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AN EXAMINATION OF ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF DIVERSITY INITIATIVE
FATIGUE

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Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

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AN EXAMINATION OF ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF DIVERSITY INITIATIVE
FATIGUE

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ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF DIVERSITY INITIATIVE FATIGUE

The purpose of my study is to examine the relationship between attitudes toward Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), cynicism towards organizational change, diversity initiative fatigue, and unit diversity climate. It was hypothesized that negative attitudes toward BIPOC will be associated with cynicism toward organizational change and diversity initiative fatigue will mediate that relationship. It was also hypothesized that unit diversity climate will moderate the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue and moderate the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change. To examine these relationships, a survey was distributed to WKU faculty assess above variables. SPSS Process Macro Model 8 was used to perform the analyses moderated mediation. Results indicated that many of the hypotheses were not supported. Hypothesis 3 was partially supported which indicated that more positive perceptions of diversity climate significantly moderated the relationship between unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed, as well as future research.

A special devotion to my grandfather, Pops, and my grandmother, Grandma Haley, who unfortunately could not be a part of this journey—I hope I am making you both proud. I dedicate this thesis to my family, specifically my mama and daddy—thank you for all the support you have given me throughout this experience.

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Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in all organizations have been gaining in notoriety recently, particularly with the social justice movements surrounding Black and Asian Americans in the United States in 2020. Indeed, the United States workforce is more diverse now than it has been in the past (Lindsay et al., 2015). One aspect that contributes to success in organizations is the degree to which the organization embraces and enhances diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Having diverse employees helps organizations to acquire different perspectives on ideas and solutions. If an organization has employees who are homogeneous in their thoughts and backgrounds, the organization may struggle to facilitate innovation or creativity in their employees. Initiatives that can ensure diversity within organizations are necessary; however, many organizations struggle with successful implementation.

When seeking to implement efforts to enhance DEI, often organizations take the first step to address biases and stereotypes of current employees. Biases and stereotypes can affect organizations by hindering recruitment and promotion opportunities (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). Therefore, organizations may implement initiatives or trainings to resolve, or even prevent, employee bias and stereotypes, which can interfere in the workplace. While implementing DEI initiatives may serve as a first step for organizations, many organizations believe that implementing these initiatives will be a fix-all (Cheng et al., 2019). However, for DEI initiatives to be successful, employee buy-in is essential. Unfortunately, not all employees support organizational DEI efforts, which can lead to cynicism toward organization change. In addition, an organizations' diversity climate, or "aggregate perceptions about the organization's diversity-related formal structure characteristics and informal values" (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009, p.24), likely serves as an important and necessary condition in the achievement of DEI initiatives.

Specifically, I propose that employee diversity initiative fatigue will mediate the relationship between employee negative attitudes towards Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and cynicism toward organizational change. I also propose that an organizations' diversity climate moderate the relationship between employee attitudes toward BIPOC and attitudes toward diversity initiatives; as well as moderate the relationship between attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change. Please see Figure 1 for the conceptual model.

Attitudes Toward BIPOC

White employees are more likely to want to interact with people of the same race rather than people in minority groups (Craig & Richeson, 2014). With organizations becoming more diverse, BIPOCs and White employees are working together more frequently, which can generate problems. When employees are exposed to a change in demographics, it can evoke racial bias, prejudice, or discrimination (Anglim et al., 2019; Craig & Richeson, 2014). According to Anglim et al. (2019), prejudice and discrimination can lead to reduced opportunities and a decrease well-being for minorities. For example, Outten et al. (2011) found that when Whites consider a future where they are the numerical minority, they feel angrier and more fearful of minorities. Outten et al. (2011) findings implicated negative feelings towards minorities can encourage Whites to act in ways that protect their advantage.

Furthermore, some White employees become uneasy and develop negative attitudes at the proposal of diversity because they feel the increase of BIPOC are a threat to their status in an organization (Craig & Richeson, 2014). The feeling of threat can be explained through Group Threat Theory. Group Threat Theory suggests that discrimination “toward minorities stems from perceived threat to the dominant racial groups’ privilege” (Craig & Richeson, 2014, p. 750).

According to Dixon & Rosenbaum (2004), when there is a considerable amount of BIPOC employees, White employees believe that there is a greater competition for jobs or positions and there are limited resources. In other words, the greater the size of minority groups in an organization, the more threatened the dominant racial group feels. When feeling threatened, the dominant racial group will be more prejudice towards minority groups (Craig & Richeson, 2014).

