SPEAKING UP: APPLYING THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR TO
Bystander Intervention in Racism

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Because racism remains a significant issue in society, and many victims of racism do not speak up for themselves when faced with racism, it is important to explore how witnesses to racist events may react and intervene upon observing racism toward others. Thus, the current study explored how participants (bystanders) reacted verbally to racist comments made by a confederate during a partner activity, as well as how participants discussed their reactions in post-interviews. Forty college students participated in the study, and three of the participants verbally intervened upon hearing the racist statements. Ajzen’s theory of planned behavior was utilized as a framework, and examination of the results indicated that components of the theory as well as social constructions of racism and appropriateness of intervention behaviors affect intervention outcomes. Theoretical, methodological, and practical implications, as well as suggestions for future research are included.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At a time when America has just elected its first nonwhite president and confirmed the first Latino Supreme Court judge, some perceive the country to be in a post-racism era (Jackson, 2009; Miah, 2009). However, although many people in the U.S. would like to believe that racism is all but in the past in our country, current events, statistics, and personal narratives paint a different picture (Jackson, 1999; Kocieniewski, 1999; Parks, 2008; Prins, 2007; Watt, 1999). Racism remains an undoubtedly significant issue in today’s society (Entman, 1990; Leader, Mullen, & Rice, 2009; Winslow, 2009).

Researchers (Brondolo, Brady, et al., 2008) have defined racism as “the beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation” (p. 151). In a recent poll published by CNN, in which respondents were 703 non-Hispanic whites and 328 blacks, 43 % of white respondents and 48 % of black respondents said they knew someone that they would consider racist, and approximately half of all black respondents claimed to have personally experienced discrimination (“Poll: Most,” 2006). However, few Americans, approximately one in eight, consider themselves racist, and, when polled, only 18 % of whites considered racism a “very serious” problem in America (“Poll: Most,” 2006, para. 5). Researchers and news outlets report numerous accounts of racism in their publications. For example, CNN reported an incident in September 2009 in which a swim club in Philadelphia was found to have cancelled a contract and revoked the swimming privileges of a daycare center simply because the majority of the children were African-American and Latino (“Commission Penalizes,” 2009). The children reported that other pool members made racial comments toward them, and reports indicated that
some white members were concerned that the minority children might steal things or hurt their

Moreover, reporters have published stories of police officers targeting African-American
and Latino drivers when patrolling traffic (Jackson, 1999; Kocieniewski, 1999), white parents
removing their children from schools with high minority composition causing instances of re-
segregation (Prins, 2007), and public beatings of minorities, incited by race, in which the
attackers shouted racial epithets (“Man Held,” 2009; O’Grady, 2009). Additionally, “[a] three-
year undercover investigation by the National Fair Housing Alliance found that real estate agents
steered whites away from integrated neighborhoods and steered blacks toward predominantly
black neighborhoods” (“Poll: Most,” 2006, para. 14). However, the brief aforementioned
examples fail to include daily instances of racism that regularly go unreported, as they are
sometimes subtle, but existent nonetheless. Indeed tales of discrimination in the workplace,
schools and universities (Parks, 2008), public restaurants, and retail stores frequently go
unnoticed by those not directly involved.

The effects of racism are widespread among races and ethnicities in the U.S. Stories of
racism span all races, including, but not limited to Native Americans, Latinos, Caucasians,
Asians, and African-Americans (Chavers, 2009; Chou, 2008; O’Grady, 2009; Winslow, 2009).
Race “denotes groups defined by inherited somatic characteristics, descent relations, and
continental origins” (Shelby, 2009, p. 130). This then includes individuals who are simply
perceived as foreign, and thus discriminated against by those with intolerance toward foreigners.
Though racism is not specific to one race, certain events may bring about a more targeted wave
of discrimination. For example, Latino population growth has surged in recent decades, and in
the 2000 census, U.S. Latinos surpassed the African-American population in number becoming
the “largest ethnic minority in the U.S.” (Kilty & Vidal de Haymes, 2000; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz, 2008, p. 2). Perhaps because of these changes, along with increased political debate concerning illegal immigration, and a perception by some that all immigrants are “illegal,” reports of racism involving Latinos as targets has increased (O’Grady, 2009). Between 2003 and 2007, “the FBI reported that hate crimes against Hispanics had increased by…40 percent…” (O’Grady, 2009). Thus, it is evident that further exploration is necessary to understand racism involving Latinos, a population increasing in number and presence.

