

OBSERVER RESPONSES TO WORKPLACE BULLYING: THE DYNAMIC  
INFLUENCE OF RACE AND RELATIONAL DEMOGRAPHY

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## ABSTRACT

### OBSERVER RESPONSES TO WORKPLACE BULLYING: THE DYNAMIC INFLUENCE OF RACE AND RELATIONAL DEMOGRAPHY

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The present study explored the impact of relational demography on observer responses to workplace bullying. To do so, we experimentally manipulated the racial composition a working group and the race of a bullied victim. Participants watched their workgroup bully a coworker at three time points. At each time point, observers responded during the bullying incident (high immediacy) and/or after the incident ended (low immediacy). The impact of racial categorizations on observer responses depended upon the immediacy of the response and time. Observers in groups that were mainly White and in groups that were mainly White with a Black victim responded more riskily at first and subsequent exposure to the bullying, suggesting that racial similarity and stereotypes of prejudicial interactions are initial contextual cues for observer responses. Relational demography did not influence observer responses after repeated exposure to the bullying. Time moderates the impact of relational demography on observer responses, though its effects differ depending on the nature of the response.

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## INTRODUCTION

Bullying represents a serious problem in today's workforce: In 2007, approximately 37% of U.S. employees reported being bullied while at work (Namie & Namie, 2007). Workplace bullying is characterized as a significant source of stress for its victims (Vartia, 2001). Humiliating and belittling remarks, gossiping, and rumours are intimidating and frightening. Beyond negative outcomes typically reported by victims of workplace aggression (for a review see Aquino & Thau, 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006) bullying – that occurs on a persistent and long term basis – seems to be associated with more severe health problems (Vartia, 2001). Effects of exposure to workplace bullying have been shown to include social isolation, anger, anxiety, despair, depression (Leymann, 1990), psychosomatic complaints, low sleep quality (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996) and in some European samples, the development of posttraumatic stress disorder (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). As a result of such stressors, victims of bullying report lowered job satisfaction, increased absenteeism and turnover intentions (Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003) and are often more likely to view leaving their organization as a positive coping strategy (Zapf & Gross, 2001); victims are constantly less able to cope with the daily task and interpersonal demands of their jobs (Einarsen, 2000).

Current research proposing organizational strategies to tackle workplace bullying is scarce and has focused mainly on formal strategies and organizational policies (Merchant & Hoel, 2003; Richards & Daley, 2003). It is, however, unclear whether formal policies are actually effective in decreasing incidents of workplace bullying. Victims are rarely likely to formally report victimization and are more likely to avoid the

aggressor(s) or deny the acts (Einarsen et al., 2003; Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & Dubois, 1997). As a result, organizational researchers have called for the examination of alternative strategies –beyond victim self-reports – of intervention (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005).

An alternative mechanism thought to be helpful in attenuating workplace aggression is observer (i.e., third party) responses to the aggression. Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelley (2005) formulated a theoretical framework postulating antecedents to observer responses to sexual harassment. To our knowledge, no empirical research examining observer responses to harassment or bullying has been published. Although, research on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983; Organ, 1988; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006) has examined interpersonal forms of coworker helping (i.e., OCB-I; Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Williams & Anderson, 1991), its focus is prosocial behaviors generally (e.g., helping with work duties, being courteous during social interactions), not helping behaviors in response to acts of aggression (e.g., consoling a victim or reporting the acts). However, researchers have examined observer responding in child and adolescents populations with promising outcomes: Based on naturalistic observations of school-yard bullying, peers intervened rarely, but when they did, bullying behaviour ended quickly (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001). As follows, coworker responding to bullying in the workplace is an understudied but potentially important avenue of empirical research for organizational researchers.

Below, we clarify a definition workplace bullying along with a discussion of issues related to its measurement. After which, we highlight Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelley’s (2005) conceptualization of observer responding to sexual harassment while



highlighting factors Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelley propose will influence observer responses, particularly factors related to social identity categorizations. We then discuss theory and research on relational demography and how it can inform social identity effects on observers’ helping. Finally, we make our own hypotheses integrating relational demography and Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelley’s theoretical framework in order to predict observer responses to bullying.

### *Theoretical Background*

#### *Defining Bullying*

Research on workplace bullying originated in Finland in the 1980’s (Leymann, 1990) following the country’s surge of interest in school-based bullying. The construct rapidly developed interest in other Scandinavian and U.K. countries in the mid to late 1990’s (Einarsen et al., 2003). In the U.S., researchers have explored a wide variety of hostile workplace behaviours labelled as a myriad of constructs, such as workplace deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), workplace aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996), incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), harassment (Bowling & Beehr, 2006), and counterproductive work behaviors (Sackett & DeVore, 2001). In their review of these constructs, Raver and Barling (2008) note that despite the seemingly endless list of labels for negative interpersonal acts, such behaviours possess many commonalities. To encompass most negative interpersonal acts, Raver and Barling adopt Neuman and Baron’s (2005) conceptualization of “workplace aggression” defined as *behaviour directed by an employee toward a coworker or series of coworkers with the intent to harm the target(s) in ways the target(s) is/are motivated to avoid* (also see Baron & Neuman, 1996). Behaviors encompassed under the general term of “workplace

aggression” do, however, vary along a series of dimensions. In particular, workplace bullying is characterized by its persistence over time and a power difference between the actor and target (Raver & Barling, 2008). Research on workplace aggression has typically been limited to episodic aggression without consideration for the persistent and long term nature of bullying (Hoel, Rayner & Cooper, 1999; Leymann, 1996; Rayner & Keashly, 2005). Researchers in Europe and Scandinavia have used the term mobbing to describe persistent aggressive acts by a group of coworkers towards a victim (Einarsen, 2000; Leymann, 1990, 1996). Though unique in its focus on group behaviour, the term “mobbing” tends to be used interchangeably with “bullying” (Einarsen, 2000) with bullying more generally encompassing aggressive acts that involve either a group or a single perpetrator.

The current study utilizes an agreed upon definition of workplace bullying: *Workplace bullying is defined as an actor or group of actors repeatedly harassing, offending, socially excluding or negatively affecting an individual. A power imbalance is created when the victim perceives he/she is unable to defend him/herself against the persistent harmful behaviour. An incident is not bullying when the negative acts are episodic and the actor and target are of equal power when in conflict* (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Einarsen et al., 2003; Salin, 2003). Common examples of workplace bullying include: persistent offensive remarks towards a victim, persistent criticism, the ‘silent treatment’ and persistent isolation or exclusion of the victim from his or her peer group (Leymann, 1996; Zapf et al., 1996).

Workplace bullying has a series of defining characteristics that differentiate it from other forms of workplace aggression. Bullying involves an individual as a target of

multiple negative acts by one or more actors on a persistent basis (Leymann, 1990; Zapf et al., 1996); occurring frequently, usually at least twice a week (Salin, 2001). In order to differentiate bullying from other social stressors at work, bullying is typically defined as occurring over a period of six months (Zapf et al., 1996); six-months is frequently used in the assessment of various psychological disorders and bullying is thought to lead to severe psychological distress (Leymann, 1990). Finally, bullying involves the presence of a power disparity between the victim and perpetrator(s). That is, victims of bullying, for a variety of reasons, feel they are unable to overcome their experienced abuse (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). The power imbalance can exist prior to the onset of bullying (e.g., the formal power structure of the organization; or informal sources of power such as information, experience, or social dependence) or it can develop as the bullying escalates (i.e., the emergence of a perceived power deficit occurs as victims are continuously treated as inferior) (Einarsen et al., 2003). Power differentials can be formal, when a supervisor withholds information from a subordinate, or informal, when a group of employees begins to continuously exclude another coworker.

### *Measuring Bullying*

Current understanding of the antecedents and outcomes of bullying and workplace aggression is primarily based on research using self-reports of victim experiences, either reporting on their perceived exposure to the behaviours or their perceived victimization from the behaviors (Einarsen et al., 2003). Specifically, the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) (Hoel & Cooper, 2000) and the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) (Fitzgerald et al., 1997) are common inventories used to assess experiences with bullying and sexual harassment, respectively. In both surveys, respondents are asked to indicate

how frequently they are on the receiving end of specific forms of negative acts (e.g., jokes of a sexual nature for SEQ and withholding of job-necessary information for NAQ). Ilies, Hauserman, Scwochau, and Stibal (2003) argue that self-reports of victimization are likely lower than is actually experienced by victims because respondents are hesitant and less likely to report victimization as it is defined by the researchers in the survey. Additionally, by utilizing retrospective accounts of victimization, researchers have not been able to explore how victims and bystanders experience bullying as a dynamic process. Additionally, an examination of bullying across time is imperative in order to gauge an understanding of the dynamic processes and mechanisms associated with observer responses.

In the current study, bullying is operationalized as *persistent negative acts by actor(s) towards a target that occur over several months in situations where the target is in a position of less power than the aggressor(s)*. The current study intends to develop an understanding of how time influences the role of social identity factors in influencing observers' responses to workplace bullying.

#### *Observer Responses to Workplace Aggression*

Researchers of developmental and school psychology are well aware of the positive effects of observer responding in child and adolescent bullying (Frey et al., 2005). Specifically, bystanders are present in 85% of school bullying incidents and bystander efforts to stop the bullying are typically effective in a majority of instances (Hawkins et al., 2001). The role observers play in intervention in workplace bullying is, however, less clear. An estimated 57% of workplace aggression occurs in the presence of observers (Glomb, 2002) and for every mistreatment in the workplace there are more

observers present than victims (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2005). Observers have power and can be influential in changing situations (Clarkson, 1996). However, no empirical research has investigated factors influencing observer responses to workplace bullying and how the effects of these factors change as the bullying continues.

*Observers are defined as individuals who witness workplace aggression occurring but are not directly involved* (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005).

Observers can take action to stop the bullying or prevent its continuation. They can respond to the negative acts in a variety of ways by reporting the incidents to formal authorities, stopping an unfolding event, providing negative feedback to the perpetrators regarding their behavior, or by consoling the victim. Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly acknowledge that observers will have different motives for responding to workplace aggression: Helping behaviors can be in-role (i.e., an expectation of the observer’s job), extra-role (e.g., OCBs), or observers can be motivated to benefit themselves, the victim, the group, or the organization.

Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly (2005) categorize observer responses to sexual harassment along two dimensions: 1) the *immediacy of the intervention*, and 2) the level *of involvement*. Immediacy of intervention distinguishes between responses that occur during the incident (*high immediacy*) versus those that occur after the incident (*low immediacy*). For example, an observer may choose to intervene and disrupt the incident as it is occurring (e.g., by taking the target away from the incident), or the observer may choose to later advise or console the target after the incident has ended.

The second dimension, level of involvement, reflects the degree to which observers immerse, or publicly embroil themselves in the incident (Bowes-Sperry &

O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). Observers may become highly involved by inserting themselves within the ongoing incident; or an observer may opt to become less involved and provide support for the target, assistance that does not involve a strong public connection to the issue. A key component of involvement is response riskiness. Observers that choose a more confrontational style of responding (e.g., telling the aggressor to stop, directly labeling the behavior) are at risk for pulling themselves into the conflict and such a strategy is risky for observers compared to less confrontational styles (e.g., diverting the victim's attention, consoling the victim). Observers choosing to engage in higher involvement (i.e., more risky) behaviors are taking an active role in stopping the negative acts. Less confrontational and more covert strategies are used by observers to assuage the situation and provide support for those involved (2005). In their two-dimensional typology of observer responding, Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelley provide a framework which researchers can use to evaluate observer responses to workplace aggression. In the present study, we incorporated both response immediacy and involvement into our operationalization of observers' responding. We assessed observer response involvement (i.e., the riskiness or confrontational nature of the response) for both high and low immediacy responses.