Investigating attitudes towards BIPOC is important because these perceptions can influence behavior and impact BIPOC's experiences and outcomes within an organization. When these attitudes are negative, employees are more likely to be sensitive or weary towards initiatives regarding diversity (Anglim et al., 2019). Resulting from feeling skeptical about changes within an organization, employees can become cynical about organizational change (Reichers et al., 1997). Cynicism towards organization change occurs when one has a pessimistic viewpoint about change efforts working (Albrecht, 2008). Cynicism toward organization change is associated with negative consequences for the organization, such as detriments in employee performance and organizational commitment (Durrach et al., 2019). According to Kaiser et al. (2021), Whites see diversity initiatives/efforts as disadvantageous to Whites and not inclusive at all. Feeling as though diversity initiatives do not include them, it can arouse negative attitudes toward BIPOC. By increasing these efforts, Whites feel more threatened and can become cynical towards organizational change—diversity initiatives/efforts. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Negative attitudes toward BIPOC will be associated with cynicism toward organizational change.

Attitudes Toward Diversity Initiatives

Diversity initiatives are implemented to improve the environment and outcomes for groups that face disadvantages in organizations (Leslie, 2019). When organizations want to endorse DEI, they need to determine what initiatives best fit for their organizations. Common initiatives are mentoring programs, recruitment efforts, diversity committees, affirmative action policies, diversity hiring, and pro-diversity marketing on websites (Dover et al., 2020). Recently a university in the southern United States (Western Kentucky University; WKU) has implemented book and media groups and deliberative dialogues as diversity initiatives aimed at enhancing awareness of diversity-related issues that impact campus communities. Book and media groups are formulated around podcasts, documentaries, TV shows, and books, which are discussed in effort to engage the WKU community in difficult conversations regarding institutionalized racism and discrimination. WKU also provides a platform that encourages discussion and collaboration about creating change. WKU has implemented deliberative dialogues, with the purpose of discussing the best course of action for eliminating discrimination and prejudice while promoting inclusivity and diversity. These dialogues aim to explore different avenues of action rather than resolving a problem. Deliberative dialogues provide students, faculty, and staff at WKU an opportunity to consider issues in depth, challenge opinions that are different from their own, and develop views to reach an actionable position.

Other common organizational diversity initiatives include trainings. Specifically, implicit bias training and general diversity training are used to help improve diversity or climate within an organization. These two types of trainings are unique; they are often viewed as different from other trainings (e.g., team training or onboarding training) because they provoke a mix of emotions and feelings, as well as emotionally charged responses (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Implicit bias training and diversity training also differ from other training programs because they

need different strategies, design, and delivery methods to have a greater impact on effectiveness. In other words, trainings focusing on disabilities or gender will influence people's perspectives of the entire group, whereas a training on leadership only influences people's ability to do this skill (Cheng et al., 2019).

Implicit bias trainings and diversity trainings aim to educate people by combatting and eliminating stereotypes and increase their attentiveness to their implicit biases (Jackson et al., 2014). Implicit bias trainings are programs or courses that aim to help people become aware of their implicit or unconscious prejudices, biases, stereotypes, or beliefs and the impact it has on their behavior (Applebaum, 2018). Diversity trainings are programs with the goal to promote positive interactions among the group, reduce prejudice and discriminatory behaviors, while improving attitudes, knowledge, and skills with incentive of participants to interact and work effectively with others who are different from them (Bezrukova et al., 2016).

Diversity Initiative Fatigue

While diversity-related initiatives are considered a positive move in the right direction for organizations, not all organizational members are pleased by proposed changes. Indeed, some organizational members may be skeptical of the idea that diversity is a necessity in organizations. In addition, some organizational members are exhausted by the communication of diversity initiatives and the amount of diversity initiatives being implemented within their organizations, which may be indicative of diversity fatigue or diversity resistance (Smith et al., 2021). Diversity fatigue and diversity resistance are often confused with one another (Smith et al., 2021). According to Wiggins-Romesburg and Githens (2018), resistance occurs when one desires and fights to maintain the norm when pressure to alter the norm arise. Diversity resistance includes, but is not limited to, silence, hostility, and "behaviors that protect the status

quo of privilege and inequality” (Wiggins-Romesburg & Githens, 2018, p. 184). Smith et al. (2021) explains that diversity resistance occurs when an individual is not willing to accept that systematic inequalities are real or does not comprehend the benefits of diversity. Diversity fatigue, on the other hand, is when one becomes desensitized to diversity efforts or experiences a weakened response to diversity efforts (Smith et., al, 2021). While diversity resistance occurs in those who are pessimistic about diversity and systemic inequality, diversity fatigue can occur among people who acknowledge “the importance of addressing systemic inequality” (Smith et al., p. 3., 2021).

Diversity fatigue may facilitate inaction when injustice occurs, and thus may contribute to the maintenance of injustice/oppression. Smith et al. (2021) study found that when faculty felt diversity fatigue, they were not motivated to inquire about diversity interventions, and they were less likely to want to execute interventions in the future. Smith et al. (2021) explains that when people experience diversity fatigue, they tend to emphasize other efforts/initiatives over diversity-related initiatives. These individuals are exhausted with diversity initiative fatigue, so diversity initiatives go on the back burner—they want to endorse other initiatives to drown out and undermine diversity efforts. Addressing diversity fatigue is important for proving valuable successful implementation of diversity initiatives; identifying obstacles such as diversity fatigue can help ensure sustained outcomes (Smith et al., 2021). Addressing obstacles allows people to communicate where their apprehensions about diversity initiatives “stem from and the extent to which those concerns can be reframed more positively” (Smith et al., p. 13, 2021).