Individuals of Asian descent also experience racism (Chou, 2008; Le, 2009). Le (2009) noted “While Asian Americans ‘only’ make up about 5% of the U.S.’s population (as of 2008), [they] are one of the fastest growing racial/ethnic groups (in terms of percentage increase) in the U.S.” (“Purpose,” para. 1). Further, scholars (Chou, 2008; Le, 2009) have noted how many instances of racism towards Asians and Asian Americans stem from misunderstandings, stereotypes, and a belief that all Asians are foreigners or from the same country. Moreover, Asians are known to many as the “model minority,” which “refers to ethnic minority whose members are more likely to achieve higher success than other minority groups, especially in economic advantage, academic success, family stability, low crime involvement, etc.” (Chou, 2008, p. 219). However, Chou this title often serves to cause Asians to be excluded among minorities (Chou, 2008).

Beyond problematic stereotypes, Asians also experience other common forms of racism. For example, recently a Texas legislator, when discussing voter identification, stated that Asians should change their names to ones that are more “American” so that they would be easier to deal with for Americans (Le, 2009). Additionally, a recent incident was reported at Tufts University in which a drunken college student harassed a group of Asian students, both verbally and
physically, and yelled racial slurs at them in a dormitory (Le, 2009). Thus, it is evident that, further study concerning Asian racism is warranted.

The effects of racism reach beyond what some might expect. Studies have shown that racism is far from harmless. Researchers (Krieger, Smith, Naishadham, Hartman, & Barbeau, 2005) found that victims of racism indicate higher levels of psychological distress. Moreover, scholars have noted racism’s correlation with other negative well-being and health outcomes including possible correlations to higher stress levels (Lopez-Kinney, 2002), higher levels of behavioral risk, environmental risk, and worry in adolescent mental health clients (Surko et al., 2005). Racism may also explain disparities in heart disease as it has been found to negatively affect nocturnal blood pressure recovery (Brondolo, Libby, et al., 2008).

Thus, racism is a seemingly frequent occurrence with tremendous effects for its victims, and it is important to explore ways of combating it. Because many victims do not speak out for themselves, either due to fear of the antagonist, feelings of powerlessness, belief that speaking out will not motivate change, or an effect of desensitization due to frequency of the experience, alternate strategies to rival racism become necessary (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005). Furthermore, because many instances of racism occur in public where bystanders may witness the behavior, one possible strategy to address and challenge racism is through bystander intervention. Bystander intervention is when individuals “who see…[a negative behavior] occurring but are not directly involved in the incident…take action to stop it or prevent future incidents” (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005, p. 288). Moreover, these intervention behaviors are perceived as helping behaviors or efforts to provide assistance (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005).
Researchers have studied bystander intervention has in numerous contexts, including emergency situations (Darley & Latané, 1968; Smith, Vanderbilt, & Callen, 1973), sexual harassment (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005), crisis situations (Carlson, 2008; Levine & Thompson, 2004), bullying situations (Weisbein, 2007), and an array of others. Much of this research seeks to research better understand bystander intervention as a behavior, to discover what variables affect intervention, and to determine what motivates bystanders to intervene (Bickman, 1975; Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005; Carlson, 2008; Darley & Latané, 1968; Fritzsche, Finkelstein, & Penner, 2000; Horowitz, 1971; Levine & Crowther, 2008; Levine & Thompson, 2004; Smith et al., 1973; Weisbein, 2007). In order to promote bystander intervention as a viable means of confronting instances of racism, it is important to better understand the intervention behaviors and what motivates or inhibits them.

Although scholars have studied the general topic of bystander intervention relatively extensively (Bickman, 1975; Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005; Carlson, 2008; Darley & Latané, 1968; Fritzsche, Finkelstein, & Penner, 2000; Horowitz, 1971; Levine & Crowther, 2008; Levine & Thompson, 2004; Smith et al., 1973; Weisbein, 2007), and a few scholars have studied the specific topic of bystander intervention in racism (Citron, Chein, and Harding, 1950; Stukas, 2006), nearly all of the scholarship on these topics has been within the field of psychology. However, bystander intervention necessarily involves communicative behavior, intervention requires an individual to utilize some form of verbal and/or nonverbal communication. Therefore, it is appropriate that an investigation into bystander intervention be conducted with particular focus on communication behaviors. Questions concerning bystander intervention involve whether or not individuals will communicate and what types of communication they will use (e.g., specific communicative messages). Moreover, and perhaps
more importantly, both the topic of racism as well as the determination of the appropriateness of intervention behaviors involve inherently socially constructed views (Vygotsky, 1978). A social construct is one created within a particular group to generate shared meaning, and in the case of perceptions/definitions of racism as well as bystander intervention in racism and what communicative behaviors to utilize in such interventions, individuals rely heavily on societal constructs and influences to determine shared meanings (Vygotsky, 1978). This applies to experiences that can symbolize communication considered to be racist. Therefore, it is important to study bystander intervention from a communication perspective and to investigate the distinctly communicative aspects of bystander intervention in order to better understand the behavior.