When choosing to become involved, observers use an array of behaviors. In order to formulate their propositions predicting observer responding, Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelley (2005) drew from Latane and Darley's (1970) conceptualization of bystander intervention. Latane and Darley's framework presents bystander intervention as the last step in a decision-making process, where the observer decides on a form of assistance to provide to the victim. Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelley highlight several

situational factors that may influence variability in observer response behaviors as a part of this decision-making process. They place particular emphasis on social identity characteristics of the situation (e.g., the gender of the perpetrator and victim) as important influences in observers' choice of whether and how to intervene. Of particular interest in the present study are social identity – and more specifically, racial identity – influences on observer response behaviors. In order to inform our hypotheses, we draw on theory and research on relational demography.

### *Relational Demography*

It is important to study the effects of surface level characteristics as influences on interpersonal functioning in groups: New and short-lived groups such as task forces and project teams are continuously forming and dismantling in organizations never reaching a point where deep level characteristics become a strong determinant of interpersonal interactions. Demographic characteristics of individuals (e.g., age, race, gender) have long been considered important variables in psychological research (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989) and previous research has highlighted surface level characteristics as influential in predicting helping behaviors (e.g., Dovidio et al., 1997; Levine & Crowther, 2008; Wispe & Freshley, 1971; Piliavin, Rodin, & Piliavin, 1969). Beyond studying the independent effects of demographic attributes on individual outcomes, the effects of demography can also have a broader impact. Pfeffer (1982, 1983) argued that distributional properties of an organization's demography are important for understanding the effects of demographic attributes on unit outcomes. Organizational demography refers to the composition of a social unit (e.g., a work group) in terms of the distribution of its demographic attributes (e.g., the number of women at a law firm). Research that has

treated demography as a compositional property (e.g., Pfeffer, 1983) has measured variance in demography of the unit and related that variance to unit outcomes. Kanter (1977) termed the degree of demographic composition of a social unit as *structural integration*, that can range from token representation (i.e., a lone woman in a group of men), skewed representation (i.e., women are a large minority in a group of mainly men), or equal representation in a balanced group. Demographic variation is also measured at the individual level: Tsui and O'Reilly use the term *relational demography* to refer to the “comparative demographic characteristics of members of dyads or groups who are in a position to engage in regular interactions” (p. 403). In essence, they propose that knowledge of the similarity (or dissimilarity) of a given demographic attribute of members of a unit provides greater insight into the individual members' characteristic attitudes, behaviours, and how demography influences job outcomes.

Findings from past research exploring the effects of race on bystanders' helping behaviors have been inconsistent (e.g., Piliavin et al., 1969; Wispe & Freshley, 1971). Given that Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelley (2005) suggest social identity categorizations influence Latane and Darley's (1970) decision-making process of observer responding, we explore race as an influence on observer responding to workplace bullying in the current study. Drawing from the relational demography framework, we contextualize individual race within a broader social unit, exploring the impact of racial similarity between an observer and victim and the racial composition of the victim and observer's working group on the observers' responses.

#### *Theoretical Rationale behind Relational Demography*



Theory used to inform relational demography research has traditionally stemmed from the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971; for a review of how the similarity-attraction paradigm relates to relational demography see Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). The similarity-attraction paradigm posits that similarity in attitudes is a source of attraction between interacting individuals. Physical traits can be used as a basis for inferring attitudes, beliefs and personality (Tsui et al., 1992). O'Reilly, Caldwell, and Barnett (1989) adopted the similarity-attraction paradigm to explain outcomes of relational demography and described social integration as the explanatory mechanism. Social integration is defined as the degree to which an individual is psychologically linked to others in a group. A multifaceted phenomenon, it reflects an individual's attraction to the group, satisfaction with other members of the group, and social interaction among the group members (Katz & Kahn, 1978; O'Reilly et al., 1989). Social integration is thought to be influenced by relative similarity to other group members through perceived similarity in terms of attitudes and beliefs. Individuals who are more socially integrated perceive themselves as more similar to their group members, have lower rates of turnover and higher satisfaction (O'Reilly et al., 1989), and have higher perceptions of inclusion (Pelled, Ledford, & Mohrman, 1999). However, Tsui et al., note that the similarity-attraction paradigm assumes interaction amongst individuals, and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) are used together to account for relational demography effects without requiring social interaction and integration.

Social identity theory posits that individuals desire to maintain a positive self identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) but in order for individuals to know how to feel about

others they need to first define themselves, for which they go through a process of self-categorization (Turner et al., 1987). Through the self-categorization process, individuals classify themselves and others into social categories based on relevant attributes (e.g., age, race, gender etc.,) allowing individuals to define themselves in terms of a social identity. Self-categorization utilizes prototypes (i.e., a cognitive representation of attributes characteristic of a particular group) that accentuate perceived similarities and dissimilarities between referent in-group and out-groups, respectively (Hogg & Terry, 2000). The referent target is therefore no longer viewed as a unique individual, but as an embodiment of the relevant prototype of the social identity, a process Hogg and Terry call “depersonalization”. Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelley (2005) propose that the interpersonal similarity and sense of common fate characteristic of common in-group categorizations give rise to a sense of *we-ness*, that Dovidio et al. (1997) define as “a sense of connectedness or a categorization of another person as a member of one’s own group” (p. 102). Depersonalization of the self leads individuals to develop “empathetic altruism” in which individuals feel obliged to support the needs and goals of similar others (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The sense of *we-ness* as a force behind in-group helping behavior can thus be explained in terms of individuals’ concerns for protection and enhancement of their own self-concept.

If a social identity allows an individual to have a positive self-identity, individuals thus perceive prototypical attributes of their social group as attractive (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As follows, social units that contain similar others are more likely to be regarded positively leading individuals to prefer homogeneous groups of similar others over diverse groups of dissimilar others (O’Reilly et al., 1989; Pelled et al., 1999). In addition

to social identity processes being motivated by the pursuit of a positive social identity (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Hogg & Abrams, 1990), self-categorization processes are motivated by a need to reduce subjective uncertainty about one's self concept (Hogg & Abrams, 1993). Self-categorization reduces uncertainty by transforming the self into a prototype that prescribes perceptions, feelings, attitudes and behaviours (Goldberg, Riordan, & Schaffer, 2010; Reid & Hogg, 2005). A social unit is psychologically attractive to an individual to the extent that it is composed of others who are similar based on the relevant demographic category (Tsui et al., 1992) and individuals interpret themselves within that unit based on the categorizations in order to reduce subjective uncertainty. Tsui et al., explored forms of organizational attachment as an outcome of demographic composition. Individuals had higher attachment (i.e., less absences, higher psychological commitment, and intent to stay) to social units composed of similar others.

#### *Relational Demography and Helping Behaviors*

The underlying link between similarity in relational demography and helping behaviors is attachment. Researchers have demonstrated that individuals are more likely to behave prosocially and engage in OCBs in units to which they perceive attachment. Individuals are attached to a group if they share a psychological bond with that group (Allen & Meyer, 1990; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Such individuals identify with and internalize the group's attitudes, values, and goals as their own because they perceive the group's attributes as congruent with their own (1986). Members of a unit who share its goals and values view their membership as a relational exchange and act in reciprocation to benefit the unit (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Morrison, 1994). Individuals feel more committed and attached to groups to which they are demographically similar (O'Reilly et

al., 1989; Tsui et al., 1992). Thus, racial categorizations can act as cues for attachment and subsequent helping behaviors.

However, in order for individuals to base perceptions of attachment to a group on a specific social identity (e.g., race) and the representation of that social identity within the group, the relevant social category first needs to be salient in that particular context. According to Hogg and Terry (2000), a social category that “fits” with a social context is the category made salient in interpreting one’s place within that context. Social categories become salient because they “account for situationally relevant similarities and differences among people and/or because category specifications account for context-specific behaviours” (2000; p. 125). Once a category is made salient, contextually relevant prototypes are used for accentuating in-group similarities and out-group differences. Previous research has demonstrated that the demographic composition of a social unit influences the salience of those demographic categories. For example, racial and gender distinctions are more pronounced when a group lacks diversity and is primarily composed of one race or gender (i.e., token or skewed groups) (Austin, 1997; Kanter, 1977). It thus follows that in groups with pronounced dissimilarity in racial representation, race is made salient, prototypes accentuate in-and out-group categorizations, and race is more likely to be used by individuals when interpreting their place within the group (e.g., perceived attachment). Therefore, individuals who are racially similar to their groups perceive greater attachment to that group and are more likely to behave in ways to benefit the group. Previous research has demonstrated that individuals who perceive less attachment to their unit are less willing to cooperate with others, make less sacrifices on others’ behalves, behave less respectfully during social

interactions (Thau, Aquino, & Poortvliet, 2007), and perform less OCBs (Den Hartog, De Hoogh, & Keegan, 2007).

The current study explores the effects of race and its representation within a working group (i.e., racial composition) on observers' responses to workplace bullying. Specifically, White observers responded to the bullying of a White or Black victim. The working group, in which the bullying occurred, consisted of mainly White coworkers, mainly Black coworkers, or a balanced number of White and Black coworkers. Observers had opportunities to respond as the bullying continued over time. Finally, the role of social dominance orientation and its interaction with victim race and group composition was also explored.

### *Hypotheses*

#### *Relational Demography and Observer Responses to Workplace Bullying*

Similarity in group membership fosters a sense of *we-ness* (Dovidio et al., 1997) and empathetic altruism (Tafjel & Turner, 1986) promoting helping behaviors in times of threat (Riordan & McFarlane Shore, 1997). Individuals act in ways to benefit their own self-concept (1986) through the depersonalizing of others based on prototypical categories (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Turner et al., 1987), such that individuals will act in ways to benefit their in-group. In instances of mistreatment, it is expected that observers will display more involved helping behaviors when they are racially similar to the victim of bullying.

*H1: Observers will display higher involvement (i.e., higher risk) in their responses when the victim of bullying is racially similar to them (i.e., White) as opposed to when the victim is racially dissimilar (i.e., Black).*

Individuals are more attached to groups to which they are similar in some meaningful way (e.g., a demographic attribute) (O'Reilly et al., 1989; Pelled et al., 1999; Tsui et al., 1989). Individuals who perceive attachment to a unit are more likely to behave in ways to benefit the unit (Allen & Meyer, 1990; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). As bullying is a behavior that is disruptive to interpersonal functioning, individuals who are attached to the group will be motivated to overcome the bullying. Additionally, groups that are more homogeneous in their racial composition will provide a context by which race is salient for individuals to perceive attachment to the group (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Attachment and helping behavior will be higher as perceived similarity will be high. In balanced groups, race is not a key means for interpretation of attachment (Austin, 1997).

*H2: Observers will display lower response riskiness when they are racially dissimilar to their working group (i.e., the group is mainly Black) than when the group is racially balanced.*

*H3: Observers will display higher response riskiness when they are racially similar to their working group (i.e., the group is mainly White) than when the group is racially balanced.*

However, in groups that are mainly Black, the mistreatment of a White member will make race particularly salient for observers because dissimilarity will be enhanced by prototypical categorizations of in and out-group membership (Hogg & Terry, 2000). In such situations, the desire for enhancing one's self-concept will be accentuated (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) fostering in group helping behaviors. However, when Whites are dissimilar and the victim is Black, attachment is low and concerns for a positive self-concept are not at play and helping behaviors will be at a minimum.

*H4: When the working group is mainly Black, observers will display higher response riskiness when the victim is White than when the victim is Black.*

When the group is mainly White, observers will have higher perceived attachment, but their responses will also be accentuated by the nature of the situation if the victim is Black. Race, and prototypical conceptions of prejudice and discrimination (i.e., perceptions of the prototypic perpetrators and victims of racism and sexism etc.,) (Inman & Baron, 1996) will be a salient basis for interpretation of the context-specific behaviors (Hogg & Terry, 2000). That is, a prototypical view of racism is a White individual discriminating against a person of color. Inman and Baron assert that individuals are particularly sensitive to and reactive to prototypical mistreatment. Instances high in prototypical characteristics are more likely to trigger stereotypical effects in interpretation and behavior (1996). Therefore, observers will be more sensitive to discrimination and prejudice within groups with characteristics prototypical of such mistreatment.