When the majority group feels weary of diversity efforts, it is implicitly telling BIPOC how the majority feels about them. According to Smith et al. (2021), “the general weariness of diversity fatigue is related to people’s reduced motivation or capacity of diversity work” (p. 2).

When one experiences diversity fatigue, it can form how they feel and respond to diversity and diversity-related initiatives in the future (Smith et al., 2021). If one feels weariness or experiences a diminished response to diversity, it may influence cynicism towards organization change. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Diversity initiative fatigue will partially mediate the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change.

Diversity Climate

Diversity climate is the perceptions employees have about organizations' diversity initiatives, informal values on diversity, social integration of underrepresented employees, and how much their organization values diversity (Dwertmann et al., 2016; Herdman & Capehart, 2010; Ward et al., 2021). Developing a positive and inclusive diversity climate can prevent negative outcomes that occur with diversity (e.g., stereotype, discrimination, etc.) by organizations spreading the idea that the employees are a part of the same group, and they share the same interests for the organization; the notion of having the same interests, lowers employees' boundaries among each other and helps them relate to one another (Mansoor et al., 2020). For example, Herdman & Capehart (2010) found that the existence of diversity programs/initiatives aided employees to perceive the diversity climate as positive. Diversity climates can also "facilitate positive effects by encouraging the exchange and integration of diverse information" (Dwertmann et al., 2016, p. 1137). Gonzalez & DeNisi (2009) findings suggested that diversity was positively associated with return on income and productivity under a supportive diversity climate. These findings are good implications for organizations; increasing productivity and return on income helps organizations' financial bottom line which helps the overall organization. The findings implicate how diversity climate can improve organizations as

well as clarifies the relationship between diversity climate and employees. A positive diversity climate sends signals to employees that influence their work, such as increase productivity or job satisfaction (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009; Mansoor et al., 2020).

Important information can come from an organization's diversity climate, such as providing a direct insight into the employees' experience in the organization regarding organizational diversity programs/initiatives (Herdman & Capehart, 2010). According to Dwertmann et al. (2016), there are two perspectives of diversity climate: (1) fairness and discrimination, and (2) synergy. The fairness and discrimination perspective is a concern for fair treatment among underrepresented members and to be proactive in eliminating exclusion; and the synergy perspective is fueled by perceptions at the unit level and reflects the widespread interest in the performance benefits of diversity (Dwertmann et al., 2016). Diversity climate can act as a signal to employees as to the importance of diversity within the organization. Signaling theory suggests employees rely on cues and signals from their organization to help interpret an organizations' commitment and goals (Herdman & Capehart, 2010). Current employees interpret organizations' policies and procedures as how organizations value diversity (Herdman & Capehart, 2010). Diversity climate "can link organizational programs with employee attitudes and behaviors" (Herdman & Capehart, 2010, p. 41). According to Smith et al., (2021), diversity fatigue can be related to how motivated or not motivated change agents are to confront discrimination and take responsibility. If organizations send signals that they value diversity through initiatives/programs, it can create a positive diversity climate for employees (Mansoor et al., 2020). According to Mansoor et al (2020), employees reach conclusions about organizations priorities and values by their encounters and their surroundings within the organization. If an organization keeps employees involved in diversity initiatives/programs, as well as keep

employees informed of any changes, this can minimize cynicism towards organization change.

Therefore, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 3a: Unit diversity climate will moderate the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue such that the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue will be weaker for individuals who have a more positive unit diversity climate.

Hypothesis 3b: Unit diversity climate will moderate the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change such that the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change will be weaker for those individuals who have a more positive unit diversity climate.

Present Study

The purpose of my study is to understand how attitudes and perceptions can influence employees' behaviors. The present study could also provide insight on how employees' attitudes towards BIPOC can impact BIPOC's experience and outcomes within an organization. While analyzing these attitudes, employees' cynicism could be revealed. Revealing and identifying people's cynicism towards organization change is important because when there are employees that are cynical towards change, negative consequences for the organization can occur, such as detriments in employees' performance, and reduced organizational commitment.

For the present study, I will examine the relationship between attitudes towards BIPOC, cynicism towards organizational change, diversity initiative fatigue, and unit diversity climate via a cross-sectional survey design. Specifically, I will assess the association of attitudes towards BIPOC and cynicism towards organization change; I propose that diversity initiative fatigue will

partially mediate this relationship. Furthermore, I will assess unit diversity climate as a moderator in the relationship between attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue, as well as a moderator in the relationship between attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organization change efforts. The conceptual model guiding this research is presented in Figure 1.