In today’s society there seems to be a general public understanding that many, if not most, people perceive racism as negative. This becomes relatively evident considering that, in a national poll, nearly half of all respondents claimed to perceive racism as, at least, a “somewhat serious” problem, but only 12-13% of respondents admitted to considering themselves racist (“Poll: Most,” 2006). Considering this negative framing of racism in society, it stands to reason that individuals who observe racism and are faced with the decision of whether they should intervene may take into consideration not only their own feelings concerning racism and intervention but also the opinions, or shared meaning, of certain relevant others in their lives. Because of this, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) may serve as a useful framework to study bystander intervention situated in communicative events embedded in racist acts. TPB was developed by Ajzen (1991) to explain how an individual’s behavioral intention is the strongest predictor of behavior. Behavioral intention is a function of three basic determinants: “the individual’s positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior (attitude toward the
behavior)…the person’s perception of the social pressures to perform or not perform the behavior (subjective norm),” and an individual’s perceptions of what may help or hinder his or her ability to perform the behavior and how strong these factors are (control beliefs) (Greene & Banerjee, 2008, p. 3). Given that racism is highly dependent upon socially constructed views, individuals might consider their own feelings when deciding whether or not to intervene as well as consider what they believe other relevant individuals would want them to do (Vygotsky, 1978; Weisbein, 2007).

Although scholars have explored certain aspects of bystander intervention in racism, many aspects of the behavior remain unstudied (Stukas, 2006). Previous studies have focused on racism occurring between whites and blacks, and have often failed to explore how the target’s race and personal characteristics preceding the racist acts may affect intervention (Stukas, 2006). Moreover, effects of the severity of the racist behavior on bystander intervention warrant additional study, and much of the current research has both failed to avoid priming participants for the subject of racism. In past studies, participants somehow knew during or prior to the experiments or studies that the purpose of the studies involved racism, and prior studies depended primarily on quantitative methodologies (Darley & Latané, 1968; Fritzsche et al., 2000; Levine & Thompson, 2004; Smith et al., 1973; Stukas, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to determine whether individuals would intervene when faced with racist comments, what types of intervention behaviors individuals might exhibit, and, to apply TPB as a framework for exploring what factors promote (motivate) and/or inhibit intervention. Specifically, the aim was to determine how personal attitudes combined with perceived social norms of relevant others and control beliefs affect intervention. Moreover, the study aimed to determine how, if at all, the race and personal characteristics of the target of
racism affects bystander intervention, and in what ways, if any, severity of the racist statements affects bystander intervention. Furthermore, this study employed a mixed methods approach in which an experiment and subsequent interviews were used in order to provide a more realistic determination of behaviors and motivations.

In chapter 2, relevant literature concerning bystander intervention and TPB is discussed. Chapter 3 includes details of the methods for the study. Chapter 4 includes a report of the results of the study. And finally, in chapter 5, theoretical and other implications are discussed, a conclusion is included, and limitations and suggestions for future research are reported.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter 2 includes a review of relevant literature, including theory of planned behavior (TPB) and bystander intervention literature. Additionally, research specific to bystander intervention in the context of racism is discussed, and research questions for the current study are introduced.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Overview of Theory

Ajzen’s (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB) evolved from the theorist’s earlier work with his colleague Fishbein involving the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Though the theories are similar, studies have indicated that TPB, when compared to TRA, improves the prediction of both behavioral intent and actual behavior due to its consideration of additional dimensions (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). According to TPB, behavioral intention is the strongest predictor of human behavior, and there are three main components involved in the determination of behavioral intention: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs (Ajzen, 1991).

