

Diversity Fatigue: A Survey for Measuring Attitudes Towards Diversity Enhancing Efforts in Academia

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Objectives: Academia is grappling with how to address persistent underrepresentation and reduce inequities. With so many diversity-enhancing initiatives underway, some within the academic community might experience “diversity fatigue,” a construct we use to understand majority groups’ feelings of weariness toward diversity efforts. **Method:** For our testing purposes, we focused on ethnic and minority underrepresentation, and collected data in four studies from 473 White American students and faculty. Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and latent profile analysis, we develop and confirm the single factor structure of the final 6-item Diversity Fatigue scale. We measured associations with other established measures and examined the strength of the association between diversity fatigue and faculty’s support for a diversity-enhancing intervention. **Results:** Results demonstrated scale reliability, convergent validity with system-justifying beliefs, and offer suggestive evidence of discriminant validity with inclusion concerns and implicit race-based associations. Although mean levels of diversity fatigue were low overall, diversity fatigue scores were related to concerns about the effort involved with diversity work and were significantly associated with faculty’s motivation to adopt a diversity-enhancing classroom activity. **Conclusions:** Diversity fatigue in academia is a dampening in people’s response to or enthusiasm for efforts that improve the experience of underrepresented people. This state experience is connected to system-justifying beliefs and is related to concerns about the effort required to do diversity interventions. Understanding and measuring this construct has implications for the psychology of intergroup relations, as well as practical implications for campus communities committed to diversity programs.

Public Significance Statement

Higher education places a high value on diversity-enhancing initiatives and interventions. Some students and faculty may value diversity, but simultaneously feel tired by all the work devoted to diversity efforts. In four studies, we validated a 6-item survey to measure “diversity fatigue” as experienced by White students and faculty at several universities in the United States and illustrate that it is meaningfully associated with someone’s support for diversity interventions.

Keywords: measurement, diversity fatigue, diversity resistance, intergroup relations, interventions

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The preregistered design and analysis plan is accessible at <https://aspredicted.org/my8da.pdf>

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Academia is not diverse. Once only accessible by the privileged White male elite by design; centuries later, U.S. colleges and universities are still grappling with undoing a structurally inequitable system that oppresses and marginalizes people who are from lower socioeconomic groups, people who are first in their family to go to college, people who are racial and ethnic minorities, as well as people who are sexual minorities and people who identify as women. Diversity within academic faculty ranks “remains elusive” (Stewart & Valian, 2018) and there are significant and persistent disparities in the enrollment, graduation, and day-to-day experiences among certain groups of students in higher education (for a summary report see Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2016). By definition, “underrepresentation” remains an important problem to systemically address.

There are many varied responses, initiatives, and programs aimed at improving equity, diversity, inclusion, access, and belonging for our underrepresented populations in higher education: from creating welcoming residential and learning student communities centered around shared interests and identities (Ramsey et al., 2013), to adding new classroom assignments that motivate at risk students (Harackiewicz et al., 2016), creating summer bridge programs for minority students (Summers & Hrabowski, 2006), changing faculty search committee processes (Smith et al., 2015), engaging in equity focused strategic planning (Latimer et al., 2014), and administering the ubiquitous climate survey assessments; the list goes on and on. Such cultural transformation efforts are difficult at best and take sustained innovation, deep changes in policy and resources, and require unshakable buy-in from campus stakeholders (Mitchneck et al., 2016; Morimoto et al., 2013; Puritty et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2018).

It is also true that diversity programs and initiatives can backfire. Much literature exists on the perils of mandatory and legally couched “diversity training” that do little to change behaviors and attitudes (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). Add to this, diversity trainings that do reduce bias can, ironically, trigger feelings of threat and exclusion among those the training aims to help (Pietri et al., 2019). Diversifying academia, then, takes constant vigilance and a willingness to design and implement diversity-enhancing interventions that improve underrepresented student and faculty experiences. Such interventions require careful adoption that can be time consuming, require resources, and are often outside the comfort zone of faculty and staff (Thoman et al., 2021; Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Yeager & Walton, 2011). This puts higher education in a precarious position: The desire to make changes that promote inclusion and cultivate a diverse culture that improves people’s lives, juxtaposed with the reality that such programs might be short-lived, not well-implemented, and seen as “just another thing” that falls on the plates of people who are already stretched too thin.

All too often, “diversity work” falls to the underrepresented people who are marginalized within the broken system they want to fix (Bird et al., 2004; Lam, 2018). The experience of “diversity burnout” or “battle fatigue” reflects the physiological, psychological, and emotional strain caused by navigating perpetual oppression while facing mounting resistance to dismantling the overarching systems that reinforce inequities (Miller et al., 2018; Smith, 2004). But what about people who are not necessarily on the front lines of diversity work, yet are nevertheless gatekeepers for enhancing diversity on college campuses? We set out to define and measure the psychological construct of “diversity fatigue,” which we hypothesize acts as a barrier to improving minority student and faculty experiences in academia. Just as there are unintended negative consequences of anti-prejudice messages (Legault et al., 2011; Pietri et al., 2019) and

deleterious effects of organizational diversity structures (Kaiser et al., 2013); so too might there be a process by which even initially positive reactions toward diversity interventions give way to feelings of indifference and low enthusiasm for such work.

Defining Diversity Fatigue

Diversity fatigue is rooted in broader societal, educational, and organizational contexts (Bronson & Merryman, 2006; Hsu, 2017; Lam, 2018) that were designed to reproduce the status quo (e.g., Flynn, 2015; Hunt et al., 2012). At the proximal psychological level, our conceptualization of diversity fatigue is as a state variable that describes variation in the extent to which someone experiences a diminished response to or desensitization toward diversity efforts. Like physiological fatigue, we posit that diversity fatigue can come on suddenly, or take a chronic form. Feelings of diversity fatigue, we argue, can shape responses to future diversity initiatives and interventions, even among those who feel that they value diversity and equity goals. Indeed, the assumption is that diversity fatigue would not occur among people who flat out reject the value of diversifying academia. We hypothesize that the general weariness of diversity fatigue is related to people’s reduced motivation and capacity for diversity work. We set out to design a tool to measure diversity fatigue and provide psychometric evidence of the structure, validity, reliability, and utility of the measure. We explicitly focus our measurement development on improving the experience of underrepresented ethnic and racial minorities within a majority-White, academic context; we return to implications for centering other underrepresented groups in our general discussion.

Diversity fatigue might, at first glance, look similar to other passive forms of “diversity resistance” (Thomas & Plaut, 2008), but with several important differences. Research on resistance to diversity often assumes the individual is unable (or unwilling) to accept the reality of systemic inequalities (Goodman, 2001), or that the person does not highly value diversity or does not see the benefits of diversity (Plaut et al., 2011), or that the person holds implicit negative associations that bias their responses (Frantz et al., 2004). Our conceptualization of diversity fatigue does not make any assumption about a person’s recognition of inequities, a person’s valuation of diversity, or a person’s degree of implicit biases. We posit, for example, that an individual can acknowledge systemic inequities within higher education yet may still experience diversity fatigue. In our validation tests, we examine whether and how diversity fatigue is related to a person’s awareness of the existence of bias, implicit bias associations, and support for diversity efforts.