Methods

Participants

Participants included staff and faculty from Western Kentucky University (WKU). A faculty-and staff-all email was sent out including a Qualtrics link. The faculty and staff who were interested then volunteered to take the survey.

There was a total of 324 responses, but after eliminating missing data, the sample size for analyses was 187. The majority of the participants were White (80.4%) and female (67.6%). Many of the participants were staff members (54.6%) and had obtained a graduate degree or beyond (70.1%). The average age for participants was 43.02 years ($SD = 11.99$) and the average organizational tenure was 9.40 years ($SD = 8.22$). Staff participants were primarily located in the Academic Affairs division (62.7%) and faculty participants were primarily from the Potter College of Arts & Letters (34.9%).

Measures

All measures to assess the study variables of interest were previously developed for cross-sectional use and have been found to demonstrate validity and reliability.

Faculty and Staff Demographics

Participants' age, gender, race, sexual orientation, education, occupation, college, department, tenure, organization tenure, and staff work unit was assessed.

Attitudes Toward BIPOC

Faculty and staff attitudes toward BIPOC were measured by using the 6-item Unawareness of Blatant Racial Attitudes subscale, adapted from Neville et al. (2000). An example item is, “Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.” Responses were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Responses were coded that higher values indicated more unawareness of blatant racial attitudes towards BIPOC. When assessing inter-item consistency, one item (“Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.”) was not correlated with any other item in the subscale, and thus was dropped from subsequent analyses. Cronbach’s $\alpha = .80$.

Diversity Climate

Perceptions of unit diversity climate was assessed by using a 10-item scale, adapted from HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey (2020) and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: University of Michigan (2016). An example item was, “The campus environment is free from tensions related to individual or group differences.” Responses were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Responses were coded such that higher scores indicated more positive perceptions of diversity climate. Cronbach’s $\alpha = .77$.

Diversity Fatigue

Diversity fatigue was assessed using the Diversity Fatigue Scale (Smith et al., 2021). This measure contained 7 items assessed along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). An example item is, “I am tired of hearing about diversity issues on campus.” Responses were coded such that higher scores indicate higher levels of diversity fatigue. Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$.

Cynicism Towards Organizational Change

Cynicism towards organizational change was assessed using a 6-item scale, adapted from Vance et al. (1995) and Reichers et al. (1997). An example item is, “Most of the diversity initiatives, such as deliberative dialogue, won’t produce real change.” Responses were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Responses were coded such that higher scores indicate greater levels of cynicism towards organizational change. Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$.

Procedure

The study took place during the Spring semester of 2022. Before data were collected, permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at WKU was obtained. A faculty- and staff- all email was sent out inviting participants to take a survey via a Qualtrics link. Participation was voluntary, however, to incentivize participants to participate, it was advertised that participants could be selected to receive one of eight \$25 Amazon gift cards for participating. Incentives for my study were provided by a Graduate Student Research Grant.

Results

Data were analyzed using the Model 8 moderated-mediation macro SPSS developed by Preacher et al. (2007). Moderated mediation macros use ordinary least regression (OLS) to examine the conditional indirect and/or direct effect of a predictor on an outcome variable via a mediator. In macro model 8, the indirect and/or direct effect the predictor has on the outcome through a mediating variable is moderated by the moderating variable. To rephrase it for current research purposes, the indirect effect of attitudes toward BIPOC has on cynicism toward organizational change through diversity initiative fatigue, where diversity climate served as a moderating variable for the relationship between attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward

organizational change, as well as attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue was examined.

Moderated mediation macro models use bootstrapped estimates of the conditional indirect effect to account for the nonnormality of standard errors in mediation models; bootstrapped estimates were based on 12,000 samples. Variables were centered to ease interpretation of the results and reduce multicollinearity. Zero-order bivariate correlations were conducted to determine variables that should be statistically controlled for. Participant's age, occupation, and organization tenure were all found to influence the relationships of interest and were entered into the model as control variables. It should also be noted that due to a lack of response from participants self-reporting department information, I was unable to assess diversity climate as a unit-level moderating variable, as such diversity climate was assessed as individual perceptions of diversity climate. Please see Table 1 for the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables of interest.

Table 2 and Figure 2 show modeled results of hypothesis testing. Hypothesis 1 indicated that negative attitudes toward BIPOC would be associated with cynicism toward organizational change. Hypothesis 1 was not supported ($\beta = .27$ $p = .11$), stronger unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC was not significantly associated with more cynicism toward organizational change. Hypothesis 2 indicated that diversity initiative fatigue would partially mediate the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change. Hypothesis 2 was also not supported (indirect effect = $-.14$, 95% CI(95) = $[-.40, .05]$); diversity initiative fatigue did not partially mediate the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change.