Behavioral beliefs involve an individual’s perception concerning the expected outcomes of a specific behavior as well as the individual’s evaluation of those likely outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). These behavioral beliefs then lead to a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward that specific behavior. Normative beliefs involve an individual’s perception of what relevant others believe and expect concerning the behavior and the individual’s “motivation to comply with these expectations” (Ajzen, 2006, para. 1). Thus, normative beliefs produce an individual’s “perceived social pressure or subjective norm” (para. 1). Finally, control beliefs include an
individual’s perceptions of “factors that may facilitate or impede performance of the behavior and the perceived power of these factors” (para. 1). Control beliefs then lead to what Ajzen (1991) referred to as perceived behavioral control. When attempting to measure control beliefs, a researcher should seek to understand an individual’s perception as to whether he or she is capable of performing the behavior (Ajzen, 2006). This could involve questions concerning how difficult an individual perceives a task to be or how “possible” performing the behavior is (Ajzen, 2006). These three components taken together, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, determine an individual’s behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991).

Generally speaking, the more positive an individual’s attitude and subjective norm toward a behavior is, and the more behavioral control an individual perceives toward a behavior, the more likely the individual is to intend to perform the behavior (Azjen, 2006). When perceived behavioral control is relatively accurate, behavioral intention, in turn, predicts actual behavior. However, if an individual lacks sufficient control to carry out a behavior, actual control then leads to the prediction of behavior. Figure 1 depicts TPB in the form of a model (Ajzen, 2006).

Thus, researchers have utilized TPB to study numerous behaviors including sexual health and condom use (Albarracin, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile, 2001; Elwood, Greene, & Carter, 2003), consumer attitudes and market research (Ajzen, 2008; Babrow, Black, & Tiffany, 1990; Pierro, Mannetti, & Feliziola, 1999), alcohol and drug use (Bennett & Clatworthy, 1999; McMillan & Conner, 2003a; McMillan & Conner, 2003b), physical activity and exercise (Biddle, Goudas, & Page, 1994; Chatzisarantis, & Hagger, 2008), blood and organ donation and general health behaviors (Conner, & Norman, 1994; Farquharson, Noble, Barker, & Behrens,
2004; Giles, & Cairns, 1995; Hyde & White, 2009), driving behaviors (Elliott, Armitage, & Baughan, 2007), and much more.

Though TPB has been widely utilized in psychology research as well as marketing research, much less research has been conducted in the communication studies discipline. However, there have been studies concerning health communication, such as research conducted by Brann and Sutton (2009) and Wang (2009) concerning health campaign design and college students’ attitudes concerning discussion of smoking related behaviors. Moreover, Jang and Yoo (2009) utilized TPB to study how attitudes toward communication within romantic relationships, perceptions of one’s significant other’s attitude, and perception of the effectiveness of communication affected topic avoidance in relationships. Other communication researchers have utilized TPB to study punctuation use in instant messaging (Zhou, 2006), voting behaviors of young adults (Avery, 2007), how discrimination and health care workers’ perceptions concerning race could affect communication with patients (Munday & Silk, 2008), and how race, specifically in Latino families, may affect communication concerning organ donation (Siegel, Alvaro, Lac, Crano, & Dominick, 2008).

On the matter of the application of TPB to the bystander intervention context, TPB seems extraordinarily well-suited to act as a framework for bystander intervention research in general, in that many of the factors in past research that scholars perceived as affecting bystander intervention seem capable of being explained by the dimensions of TPB. Moreover, TPB’s inclusion of the social influences involved in intent lends itself to considerations of the effects social norms have on communication, including communication involved in bystander intervention in racism. However, only one bystander intervention study, to the author’s knowledge, has utilized TPB as a framework (Weisbein, 2007). This study involved young
children’s bystander intervention tendencies in bullying contexts, and the author found that the predictors of whether children would intervene depended on their attitudes toward helping bullied friends and their perceptions concerning how others would react to their reporting the bullying (Weisbein, 2007).

Bystander Intervention

A bystander is someone who witnesses an event or behavior but is not directly involved (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005). Much of the research involving bystander intervention begins with the desire to understand what makes an individual choose whether or not to intervene in an emergency. Often, this question has stemmed from occurrences in society. Such is the case for much of the seminal work conducted by Darley and Latané (1968; Latané & Darley, 1970). One of the most famously cited incidences concerning bystander behavior is the murder of Kitty Genovese (Darley & Latané, 1968; Rosenthal, 1964). In 1964, Genovese was stabbed to death as others watched and listened from their apartments while she cried out for help over the course of about 30 minutes that it took for her assailant to kill her (Darley & Latané, 1968; Rosenthal, 1964). Horrifyingly, at least 38 people witnessed the street attack from their apartment windows, yet none of them attempted to intervene, offer her aid of any sort, or even call the police (Darley & Latané, 1968; Rosenthal, 1964).