We do not view diversity fatigue as an ideology; though, we do expect that the state of diversity fatigue is positively related to trait levels of system-justifying beliefs (O’Brien & Major, 2005). System-justifying beliefs include the view that the world is fair and good things happen to good people (i.e., just world beliefs, Furnham, 2003), that society and its hierarchies are desirable (i.e., status and system legitimacy, Jost et al., 2004) and that hard work and merit underlie reward structures (i.e., Protestant work ethic, Furnham, 1984). The more people hold system-justifying beliefs, the more they justify maintaining the status quo (Kay et al., 2009) and the more likely they are to believe that members of high-status groups (e.g., Whites) deserve better outcomes (O’Brien & Major, 2009). We predict that diversity fatigue is related to, but distinct from, such system justification beliefs. The primary distinction is that diversity

fatigue can occur even among those who do recognize the importance of addressing systemic inequality. That said, we also believe the experience of diversity fatigue might be more likely among people who are higher in trait levels of system-justifying beliefs. Indeed, it is likely that one consequence of people who experience diversity fatigue is that their inaction will, unintentionally or not, contribute to the maintenance of the (oppressing) status quo. Diversity fatigue, we predict, is linked to inaction and the tendency to emphasize other priorities that divert attention away from change efforts; all which result in the continuation of the racist patriarchy. As such, we include system-justifying belief measures in validation tests of the new Diversity Fatigue scale and examine the relationship with cost perceptions for implementing a diversity-enhancing intervention.

We purposefully limit the scope of diversity fatigue in two essential ways. First, we focus on diversity efforts within academia. Although the construct (and measure) could certainly be applied to broader organizational contexts, we developed the scale to address diversity fatigue within higher education settings. There is mounting pressure on higher education from governing bodies, policy makers, funding agencies, and the community at large to address disparities in access, treatment, and outcomes in academia (Mervis, 2018; Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2016; Valantine & Collins, 2015; Young Invincibles, 2017). While there are hopes for higher education to be the “great equalizer” to launch the next generation into better economic and social standing (Chetty et al., 2017), this has not been realized. It is within this zeitgeist that we propose to examine diversity fatigue in a higher education context and explore the relationship between diversity fatigue and a student’s or faculty’s concern for assisting underrepresented people to feel included in academia.

Second, we conceptualize diversity fatigue from the perspective of majority group members, with a particular emphasis for scale development on White Americans. The decision to conceptualize diversity fatigue as distinctively experienced by White Americans is supported by research showing that White Americans perceive racism as zero-sum, such that gains made by minorities to reduce racism, comes at the expense of Whites experiencing more bias (Norton & Sommers, 2011; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2013). Research also demonstrates that when reminded about the declining proportion of Whites in America (as ethnic minority populations increase), White Americans are less likely to value diversity (Danbold & Huo, 2015) and are more likely to value political candidates who revere status hierarchies (Mutz, 2018).

We also based our decision to focus on majority group perceptions on the assumption that feelings triggered by efforts to diversify higher education are necessarily informed by a person’s lived experiences, status, and privilege. As such, we expect that underrepresented members’ feelings about diversity efforts invoke different psychological processes as the target of those efforts. Such responses could include tokenism and social identity threat on the one hand, to belonging and identity safety on the other, depending on how the diversity initiatives are framed, implemented, and valued (e.g., Casad et al., 2018; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). To be sure, there are many ways in which structural, institutional, and interpersonal oppression are internalized (Speight, 2016) and minority group members are not immune to prejudice and bias (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012), can endorse system-justifying beliefs (Bahamondes et al., 2019), and differ in their responses to discrimination claims (Wellman et al., 2019). Nevertheless, we intentionally

define diversity fatigue as a majority group phenomenon, given their advantaged situational, dispositional, and positionality factors (Liviatan & Jost, 2014). To feel diversity fatigue, assumes an inherent level of power and privilege that allows someone to minimize the effects of oppression. Of course, who is in the “majority” that holds power within these structures is contextually specific and for our purposes here we focus on White Americans as the dominant group under study.

Project Overview

We set out to define the factor structure of a new Diversity Fatigue scale, explore and confirm convergent and discriminant parameters of diversity fatigue among majority group members, and test the relationship between diversity fatigue and faculty valuation of and motivation for adopting a diversity-enhancing classroom intervention. We present the methodology and data in three phases: (a) survey development of a 9-item measure and exploratory factor analyses, validity, and reliability analyses; (b) survey refinement with a 6-item measure and confirmatory factor analyses, validity, and reliability analyses; and (c) validity tests to determine the associations of the new measure of Diversity Fatigue with different cost concerns associated with implementing a diversity intervention and responses to a diversity intervention.

Table 1 presents the final 6-item survey. Instructions for survey takers are noted at the bottom of the Table. The survey is meant to be tailored to a particular institution when possible (phase 2 and 3) but can also be used more generally to gauge dominant group member feelings across a number of academic institutions (phase 1).

Phase 1: Exploratory

An initial set of 10 items were drafted based on direct experiences and observations of actual sentiments heard by two of the authors who lead, research, and evaluate institutional programs aimed at broadening participation and undoing systemic inequality. These original items were then sent to a psychometric expert for feedback on item construction. The revised version was then shared with a diversity scholar expert who had years of academic field experience, who provided additional feedback on the external validity of the items. From there, we settled on 9 items, which were the focus of our first study.

In this first study, we set out to identify the factor structure of the proposed Diversity Fatigue measure and to establish construct validity through the scale’s relationship with other established measures. This study and analysis plan were pre-registered at As Predicted: <https://aspredicted.org/my8da.pdf>

Method

Procedure and Participants

One-hundred fifteen university students who self-identified as White completed a series of online surveys via Mechanical Turk. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 66 ($M = 28.4$, $SD = 8.5$, Median = 26) and a majority (59.9%) identified as male. Participants completed four measures in a counterbalanced fashion. The original 9-item diversity fatigue scale consists of the six items presented in Table 1, with three additional items that we explored: “I sometimes worry that we do not take diversity seriously enough at

Table 1*Final Diversity Fatigue Scale*

Item
I am tired of hearing about diversity issues on campus.
I feel annoyed when someone brings up concerns about diversity in academia.
I do not want to see any more diversity classes and programs at [my university].
I am uneasy that diversity classes are required for students at [my university].
I worry that my university has neglected other important issues because of too much focus on diversity initiatives.
Diversity efforts on campus are becoming distracting.

Note. Instructions: The following questions concern your feelings about [your university] during the last year. (If you have been at this university for less than a year, this concerns the entire time you have been here). All items rated on the scale. 1 = *not at all true*, 2 = *slightly true*, 3 = *somewhat true*, 4 = *very true*, 5 = *completely true*.

[my university]" "I feel happy when people discuss the importance of diversity at [my university]" and "It is very important that my university continue to prioritize increasing faculty and student diversity." Because participants came from different universities, they were asked to rate their feelings about diversity-related initiatives "at their university" or "on their campus."

Participants also completed the following:

System-justifying Beliefs. 12 items total that align with subscales for Belief in a Just World (4 items, e.g., "I feel that people get what they deserve."), Protestant Work Ethic (4 items, e.g., "If people work hard they almost always get what they want."), and Belief in Status Legitimacy (4 items, e.g., "Differences in status between groups in American society are fair."). All items used a scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Items were taken directly from O'Brien and Major (2005) with pastconstruct validity work from scholars such as Lipkus (1991) and Katz and Hass (1988).

Inclusion Concerns. 9-items measuring an individual's concerns with helping women and minorities feel included in academia were inspired by the Walton and Cohen (2007) measure of belonging, and is akin to the desire to create micro-affirming situations (Pittinsky, 2016). Example items include: "When women and minorities face difficulties in my university, I really try to help make everyone feel like they fit in."; "I am anxious that I am not doing enough to help women and minorities fit in at my university.". Higher scores

indicated more concerns about helping underrepresented people feel a sense of belonging (1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *completely*).

Bias Awareness. 4-item measure of bias awareness by Perry et al. (2015) (e.g., "When talking to minorities, I sometimes worry that I am unintentionally acting in a prejudiced way."). Higher scores indicated more worry about holding and acting in unintentionally biased ways (1 = *Not at all true* to 5 = *completely true*).

Based on the theoretical context of each of these measures, the following preregistered hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: We predicted that the new Diversity Fatigue scale would load onto one factor and show high reliability.

Hypothesis 2: We predicted that diversity fatigue would positively correlate with the measures of system-justifying beliefs.