Hypothesis 3a indicated that unit diversity climate would moderate the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue. Hypothesis 3a was partially supported, individual perception of diversity climate significantly moderated the relationship between unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue ($\beta = .92, p < .001$), however the moderation was not in the hypothesized direction. More positive perceptions of diversity climate and stronger unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC was associated with more diversity initiative fatigue, not less. A simple slope test indicated that the slope for more positive perceptions of diversity climate was significant, $t(187) = 2.48, p = .014$; however the slope for more negative perceptions of diversity climate was not significant $t(187) = 0.34, p = .301$. See Figure 3 for the graphed interaction. Interestingly, 78% of the variance in diversity initiative fatigue was explained by both unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC and individual perceptions of diversity climate.

Hypothesis 3b indicated that unit diversity climate would moderate the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change, such that the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change would be weaker when participants had more positive perceptions of diversity climate. Hypothesis 3b was not supported ($\beta = -.13, p = .61$).

Discussion

The purpose of my study was to examine the associations between negative attitudes toward BIPOC, diversity initiative fatigue, and cynicism toward organizational change efforts. I further sought to examine how perceptions of diversity climate may moderate these relationships. These relationships were suggested through both Group Threat Theory and

Signaling Theory. However, many of the hypothesized relationships were not supported. More unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC was not significantly associated with cynicism toward organizational change efforts. Furthermore, diversity initiative fatigue did not mediate the relationships between more unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change efforts. Furthermore, individual perceptions of diversity climate did not moderate the relationship between unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change.

However, results did indicate partial support for Hypothesis 3. More positive perceptions of diversity climate did significantly moderate the relationship between unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue; however the results indicate the moderated effect was in the opposite direction of what was hypothesized. Specifically faculty and staff with more positive perceptions of the diversity climate who also had more unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC were more fatigued with university diversity initiatives, not less fatigued as hypothesized.

Theoretical Implication

Group threat theory would suggest that the majority (Whites) feel threatened by the increase of BIPOC employees, because the majority feels as though resources and opportunities will become scarce (Craig & Richeson, 2014). This threatening feeling can cause the majority to have prejudices against minorities (Craig & Richeson, 2014). However, my results did not support the association between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and cynicism toward organizational change, which was based on group threat theory.

Signaling theory would suggest that diversity climate sends a signal to employees which should theoretically mitigate the association between negative attitudes toward BIPOC, diversity

initiative fatigue, and cynicism toward organizational change. Research indicates that organizations send signals to employees via diversity climate (Herman & Capehart, 2009). My results partially support the idea of signaling theory, but not in the hypothesized direction. Results indicate that individuals with more positive perceptions of diversity climate, who had more negative attitudes toward BIPOC, experienced more diversity initiative fatigue, not less. It is possible that people conveyed their perception of WKU's diversity climate as positive because they were the majority (White) and do not encounter the negative aspects of WKU's climate rather than the signals WKU were promoting and implementing.

Strengths and Limitations

I collected cross-sectional survey data from faculty and staff at a regional comprehensive university in the southern United States. While participants were incentivized to participation by the opportunity to be selected to receive one of eight \$25 Amazon gift cards, many participants volunteered to complete my study. Measures used within the survey have been found to be both valid and reliable from previous research, and were originally developed for cross-sectional use.

However, my research is not without its limitations. All responses were collected via self-report survey, which could increase the risk of common method variance. In addition, self-report surveys are subject to potential socially desirable responding. While I ensured confidentiality via informed consent, and did not collect identifying information, there is still the possibility that participants did not respond truthfully. Furthermore, my sample lacked diversity in racial background for participants, however the sample did largely reflect the demographic characteristics of faculty and staff on campus. Although, this percentage is representative of WKU, it does not make it generalizable to BIPOC individuals. Specifically, the data indicated that the majority of participants had the perception of a positive diversity climate. However, this

perception may not be accurately reflective of BIPOC employees' perceptions. Future research would benefit from recruiting a more diverse sample in assessing diversity climate on college campuses. Another limitation is that the sample size was relatively small. As stated previously, there was a total of 324 participants, but after eliminating missing data, only 187 responses were valid. Such a small size has the potential to impact the generalizability of the results. In this case, the bootstrap method was included to account for the small sample size.

Practical Implications and Future Research

The present study will advance knowledge in the field, specifically to current diversity and inclusion literature, because it not only addresses the diversity of organizations, but also how the lack of inclusion can interfere with minority opportunities and well-being in organizations. In integrating group threat and signaling theory, I provided evidence to support the moderating effect of diversity climate on the association between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue. The results indicate that a positive diversity climate may enhance the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue. When there are employees who partake in negative attitudes toward BIPOC, organizations must assess how they promote and implement diversity initiatives for them to be the most successful. At best, my study can help organizations become more aware of how their policies and procedures can influence employees, which ultimately has the possibility to cause ruckus for BIPOC employees.