*H5: When the working group is mainly White, observers will display higher response riskiness when the victim is Black than when the victim is White.*

Observer interpretations of a prototypically salient situation as a negative act and their subsequent response may also be influenced by their tendencies to endorse ideologies that legitimize group status differences. Social dominance orientation (SDO) is a general attitudinal orientation reflecting whether one generally prefers intergroup relations to be equal, or hierarchical along a superior-inferior dimension. Individuals high on SDO desire that their in-group dominate and be superior to out-groups whereas those lower on SDO favor hierarchy-attenuating ideologies (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). It is suggested that members of traditionally high-status groups (e.g., White men) use SDO as a device to maintain superior group status; SDO is predictive of legitimizing ideologies endorsing prejudice and discrimination (Pratto et al., 1994). Therefore, in situations prototypical of prejudice or discrimination, individuals high on SDO may exhibit lower response behaviors in attempts to maintain their superior group status. Thus, an interaction between SDO, victim race, and group composition is proposed:

*H6: When the working group is mainly White, observers low on SDO will display higher response riskiness when the victim is Black than White, but observers high on SDO will display higher response riskiness when the victim is White than Black*



### *Effects of Time on Observer Responses to Workplace Bullying*

Bullying involves recurring incidents of mistreatment over a long period. With increasing incidents of mistreatment, perceptions of persistence are likely to result. Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelley (2005) propose that if observers expect sexual harassment to recur, they will be more likely to take subsequent action. Given that observers view mistreatment as harmful (Skarlicki & Kulik, 2005), they are likely to feel accountable for future incidents. As mistreatment persists, expectations of recurrence solidify and feelings of accountability increase. It is likely that substantial dissonance will be caused by continued inaction if observers witness more mistreatment (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelley, 2005).

*H7: Observers will display higher response riskiness as time passes.*

Across time, with increasing exposure to individuals from various racial groups, attention paid to racial category distinctions decreases (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Martins et al., 2003). Literature on individual cognitive processing of diversity (e.g., Austin, 1997), the contact hypothesis (e.g., Brewer & Brown, 1998), and on the symbolic aspects of diversity (e.g., Riordan, 2000) all suggest that recurrent exposure to individuals from out-group racial categories reduces the reliance individuals place on racial identity when interacting with members of other social groups. That is, with increased exposure to diversity, race becomes less important for interpersonal functioning. Group members become desensitized to racial differences within their group as they come to develop a

deeper level understanding of their relationships and interactions with other group members (Glaman, Jones, Rozelle, 1996). With increased exposure, interpretations of and reactions to others focus more on deeper level differences and less on race.

*H8: As time passes, differences in response behaviors as a function of race of the victim and group composition will lessen*

On a final note, Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelley (2005) were not clear in their differentiation between the riskiness of specific types of observer responses. For example, it is not clear if engaging in a lower involvement strategy while the bullying is occurring (high immediacy) is more or less risky than engaging in a high involvement strategy after the bullying incident is over (low immediacy). We therefore assessed observer response involvement separately at two levels: high immediacy and low immediacy. We acknowledge that observer responses at high and low immediacy are likely to accrue important practical and theoretical differences, though for the current study we view those differences as exploratory in nature. As a result, the above hypotheses are general to response riskiness and no specific hypotheses are made for differences in high and low immediacy.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants were recruited from an undergraduate psychology subject pool at a large public university in the Midwestern United States. There were 226 participants (mean age = 19.69; SD = 2.57) of which 181 (76%) were female and 44 (18%) were

male; 14 participants (6%) did not indicate their gender. Sample size was determined based on a priori power analysis using G\*Power (version 3.0.10) software (Faul, Erdfeller, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) in order to detect a medium effect size employing the traditional .05 criterion level of statistical significance. As per required for participation in this study, 100% of participants identified their race as White. The mean amount of participant work experience ranged from 2 to 2.5 years. Participants received course credit for participating in the study.

### *Procedure*

Participants were made aware of each stage in the study in the initial consent form. Participants firstly completed an online survey containing the individual difference measures: SDO; and prosocial orientation, trait empathy and perspective taking as exploratory measures. Rosenberg's measure of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) was included in this online survey as a distracter measure. Between one and two days after completing the online survey, an experimenter emailed participants to coordinate times for them to complete the in-lab portion of the study. Effort was made to ensure that participants completed the in-lab portion of the study between four and seven days after their completion of the online survey. Completion of the online survey and the lab study were separated in time to minimize the sensitive nature of the individual difference measures influencing participant responses to the lab stimuli.

Prior to each lab session, an experimenter randomly assigned each participant to one experimental condition. Once in lab, participants read instructions asking them to think of themselves as a part of a workplace scenario (see Appendix A). In this scenario, each participant was a member of a workgroup, along with five other coworkers engaging

in a series of weekly meetings that occur several weeks apart. The scenario provided a brief history of the workgroup as well as a brief outline of the group's tasks. In the scenario, participants were told they would observe videos of their group engaging in meetings. Following the scenario description, participants were asked to study a diagram consisting of photographs and demographic information (e.g., name, age, tenure) of the members of their workgroup and they were told that the diagram was representative of the location where each group member would be sitting during each meeting. Group member demographic information depicted in the diagram remained consistent across all conditions of the experiment, but the racial composition of the group and the victim's race (a woman named Ashley) were manipulated with photographs across conditions.

Experimental conditions for this study consisted of a 2 (*victim race*: Black vs. White) x 3 (*group racial composition*: mainly White vs. balanced vs. mainly Black) between-participants design. Victim race and group composition were manipulated in the group diagrams and videos of the group meetings. Photographs of the five other group members within the diagrams and the corresponding actors in the videos were manipulated according to each condition. It is important to note that a fully crossed observer race design (i.e., Black and White observers) was not used for two reasons: a) The interest of this study is in the reactions of traditionally White majorities to negative acts in various diverse contexts, and b) to simplify procedures and data collection.

After studying the scenario and group diagram, participants responded to a series of manipulation check questions to ensure that they had attended to the manipulations of interest (i.e., their group's racial composition and the victim Ashley's race). Embedded in a series of questions about their coworkers' age, tenure, gender, appearance, and

positions in the group diagram (see Appendix A), participants responded to two focal questions: “Approximately how many of your fellow group members are White (or Caucasian)?” and “Based on her picture, what is Ashley’s race/ethnicity?”

Following the manipulation check, participants were cued to watch the first video of their workgroup meeting. Each video was approximately two minutes in length and participants were not told how many videos they would observe. The first video did not depict acts of bullying as it was intended to accustom participants to the video stimuli and response format. After each video ended, participants were prompted to respond to an open-ended assessment of their response to the video (see Appendix A). After completing these measures, participants were cued to watch the next video. Each participant observed four videos: video two, three, and four depicted exclusionary bullying by the group members of a female victim. Response formats were identical after each video.

Participants completed a final demographic inventory after completing measures for video four (see Appendix B).

### *Stimuli Development*

*Bullying Behavior.* Before the scripts for each of the four videos were created, the authors wanted to ensure that the bullying depicted in the videos was consistent with how workplace bullying is conceptualized in the literature. In order to do so, the primary investigator created five descriptions of workplace scenarios (see Appendix A) each depicting some form of workplace incivility. Some of the scenarios were more in line with the definition of workplace bullying (see Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Einarsen et al., 2003; Salin, 2003) than others. In an online survey, separate participants indicated the extent to which each scenario was reflective of the definition of workplace bullying

provided to them on a seven point Likert-type scale (1 = “Not at all” to 7 = “Definitely”). Participants were 37 students (mean age = 19.27; SD = 1.12) recruited from an undergraduate psychology subject pool of a large public university in the Midwestern United States. Of the sample, 30 (81%) identified their gender to be female, and 7 (19%) male; 31 (92%) identified their race to be White, 2 (5%) as Black/African American, and 1 (3%) as Hispanic. Mean work experience for this sample ranged from 2 to 2.5 years. Participants rated scenario two ( $M=6.27$ ;  $SD=0.84$ ) and four ( $M=6.19$ ;  $SD=1.02$ ) as significantly more consistent with the definition of workplace bullying than scenarios one ( $M=4.81$ ;  $SD=1.49$ ), three ( $M=4.59$ ;  $SD=1.50$ ), and five ( $M=4.84$ ;  $SD=1.77$ ) based on repeated-measures ANOVA,  $F(1,36)=11.38$ ,  $p=.001$ , and follow-up paired-sample t-tests,  $ts(36)>3.71$ ,  $ps<.001$ .

The scripts for videos two, three and four were based on behaviors described in scenario four. Bullying behaviors depicted in the videos included social exclusion and isolation by all group members of a lone female victim (i.e., Ashley) during the meetings. Example bullying behaviors included: interrupting and ignoring Ashley’s comments, not holding the door open or passing her an agenda. We ensured that the bullying behaviors depicted at times two, three, and four were similar in type (e.g., all videos involved similar exclusion from group discussion) to ensure that variation in bullying type did not confound with time. Specific bullying behaviors were repeated in each video in order to capture the repetitive nature of bullying. The scripts used to create the videos can be found in Appendix A.

*Victim Attractiveness.* In order to ensure that the attractiveness of the Black or White victims did not influence participant responses to the bullying incidents, female

actors were matched for attractiveness across conditions. Each actress had a picture of her face taken. Pictures were standardized to only include the face (from the shoulders up, no smile) against a white background. A separate group of 20 White volunteers (mean age=23.01, SD=2.13; 13 [65%] female, 7 [35%] male), who were acquaintances of the primary investigator, rated each picture on attractiveness. Using a five-point Likert-type scale, participants rated the extent to which they thought each person was attractive (1= “Very unattractive” to 5 = “Very attractive”). Statistically controlling for participant gender, repeated measures ANCOVA was used to compare the attractiveness ratings of the Black and White actresses. The Black and White actresses whom did not differ significantly in attractiveness were selected as the Black and White alternates for the victim, Ashley.

*Video Production.* Four Black (two males, two females) and three White (one male, two females) undergraduate students from a large public university in the Midwestern United states were recruited to act in all of the videos. Four videos were created for each of six conditions. Across all conditions, gender composition of the workgroup was held constant: Each workgroup was composed of two male actors and three female actors in addition to the gender of the participant. Great effort was made to ensure that the actions and appearances of the actors were consistent across conditions while filming.

#### *Pilot Testing*

The instructions, group diagrams, and videos were pilot tested to ensure that the manipulations were strong enough to yield differences in response behaviors across

conditions. The stimuli yielded promising levels of difference so no iterative changes were necessary before official data collection began.

*Independent Variables – Level 2 (Between-Individual) Measures*

*Gender.* Participants' gender was measured with a variable in the final demographic inventory (coded as 0 = *male*, 1 = *female*).

*Group racial composition and victim race.* Participant workgroups contained six coworkers, the participant and five actors: one victim (i.e., Ashley) and four additional perpetrating coworkers. Six conditions were created by varying (a) the racial composition of the group: whether the group was *mainly White*, *balanced* or *mainly Black* (dummy coded so *balanced* was the comparison group) and (b) the race of the victim: the victim was either *White* or *Black* (coded as 0 = *Black*, 1 = *White*). In the *mainly White* condition, four members of the group were White and two were Black. In the *mainly Black* condition four members of the group were Black and two were White. In the *balanced* condition, half of the group was White and half was Black. As participants were asked to think of themselves as a part of the work group, the participants own race was included as a part of the group racial composition. There were equal numbers of male and female coworkers across all conditions.