Hypothesis 3: We predicted that diversity fatigue would negatively correlate with an individual's inclusion concerns.

Hypothesis 4: We predicted diversity fatigue would be unrelated to bias awareness.

Results and Discussion

Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out using MPlus 8.0 software (Muthen & Muthen, 2017). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index of .883 was well above cutoff of .5 for sampling adequacy. The correlation matrix eigenvalues indicated a 2-factor solution with negatively worded items loading on factor 1 and accounting for 54.3% of the variance and the positively worded items loading on factor 2 explaining an additional 22.2% of the variance. However, upon investigating the item loadings, one item (i.e., "I sometimes worry that we do not take diversity seriously enough at my university") showed significant cross-loadings on the factors above the .15 difference and was removed and a second EFA was performed.

A principal axis factor analysis was conducted on the revised 8-item Diversity Fatigue measure. The initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each factor in the data. Two factors had eigenvalues over Kaiser's Criterion of 1 and combined explained 79.1% of the variance. Promax rotated factor loadings in Table 2 show items loading on factor 1 were items that asked how tired, annoyed, uneasy, and worried participants were about diversity

Table 2*Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis of 8-Item Diversity Fatigue Scale*

#	Item	Factor	
		1	2
1	I am tired of hearing about diversity issues on campus.	.805	
4	I feel annoyed when someone brings up concerns about diversity in academia.	.899	
5	I do not want to see any more diversity classes and programs at [my university].	.883	
6	I am uneasy that diversity classes are required for students at [my university].	.863	
7	I worry that my university has neglected other important issues because of too much focus on diversity initiatives.	.765	
9	Diversity efforts on campus are becoming distracting.	.874	
3	I feel happy when people discuss the importance of diversity at my university*		.747
8	It is very important that my university continue to prioritize increasing faculty and student diversity*		.899

Note. * Items were reverse-coded.

efforts. Higher ratings therefore all indicated more diversity fatigue. Conversely, items on factor 2 asked how much happiness and importance participants felt towards diversity efforts, with higher ratings intended to signify less diversity fatigue. After reverse-coding factor 2 items, correlations between these two factors was .366. All residuals were less than .05 indicating good model fit ($\chi^2(13,115) = 16.78$, $p = .210$, RMSEA = .050, CFI = .994, TLI = .988, SRMR = .016).

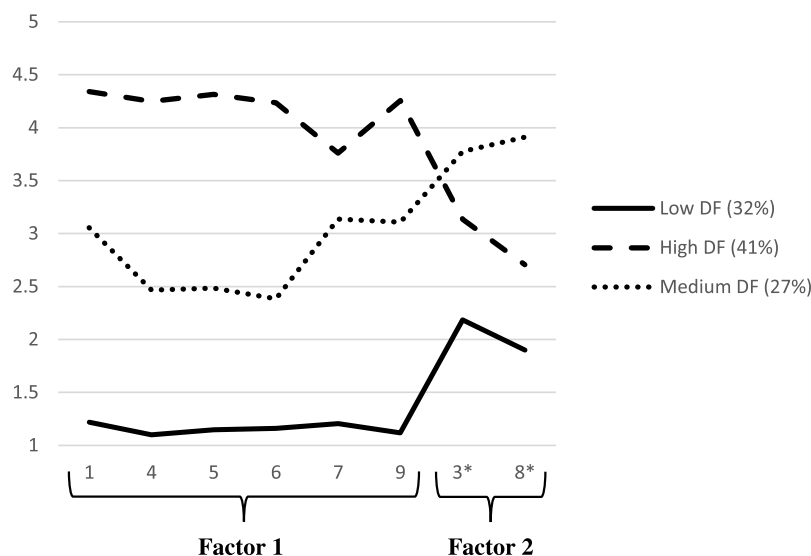
Theoretical and statistical considerations led us to discern that the two items that comprised factor 2 did not represent the phenomenon of diversity fatigue, and that they should be removed. First, we noted that both items comprising factor 2 happened to be the only items in our scale tapping positive feelings about diversity. This is consistent with a growing body of literature showing that negatively phrased or “reverse-coded” items may not always represent the converse of the measured construct, and that despite their appeal, reverse-coded items may introduce more measurement error than they resolve (for review, see [Gehlbach, 2015](#)). Instead, these reverse-coded items created a separate factor that bears similarity to existing scales of diversity endorsement (i.e., [Plaut et al., 2011](#)).

Second, as a robustness check, we conducted a latent profile analysis (LPA). Although after reverse-coding factor 2 items, the overall correlation between the factors was appropriately positive ($r = .366$), LPA allowed us to detect whether this overall correlation was actually composed of subgroups within our sample that showed inconsistent relationships between factor 1 and factor 2 items. We determined that the 3-profile solution in [Figure 1](#) was a significantly better fit than the 2-profile solution (Vuong–Lo–Mendell–Rubin test $p = .010$), while not significantly worse-fitting than the 4-profile solution (VLMR $p = .553$). These three profiles indeed revealed that students with low, medium, and high levels of diversity fatigue (factor 1 items) did not rate factor 2 items in a way that reflected their diversity fatigue. Counter-intuitively, students with high and low

diversity fatigue had relatively similar ratings for factor 2 items. This confirmed our interpretation of the EFA that “reverse coded” factor 2 items evoking feelings akin to the importance of diversity efforts did not represent the converse of diversity fatigue. Therefore, although “importance of diversity work” items are worth investigating (see Phase 2), they were excluded from the Diversity Fatigue scale. What these data suggest is that even people who feel diversity efforts are important can experience variation in their feelings of diversity fatigue.

Reliability and Validity. Proceeding with the six items from EFA factor 1, reliability of the 6-item scale was acceptable with a standardized Cronbach’s alpha of $\alpha = .94$. As seen in the Phase 1 panel of [Table 3](#), diversity fatigue was relatively low overall, with a mean below the scale midpoint. That said, additional descriptive statistics illustrate that half of our sample (50%) scored above the scale midpoint. Confirming hypothesis 2, diversity fatigue was positively and significantly correlated with the SBJ subscales of belief in a just world, Protestant work ethic, and beliefs in status legitimacy. Contrary to hypotheses 3 and 4, there was no significant correlation between diversity fatigue and inclusion concerns, and a small, but significant positive relationship between diversity fatigue and bias awareness, suggesting that diversity fatigue can occur even among people who are tuned into the existence of inequality and prejudice. Finally, we tested for gender differences. Due to the skewness of this scale in some of our samples, we eschewed t-tests in favor of Wilcoxon rank-sum tests (a nonparametric that is robust to outliers because it uses distribution statistics other than the mean). In this sample, men ($n = 69$, $Q1 = 1.00$, $Mdn = 3.17$, $Q3 = 4.00$) exhibited approximately similar distributions of diversity fatigue as women ($n = 45$, $Q1 = 1.00$, $Mdn = 2.80$, $Q3 = 4.00$), $p = .303$ (means and standard deviations reported in [Table 3](#)).

Figure 1
Three-Class Solution of Latent Profiles for the 8-Item Diversity Fatigue Scale



* Values for items three and eight are reverse-coded. Percentage refers to the percent of the sample in a given profile.