Following this perplexing incident, Darley and Latané (1968; Latané & Darley, 1970) conducted a series of experiments to investigate bystander intervention and apathy, especially in emergencies. To clarify, an emergency in this context is defined as a situation “in which help is needed or absolutely required” immediately or urgently (Austin, 1979, p. 2110), there is a “threat of harm or actual harm,” “[l]ife, well-being, or property is in danger,” and the event is rare or
unusual and unforeseen (Latané & Darley, 1970, pp. 29-30). Moreover, intervention involves a helping behavior or an attempt to provide assistance (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005).

The major findings of Darley and Latané’s (1968; Latané & Darley, 1970) work included the claim that situational factors have the greatest effect on the likelihood of bystander intervention, namely, the bystander effect. In this, the researchers posited that as the number of individuals in a group of bystanders increases, the likelihood of a bystander intervening decreases. The bystander effect involves the ability to diffuse responsibility when others witness an emergency along side of you, as individuals wonder why it should be their responsibility to act, as opposed to others present, and this finding proved significant in numerous studies (Darley & Latané, 1968; Latané & Darley, 1970).

Latané and Darley (1970) also created an intervention model, called the decision tree model, which depicted how bystanders make the decision to intervene (Latané and Darley, 1970). The model consisted of five steps: 1) noticing something wrong, 2) deciding the event is an emergency, 3) deciding on degree of personal responsibility, 4) deciding the specific mode of intervention, and 5) implementing the intervention (the stage in which important communicative action is likely to occur). The researchers noted that in step 4, during which a bystander decides the specific mode of intervention, bystanders may choose direct intervention, in which they intervene in the situation itself, or they may choose detour or indirect intervention, during which individuals seek out help or report the situation to a relevant authority (Latané and Darley, 1970).

However, certain situations affect specific aspects of the model. First, in a concept Latané and Darley (1970) referred to as “cycling,” bystanders may execute the decision making steps out of order, the steps may overlap, and bystanders may “cycle back and forth” between steps, thus greatly affecting decisions in the remaining stages (p. 122). Second, in “blocking,” a
bystander may never come to a decision regarding whether or not to intervene. However, the scholars noted that this indecision should not be taken as a decision not to act due to a lack of empathy or a state of alienation, but rather, the bystander is “confused and conflicted” (p. 122). Finally, in “commitment,” Latané and Darley noted that for some bystanders, the longer they struggle with indecision, the more likely they are to commit to indecision or inaction. As time progresses, intervention becomes more difficult due to bystanders’ “commit[ment]…to an interpretation of the situation which is inconsistent with [their] later [intervening]” (p. 122).

The seminal work of Latané and Darley spurred countless additional studies in the area of bystander intervention. The majority of the studies conducted involved exploring what affects bystander intervention in three main areas: bystander characteristics, victim characteristics, and situational factors.

**Bystander Characteristics**

One of the major bystander characteristics that affects bystander intervention is the perception of costs and benefits (Austin, 1979; Fritzche et al., 2000; Latané & Darley, 1970; Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981). Austin (1979) stated that costs can be both physical and/or psychological. Possible costs include embarrassment, feelings of guilt or shame for not intervening (both from others and from self) (Austin, 1979; Fritzche et al., 2000), fear for personal safety (Austin, 1979), fear of harassment (verbal or otherwise) (Carlson, 2008), fear that intervening may be a violation of the victim’s privacy (Austin, 1979), a fear of one’s masculinity being questioned (Carlson, 2008; Tice & Baumeister, 1985), the fear that one may not have the ability to help (lack of competence) (Cramer, McMaster, Bartell, & Dragna, 1988; Latané & Darley, 1970), and the fear of inducing conflict (Latané & Darley, 1970). For example, Carlson (2008), in her study involving male bystander intervention in gang rape, public fights, and
domestic violence, found that, for many men, the fear of being seen as a “wuss,” or as less than a man, far outweighs the importance of intervention. Moreover, Latané and Darley (1970) expanded the notion of bystanders’ fear of embarrassment by noting that many bystanders feel they should appear calm and collected and do not want to overreact.