*Social Dominance Orientation (SDO).* SDO was measured using fourteen statements for which respondents indicated whether they had a positive or negative feeling on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from “very negative” to “very positive” (Pratto et al., 1994) (see Appendix A). Items assessed participant feelings about statements regarding hierarchical systems where one group dominates another (e.g., “Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place”). Higher scores indicated higher



levels of SDO. For participants in this study (N=210), this scale had good internal consistency reliability,  $\alpha = .87$ .

*Dependent Variables – Level 1(Within-Individual) Measures*

The Level 1 dependent variable was measured at three points in time when observers responded to the bullying incidents: Time 2 (T2), Time 3 (T3), and Time 4 (T4). Thus, there were three observations of behavioral responses for each participant.

*Behavioral Response.* Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelley (2005) characterized observer responses to sexual harassment along two dimensions: the immediacy of the response and the level of involvement. In the present study, we incorporated both dimensions into our conceptualization of observer responding. Participants were prompted to respond to their group after viewing each video; they were asked to say something to their group as the bullying was occurring during the meeting (high immediacy) or have private follow-up conversations with each group member after the bullying had ended (low immediacy), or both, capturing variation in the immediacy of their response. Participants were instructed to respond with at least five sentences. Only responses for T2, T3, and T4 were coded as bullying was not depicted at T1. Open-ended response formats are preferable to behavioral checklists or ratings of response intentions because they are less prone to common method biases and socially desirable responding (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Responses were coded by three coders: two research volunteers who were blind to the intent of the study and the primary investigator.

Additionally, in line with Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelley’s (2005) conceptualization of involvement of observer response, each response was coded for its

riskiness to the observer. Within their instructions, coders were provided with a definition of personal risk to the observer along with examples of behaviors associated with risky responding (for coder instructions see Appendix A). Response riskiness codes included 0 (no attempt to help victim), 1 (non-confrontational with minimal or mild risk), and 2 (confrontational or assertive response with high risk). Non-responses, or responses not related to the group's mistreatment of the victim, were coded as 0. Responses were coded as 1 or 2 if there was clear intent by the observer to respond to the bullying. Response that were not confrontational or assertive (e.g., polite) were coded as 1. Responses that were confrontational or assertive (e.g., rude and aggressive) in that they put the respondent at greater risk for negative retribution from fellow group members were coded as 2.

Below is one example of a response that was coded as 0 for non-response:

*"I'm glad to hear that we are making progress on the project for the client. What are the finishing touches we can work on before submitting it? Let's finish this up to make the VP happy."*

Below are two examples of responses coded as 1, or as minimally risky to the observer:

*"Have you noticed that Ashley has been singled out of the team? She keeps getting interrupted and it seems no one wants to sit by her, or hand out an agenda to her. I would go talk to her and address that this has to stop now."*

*"Ashley has something to say, you should listen to her. We need to improve by including Ashley as a part of the group too. When management comes in, I'll let*

*them know that we did not work effectively as a group. We need to make some changes.”*

Below are two examples of responses coded as 2, or as highly risky to the observer:

*“I do not believe everyone in this meeting is being treated with respect and I do not understand why. Most of you are participating in treating Ashley in a rude manner. I don't understand why, but it needs to stop. I want an explanation for this behavior. Can anyone give me one?”*

*“Why do you have to ignore everything that Ashley says? She may have a valid point. Just give her a chance. Your attitude is unacceptable in the workplace.”*

Inter-rater agreement was generally high amongst the three coders for both high and low immediacy responses at times two, three and four. At time two, full agreement amongst coders was 97% for high immediacy and 94% for low immediacy; at time three, full agreement amongst coders was 86% for high immediacy and 91% for low immediacy; at time four, full agreement amongst coders was 89% for high immediacy and 95% for low immediacy. Coder disagreement was resolved by discussion and agreement amongst coders facilitated by the primary investigator.

### *Exploratory Variables*

In addition to the above variables hypothesized to be related to observer responses, we also explored the predictive effects of three additional individual difference (level 2) variables: Prosocial orientation, trait empathy, and trait perspective taking. We believed these variables would have an effect on response riskiness but we made no specific hypotheses about their expected relationships

*Prosocial Orientation.* Prosocial orientation was measured using a 16-item scale for assessing individual differences in adult prosocialness (Caprara, Steca, Zelli, & Capanna, 2005). On a seven-point Likert-like scale, ranging from “Never/almost never” to “Always/ almost always”, respondents indicated the extent to which each statement reflected their own feelings and behaviors (e.g., “I try to be close to and take care of those who are in need”) (see Appendix A). Higher scores indicated higher levels of prosocialness. For participants in this study (N=226), this scale had good internal consistency reliability,  $\alpha = .83$ .

*Trait Empathy and Perspective Taking.* The seven item perspective taking and six item empathetic concern subscales from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1983) were used to assess trait perspective taking and empathy, respectively (see Appendix B). Respondents were asked to indicate how well a series of statements describes them on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) “Does not describe me well” to (5) “Describes me well”. The perspective taking measure reports a tendency to adopt another’s psychological point of view in everyday life (e.g., “I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective”). The empathetic concern scale assesses tendencies to experience sympathy and compassion for unfortunate others (e.g., “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me”). Higher scores indicated higher levels of empathetic concern and perspective taking. For participants in this study, the perspective taking scale (N=213) had good internal consistency reliability,  $\alpha = .84$ , but the empathetic concern scale (N=214) had a poor internal consistency reliability,  $\alpha = .62$ .

## Results

### *Manipulation Check*

All participants included in the data analysis passed the manipulation check by correctly indicating the racial composition of their work group and the race of the victim (N=226).

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the study variables are provided in Table 1 of Appendix B. Readers should be aware of two caveats in interpreting this matrix: Time is excluded from the matrix because it is constant across individuals and interactions among the level 2 independent variables are also excluded. High immediacy responses increased in riskiness with time  $F(2, 224)=59.48, p<.001$ . Responses at T3 ( $t[225]=-8.08, p<.001$ ) and T4 ( $t[225]=-10.75, p<.001$ ) were significantly more risky than Responses at T2, and responses at T4 were significantly more risky than responses at T3,  $t(225)=-2.78, p<.01$ . On average, response riskiness tended to fall below average, or was less than mildly risky, at T2 and T3. Though not drastically, responses were on average above mild riskiness at T4. Low immediacy responses also differed in riskiness with time  $F(2, 224)=5.51, p<.01$ : Responses at T2 ( $t[225]=2.81, p<.01$ ) and T3 ( $t[225]=3.01, p<.01$ ) were significantly more risky than Responses at T4, but responses at T2 did not differ in riskiness than responses at T3,  $t(225)=-0.87, p>.05$ . On average, low immediacy response riskiness tended to fall below average, or was less than mildly risky, at all points in time. There appears to be no issues of range restriction for high and low immediacy responses at T2, T3, or T4.

### *High Immediacy Response*

Data were analyzed utilizing Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM 6.0; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2004). In HLM, Level 1 variables were modeled to vary over time, in this case over the three time periods. The dependent variables (within-individuals) were measured at three points in time and the Level 2 variables (between-individuals) were used to predict variation in the outcome of interest at each time point. The Level 1 time variables (i.e., T2, T3, and T4) were dummy-coded. In order to prevent over-paramaterization, the Level 1 intercept was not included as a part of the model for either dependent variable and slopes for all three time points were included instead (Raudenbush et al., 2004); the purpose of our analyses was to capture the effect of each level 2 independent variable across time.

The results predicting riskiness of high immediacy responses are provided in the left side of Table 2 in Appendix C. The hierarchical linear model was specified as using the Level 2 variables to predict the slope of the behavioral response at T2, T3, and T4. Additionally, as gender was not included as a part of the study manipulations and gender similarity may play a role in observer responses, participant gender was included as a covariate in all analyses.

At T2 victim race did not significantly predict response riskiness ( $B = 0.069$ ,  $ns$ ) meaning that observers' immediate response riskiness did not differ depending on whether the victim was Black or White. H1 was not supported. Inconsistent with H2, observers' immediate responses did not differ in riskiness depending on whether the group was mainly Black or balanced ( $B = -0.015$ ,  $ns$ ). H3 was supported in that observers responded more riskily in groups that were mainly White compared to balanced ( $B = 0.381$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Inconsistent with H4, a victim race\*group composition interaction was

not apparent in mainly Black groups ( $B = 0.090, ns$ ). However, the significant main effect of the mainly White group appeared to be partially qualified by the significant victim race\*group composition interaction. In support of H5, observers immediately responded more riskily if the victim in a mainly White group was Black rather than White ( $B = -0.464, p < .05$ ). Observer levels of SDO ( $B = -.023, ns$ ) and its interaction with victim race ( $B = -0.039, ns$ ), group composition (Black group [ $B = -0.072, ns$ ], White group [ $B = 0.173, ns$ ]), or their interactions (victim race\*Black group [ $B = 0.070, ns$ ], victim race\*White group [ $B = -0.148, ns$ ]) did not significantly predict highly immediate response riskiness at T2. Therefore, H6 was not supported

At T3, victim race ( $B = 0.230, ns$ ); group composition (Black group [ $B = -0.109, ns$ ], White group [ $B = 0.098, ns$ ]); and their interactions (victim race\*Black group [ $B = -0.253, ns$ ], victim race\*White group [ $B = -0.272, ns$ ]); observer SDO ( $B = -.009, ns$ ), and SDO interactions with victim race ( $B = -0.050, ns$ ), group composition (Black group [ $B = -0.086, ns$ ], White group [ $B = 0.022, ns$ ]), or their interactions (victim race\*Black group [ $B = -0.126, ns$ ], victim race\*White group [ $B = 0.471, ns$ ]) did not significantly predict high immediacy response riskiness.

Similarly, at T4 victim race ( $B = -0.021, ns$ ); group composition (Black group [ $B = -0.176, ns$ ], White group [ $B = 0.026, ns$ ]) and their interactions. Also, observer SDO ( $B = 0.047, ns$ ) and its interactions with victim race ( $B = -0.032, ns$ ), mainly White group [ $B = -0.061, ns$ ]), or their interactions (victim race\*Black group [ $B = 0.094, ns$ ], victim race\*White group [ $B = -0.074, ns$ ]) did not significantly predict high immediacy response riskiness. However, despite having no interactive effect with mainly White group, observer SDO did significantly interact with mainly Black group ( $B = -0.606, p < .05$ ):

Simple slopes analysis indicated that SDO ( $B = -0.316$ ) negatively predicted response riskiness in groups that were mainly Black,  $F(1, 74) = 6.61, p < .05$ , but had no predictive ability in groups that were balanced,  $F(1, 69) = 0.05, ns$ , or mainly White,  $F(1, 71) = 0.09, ns$ . That is, individuals lower on SDO responded more riskily than individuals higher on SDO in mainly Black groups at T4. Figure 1 of Appendix C contains a graphical representation of this interaction.

H7 was partially supported for high immediacy responses. Analysis of slope intercepts at T2, T3, and T4, indicates that subsequent time points, T3 ( $B = 1.027, p < .05$ ) and T4 ( $B = 1.018, p < .05$ ) were positively related to response riskiness, whereas T2 ( $B = 0.478, ns$ ) was not. Analysis of means (see Table 1) is consistent with this trend: response riskiness at T3 ( $M=0.92$ ) and T4 ( $M=1.04$ ) are significantly higher than riskiness at T2 ( $M=0.48$ ).

Finally, H8 was also partially supported for high immediacy responses. Victim race, group composition, and their interactions were only significant predictors of response riskiness at T2, not at T3 and only the interaction between SDO and group composition was significant at T4. Social category situational cues significantly influenced response riskiness at T2 and not at later times.

#### *Low Immediacy Response*

The results predicting riskiness of the low immediacy response are provided in the right side of Table 2 in Appendix B. An identical analytical strategy as used with high immediacy was used for low immediacy responses.