Table 3
Diversity Fatigue—Relationships Among the Variables Across Student Samples

Phase 1 (<i>n</i> = 115)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Diversity fatigue	—					
2. Just world beliefs	.37**	—				
3. Status legitimacy	.53**	.65**	—			
4. Protestant work ethic	.43**	.77**	.68**	—		
5. Bias awareness	.28*	.19*	.15	.10	—	
6. Inclusion concerns	.12	.12	-.10	-.06	.42**	—
Mean	2.83	4.33	3.55	3.84	3.70	2.89
<i>SD</i>	1.37	1.47	1.34	1.31	1.40	.76
Range	1–5	1–7	1–7	1–7	1–6.25	1–4.7
Cronbach's Alpha	.94	.90	.78	.75	.75	.75
Phase 2 sample 1 (<i>n</i> = 202)	1	2	3	4	—	—
1. Diversity fatigue	—					
2. Just world beliefs	.23**	—				
3. Status legitimacy	.58**	.32**	—			
4. Protestant work ethic	.34**	.55**	.38**	—		
Mean	1.51	3.69	3.50	2.95		
<i>SD</i>	.68	1.03	1.06	1.15		
Range	1–4.5	1–6	1–6.75	1–6.25		
Cronbach's Alpha	.86	.74	.75	.73		
Phase 2 sample 2 (<i>n</i> = 127)	1	2	3	4	5	—
1. Diversity fatigue	—					
2. Just world beliefs	.37**	—				
3. Status legitimacy	.57**	.62**	—			
4. Importance of diversity work	-.53**	-.33**	.57**	—		
5. Implicit racial bias associations	.13	.08	.19*	-.02	—	
Mean	1.33	3.59	2.80	3.68	.01	
<i>SD</i>	.56	1.17	1.05	1.09	.28	
Range	1–4.17	1–6	1–5.75	1–5	-.725–.619	
Cronbach's Alpha	.87	.73	.70	.79	—	

Note. Diversity fatigue (DF) for all samples is 6-item scale. For all measures, higher values represent more of that respective construct. Implicit racial bias associations is not a multi-item survey measure (see Phase 2 sample 2 method).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

Summary

Scale development procedures for the new Diversity Fatigue scale resulted in a final 6-item survey determined to have one factor, after trimming three items. The scale showed adequate reliability and was positively associated with system-justifying beliefs. Contrary to expectations, the experience of diversity fatigue did not show significant overlap with inclusion concerns in this sample. Results further demonstrated that although the overall mean was low, 50% of participants scored at or above the midpoint of the scale. The LPA results further illustrated that diversity fatigue can and does vary among people who feel diversity efforts are important, and the positive relationship with bias awareness is at least suggestive that diversity fatigue might increase the more in tune people are with the reality of inequity and prejudice. Results of this pre-registered study with MTurk workers enrolled at universities nationwide lend support to the viability of measuring diversity fatigue.

Phase 2: Confirmatory and Validation Tests

We next collected data from a convenience student sample to again test the factor structure for the new survey (sample 1) and examine the relationship with implicit associations (sample 2). The selection of an east coast university for our sample 1, presented a noteworthy setting

given it is a primarily White institution with a complicated historical and present-day race-related record, including high profile race-related demonstrations and tragic events (e.g., a Unite the Right Rally, controversy over Confederate statues). The selection of a west coast university for our sample 2, presented another noteworthy setting given it is a Hispanic Serving Institution with a highly diverse student community situated within a city bordering Mexico.

Sample 1

Method

Procedure and Participants. We used data from 329 undergraduate university students who self-identified as White and who completed a large survey with many measures during a mass testing session of the psychology subject pool. A majority (71.3%) identified as female. The vast majority of participants (89.1%) were first- or second-year students (age data were not collected). All 329 students completed the original nine diversity fatigue items and 202 of these participants completed the same system-justifying beliefs measures from Phase 1.

Confirmatory factor analyses were performed using MPlus 8.0 software. Informed by the EFA in phase 1, we tested the fit of both

the 8-item, 2-factor measurement model and the 6-item, single-factor model, to determine whether the item factor structure from Phase 1 would be replicated. Data from Phase 1 suggested a 6-item Diversity Fatigue structure with 2 additional items representing the importance of diversity work, and replicating this structure was important before deciding to trim the fatigue scale to six items. We also set out to see if the convergent validity with SJB constructs identified in Phase 1 replicated with data from new student samples.

Hypothesis 1: We predicted that diversity fatigue would load onto one factor and show high reliability.

Hypothesis 2: We predicted that diversity fatigue would positively correlate with the measures of system-justifying beliefs.

Results

The CFA models were assessed for exact fit with the WLSMV χ^2 and approximate fit with SRMR according to the guidelines put forth by Asparouhov and Muthen (2018). First, results showed the 8-item, 2-factor model (see Table 2) provided adequate fit to the data $\chi^2(329, 18) = 61.73$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .086, CFI = .956, TLI = .931, and SRMR = .044. Examination of modification indices showed no significant benefit to creating a single factor or having either of the two positively worded (importance of diversity work) items load onto the fatigue factor.

When we dropped the two positively worded items from the analysis and examined only the six items identified in Phase 1 within a single factor model, results provided strong support for this

structure, as illustrated in Figure 2, $\chi^2(329, 8) = 12.29$, $p = .139$, RMSEA = .040, CFI = .994, TLI = .989, and SRMR = .017. The model was strengthened by adding one correlated residual estimate between the two items that specifically referred to diversity issues being mentioned in conversation. All results reported above include this correlated residual, as drawn in Figure 2.

Reliability and Validity. Reliability of the 6-item scale from the sample of students was acceptable with a standardized Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .86$. Hypothesis 2 was again tested using Pearson's correlations. As seen in Table 3, mean diversity fatigue was once again low overall, with the lowest two-thirds of the sample scoring below 1.50. Replicating Phase 1 results, diversity fatigue was positively and significantly correlated with the belief in a just world ($r = .23$), Protestant work ethic ($r = .57$), and beliefs in status legitimacy ($r = .34$). In this sample, men ($n = 58$, $Q1 = 1.17$, $Mdn = 1.50$, $Q3 = 2.17$) felt significantly greater levels of diversity fatigue than women ($n = 144$, $Q1 = 1.00$, $Mdn = 1.17$, $Q3 = 1.63$), $p = .001$.

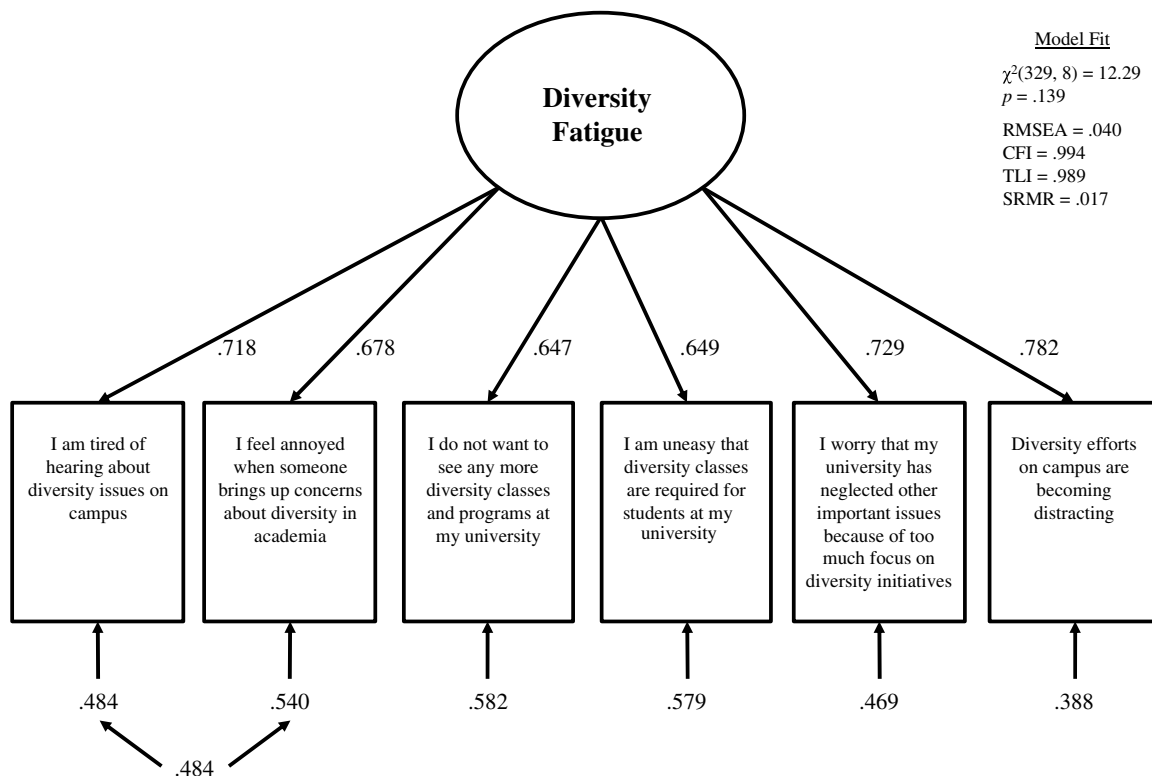
Sample 2

Method

Procedure and Participants. We used data from 127 undergraduate university students who self-identified as White and who participated in an in-person experiment on student reactions to diversity-related classwork. Participants received credit toward their introductory psychology class. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 25 ($M = 19.0$, $SD = 1.3$) and a majority (85%) identified as female.