Future research should seek to incorporate a larger, more diverse sample in the investigation of the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC, diversity initiative fatigue, cynicism toward organizational change, and perceptions of diversity climate. Enlarging the sample size allows better generalizability of the results. Furthermore, a larger sample size may allow for the modeling of unit-level diversity climate in examining the aforementioned

relationships. The modeling of unit diversity climate in assessing the aforementioned relationships may provide information on whether organizations' diversity initiatives/efforts are effective.

Future research should also seek to better examine cynicism toward organizational change as a construct of interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion within organizations. It would be interesting to see if those who have positive attitudes toward BIPOC have more cynicism toward organizational change because of the lack of follow through succeeding the implementation of diversity initiatives. As well as examining cynicism toward organizational change, diversity initiative fatigue should be examined. Diversity initiative fatigue can affect those who acknowledge the importance of diversity initiatives, as mentioned previously. One should assess the degree of diversity fatigue to those who support these diversity efforts.

Conclusion

Utilizing a cross-sectional organizational survey, I examined the relationship between negative attitudes toward BIPOC, diversity climate, diversity initiative fatigue, and cynicism toward organizational change. Results supported a strong, positive association between unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC and diversity initiative fatigue, and more positive perceptions of the diversity climate enhanced this relationship. These results contribute to the nascent literature on diversity initiative fatigue, which is likely to grow in prominence in diversity, equity, and inclusion, as organizations seek to enhance BIPOC-friendly workplaces. Organizations acknowledging that a positive diversity climate may backfire when trying to implement diversity initiatives/efforts is important for the initiatives to be successful. This acknowledgement allows organizations to assess and plan how to promote such initiatives without giving individuals diversity initiative fatigue.

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Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Age	—								43.02	11.99
2. Race	.08	—							1.35	0.96
3. Occupation	.31	.11	—						1.45	0.50
4. Organization Tenure	.68	.02	.20	—					9.40	8.22
5. Diversity Fatigue	.30	-.07	-.09	.23	—				2.91	1.51
6. CTOC	.03	.09	.31	.02	-.32	—			3.57	1.48
7. Diversity Climate	.09	-.01	-.12	.06	.50	-.48	—		3.26	0.51
8. BNA BIPOC	.23	.03	-.09	.19	.72	-.22	.48	—	1.86	0.76

Note: **bold** = significant at $p < .05$; no means and standard deviations reported for race and occupation (categorical variables); CTOC = cynicism toward organizational change; BNA BIPOC = unawareness of blatant racial attitudes toward BIPOC.

Table 2. *Model Results*

	Diversity Initiative Fatigue			Cynicism toward Org Change			Indirect Effect		
	β	<i>SE</i>	R ²	β	<i>SE</i>	R ²	Est.	<i>SE</i>	90% CI
Controls									
Org Tenure	.01	.01		.01	.01				
Predictors									
Blatant	.98	.11		.27	.17				
Diversity Climate	.69	.15		-.15	.21				
BL x DC	.92	.18		-.13	.25				
			.78			.55			
Indirect Effect									
Blatant – DC - CTOC							-.14	.12	-.40 .05

Note. BL = blatant; DC = diversity climate; CTOC = cynicism toward organizational change