At T2, victim race ( $B = 0.151, ns$ ); group composition (Black group [ $B = -0.009, ns$ ], White group [ $B = 0.078, ns$ ]) and their interactions (victim race\*Black group [ $B = -$



0.061, *ns*], victim race\*White group [ $B = -0.290$ , *ns*]); observer SDO ( $B = 0.145$ , *ns*) and its interactions with victim race ( $B = -0.290$ , *ns*), group composition (Black group [ $B = -0.321$ , *ns*], White group [ $B = -0.333$ , *ns*]), or their interactions (victim race\*Black group [ $B = 0.498$ , *ns*], victim race\*White group [ $B = 0.426$ , *ns*]) did not significantly predict riskiness of observer low immediacy responses. Therefore, H1-6 were not supported for the low immediacy response.

At T3, gender was a significant predictor of low-immediacy response riskiness ( $B = 0.226$ ,  $p < .05$ ), in that females responded more riskily than males. Victim race was also a significant predictor of low immediacy response riskiness ( $B = 0.418$ ,  $p < .01$ ): observers responded more riskily if the victim was White than Black. Though observers' low-immediacy responses did not differ in riskiness depending on whether the group was mainly Black or balanced ( $B = 0.103$ , *ns*), observers responded more riskily in groups that were mainly White compared to balanced ( $B = 0.455$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This main effect appeared to be partially qualified by the significant victim race\*group composition interaction, in that observers' low immediacy responses were more risky if the victim in a mainly White group was Black rather than White ( $B = -0.793$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A victim race\*group composition interaction was not significant for mainly Black groups ( $B = -0.333$ , *ns*). Observer SDO ( $B = -0.161$ , *ns*) and its interactions with victim race ( $B = 0.253$ , *ns*), group composition (Black group [ $B = 0.252$ , *ns*], White group [ $B = -.119$ , *ns*]), or their interactions (victim race\*Black group [ $B = -0.222$ , *ns*], victim race\*White group [ $B = 0.080$ , *ns*]) did not significantly predict riskiness of observers' low immediacy responses.

At T4, victim race ( $B = 0.038, ns$ ); group composition (Black group [ $B = -0.032, ns$ ], White group [ $B = 0.136, ns$ ]) and their interactions (victim race\*Black group [ $B = 0.023, ns$ ], victim race\*White group [ $B = -0.141, ns$ ]); observer SDO ( $B = 0.320, ns$ ) and its interactions with victim race ( $B = -0.078, ns$ ), group composition (Black group [ $B = -0.127, ns$ ], White group [ $B = -0.347, ns$ ]), or their interactions (victim race\*Black group [ $B = 0.016, ns$ ], victim race\*White group [ $B = -0.067, ns$ ]) did not significantly predict riskiness of observers' low immediacy responses.

H7 was not supported for the low immediacy response. As indicated by the intercepts of the slopes at T2 ( $B = 0.343, ns$ ), T3 ( $B = 0.625, ns$ ), and T4 ( $B = -0.144, ns$ ), time was not related to riskiness of observer low immediacy responses.

Finally, H8 was partially supported for the low immediacy response. Victim race, group composition, and their interactions were only significant predictors of response riskiness at T3, not at T2 or T4. Similar to high immediacy responses, social category situational cues do not appear to influence response riskiness after repeated exposure at T4.

#### *Additional Results*

Riskiness for high and low immediate responses was also predicted with the additional exploratory individual difference variables (prosocial orientation, trait perspective taking, and trait empathy). Trait empathy had poor reliability ( $\alpha = .62$ ) with this sample and the additional variables were not significant predictors of the outcomes of interest. In order to maintain simplicity, the exploratory variables were excluded from the final model reported in this paper.

## DISCUSSION

In the current study we applied a relational demography framework to explore the influence of racial identity on observer responses to workplace bullying. In order to do so, we examined the impact of observers' racial similarity to a bullied victim and the racial composition of the work group in which the bullying occurs, and how these factors change in their impact over time. Observers viewed videos of their work group bullying a victim at three points in time. They made open-ended responses to the group as each incident of bullying was occurring and/or after each incident had ended. Results indicated that racial similarity, group composition, the interaction between racial similarity and group composition and social dominance orientation all play a role in influencing observer responses. In particular, racial similarity to one's group and the prototypical nature of a prejudicial interaction play an initial and continued role in observer responses. Our results both support and extend propositions made by Harrison and colleagues (1998) who suggested that time moderates the influences of social categories on coworker interactions: the effects of demography on observer responses persist over time depending on the nature of the racial context and the immediacy of the observers' response.

### *Summary of Findings*

At first exposure to the bullying, group composition influenced observer responses as the bullying was occurring (high immediacy), but not after the bullying incident had ended (low immediacy): Observers responded more riskily when their group was mainly White and when the victim was Black in a mainly White group. During the second exposure to the bullying, racial similarity and group racial composition did not

influence observer responding as the bullying was occurring, but instead influenced low immediacy responses after the bullying had ended: Observers responded more riskily after the bullying had ended when the victim was White, when the group was mainly White, and when the victim was Black in a mainly White group. During the third exposure to the bullying, racial similarity and group racial composition did not influence observer responding as the bullying was occurring or after the bullying had ended, except that when the bullying was occurring individuals high on SDO had lower response riskiness when in a mainly Black group.

Observer response riskiness also varied with time: As exposure to the bullying increased, highly immediate responses while the bullying was occurring became more risky, but low immediate responses after the bullying ended became less risky. The results of this study indicate that observer responses are influenced by racial identity categorizations among the individuals present in the immediate bullying situation. The extent to which racial categorizations influence responses is influenced by time but the effects of time differ depending on the immediacy of the responses. Our findings are in line with predictions by Harrison and colleagues (1998) for high immediacy responses: Relational demographic factors are impactful at initial interaction and become less important after subsequent exposure; but for low immediate responses, relational demography effects are not present at the initial interaction and take effect after subsequent interaction. Overall, our study integrates the relational demography framework with Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelley's (2005) conceptualization of observer responding, while both supporting and extending views of Harrison and

colleagues regarding time as a moderator of the effects of relational demography on coworker interactions.

### *Theoretical Implications*

The above findings highlight the implications that social identity categorizations have on helping behaviors and how characteristics of the situation can influence social categorization effects. We believe that the results reported here can be interpreted through the unique influence that time and response immediacy have on observers' interpretation of their role within a newly interacting social unit.

The general trend in our results across the three bullying exposures was, as time progressed more observers responded for high immediacy responses, but more observers chose to do nothing in terms of low immediacy responses. As a result, high immediacy response riskiness increased with time, while low immediacy response riskiness decreased with time. According to Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelley (2005), highly immediate responses are intended to stop the aggression as it is occurring. High immediate responders use a variety of behaviors (e.g., remove the victim from the situation, ask the perpetrator to stop), but the behaviors are thought to be more effective than low immediate responses in preventing any additional harm from continuing. When observers respond after the bullying has ended, their role in preventing additional harm is less clear. Low immediate responders can choose to console the victim, report the incident, retaliate or offer suggestions to the aggressor(s) (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelley, 2005) but the result of their responses are not direct. Results in the present study suggest that, with increased exposure, expectations of recurrence may increase response riskiness for responses thought to be more effective in preventing additional harm.

During initial exposure to the bullying, our results support arguments made by Harrison et al., (1998) for high immediate responses: Individuals appear to use superficial categorizations of their group members as the basis for their response behaviors. Observers possibly base their attachment to their group on racial similarity (O'Reilly et al., 1989; Pelled et al., 1999; Tsui et al., 1989) and thus behave in ways to benefit their group (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Morrison, 1994; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986) particularly in novel and uncertain situations. Group composition acted as an important determinant of observer response riskiness at early exposure: mainly White groups had higher response riskiness, whereas victim race and mainly Black groups had no significant effects. One possible explanation for these effects is that at first exposure to the bullying observers are new to the social unit and are unsure about their role within the group. In order to reduce subjective uncertainty about their self-conceptualization of their place within their new social unit, observers initially self-categorize based on race, conferring confidence in how to behave and interpret their social environment (Goldberg et al., 2010; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Reid & Hogg, 2005). At initial exposure to bullying that is clearly disruptive to group interpersonal functioning, race is salient as a cue for attachment to the group, and observers racially similar to their group are motivated to overcome the bullying. Additionally, during initial group interactions, group characteristics as a whole, and not characteristics of individual group members, serve as a cue for attachment interpretations that drive helping behaviors; at initial exposure, it thus follows that individual characteristics of victims (i.e., victim race) may not play an important role in helping behaviors. However, at initial exposure the interaction between group composition and victim race appears to activate prototypical conceptualizations of prejudicial treatment

that includes Whites discriminating against a person of color (Inman & Baron, 1996). Observers appeared to be responsive to such contexts acting to overcome the prejudicial treatment they perceived. Despite racial similarity to the victim not influencing interpretational cues at initial exposure, the stereotypical nature of the interaction when the victim is Black in a White group appears to be particularly salient and influential in observer responding at initial exposure to the bullying. Finally, *racial dissimilarity* to one's group (i.e., a White observer in a mainly Black group) appears to be less important than *racial similarity* to one's group (i.e., a White observer in a mainly White group) in influencing helping behaviors across all time points. Future research will benefit from investigating the differential influence of demographic *similarity* versus *dissimilarity* in group members' cues for group interpersonal functioning.

Responses during initial exposure to the bullying were generally more risky for low immediate responses than high immediate responses. This suggests that when observers are new to a group they are less willing to directly involve themselves in the bullying as it is occurring and are more likely to respond riskily in a less direct manner after the bullying incident has ended. Indeed, a large proportion of observers engaged in minimally risky low immediacy responses at initial exposure. Observers thus used this as an opportunity to alleviate the conflict in a less direct manner. Given the majority of observers who responded in this fashion, differences based on group composition or victim race were less likely. At initial exposure, conflict is evident and there is a clear expectation that some response is required even though the effectiveness of such a response is not clear. One possibility underlying differential impact of relational demography on high and low immediate responding could be that observers' responses

rely less on racial identity cues to aid in their interpretation and behavior within the social unit when they are more certain about the role they should take. Consistent with theory proposed by Hogg and Terry (2000), in order to reduce subjective uncertainty, individuals rely on social category distinctions to aid their interpretation of themselves within the group. At initial exposure, a low risk response after the bullying has ended is perceived as less direct, intrusive, and more role-appropriate for a new group member; an unambiguous interpretation requiring less emphasis on surface cues to infer appropriate behavior. In the high immediate condition at first exposure, the role of a direct responder as the bullying is occurring may be less clear because such a response could have a multitude of implications for the responder (e.g., others may perceive him/her as a leader, he/she may be targeted as the next victim). After subsequent exposure to the bullying, however, expectations of recurrence may increase perceptions of responsibility and more risky high-immediate responses are seen as role-appropriate. After subsequent exposure, implications of less direct-low immediate responses are less clear, by comparison, fostering a context where social categorization will influence observer responses, as is evident in our results at second exposure to the bullying.

During second exposure to the bullying, racial identity categorizations did not influence high immediacy responses but played an important role in low immediacy responses. Similar to high immediacy responses during first exposure, being in a mainly White group and a mainly White group with a Black victim predicted more risky responses by observers and, additionally, if the victim was White observer responses were more risky compared to if the victim was Black. Consistent with above explanations, uncertainty regarding observer role-appropriate behavior in low immediacy



responses fosters greater reliance on social category distinctions on which helping behaviors are based. As observers were able to respond to group members individually after bullying incidents had ended, characteristics of individual group members played a more important role in helping behaviors compared to when responding to the group as a whole. At a dyadic level of responding, when response outcomes are uncertain, the sense of *we-ness* (Dovidio et al., 1997) and empathetic altruism (Tafjel & Turner, 1986) of racial in-group categorizations prompt individuals to respond in helpful ways (Riordan & McFarlane Shore, 1997). As is evident in our results, attention to racial category distinctions persists past initial exposure to bullying. Racial category effects subside after initial exposure for high immediacy responses but emerge after subsequent exposure for low immediacy responses, with our results suggesting that dyadic in-group favoritism based on race also emerges with this trend. However, at third exposure, reliance on racial categorizations is minimal, consistent with research finding that after increased exposure to diversity, race becomes less important for interpersonal functioning (Glaman, Jones, & Rozelle, 1996; Martins et al., 2003).

