to intervene. For example, in a study of the use of interactive theater to train faculty on bias in faculty searches, Shea et al. (2019) found that the representation of women faculty increased significantly following the program's implementation, and a significant portion of this increase was directly attributable to the workshop training. Thus, training in bystander intervention may be a powerful tool to improve the academic workplace climate. As our findings link a chilly climate to an intention to quit, it is clear that creating positive climates is essential for retaining historically underrepresented faculty.

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