Figure 1. *Conceptual Model*

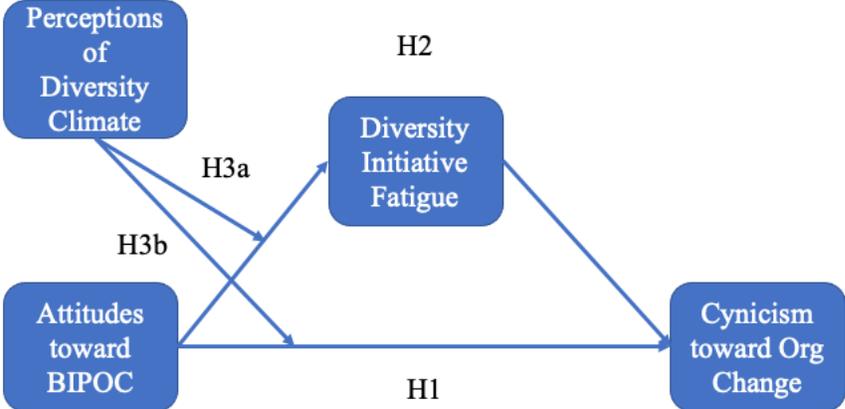
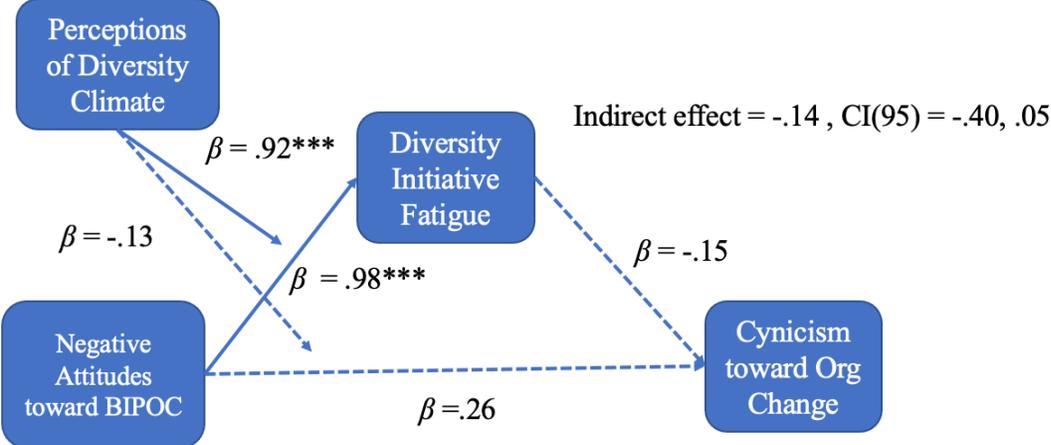
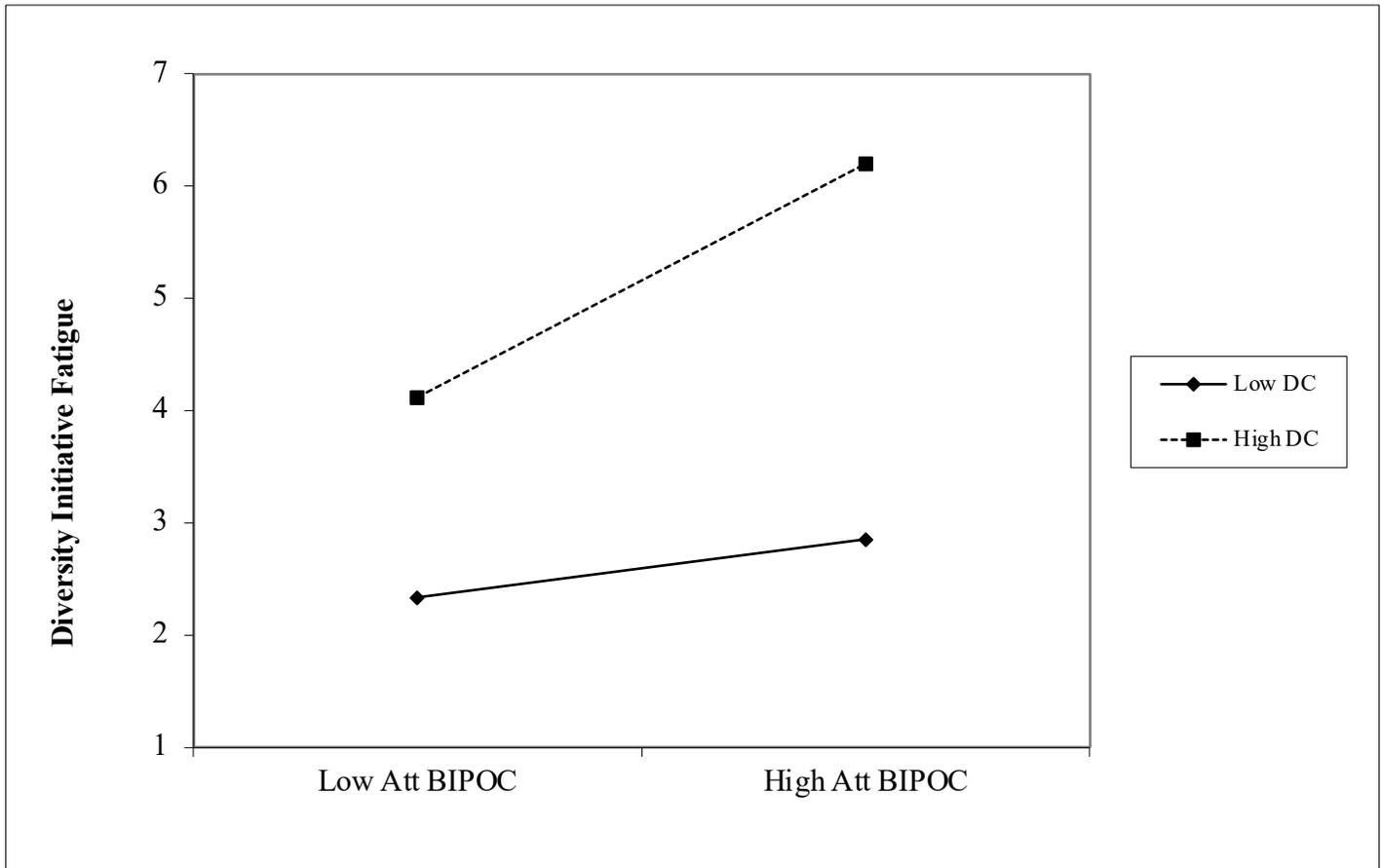


Figure 2. Model depicting Hypothesized Results



Note. $p < .001^{***}$

Figure 3. *Moderating Effect of Diversity Climate on the Relationship between Negative Attitudes toward BIPOC and Diversity Initiative Fatigue*