After repeated exposure to diverse others, interpretations of and reactions to behavior are based more on deeper level differences and less on race (Harrison et al., 1998), as the results of the current study would suggest. During third exposure to the bullying, a predominant proportion of observers responded more riskily as the bullying was occurring, and a large proportion of observers did not respond at all after the bullying had ended. It is likely that after repeated exposure to the bullying observers are particularly likely to feel accountable for future mistreatment (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelley, 2005) and will respond in ways to attenuate the negative effects of the behavior

more directly. With role-appropriate behaviors more clear, reliance on racial category distinctions are less important to reduce subjective uncertainty. One interesting finding during third exposure was that observers high on SDO responded in a less risky way during the bullying compared to low SDO observers. If high immediate responses are perceived as more effective after repeated exposure, individuals who feel less attached to the group may be less willing to reduce the conflict effectively. In particular for Whites, racial dissimilarity can accentuate feelings of exclusion (O'Reilly et al., 1989) because it is inconsistent with their conceptualization of dominance within organizations (Pelled et al., 1999; Riordan & McFarlane Shore, 1997; Tsui et al., 1992). Individuals high on SDO tend to favor hierarchical legitimizing ideologies (Pratto et al. 1994). Whites high on SDO in groups that are mainly Black are less likely to behave effectively to reduce mistreatment in a group that is unlike them or predominantly composed of Blacks. Direct and more risky responses are less appealing to observers concerned with maintaining the dominance of their salient social identity.

The current study provides evidence for the role of social category group membership in observer responses to workplace aggression, building on few previous studies that have explored the role of social categorization on bystander intervention (e.g., Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Reicher, 2002; Levine & Crowther, 2008; Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher, 2005). Consistent with these previous studies, our results demonstrate that being racially similar to fellow observers promotes risky responding. Our research also suggests that racial similarity to other observers and the race of the victim interact to promote helping when the interaction is prototypical of a prejudicial interaction. However, our study extends previous research that has primarily looked at single acts of

violence or aggression by exploring the role of victim race and racial similarity across time and at different response immediacies. This is important in two respects. Firstly, our high immediacy results fit with the popular injunction that people base behaviors on social categorizations early on in interactions, but these effects diminish with increased exposure. Secondly, the fact that this held for high immediate responses, but not low immediate responses, suggests that other, situation-specific, norms and expectations (e.g., effectiveness of a response strategy) may come to shape the behavior of observers and that these effects differ with time. Finally, we also provide evidence that SDO interacts with racial categorizations to influence observer responses in a manner consistent with Whites' concern for their dominance in organizations (Pelled et al., 1999; Tsui et al., 1992).

Surprising in our results was that neither trait perspective taking nor prosocial orientation predicted observer response riskiness across time. We believe that these findings may be due to how we conceptualized our dependent variable. Indeed, previous research linking perspective taking (e.g., Kamdar, McCallistar, & Turban, 2006) and prosocial orientation (Caprera, Steca, Zelli, & Capanna, 2005) to helping behavior has analyzed helpers' general tendency to take a perspective or be helpful. Perspective taking and prosocial orientation may relate to helpful tendencies but may not predict the specific nature of helping behaviors, such as response riskiness. In light of these findings, future research is clearly needed to delineate the effects of individual differences on observer responses to workplace bullying.

### *Practical Implications*

Organizations stand to suffer considerable losses when employees are victimized by bullying. Physical and psychological well-being (Leymann, 1990; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996) tends to be lower and withdrawal behaviors (e.g., absenteeism and turnover intentions) tend to be higher (Hoel et al., 2003; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Zapf & Gross, 2001) for victims of bullying. As victims of bullying are rarely likely to confront the aggressor(s) themselves (Einarsen et al., 2003; Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & Dubois, 1997) it is in organizations' best interests to understand factors (e.g., demographic similarity) that promote third party observer responses to bullying. Toward this end, our findings suggest a couple of practical implications. First, organizations should pay particular attention to situations wherein employees are demographically dissimilar to a large portion of their coworkers or on interactions that are not stereotypically prejudicial. In such situations, diversity training provided by competent diversity experts may prove especially valuable. This training may be used to heighten awareness amongst all parties of the potential for misunderstandings to be interpreted in social category terms. Moreover, educating participants about how bullying is manifested in the workplace (e.g., identifying examples of continued exclusionary aggression) should help to create a more objective and uniform standard for by which observers will respond to bullying.

Second, we encourage organizations to work on creating highly prosocial work climates (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). Creating a climate that punishes aggression and rewards interpersonal support may make observers more likely to put an end to mistreatment. Training that includes perspective taking may be one strategy that would

promote helpful responses of others through increased empathy and by debiasing social category and in-group favoritism influences on observer responses (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Additionally, by training employees about effective response behaviors, responses may be quicker to the unfolding aggression (a high proportion of observers did not respond during initial exposure in the current study), sooner diminishing its continued harm for the victim and organization.

### *Limitations and Future Research*

The findings of the current study should be further validated and extended in a variety of ways. As with all research, our study has several limitations noted in the paragraphs below.

One limitation of our study is that it examined observer responses to workplace bullying in a laboratory rather than a field setting. We opted to test our hypotheses using a laboratory experiment because past studies assessing observer responses to workplace aggression have typically been correlational and based on retrospective reports of responses. Conducting an experimental study allowed us to test relationships between variables – while maintaining internal validity – that would otherwise be impossible to manipulate in a field setting. The nature of our experimental design also provided a strong basis for examining causality while also avoiding common method bias and confounding effects: We separated our assessment of SDO and observer responses in time, and our dependent variable was assessed using a behavioral measure with open-ended responses. We also presented participants with videos scenarios instead of written scenarios to depict the workplace bullying incidents. Researchers of violence (e.g., Noel et al., 2008) prefer using video vignettes because participants feel more engaged and

respond more realistically than when presented with written scenarios that are typically used in organizational research of observer responding. We made attempts to ensure that the experimental design was similar to real world workplace scenarios but further research is required to assess the external validity of our findings.

In addition to the efforts we made to enhance the design of our study, future research will help overcome other limitations associated with our study. First, we only allowed participants to observe their fellow group members for short periods of time. Although, we believe that is important to examine interpersonal relationships in short-lived work groups, future research is needed to examine the influence of race and relational demography on observer responses amongst coworkers that have longer interactional histories. Second, Hopkins and Reicher (1996) argue that experimental studies have limitations because they predefine the nature of the social context forcing observers to be passive, powerless to alter or advance the social construction. In our study, participants were not able to actively engage with their work group and alter the outcome of the bullying. Future research will benefit from utilizing other methodologies (e.g., interviews eliciting people's own accounts of observer responses) to develop a better understanding of how observers actively involve themselves in the situation. Third, our scenario focused on one form of workplace bullying, exclusion, which may result in different observer behaviors than other forms of bullying, such as more direct verbal derogation. Fourth, in order to simplify the design of our study we did not manipulate the gender of the bullied victim and only used a female victim. Early research has indicated that men are stereotyped as more assertive and aggressive than women (Eagly &

Mladinic, 1989), and such stereotypes may have implications for observers' willingness to help a male victim.

Another limitation of our study is that the sample was comprised of relatively young college-aged students that were primarily female. Although this population is not typical of the working class, young people are becoming a large part of the working population and college students often work part-time jobs or have several years of work experience. It is thus important for organizations to manage young employees and understand their responses to workplace aggression. Future research should seek to examine the effects of similar variables on samples with varying demographics like age, gender and work experience.

A final limitation to our study is more theoretical than methodological. Our experiment did not examine the precise mechanisms whereby social categorizations influence observer responses. In our theoretical conceptualization we speculate that psychological attachment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; O'Reilly et al., 1989; Tsui et al., 1989) to the social unit and expectations of recurrence (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelley, 2005) are mediators between racial categorizations and helpful observer responses. However, we did not test such processes. Additional mediating variables thought to underlie social category relationships include: Awareness of common fate, perceived similarity, and collective responsibility (Levine et al., 2002), and people's internalized sense of their membership to a particular social category (Crowther & Levine, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

### *Conclusion*

With this research, we have offered an integration of literature on observer

responses to workplace aggression with literature on relational demography, and we presented initial evidence illustrating the dynamic influence of racial categorizations on the observer response process. This evidence highlights the influential role of demographic similarity to coworkers and stereotypical nature of interactions, which are overlooked situational characteristics that impact the nature of observer response behaviors. Greater attention to group demography could enhance research in this domain, especially when coupled with a consideration of potential mediating mechanisms linking racial categorizations to response behaviors. We strongly encourage other scholars pursue this line of inquiry, to join us in further investigating workplace aggression as a dynamic process and considering the dynamic impact of antecedents of observer responses.



## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
Procedural Materials

## Scenario

CASE: Working in groups (or teams) is a common practice in many organizations. There is no doubt that you have experience working with a group of people to complete a task, whether it is a project at work or an assignment for school. In order for groups to be effective they need to meet periodically in order to remain organized and focused.

In this study, you will be a part of a group of six coworkers who are working together to complete a project over a period of several months. Your group's task is to create a proposal for one of your company's major clients. You and your five fellow group members hold meetings on a weekly basis to review what has been done and to plan what needs to be done for the next week. There is no leader for this project and it is expected that every member of the group work together to complete the task. Meetings are relatively informal and usually involve a review of objectives and completed tasks and an informal discussion that involves brainstorming and planning for the next week's work. Your group's current project is in the middle stages of completion.

## Manipulation Check

INSTRUCTIONS: Based on the information in the scenario, pictures, and mini-biographies answer the following questions. For each question please indicate the answer you think is most correct. Feel free to flip back to the scenario and chart to help you answer the questions.

1) How long have you been working in this organization (your tenure)?

a) One month   b) Four months   c) Six months   d) Two years   e) Three years

2) How long has Thomas been working in this organization (tenure)?

a) One month   b) Four months   c) Six months   d) Two years   e) Three years

3) How long has Ashley been working in this organization (tenure)?

a) One month   b) Four months   c) Six months   d) Two years   e) Three years

4) Of your fellow group members (including you), how many have been working at this organization (tenure) longer than you have?

a) 1   b) 2   c) 3   d) 4   e) 5

5) Based on her picture, what is Ashley's race/ethnicity?

a) Asian   b) Black   c) White   d) Can't tell from the picture

6) Based on his picture, what is Thomas' race/ethnicity?

a) Asian   b) Black   c) White   d) Can't tell from the picture

7) Based on her picture, what is Jessica's race/ethnicity?

a) Asian   b) Black   c) White   d) Can't tell from the picture

8) How many of your fellow group members (including you) are White (or Caucasian)?

a) 1   b) 2   c) 3   d) 4   e) 5

- 9) Who is sitting directly beside Sam on HIS right-hand side?
- a) Jessica   b) Ashley   c) Stacey   d) Thomas   e) No one, the seat is empty
- 10) Who is sitting directly beside Stacey on HER left-hand side?
- a) Jessica   b) Sam   c) Stacey   d) Thomas   e) No one, the seat is empty
- 11) How many of your fellow group members (including you) are female?
- a) 1   b) 2   c) 3   d) 4   e) 5
- 12) Based on her picture, approximately how old (in years) would you say Stacey is?
- a) 18   b) 21   c) 26   d) 30   e) 40
- 13) Based on her picture, approximately how old (in years) would you say Jessica is?
- a) 18   b) 21   c) 26   d) 30   e) 40
- 14) Based on his picture, approximately how old (in years) would you say Sam is?
- a) 18   b) 21   c) 26   d) 30   e) 40
- 15) Which one of the following names is not one of your fellow group members'?
- a) Jessica   b) Anna   c) Ashley   d) Sam   e) Stacey
- 16) Which one of your fellow group members is wearing a yellow sweater in the picture?
- a) Ashley   b) Thomas   c) Sam   d) Stacey   e) Jessica
- 17) Which one of your fellow group members is wearing a white collared shirt in the picture?
- a) Ashley   b) Thomas   c) Sam   d) Stacey   e) Jessica

## **Descriptions of Workplace Scenarios**

INSTRUCTIONS: Carefully read the following definition of workplace bullying.