Figure 2

Factor Structure With Standardized Loadings for 6-Item Diversity Fatigue Scale



As part of a larger study (Toves, 2019), participants completed a survey with the Diversity Fatigue and system-justifying beliefs measures, as well as the Multicultural Implicit Associations Test (MC-IAT; see Axt et al., 2014) which measures implicit bias toward people who are Asian, Latino, Black, and White. The MC-IAT was administered via twelve computer trials conducted through Inquisit Lab 5. Participants were told to press the "I" key when "good" target words (e.g., love, wonderful) appeared or faces of the "target race" (i.e., White, Asian, Black, Latino) appeared (e.g., "use the 'I' key for White faces or good words"). Alternatively, they were told to press the "E" key when "bad" words (e.g., awful, terrible) or the a "comparison race" appeared (e.g., "use the 'E' key for Asian faces or bad words"). Twelve trials allowed each race to be paired with one of the other three as both the target race and the comparison race.

The (albeit contested) logic behind the IAT is the likelihood that participants with implicit negative attitudes about a specific racial group will have more difficulty associating pictures of people from that racial group with positive words (Banaji & Hardin, 1996; Blanton et al., 2006; Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019; Jost, 2019; Nosek & Sriram, 2007). This should lead to larger reaction times when the key for recognizing negatively viewed racial groups is the same as the key for recognizing good words. Implicit racial bias scores were calculated first by combining the amount of time participants took to associate faces from the target race with their assigned word categories, also factoring in error rates. These were then compared to the time and error rates of participants when asked to press "E" for faces from comparison race and bad words. This allowed the program to calculate preference/bias scores for each race compared to another race (e.g., preference for White vs. Latino people). For the purpose of this study, we used a single implicit bias score (Axt et al., 2014) that aggregated the preference for Whites more than the other three racial groups, individually.

Data from this sample were intended to provide both a replication test of hypothesis 2, that responses to the Diversity Fatigue scale would positively correlate with the measures of system-justifying beliefs, as well as the opportunity to explore whether (and if so how) diversity fatigue was related to implicit biases. On the one hand, it was possible that diversity fatigue would be positively related to implicit biases, such that people higher in implicit biases might be more likely to feel diversity fatigue in certain situations. On the other hand, it was also possible diversity fatigue could be experienced regardless of implicit bias levels, and there might be no relationship. We also included the trimmed items from the original scale as a separate measure of importance of diversity work. We predicted that there would be a significant negative relationship between diversity fatigue and importance of diversity work.

Results

Reliability and Validity. Reliability of the 6-items scale from the sample of students was acceptable with a standardized Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .87$. Implicit racial bias scores were not significantly associated with diversity fatigue ($r = .13$). Correlational results, as shown in Table 3, illustrate that diversity fatigue was again positively and significantly correlated with the belief in a just world ($r = .37$), beliefs in status legitimacy ($r = .57$), and as predicted, negatively related ($r = -.53$) to the importance of diversity work. Although this sample included very few men, men ($n = 15$, $Q1 = 1.17$, $Mdn = 1.60$, $Q3 = 2.50$) again exhibited

significantly higher levels of diversity fatigue than women ($n = 108$, $Q1 = 1.00$, $Mdn = 1.00$, $Q3 = 1.40$), $p = .002$.

Summary

Results from two very different student samples suggest the scores on the 6-item Diversity Fatigue scale fit the data as a single factor, showed acceptable internal reliability, and demonstrated consistent convergent validity with system-justifying beliefs. Results showed a significant, but not totally overlapping, relationship with system-justifying beliefs and importance of diversity work. Data from sample 2 provided suggestive evidence that diversity fatigue is not simply a manifestation of race-based implicit attitudes. That said, interpreting null results must be considered with caution.

Phase 3: Diversity Fatigue and Responses to a Diversity Intervention

Having established the factor structure and reliability of the Diversity Fatigue scale and documented the selected convergent validity and suggestive evidence of discriminant validity of the survey with student samples, we next turned to replicating results with a faculty sample and testing how the experience of diversity fatigue relates to support for a particular diversity intervention. How can knowing someone's feelings of diversity fatigue provide useful insight into worries about implementing academic diversity initiatives? To answer this question, we tested how diversity fatigue was associated with faculty's motivation for and opinion of a diversity-enhancing classroom intervention using a small, national, sample of biology faculty.

We specifically investigated how diversity fatigue might relate to different dimensions of cost concerns about the diversity activity and explored the strength of associations among the variables. Research on physical fatigue suggests that greater fatigue increases the perception of future effort during decision making (Iodice et al., 2017). Thus, we reasoned that examining associations with perceptions of greater effort or cost concerns would provide support (or not) for our conceptualization of the diversity fatigue construct as a state of weariness to sustain motivation. Drawing from Flake et al. (2015), which defines costs within the classic expectancy-value model of motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) there are four cost concerns 1) task effort (i.e., negative appraisals of the time and amount of work needed to achieve the task), loss of valued alternatives (i.e., what is given up to pursue the task), emotional cost (the psychological stress of doing the task), and outside effort cost (other competing priority tasks). Research with undergraduate students demonstrates that the four cost concerns measured at the start of the semester all negatively correlate with class motivation at the end of the semester as well as students' final grades in the class (Flake et al., 2015).

Finally, we explored the association between diversity fatigue and meritocracy. Meritocracy beliefs assume that rewards, opportunities, and outcomes are based on a distributive process that everyone has equal access to depending on talent and effort. Such beliefs render the very notion of diversity interventions irrelevant because gender, race, sexual orientation, first generation status, and other marginalized identities should, by definition, not matter to success, as long as the person does what is required to achieve (e.g., Slaton, 2015). According to this merit principle, everyone has the same chance to enter into the top of the hierarchy, which is an important distinction from system-justifying beliefs (Son Hing et al., 2011).

However, meritocratic understanding of achievement ignores the structural inequalities built into the very metrics, evaluation tools, and timelines used to determine ability and effort. We predicted a positive relationship between diversity fatigue and meritocracy beliefs.

Method

Procedure and Participants

Forty biology faculty from eight 4-year universities across the US participated as part of a larger program of research testing pedagogical decision making in biology classrooms (Thoman et al., 2021). Participants received a \$100 gift card for their time. Data from participants who self-identified as White were analyzed ($n = 31$) and in that sample they ranged in age from 31 to 75 ($M = 52.1$ years, Median = 50, $SD = 11.4$) with about half (51.7%) identifying as male. Participants completed a pre-interview demographic questionnaire online and then took part in a 60-90 minute, in-person, semi-structured interview (as reported in Thoman et al., 2021). Near the end of the interview, participants were presented with information regarding a diversity-enhancing intervention called the utility value intervention (Harackiewicz et al., 2016). The information highlighted the intervention's effectiveness in closing the achievement gap for underrepresented minority and first-generation college students. The intervention consists of three classroom biology writing assignments that helps students to link course content to personally relevant content (see also: Canning & Harackiewicz, 2015; Hulleman et al., 2010).