In regards to perceived benefits, bystanders consider intervention in terms of their self-interest (Austin, 1979). Possible benefits for a bystander who intervenes include: feeling like a good person (Latané & Darley, 1970), gaining praise and reinforcement (Berkowitz, 1987), feeling accomplished (Latané & Darley, 1970), and improvement of mood (Cunningham, Steinburg, & Grev, 1980). Latané and Darley (1970) noted that oftentimes bystanders will only choose to intervene if they perceive the benefits to outweigh the costs.

Other general bystander characteristics that may affect intervention include age (Latané & Darley, 1970), sex (Austin, 1979), physical condition (Latané & Darley, 1970), group membership (such as involvement in a community service organization) (Levine & Crowther, 2008), general disposition (how calm and clear they are) (Latané & Darley, 1970), empathetic concern (Lord, 1997), mood (Lord, 1997), the size of the community in which they grew up (Latané & Darley, 1970), and social class (Latané & Darley, 1970). To clarify, according to Lord (1997), researchers have found that bystanders who are in a good mood are more likely to intervene because their positive mood enables them to focus on the benefits of intervening. Lord (1997) further stated that researchers have termed this consistent finding “the warm glow of good will.” Bystander characteristics, specifically bystanders’ perceptions of costs and benefits, are important in the present study, as one research goal is to determine what factors promote or inhibit intervention.
Victim Characteristics

Researchers have also studied how certain characteristics of a victim may affect bystander intervention, though this area of research is far less common than that of bystander characteristics. Victim characteristics that may affect bystander intervention include sex of the victim (Austin, 1979; Lewin, 1977), how much the victim “deserves” help (Austin, 1979), victims’ nonverbal cues (DeJong, Marber, & Shaver, 1980; Marsh & Ambady, 2007), victims’ verbal cues (Warner, 1977), and victim race (Lewin, 1977). To expand, DeJong et al. (1980) found that a victim’s facial expressions during an emergency, such as expressions of fear or sadness, may affect bystander intervention. Further, what victims say to let others know that they are in a crisis may affect intervention (Warner, 1977). Additionally, Latané and Darley (1970) also discussed the importance of how much a victim seems to deserve help, though this may, in large part, depend upon a bystander’s perception of the situation at hand and the characteristics of the victim, and Austin (1979) furthered this discussion to include the issue of how well a victim portrays his or her need for help. Finally, Lewin (1977) studied how race of the victim may affect bystander intervention in a study in which a confederate purposely gave a subway passenger, who was also a confederate, incorrect information about the subway. The researcher (Lewin, 1977) studied how race of the passenger, whether black or white, affected bystanders’ likelihood of intervening to correct the misinformation. Lewin found that race did sometimes affect bystander intervention. Thus, victim characteristics, specifically race and perceptions surrounding the race of the victim, are important for the present study, as one of the research goals is to determine how the victim’s race may affect the likelihood of bystander intervention in racism.
Situational Factors

The final types of variables that may affect bystander intervention are situational factors. Situational factors may differ based upon whether bystanders witness an event in a group or alone. If bystanders are in a group, situational factors that may affect bystander intervention include group identity or characteristics (Horowitz, 1971; Levine & Crowther, 2008), how well group members know each other (Rutkowski, Grumer, & Romer, 1983), and the behavior and reaction of other group members (Smith, Vanderbilt, & Callen, 1973). As previously mentioned, many of these factors involve variables of the bystander effect.

Additional situational factors that may affect bystander intervention, whether bystanders are in a group or alone, include severity of the situation (degree of harm to the victim/whether the situation is perceived as an emergency) (Ashton & Severy, 1976; Austin, 1979), established social norms (Austin, 1979), degree of uncertainty (Austin, 1979), the likelihood that the bystander will see the victim again (Gottleib & Carver, 1979), where the event occurs (Latané & Darley, 1970), arousal of interest (which also involves severity) (Ashton & Severy, 1976), the relationship between the victim and the bystander (Gottleib & Carver, 1979), and the level of similarity between the victim and the bystander (Suedfeld, Bochner, & Wnek, 1972).