‘Workplace bullying is defined as an actor or group of actors repeatedly harassing, offending, socially excluding or negatively affecting one or more individuals. A power imbalance is created when the victims perceive they are unable to defend themselves as targets of persistent systematic anti-social behaviour. Workplace bullying involves at least two negative acts, weekly or more often, for six or more months in situations where targets find it difficult to defend against and stop abuse.’

NEXT: Read each of the following workplace scenarios that involve groups of coworkers interacting. Indicate the degree to which YOU feel each scenario reflects an incident of workplace bullying as it is defined above.

### **Scenario #1**

During a team meeting a group of six coworkers were discussing their current project. When one coworker, Jamie, asked a question several of the other team members interrupted Jamie by laughing and whispering under their breaths, ‘stupid question!’ These comments were made directly towards Jamie.

### **Scenario # 2**

Several times a week a group of six coworkers meet. The group usually engages in casual conversation during the meeting discussing events that happened at work and gossip about other coworkers. A member of this group is a coworker named Jamie. During these conversations several of the group members often make sarcastic and condescending remarks about Jamie’s appearance and work habits directly towards Jamie. These group members have been making these types of comments towards Jamie ever since the group started meeting around six months ago.

### **Scenario # 3**

A group of six coworkers meets regularly in a company conference room. Almost always, individuals tend to wait until Jamie takes a seat, and then sit on the other side or other end of the table from Jamie.

### **Scenario # 4**

A team of coworkers meets weekly to discuss a current project. The meetings occur in the company’s conference room where the team of six convenes to reflect on tasks and future plans. During meetings the coworkers tend to sit away from a coworker Jamie, often leaving Jamie to sit alone at one end of the table. When documents are distributed to the team, the group often neglects to give any to Jamie. When Jamie speaks up or asks questions, other group members tend to ignore Jamie’s comments. The coworkers have

treated Jamie in this way for most meetings since the team originally convened almost eight months ago.

#### Scenario # 5

Several times a week a group of six coworkers meet. The group usually engages in casual and light-hearted conversation discussing events that happened at work and gossip about other coworkers. A member of this group that often engages in these conversations is a coworker named Jamie. During these conversations several of the group members often joke about Jamie's appearance and work habits and most of the group laughs, including Jamie. These group members have been making these types of jokes about Jamie ever since the meetings started six months ago.

## Video Scripts

### *Video 1*

Team members Stacey, Thomas, Ashley, Jessica, and Sam file into the conference room. Thomas holds open the door for everyone. The group stands in a huddle around the table, and a few converse in small talk, before sitting down at the table. Everyone sits together as a group, with relaxed body language. The VP has not convened the meeting officially, so the group continues talking amongst themselves:

-Stacey: (to Ashley) “I wonder if the nice weather we’ve been having is going to stick around for a while.”

-Ashley: “I think the weather channel said that we’re going to get some rain on Thursday.

-Stacey: “Oh, that’s too bad.”

-Everyone else in group nods to express agreement.

-Thomas: (addressing the group) “Does anyone know what this meeting is about?”

-Sam: “I think it might have to do with the reports due at the end of the week.”

-Jessica: (addressing the group) “I really hope it does not take too long.”

-Ashley: (to Jessica) “Yes, an early lunch would be nice.”

-Stacey: “It’s one of the bigger clients, so the VP may want to spend extra time on this project”

-Sam: “We’ll have to wait and see.”

-Thomas: “We should probably get settled.”

-Everyone moves towards their initial seat (as indicated in the seating chart provided to the participant)

-Jessica: (looks across the table and notices a stack of white sheets stapled together) “Oh, this must be the agenda.”

-Everyone leans to grab the papers.

-Jessica hands two papers to Sam, who cannot reach the pile.

-Sam: (to Jessica) “Thank you.” Sam puts one of those papers in front of the participant.

-Everyone has a paper in front of him or her.



## *Video 2*

Scene begins similarly to last with the team members filing into the conference room, about to have a meeting. Ashley is the last to enter. This time, while Thomas still holds the door open for the majority of the group, when Ashley approaches the door last, he abruptly lets go as if not to notice her. The group stands in a huddle near the table with Ashley just outside the huddle, close to the door as she entered last.

-Jessica: (addressing the group) “So, does anyone have anything interesting planned for the weekend?”

-Thomas: “I’m hoping to do some camping up north with some of my friends from school. It will be nice to take a break from work”

-The group nods in agreement

-Ashley: “Well, I was hoping to...”

-Sam: Abruptly interrupts Ashley and turns his back to her, excluding her even more from the huddle. He then says “This’ll be a good weekend to laze around and catch-up on some TV I haven’t seen in a while.”

-Ashley moves closer to the group and speaks up attempting to be heard and says “That sounds like...”

-Stacey abruptly interrupts Ashley and turns her back to her, excluding Ashley completely from the huddle. She then says “That sounds like fun, I guess I won’t be seeing you at the gym then.” --Stacey then jokingly nudges Sam

-The group, except Ashley, chuckles.

-Sam: “We should probably get settled”

-The group moves towards the seats they were sitting at the last meeting. As Ashley takes her seat, Thomas and Jessica leave their seats and move to the other side of the table to sit beside Sam and the participant. Stacey moves two chairs over to sit beside the participant.

-Ashley sighs and sits down at the table, slumped down looking frustrated.

-Jessica: (looks across the table and notices a stack of white sheets stapled together) “Here is the agenda for this week”

-Everyone leans to grab the papers.

-Jessica hands two papers to Sam, who cannot reach the pile.

-Sam: (to Jessica) “Thank you.” Sam puts one of those papers in front of the participant.

-Ashley stands up and retrieves her own agenda from where Jessica is sitting and then returns to her seat.

### *Video 3*

This scene begins similarly to last with the team members filing into the conference room, about to have a meeting. Like before, Ashley is the last to enter. Again, Thomas holds the door open for everyone else but not Ashley. The group stands in a huddle near the table with Ashley just outside the huddle, close to the door as she entered last.

The group moves towards the seats they were sitting at the beginning of last meeting. As Ashley takes her seat, Thomas and Jessica again leave their seats and move to the other side of the table to sit beside Sam and the participant. Stacey moves two chairs over to sit beside the participant.

Ashley sighs and sits down at the table, slumped down looking frustrated.

-Jessica: (noticing the stack of papers across the table). "Here is the agenda again." And she slides them to each group member sitting close to her. Ashley is too far away to get one.

-Ashley: (to the group) "Could someone please pass me an agenda?"

-Sam: Ignoring Ashley's request, Sam turns his back to Ashley and promptly says to the group: "I thought last week's meeting was very productive. I think the VP is happy with our progress."

-Ashley: (to the group) "Excuse me..."

-Thomas interrupts Ashley and turns his back, excluding Ashley even more from the group: "Yeah, Sam. I feel like we'll be wrapping up with this project shortly."

-Stacey: "Just a few more finishing touches and we'll be able to send the proposal to the client."

-No one looks up or makes any sort of effort to assist her, so Ashley gets out of her chair and walks over to get a paper. No one acknowledges that Ashley has moved. After picking an agenda, Ashley sits down next to Stacey, hoping to be included. Stacey turns her shoulders away from Ashley.

-Jessica: (addressing the group) Jessica chuckles "Hopefully management agrees!"

-Thomas: (addressing the group) "Anyways let's take a look and see what is on the agenda for today before the VP gets here."

-The group proceeds to read the agenda.

#### *Video 4*

This scene begins similarly to last with the team members filing into the conference room, about to have a meeting. Like before, Ashley is the last to enter. Again, Thomas holds the door open for everyone else but not Ashley. The group stands in a huddle near the table with Ashley just outside the huddle, close to the door as she entered last.

-Thomas: (addressing the group) “Let’s get settled and see what management has planned for today’s meeting.”

-This time, the group takes their seats away from Ashley (where they were sitting at the end of last meeting). Ashley sits alone at her end of the table.

-Jessica: “Here are the agendas.” Jessica slides the agendas to everyone at the table except Ashley.

-Sam: “We’re so close to being done they probably want us to wrap up a couple issues.”

-Jessica: “Yeah, I guess. Or, make some final changes.”

-Ashley gets out of her chair and walks over to get an agenda. No one acknowledges that Ashley has moved. After picking an agenda, Ashley sits down next to Sam, hoping to be included. Sam turns his shoulders away from Ashley to exclude her.

-Stacey: “Did anyone come up with a way to improve this last part?” (She holds up her paper, pointing to one of the bullet points.”

-Everyone looks at his or her own paper; Ashley seems to have an idea so she speaks up.

-Ashley: “Oh, yeah I thought that we could improve it if we...” but Ashley is interrupted by Sam sitting next to her who scoots his chair away and turns his shoulders to the rest of the group as he says:

-Sam: “I don’t think that there’s much to improve upon.”

-Jessica: “I agree, I think our communication as a group works well and we’ll just wait and see what management says.”

-Ashley looks like she disagrees and tries to speak up.

-Ashley: “I don’t think that we do as good...” but she is again interrupted.

-Stacey: “So we can say that we don’t need to change anything?”

-Ashley: “But...”

-Thomas interrupts Ashley again: “So, moving on to this next point...”

-The group looks down to read their agendas again.

## Instructions for Coders

The point of this code is to assess the riskiness of each participant's response. Participants who respond in a confrontational or assertive way would be more likely to receive negative retribution from their co-workers (i.e., this is a more risky response choice). For example, a participant who says something forthright or assertive during a conversation (e.g., assertively tells someone to stop what they're doing or calls them a jerk) is at greater risk for negative retribution from his/her coworkers than a participant who coyly asks a co-worker why they did something (e.g., "Why did you not pass an agenda to Ashley?") or politely asks them to stop.

0 = No response (i.e., no attempt to help Ashley or stop the aggression)

1 = Minimally/mildly risky (e.g., "I could not help notice there was tension between you and Ashley? What happened?" "What's going on with everyone? "Excuse me, but we need to let everyone speak now!", "Why are you ignoring Ashley?", "Why are you avoiding Ashley? We should stop it" "We need to work together better, it is not ok to ignore Ashley")

2 = Assertive and highly risky (e.g., "Stacey, quit being a bitch", "you're a jerk", "you're fired!", "you guys are acting like a bunch of kids", "stop bullying Ashley")

## APPENDIX B

### Measures

### Dependent Variable - Open-Ended Response

INSTRUCTIONS: You are in the room during this meeting and you now have an opportunity to say something or ask questions to your fellow group members. Or, you can wait for the meeting to end and have a follow-up conversation with each group member.

If you would like to say something or ask questions during the meeting respond to part (A) below. If you would like to have a private follow-up conversation with one or all of the group members individually, respond to part (B). If you choose to do both, respond to both (A) and (B).

(A)

INSTRUCTIONS: You are in the room during this meeting and you now have an opportunity to say something or ask questions to your fellow group members. Using the space provided, please write AT LEAST FIVE sentences of what you want to say. Please be specific as to who your comments are directed (i.e., a specific group member or the entire group). The more detailed you are the better!

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(B)

INSTRUCTIONS: Now assume the meeting for this week has ended. *If you choose to*, you can have a private follow-up conversation with each of your fellow group members. Using the space provided, please write AT LEAST FIVE sentences of what you want to say in your follow-up conversation with each of the following group members. The more detailed you are the better!