Following the interview, participants completed a "post-interview survey." Participants completed the same measures used in Phase 1 including the 6-item Diversity Fatigue Survey and the 2 items measuring the importance of diversity work, the system-justifying beliefs items, and the inclusion concern items. New to this study, participants also rated the following:

Meritocracy Beliefs

The 4-item-measure of Meritocracy (O'Brien & Major, 2005; e.g., "America is an open society where all individuals can achieve higher status").

Implementation Intentions of the Diversity Intervention

Participants rated a single-item measure of their "intentions to implement the intervention," and a single-item measure of their "intention to learn more about the intervention."

Valuation of the Diversity Intervention

Participants rated six items measuring value of the intervention designed just for this study. After conducting factor analysis, these six items representing Eccles' et al. (1983) notions of attainment and utility value loaded onto one factor (e.g., "Including a classroom intervention is useful for my students," "Supporting the needs of diverse students is personally meaningful to me," "I think the classroom intervention is valuable," "Including a classroom intervention is useful for my students").

Cost Concerns

Participants rated the four types of cost concerns associated with implementing the intervention. Items were adapted from Flake et al. (2015). We modified the original items (designed for students in a classroom) into a 9-item instrument with four subscales for task effort (e.g., "For me, adding new assignments just might not be worth the effort"), loss of valued alternatives (e.g., "Doing a classroom intervention takes a lot of time away from other activities that I want to pursue"), emotional cost (e.g., "Doing a classroom intervention would be too stressful"), and outside effort cost (e.g., "I have so many other commitments that I can't put forth the effort needed to revise my class to include an intervention").

Our aim was to examine the relationships among each of the cost concerns with diversity fatigue, and to determine the strength of the association among the variables with intervention intentions and valuation. We also wanted to test whether and how feelings of diversity fatigue were associated with responses to the diversity-enhancing utility value intervention over and above system-justifying beliefs.

Hypothesis 1—Replications and Extensions. We predicted that the 6-item Diversity Fatigue scale would show high reliability and show similar patterns of convergent validity (with system-justifying beliefs constructs) found in Phase 1. We also wanted to replicate the unexpected null relationship with inclusion concerns found in Phase 1. We further expected to replicate the negative relationship between diversity fatigue and ratings of importance of diversity work. We also predicted a positive relationship between diversity fatigue and meritocracy beliefs.

Hypothesis 2: We predicted that higher levels of diversity fatigue would be related to faculty's greater cost concerns about implementing the intervention.

Hypothesis 2A: We predicted that higher levels of faculty's diversity fatigue would be associated with lower valuation of and motivation for implementing the diversity intervention.

Hypothesis 2B: We predicted that faculty's greater cost concerns would be associated with lower valuation of and motivation for implementing the diversity intervention.

Hypothesis 3: We predicted that diversity fatigue would be negatively associated with faculty's motivation for and valuation of the diversity-enhancing intervention, even when controlling for trait levels of system-justifying beliefs.

Results and Discussion

Reliability and Validity

Replicating findings with our student samples, diversity fatigue was very low. As shown in Table 4, all participants fell below the scale's midpoint. Hypothesis 1 was generally confirmed, such that feelings of diversity fatigue were positively related to status legitimacy. Just world beliefs and Protestant work ethic did not significantly correlate with feelings of diversity fatigue. However, the pattern and strength of the relationships were similar to our student samples, suggesting that the small sample size and/or restricted range of diversity fatigue scores contributed to the lack of statistically significant correlations. We also

Table 4
Diversity Fatigue—Correlations Among the Variables for the Faculty Sample

Phase 3 sample 1 (<i>n</i> = 29)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Diversity fatigue	—										
2. Just world beliefs	.33	—									
3. Protestant work ethic	.26	.45*	—								
4. Status legitimacy	.59**	.30	.52*	—							
5. Meritocracy	.52*	.39*	.55**	.75**	—						
6. Inclusion concerns	-.25	-.32*	-.28	-.29	-.32	—					
7. Import. of diversity	-.45*	-.35	-.34	-.52**	-.51**	.48**	—				
8. Task effort cost	.46*	.17	.21	.53*	.31	-.08	-.17	—			
9. LOVA cost	.39*	.29	.24	.26	.13	-.08	-.19	.56**	—		
10. Emotional cost	.25	.26	.16	.19	.08	.02	.10	.60**	.53**	—	
11. Outside effort	.42*	.09	.17	.07	.02	-.09	-.09	.56**	.64**	.53**	—
Mean	1.19	3.12	2.57	1.89	2.89	3.19	3.22	2.74	3.23	1.85	3.04
SD	.31	1.09	.84	.71	1.15	.39	.90	1.31	1.28	.91	1.31
Range	1–2.16	1–5.25	1–4	1–3.75	1–6.5	1–4.4	1.50–5	1–5.67	1–5	1–4.5	1–5.5
Cronbach's alpha	.69	.78	.59	.81	.85	.76	.69	.88	.85	.85	.92

Note. LOVA = Loss of valued alternatives.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$.

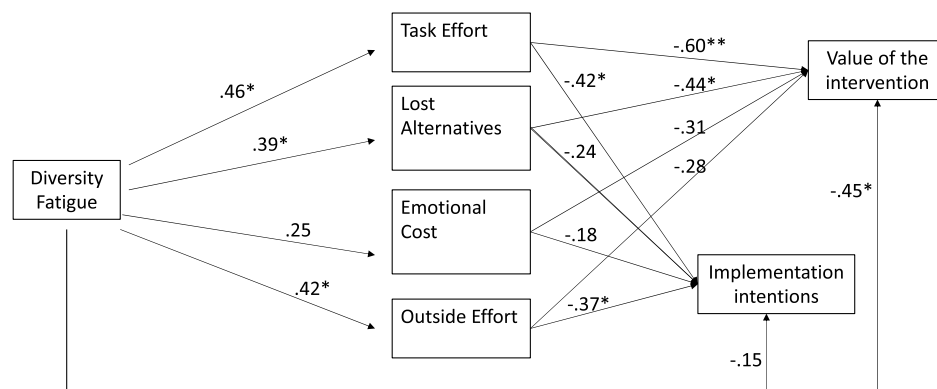
demonstrated that diversity fatigue was significantly positively related to meritocracy beliefs. Replicating Phase 1 data, inclusion concerns showed a non-significant relationship with diversity fatigue; though the underpowered sample and restricted range of diversity fatigue scores also render this null result difficult to interpret. Inclusion concerns therefore either increase as diversity fatigue decreases or are unrelated. Similar to Phase 2, diversity fatigue was significantly negatively correlated, but not completely overlapping with, items measuring importance of diversity work ($r = -.45$). In this sample, men ($n = 15$, $Q1 = 1.00$, $Mdn = 1.00$, $Q3 = 1.33$) exhibited approximately similar levels of diversity fatigue than women ($n = 14$, $Q1 = 1.00$, $Mdn = 1.00$, $Q3 = 1.33$), $p = .980$.