In particular, severity of a situation, has proven to be a major factor affecting bystander intervention (Ashton & Severy, 1976; Piliavin, Rodin, & Piliavin, 1969). Some researchers (Piliavin et al., 1969) have found that the more severe a situation seems, the more likely a bystander is to intervene. Others (Ashton & Severy, 1976) hypothesized (though findings were inconsistent) that the trend is more like an inverted-U, in which bystander intervention is unlikely in low and high severity situations but relatively likely in moderately severe or ambiguous situations. Moreover, researchers (Gottleib & Carver, 1980) have found that if a
bystander anticipates future interaction with a victim, the bystander is more likely to intervene. Similarly, if a bystander knows a victim prior to the intervention event, as opposed to situations involving strangers, the bystander is likely to intervene (Gottleib & Carver, 1980). Further, how much the event arouses interest in the bystander affects bystander intervention (Ashton & Severy, 1976), and bystanders who perceive similar personal attributes to victims are more likely to intervene (Suedfeld et al., 1972). Finally, bystanders look to perceived social norms given the specific situation in order to determine whether or not they should intervene (Austin, 1979). Thus situational factors, specifically severity and perception of social norms, are important to the present study, as part of the research goal is to determine how severity of racism and perception of norms may affect intervention.

**Bystander Intervention Models**

There have been several researchers who have created models in an attempt to better understand bystander intervention. One, as previously mentioned, was created by Latané and Darley (1970), referred to as the decision tree model of helping. Also previously discussed was the J. A. Piliavin and Piliavin model, which was later revised with Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, and Clark (1981). In this model, named the arousal: cost-reward model of bystander intervention, the researchers claimed that when a bystander witnesses a victim in distress, the bystander experiences physiological arousal, which, due to discomfort, the bystander seeks to reduce (Fritzsche et al., 2000). To determine the course of action to reduce the arousal, the bystander weighs costs and rewards (Fritzsche et al., 2000). An alternative explanation of bystander intervention was conceptualized in Staub’s (1978) Person X Situation interactive approach. In this model, the researcher posited that bystanders’ behavior and personality are affected and moderated by the situation, thereby linking intervention acts with social norms (Austin, 1979;
Louis, Mavor, & Terry, 2003). Staub (1978) utilized studies such as the Milgram experiments to illustrate how individuals’ behavior and personality may change in certain situations due to norms such as obedience to authority (Louis et al., 2003). Additional models include Schwartz and Clausen’s (1970) extension to Latané and Darley’s work in which the researchers added ascription of responsibility, bystander competence, and information appropriate for action as important determinants for bystander intervention. According to Austin (1979), these models generally utilize the importance of cost and responsibility in determining bystander intervention.

*Intervention Beyond Emergencies*

Generally speaking, much of the aforementioned research involved bystander intervention in the case of emergencies, as this is where the studies of bystander intervention, in large part, began, and have continued throughout the years. However, far less research has been conducted concerning bystander intervention in situations that do not fit the definition of an emergency, in which no individual or property is facing physical harm. Non-emergency studies include one in which researchers studied whether or not bystanders would help individuals find a lost contact lens in a grocery store (Murray & Vincenzo, 1976), and experiments involving whether bystanders would intervene when they observed others give misinformation regarding subway directions (Lewin, 1977). However, still less research has been conducted concerning bystander intervention in more serious situations, much like the context of racism, that would not be considered emergencies.

One example of such a situation is sexual harassment. Although some instances of sexual harassment may not involve immediate physical harm to an individual, the problem is one of a serious nature that may, if witnessed by others, warrant bystander intervention. In a study, Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly (2005) investigated what they termed observer intervention in
sexual harassment (SH) in an organizational context. In their study, the researchers developed their own typology of intervention behaviors, in which intervention behaviors are categorized by the level of the observer’s involvement (high vs. low), which refers to “the degree to which individuals immerse themselves in the SH incident,” (p. 290) and the immediacy of intervention, (high vs. low), which “distinguishes cases in which intervention occurs in a current situation (high immediacy) from interventions that take place at a later point in time (low immediacy),” (p. 289). Further, Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly (2005) utilized Latané and Darley’s (1970) decision tree framework and applied it to the context of SH in order to create their own model of observer intervention in SH. In this, the authors (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005) included numerous possible factors in motivation for intervention as well as factors promoting and inhibiting intervention, including ambiguity of the situation, level of moral intensity, display of concern by others, relationship of target and harasser, observers’ organizational role, identity groups of target and harasser, whether the observer has witnessed others intervene in SH, belief that the SH will occur again, perceptions of harm, beliefs concerning the target’s desire for assistance, and perceived costs and benefits.