Note. Att BIPOC = negative attitudes toward BIPOC; DC = positive diversity climate

Appendix

Demographic Items

Age	What is your age?	Numeric Open
Gender	Gender	1 = Male 2 = Female 3 = Transgender 4 = Gender neutral 5 = Non-binary
Race	What is your racial background? (Please select all that apply).	1 = White, European decent 2 = Black, African American, African 3 = American Indian, Alaska Native 4 = Asian, Asian American 5 = Hispanic, Latino/a
Sexual Orientation	Sexual Orientation	1=Heterosexual/Straight 2=Gay/Lesbian 3=Asexual 4=Bisexual 5=Queer 6=A sexual orientation not listed here
Education	What is the highest level of education you've completed?	1 = Some high school 2 = High school graduate (or GED) 3 = Some college (or technical vocational school) 4 = Two-year college degree (Associate's) 5 = Four-year college degree (Bachelor's) 6 = Graduate degree or beyond (Master's, M.B.A., Ph.D., M.D., Lawyer)
Occupation	Are you considered faculty or staff?	1 = Staff Member 2 = Faculty Member

College	[If Faculty] What college are you in?	1 = College of Health and Human Services 2 = Ogden College of Science and Engineering 3 = Gordon Ford College of Business 4 = Potter College of Arts & Letters 5 = College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Department	[Branching] What Department are you in?	Open
Staff Work Unit	[If Staff] What is your primary job title/work unit?	Open
Tenure	How long have you been in your current position?	Open
Org Tenure	How long have you worked at Western Kentucky University?	Open

Diversity Fatigue from Smith et al. (2021)

DF1	I am tired of hearing about diversity issues on campus.	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
DF2	I feel annoyed when someone brings up concerns about diversity in academia.	
DF3	I do not want to see any more diversity programs at WKU, for example deliberative dialogues.	
DF4	I worry that my university has neglected other important issues because of too much focus on diversity initiatives.	
DF5	Diversity efforts on campus are becoming distracting.	
DF6	I would like to see more diversity classes at WKU (reverse-coded).	
DF7	I am uneasy that diversity classes are not required at WKU (reverse coded).	

Attitudes from Neville et al. (2000)

A1	Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
A2	Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S.	
A3	It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian American.	

	A4	Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.	
	A5	Racism is a major problem in the U.S.	
	A6	Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.	
	A7	Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.	
	A8	Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S.	
	A9	White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color their skin.	
	A10	Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.	
	A11	It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems.	
	A12	White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.	
	A13	Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of the U.S.	
	A14	English should be the only official language in the U.S.	
	A15	White people are more to blame for racial discrimination in the U.S. than racial and ethnic minorities.	
	A16	Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.	
	A17	It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.	
	A18	Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.	
	A19	Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.	
	A20	I see the value of having students from different racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds in classes.	
	A21	I am comfortable interacting with people who have a different race/ethnic than my own.	
	A22	I am comfortable interacting with people who have a different gender than my own.	

Diversity Climate

DC1	I have felt discriminated against at Western Kentucky University.	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
DC 2	I am satisfied with the ratio of male and female faculty and staff members at Western Kentucky University	
DC 3	I have ample opportunities to meet people of different racial, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds.	
DC4	I am satisfied with the overall campus climate/environment that I have experienced at the Western Kentucky University.	
DC5	Western Kentucky University has a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.	
DC6	There is too much emphasis put on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Western Kentucky University.	
DC7	Western Kentucky University provides sufficient programs and resources to foster the success of a diverse faculty and staff.	
DC8	The campus environment is free from tensions related to individual or group differences.	
DC9	I have interacted with people who have a racial and/or ethnic identity other than my own in the last 12 months.	
DC10	I have interacted with people whose gender differs from my own in the last 12 months.	

Cynicism Towards Organizational Change from Vance et al. (1995) and Reichers et al. (1997)

Cynicism1	My work group/department allocates too many resources towards solving the lack of diversity in the organization.	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
Cynicism2	My work group/department does not get the cooperation they need from others when trying to make changes regarding diversity in the organization. (R)	
Cynicism3	Changes to the usual ways of doing things at the university are more trouble than they are worth.	
Cynicism4	Most of the diversity initiatives, such as deliberative dialogue, won't produce real change.	
Cynicism5	It's hard to be hopeful about the future of the university because of the constant addition of diversity initiatives such as book and media groups.	
Cynicism6	Most people in at the university think implementing diversity initiatives will improve the university climate instead of making it worse. (R)	

Institutional Research Board (IRB) Approval



*INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY*

DATE: January 25, 2022

TO: Katrina Burch, PhD
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1865897-1] Attitudes Toward University Diversity Initiatives
REFERENCE #: IRB# 22-175
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: January 25, 2022

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by an *implied* consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Robin Pyles at (270) 745-3360 or irb@wku.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.