Association With Concerns About the Costs of Implementing a Diversity Intervention

Partially confirming Hypothesis 2, diversity fatigue was also significantly positively associated with all but one of the cost

concerns for implementing the diversity intervention. As shown in Figure 3, those who expressed more diversity fatigue also reported lower valuation of the intervention. Indeed, it appears that task effort concerns reflected the strongest associations, both in terms of the relationship to diversity fatigue and the relationship to valuation of the intervention and implementation intentions. Though our small sample size ruled out mediation testing, we did calculate the indirect effects between diversity fatigue and valuation of the intervention as a function of cost concerns. We examined each independently rather than as a set of four parallel mediators because the cost variables were all highly correlated ($r_s > .52$). Confidence intervals for each test contained zero, but all indirect effect estimates were in the predicted direction and skewed negative. The standardized indirect effect estimates and confidence intervals were: task effort (indirect effect = $-.23$, CI: $\{-.56$ to $.0049\}$) lost alternatives (indirect effect = $-.16$, CI: $\{-.44$ to $.03\}$); outside effort costs (indirect effect = $-.04$, CI: $\{-.35$ to $.10\}$), or emotional costs,

Figure 3
Conceptual Model Presenting Strength of Relationships (Standardized Beta Coefficients) Among Pairs of Variables



Note. $N = 29$ for all estimates involving DF, $N = 31$ for all other estimates. All estimates are standardized coefficients from bivariate correlations.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

(indirect effect = $-.06$, CI: $-.39$ to $.04$). Although the sample is too small to draw any substantive conclusions from these analyses, the pattern suggests that cost perceptions are worthy of future investigations examining processes through which diversity fatigue influences responses to diversity interventions.

Associations With Responses to a Diversity Enhancing Intervention

Our sample size was small, limiting these analyses' ability to achieve statistical significance. Therefore, we used significance testing, magnitude of the raw coefficient, and the consistency of multiple tests to guide our conclusions. The first column of Table 5 presents the pairwise correlations between diversity fatigue and responses towards the intervention, which we expected to be negative. Confirming Hypothesis 3, we see those who express more diversity fatigue consistently express lower intentions to implement, lower intentions to learn more in the future, and express a lower valuation of the intervention.

The Unique Role of Diversity Fatigue

The remaining columns in Table 5 present these same correlations after partialing out the variance associated with system-justifying beliefs. We did this to assess the extent to which diversity fatigue might be informative for understanding the valuation of the diversity-enhancing intervention above and beyond system-justifying beliefs. Results showed that although removing the variance due to status legitimacy beliefs attenuated a few of these correlations, the vast majority of partial correlations were highly similar to the pairwise correlations, suggesting that diversity fatigue scores were incrementally useful for understanding associations with cost concerns about and support for the diversity-enhancing intervention.

Summary

Results illustrated that the Diversity Fatigue scale can be used with a faculty sample and that although diversity fatigue was low overall, even relatively small variability in this measure was

associated with both status legitimacy and meritocracy beliefs, whereas diversity fatigue was potentially different from inclusion concerns. Data also demonstrated the real-world usefulness in measuring feelings of diversity fatigue as it was associated with faculty's valuation of and motivation to adopt a diversity-enhancing classroom activity, such that relatively higher expressions of diversity fatigue were related to lower valuation of the intervention, even when factoring out trait levels of system-justifying beliefs. Moreover, it appeared that task effort concerns, that is, the negative appraisals of the amount of work involved with intervention implementation, were an important variable associated with both diversity fatigue and motivation for and valuation of the intervention.

General Discussion

There is a clear need to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion on our college campuses. Doing so requires attitudinal and behavioral change from the administrators who control admissions and hiring processes, the instructors who shape the learning environment, and the classmates and faculty colleagues with whom people navigate their experience. In this three-phase project, we set out to create a measure for the emotional state of desensitization to diversity interventions; called diversity fatigue. Developing and testing a measure of academic diversity fatigue can generate new insights into dominant group members' feelings about sustaining efforts towards diversity programs in higher education.

In addition to the literature and practical experiences that informed our initial set of items to measure diversity fatigue, statistical evidence from this project refined our definition. We included items to capture the state of emotional and mental weariness towards diversity efforts and initiatives, assuming that such programs require sustained effort from faculty and students who already have many other concerns occupying their time. Diversity fatigue was not intended to reflect ignorance towards the value of diversity, or reflect a trait ideology, but rather overburdened feelings that dampen the response to or enthusiasm for diversity efforts.

Factor analyses and latent profile analysis supported the conclusion that diversity fatigue is more than a simple measure of disregard for the value of diversity. Items gauging the importance of diversity activities and efforts, similar to Plaut et al. (2011) scale, did not load

Table 5

Correlations and Partial Correlations of Diversity Fatigue With Implementation Intentions, Valuation of the Intervention, and Cost Concerns for the Intervention

Survey Variables	Pairwise correlations with diversity fatigue	Partial correlations with diversity fatigue, controlling for		
	<i>r</i>	Just world beliefs	Protestant work ethic	Status legitimacy beliefs
Positive responses to a diversity intervention				
Intentions to implement	-.15	-.16	-.07	.18
Intentions to learn more	-.48**	-.51**	-.50**	-.47*
Perceived value of intervention	-.46**	-.41*	-.40*	-.07
Cost concerns for implementing the intervention				
Task effort cost	.46*	.44*	.45*	.21
LOVA cost	.39*	.31	.33	.30
Emotional cost	.25	.19	.23	.18
Outside effort cost	.42*	.42*	.42*	.47*

Note. $N = 29$ for all correlations. r indicates pairwise correlation between diversity fatigue and the variable listed in each row. Remaining columns present partial correlations, controlling for the variable in the header of each column. LOVA = Loss of valued alternatives.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

onto the same factor as items expressing participants' worries and concerns about diversity programs. Additionally, latent profile analysis shed light on why this is, showing that even people who value diversity efforts experience diversity fatigue ("High DF" in Figure 1). By identifying subgroups within our overall sample, the latent profile analysis illustrated not only that diversity fatigue and valuation of diversity efforts were not synonymous, but also that the relationship between these constructs may not be the same for everyone. Indeed, examining systematic predictors of variation in this relationship across people (e.g., among change agents and allies) is an important next step in this research.

Divergent and convergent validity testing also helped to refine our understanding of the construct. For instance, we found evidence that as bias awareness increased, so too did feelings of diversity fatigue. This suggests that diversity fatigue can occur even among people who acknowledge the existence of prejudice and discrimination. Furthermore, diversity fatigue was not consistently correlated with either inclusion concerns or implicit racial bias, suggesting that diversity fatigue may not be just an expression of implicit biases or lack of enthusiasm for helping underrepresented people fit in. Results suggested that personal beliefs are important for understanding who is likely to express the most diversity fatigue, with system-justifying beliefs in particular showing the strongest, most consistent association with diversity fatigue. We return to this point below.

Finally, our Phase 3 results offer suggestive evidence of the real-world associations among diversity fatigue and faculty's responses to a diversity-enhancing intervention. The more faculty felt diversity fatigue, the less motivated they were to learn more about the intervention and the less likely they were to want to implement it in the future. Similar to effects of physical fatigue on perceptions of future effort in decision making (Iodice et al., 2017), we also learned that diversity fatigue is related to cost concerns about the level of effort involved in implementing the intervention, the worry about the loss of valued alternatives to implementing it, and heightened concerns about competing priorities. These concerns were also associated with motivation for and responses to a diversity intervention. The covariations between diversity fatigue and cost concerns might therefore help direct future research on the mediational role of both when gauging faculty interest in a given diversity initiative.

Limitations and Future Directions

In four studies (one of which was preregistered), we developed and validated the factor structure of the final 6-item Diversity Fatigue survey. Our student samples included White student M-Turk workers who were currently enrolled at a university as well as White undergraduates from two very different university contexts. Our faculty sample was national in representation (though small in numbers). Results therefore remain to be replicated and extended to other contexts and university stakeholders. Replication is especially important because interpreting null results (e.g., regarding inclusion concerns or implicit associations) about what is not related to diversity fatigue is problematic without multiple investigations.

Fortunately, diversity fatigue was quite low in most of the settings we studied. However, even small variations in our measure were important for predicting who is likely to see greater costs to diversity programs. Considering this, it is noteworthy that at least some level of diversity fatigue was felt by at least 38% of those in our faculty sample and by at least 47% in all of our student samples. It is of course possible that our

survey conjured social desirability concerns, and one limitation of our project is not including social desirability measures.