Follow-up conversation with *Jessica*:

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## Demographic Inventory

INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer the following demographic questions about yourself. Recall that this information will NOT be used to identify you personally. Results will be presented based upon grouped data and your participation is completely confidential.

1. What is your gender? (please select one)    ☐ Female    ☐ Male
2. What is your age? (please write in)    \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which of the following BEST describes your racial or ethnic background?  
(please select one)  
  
☐ Native American  
  
☐ Asian  
  
☐ Black (African or Caribbean)  
  
☐ White/Caucasian  
  
☐ Hispanic  
  
☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Were you in born in the U.S.? (please select one)    ☐ Yes    ☐ No  
  
If you answered “No,” please answer the following questions.  
  
4a. If “No,” where were you born \_\_\_\_\_.  
  
4b. If “No,” how long have you been in the U.S.?    \_\_\_\_\_Years    \_\_\_\_\_Months
5. How many years (cumulative) of paid work experience in the labour market do you have? (please select one)  
  
☐ None                                      ☐ 1.5 years – 2 years  
☐ 0-6 months                                      ☐ 2 years - 2.5 years  
☐ 6 months – 1 year                                      ☐ 2.5 years – 3 years  
☐ 1 year – 1.5 years                                      ☐ more than 3 years

In what job(s) did you gain this experience?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Social Dominance Orientation** (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994)

1. Some groups of people are simply not the equals of others.
2. Some people are just more worthy than others.
3. This country would be better off if we cared less about how equal all people were.
4. Some people are just more deserving than others.
5. It is not a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others.
6. Some people are just inferior to others.
7. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on others.
8. Increased economic equality.
9. Increased social equality.
10. Equality.
11. If people were treated more equally we would have fewer problems.
12. In an ideal world, all nations would be equal.
13. We should try to treat one another as equals as much as possible (All humans should be treated equally.)
14. It is important that we treat other countries as equals.



**Prosocial Orientation** (Caprara, Steca, Zelli, & Capanna, 2005)

1. I am pleased to help my friends/colleagues in their activities
2. I share the things that I have with my friends
3. I try to help others
4. I am available for volunteer activities to help those who are in need
5. I am emphatic with those who are in need
6. I help immediately those who are in need
7. I do what I can to help others avoid getting into trouble
8. I intensely feel what others feel
9. I am willing to make my knowledge and abilities available to others
10. I try to console those who are sad
11. I easily lend money or other things
12. I easily put myself in the shoes of those who are in discomfort
13. I try to be close to and take care of those who are in need
14. I easily share with friends any good opportunity that comes to me
15. I spend time with those friends who feel lonely
16. I immediately sense my friends' discomfort even when it is not directly communicated to me

**Empathetic Concern** (Davis, 1983)

1. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
2. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (*R*)
3. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.
4. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (*R*)
5. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (*R*)
6. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

*Note:* (*R*) indicates scored in reverse fashion.

**Perspective Taking** (Davis, 1983)

1. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the “other guy’s” point of view. (*R*)
2. I try to look at everyone’s side of the disagreement before I make a decision.
3. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
4. If I’m sure I’m right about something, I don’t waste much time listening to other people’s arguments. (*R*)
5. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
6. When I’m upset at someone, I usually try to “put myself in his shoes” for a while.
7. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

*Note:* (*R*) indicates scored in reverse fashion.

## APPENDIX C

### Tables and Figures

Table 1

## Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlation of study variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Gender (male = 0, female = 1)	---										
2 Victim Race (Black = 0, White = 1)	0.08	---									
3 Black Group (Black = 1, all else = 0)	0.00	0.03	---								
4 White Group (White = 1, all else = 0)	0.11	0.02	0.51**	---							
5 Social Dominance Orientation	-0.09	0.03	-0.01	0.07	---						
6 High immediacy T2	-0.02	0.05	-0.04	0.12	-0.01	---					
7 Low immediacy T2	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.04	-0.07	0.05	---				
8 High immediacy T3	-0.08	0.03	-0.13*	0.03	0.01	0.11	0.24**	---			
9 Low immediacy T3	0.15*	0.05	-0.04	0.09	-0.08	0.12	0.24**	-0.02	---		
10 High immediacy T4	0.00	0.01	-0.08	0.02	-0.07	0.04	0.16*	0.34**	0.08	---	
11 Low immediacy T4	-0.01	0.01	-0.03	0.04	0.09	0.11	0.20**	0.06	0.36**	0.13	---
<i>M</i>	0.80	0.49	0.35	0.33	2.04	0.48	0.70	0.92	0.70	1.04	0.55
<i>SD</i>	0.40	0.50	0.48	0.47	0.56	0.56	0.57	0.66	0.66	0.59	0.66

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ . Because time is invariant between individuals it is excluded from the table. High immediacy and low immediacy coded as 0=no involvement, 1=low involvement, 2=high involvement

Table 2

Hierarchical Linear Modeling results predicting response riskiness

Variable	<i>High Immediacy</i>			<i>Low Immediacy</i>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i> statistic	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i> statistic
Time 2 slope, <i>B1</i>	0.478	0.421	1.137	0.343	0.436	0.787
Gender (male = 0, female = 1)	-0.056	0.100	-.554	0.020	0.104	0.197
Victim race (Black = 0, White = 1)	0.069	0.140	0.496	0.151	0.144	1.048
Black group (Black = 1, all else = 0)	-0.015	0.138	-.109	-0.009	0.142	-0.066
White group (White = 1, all else = 0)	0.381	0.137	2.782**	0.078	0.142	0.551
SDO	-0.023	0.186	-0.124	0.145	0.193	0.749
Victim race*Black group	0.090	0.194	0.464	-0.061	0.201	-0.305
Victim race*White group	-.464	0.196	-2.372*	-0.290	0.203	-1.434
Victim race*SDO	-0.039	0.259	-.159	-0.290	0.257	-1.126
Black group*SDO	-0.072	0.261	-0.277	-0.321	0.270	-1.192
White group*SDO	0.173	0.246	0.703	-0.333	0.255	-1.308
Victim race*Black group*SDO	0.070	0.355	0.196	0.498	0.368	1.355
Victim race*White group*SDO	-0.148	0.345	-0.428	0.426	0.357	1.195
Time 3 slope, <i>B2</i>	1.027	0.421	2.439*	0.625	0.436	1.434
Gender (male = 0, female = 1)	-0.125	0.101	-1.248	0.226	0.104	2.180*
Victim race (Black = 0, White = 1)	0.230	0.140	1.647	0.418	0.144	2.898**
Black group (Black = 1, all else = 0)	-0.109	0.138	-0.789	0.103	0.142	0.726
White group (White = 1, all else = 0)	0.098	0.137	0.713	0.455	0.142	3.211**
SDO	-0.009	0.186	-0.050	-0.161	0.193	-0.835
Victim race*Black group	-0.253	0.194	-1.303	-0.333	0.201	-1.661

Table 2 continued

Victim race*White group	-0.272	0.196	-1.387	-0.793	0.202	-3.914**
Victim race*SDO	-0.050	0.249	-0.202	0.253	0.257	0.982
Black group*SDO	-0.086	0.261	-0.331	0.252	0.257	0.982
White group*SDO	0.022	0.246	0.088	-0.119	0.255	-0.468
Victim race*Black group*SDO	-0.126	0.355	-0.354	-0.222	0.357	-0.623
Victim race*White group*SDO	0.471	0.345	1.366	0.080	0.368	0.217
Time 4 slope, <i>B3</i>	1.018	0.421	2.417*	-0.144	0.436	-0.330
Gender (male = 0, female = 1)	-0.010	0.101	-0.098	-0.016	0.104	-0.155
Victim race (Black = 0, White = 1)	-0.021	0.140	-0.152	0.038	0.144	0.266
Black group (Black = 1, all else = 0)	-0.176	0.137	-1.283	-0.032	0.142	-0.226
White group (White = 1, all else = 0)	0.026	0.137	0.189	0.136	0.142	0.957
SDO	0.047	0.186	0.252	0.320	0.192	1.657
Victim race*Black group	0.094	0.194	0.484	0.023	0.201	0.116
Victim race*White group	-0.074	0.196	-0.380	-0.141	0.203	-0.698
Victim race*SDO	-0.032	0.249	-0.127	-0.078	0.257	-0.303
Black group*SDO	-0.606	0.261	-2.324*	-0.127	0.270	-0.472
White group*SDO	-0.061	0.246	-0.248	-0.347	0.254	-1.361
Victim race*Black group*SDO	0.492	0.355	1.385	0.016	0.368	0.044
Victim race*White group*SDO	0.121	0.344	0.350	-0.067	0.357	-0.189

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ . *B* = unstandardized hierarchical linear modeling coefficient

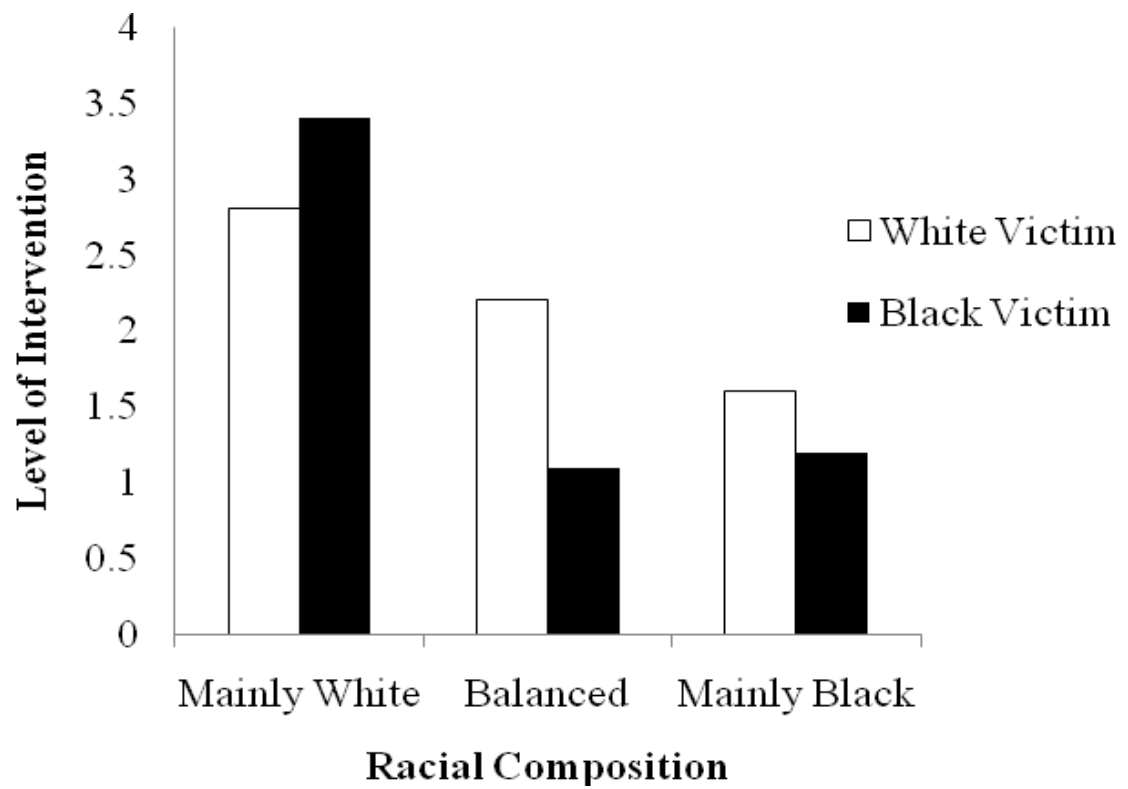


Figure 1. Results for the interaction between SDO and group racial composition predicting high immediacy response riskiness at T4. High SDO is 1 SD above the mean and low SDO is 1 SD below the mean.



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