We also limited the scope of our study to dominant group members' feelings of diversity fatigue, with a focus for our scale development on White Americans. This was not done to imply that supporters of diversity efforts who are themselves from underrepresented backgrounds cannot also become fatigued. However, because the processes by which fatigue is felt and influences processes and behaviors are rooted in our lived experiences, status, and privilege, we expect it to be distinct for underrepresented group members. In some ways, feeling diversity fatigue may be seen as a "luxury" of the privileged class who have the option to evade the sustained emotional toll and realities of oppression and structural inequalities (Plaut et al., 2020). Our focus only on people who self-identified as White, of course, means there are many other intersecting and underrepresented identities that we did not uniquely examine (e.g., low income Whites; women who are White and in a STEM field; people who are disabled and White, etc). For example, in half of our samples, White men were significantly higher in diversity fatigue than White women (in the other half, there were no differences), suggesting the importance of considering how people's backgrounds influence their experience of diversity fatigue. Of particular interest may be identifying what factors lead to majority group identification, whether majority and minority group members experience diversity fatigue differently, how an intersectional lens can help best articulate diversity fatigue experiences, and the consequences for teams in which majority and minority members are both contributing to diversity efforts.

Contextual Considerations

The survey was administered within a very general context, and it is unclear if, for example, priming certain diversity programs that are more/less successful on a given campus would change someone's expression of diversity fatigue. Now that we have the measure developed, key questions can be asked and answered about contextual effects. For example, it is possible that length of time at the university (e.g., first year students vs. seniors), type of exposure to diversity initiatives (e.g., direct vs. distal), or even varied experiences with the success of different initiatives, would influence diversity fatigue. Indeed, we do not know if this measure of diversity fatigue misses some variability with individuals having high support for one type of diversity initiative but fatigued by others. Case in point, our correlated residuals in our confirmatory factor analysis suggested that the negative feelings evoked by conversations about diversity may be distinct from negative feelings that stem from generally observing diversity efforts across campus. We hope future research will help unpack the contextual conditions that create or reduce feelings of diversity fatigue, especially as these feelings relate to different cost concerns about the work involved with implementing a diversity-enhancing intervention.

The Origins of Diversity Fatigue

Our survey was tested as a tool for understanding majority group members' feelings of diversity fatigue, and as such, we focused on correlates (such as system-justifying beliefs), but the developmental pathway and antecedents of diversity fatigue are not yet known. As mentioned at the outset, we assume that similar to physiological fatigue, diversity fatigue can be either acute or chronic.

This assumption remains to be tested and, now that the measure is more solidified, is a great question for future research. We thus see an important next step in this research as understanding diversity fatigue as an outcome. In what ways might messaging about diversity create diversity fatigue or reduce it? Does diversity fatigue come about from one high profile initiative that fails to produce a positive outcome? Does chronic diversity fatigue set in when a given institution is persistent in espousing the value of diversity but insufficient in enacting diversity? Is diversity fatigue situation specific or does it generalize across situations? Our results, for example, point to a positive relationship with bias awareness. Perhaps (as one reviewer suggested), people who are tuned into their own prejudice behaviors and are thus more “bias aware” are also more likely to experience diversity fatigue because they do not feel like these initiatives have helped them address their own biases.

In each of our samples, diversity fatigue was associated with system-justifying beliefs, and diversity fatigue was also associated with faculty responses towards a diversity intervention beyond what could be explained by system-justifying beliefs. Research shows that system-justifying beliefs are negatively associated with supportive measures for historically underrepresented groups, such as affirmative action programs and legislation against hate crimes (Mallett et al., 2011; Phelan & Rudman, 2011). Perhaps system-justifying beliefs increase susceptibility to diversity fatigue experiences. A central question then for future research about the origins, is to test if diversity fatigue is more likely to emerge among people who hold more system-justifying beliefs, and whether this happens under certain conditions. The assertion that diversity fatigue may have some origins within a system-justifying motivation presents other potential hypotheses, for example, diversity fatigue could be heightened when individuals feel dependent on an inequitable system, particularly one which is perceived as inevitable or slow to change (Blanchar & Eidelman, 2013), like academia.

That said, diversity fatigue in our study was also associated with faculty attitudes towards diversity programs beyond what could be explained by system-justifying beliefs, suggesting a unique contribution of diversity fatigue. Though our data did not allow for such a clear-cut test, we would encourage future studies with sufficiently large sample sizes to test the implication that diversity fatigue mediates the relationship between people’s belief systems and the actions they ultimately take to support or dismiss diversity efforts. Such (in)actions, of course, may be one pathway through which the status quo is (unintentionally or not) reproduced.

Practical Implications

Preliminary evidence from our faculty sample demonstrated that diversity fatigue was useful for predicting White faculty’s lower support for a diversity-enhancing classroom intervention. Such results suggest, for example, that dominant-group members’ diversity fatigue may lead to poor implementation that can render them ineffective and compound feelings of fatigue. Practically, results suggest that diversity fatigue is unlikely to be reduced simply by further extolling the value of diversity. Our latent profile analysis provides initial evidence that people who are “pro-diversity efforts” can still experience diversity fatigue. This suggests the unique possibility that diversity fatigue could be related to whether and how change agents and allies are motivated (or not) to take action to change the status quo, confront discrimination, and take responsibility

for organizational change (Sawyer & Thoroughgood, 2020). Our results suggest that the negative appraisals about the amount of effort involved need to be addressed. A critical step will therefore be to help students and faculty articulate more precisely from where their concerns about diversity efforts stem, and the extent to which those concerns can be reframed more positively.

Although we limited our investigation of diversity fatigue to its existence within academia, this link may also be relevant to other settings. If diversity fatigue requires a combination of sustained pressure to support diversity programs with waning motivation to do so, it is likely that this phenomenon will not be as salient in organizations where diversity efforts are driven more by ephemeral individual efforts than sustained organizational change efforts. We encourage future work in other organizations to consider and test for diversity fatigue.

Situating Diversity Fatigue

Our goal was to create a survey tool useful for assessing the microlevel psychological experiences of diversity fatigue within academia. We would be remiss, however, to not explicitly warn against the potential misuse of measuring such a construct. Identifying the existence of diversity fatigue must not justify the reduction of social change efforts. As it is, diversity initiatives are too often designed to appease the majority with an emphasis on the benefits for dominant groups (Byrd, 2019); with the goal to make interventions palatable to those at the top of the hierarchy (Plaut et al., 2020). To be sure, such narrow orientations and incomplete solutions to oppression may be more prone to inducing diversity fatigue, but the remediation of inequality must continue.

An individual’s experience of diversity fatigue is necessarily situated within current systems of institutional power, and as such, unequal power relations and other levels of social power (interpersonal, cultural, structural) cannot be ignored. To consider and measure diversity fatigue, is to recognize that to feel diversity fatigue is itself a form of power. As we begin to unpack the complexity of diversity fatigue as it relates to power, relationality, and social justice (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016), we cannot lose sight of the deeply entrenched macrolevel connections between diversity-enhancing efforts within academia and dismantling injustice within all our social and political institutions (Ruggs et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Diversity fatigue in academia is a state variable that describes variation in the extent to which someone experiences a diminished response to or feelings of weariness toward diversity efforts that improve the experience of underrepresented people. We designed and tested a 6-item survey to measure diversity fatigue as experienced by dominant group members in higher education. Results illustrated the satisfactory reliability and validity of the measure and point out that diversity fatigue can be experienced even by people who generally value diversity efforts. Feelings of diversity fatigue are useful for understanding faculty’s responses to a diversity-enhancing intervention and are associated with the task effort concerns involved with implementation. Measuring (and addressing) diversity fatigue may prove valuable to the successful implementation of diversity-enhancing interventions. It is critical that universities remain vigilant and accountable to create an inclusive and diverse learning and working environment and identifying a barrier such as diversity fatigue may help ensure more positive, sustained, outcomes.

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