*Bystander Intervention in Racism*

Although not considered an emergency situation, as in many cases it does not involve the threat of physical harm, few researchers have conducted studies specifically concerning the serious issue of bystander intervention in racism. First, Citron, Chein, and Harding (1950), in their seminal work, conducted a series of studies concerning the most effective ways that bystanders, referred to as “answerers” by the research team, could answer racist or bigoted remarks. In their research, Citron et al. (1950) sought to determine what type of remarks and what manner of delivery of said remarks had the greatest chance of affecting the bigot, other
bystanders, and the answerer, in that the bigot might reconsider publicly expressing racist statements, other bystanders would lose the desire to endorse the bigot’s racist statements and attitude, and the answerer would feel a sense of accomplishment. Additionally, the researchers (Citron et al., 1950) sought remarks that were easily understandable by most, relatively short and straightforward, relatively generalizable or useful in a number of varied situations, and generally effective in reducing prejudice.

To discover what types of remarks fit the aforementioned criteria, Citron and his colleagues (1950) conducted several experiments, one of which involved the researchers staging plays (socio-dramatic experimental technique) in which anti-Semitic remarks were made by a character, and subsequently, an answerer in the play responded to the remark, in front of other bystanders on stage, with one of several pre-determined, “role” responses. Following the play, the audience members/participants completed questionnaires, some participated in one-on-one interviews, and, in some cases, the audience participated in a post-show discussion. Citron et al. (1950) concluded that answers involving the “American tradition” were most effective. The “American tradition answer attempt[ed] to bring into play a system of values (the ‘American Creed’) which opposes prejudice or discrimination against any group within this country,” including mention of “our democracy,” “a fair break,” and utilization of such comments as, “We don’t want that kind of talk in America” (p. 110). Moreover, a reasonable and calm tone was found to be the most favorable manner of delivery (Citron et al., 1950). Using this data, Citron and Harding (1950) later began to conduct trainings concerning how to answer anti-minority remarks.

Much more recently, Stukas (2006) investigated principled stands in racism. Stukas (2006) identified principled stands as “answering prejudiced comments with an appeal to values
or other abstract principles” including a declaration of disagreement (p. 110). In an experiment, Stukas (2006) asked white college students to view a video with a confederate (an individual working with the researcher(s) who is aware of the purpose of the study, but who appears to be just another participant to outsiders) to determine if the video would be useful for a psychology course. The video was a special with Diane Sawyer during which a white man and a black man seek housing, employment, and material items from establishments in St. Louis, Missouri. During the special, the black man was clearly treated differently on several occasions and experienced racism. Following the video, the researcher asked the participant and the confederate to discuss the video or racism in general, during which the confederate either delivered one of three racist scripts, each including nine clearly racist statements against blacks, or a neutral script, which served as a control. The three racist scripts involved varying reasons for the confederate’s racist attitudes, including “‘value-expressive’ reasons (e.g., he believes his values conflict with those of black people), ‘ego-defensive’ reasons (e.g., he believes that black people take opportunities for schools/jobs away from him), or ‘social-adjustive’ reasons (e.g., he believes that people prefer to be with members of their own race)” (p. 111). The participants subsequently completed scales to offer explanation for their experiences and behavior in the experiment.

Stukas (2006) found that participants were more likely to take principled stands during the experiment than not, as 61% of participants took principled stands. Moreover, Stukas (2006) found that “women were 8.45 times more likely to make a principled stands than were men,” but men’s stands were usually more potent (included a perceivably stronger reaction) (p. 117). Additionally, the specific script utilized by the confederate did not elicit a significant difference in the responses of the participants (Stukas, 2006). Finally, Stukas (2006) produced a list of types
of verbal behaviors participants exhibited in response to the confederate’s racist remarks during the experiment, including: “expressions of disbelief, questions asked, rejections of statements, accusations of prejudice, use of emotional terms, differences cited, personal anecdotes recounted, declarations of agreement, [and] admissions of prejudice” (p. 116).

Current Study: TPB and Bystander Intervention

Thus, from the review of relevant literature, it seems that many researchers have sought to identify what factors influence bystander intervention, including bystander characteristics, victim characteristics, and situational factors. Additionally, researchers have attempted to create models to explain and organize these factors. However, I posit that TPB is the most advantageous theory to utilize as a frame for bystander intervention, as all of the aforementioned factors may be applied to the three determinants found in the theory, namely behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs (Ajzen, 1991).

For example, bystander characteristics such as perception of costs and benefits, age, and general disposition would all affect an individual’s behavioral beliefs. Individuals’ perceptions and characteristics in these areas fit well into TPB’s explanation of how attitudes/perceptions are formed. Certain perceived costs such as fear of embarrassment also fit into the normative beliefs category, as this concern involves the perceptions of relevant others. Additionally, bystander characteristics such as perception of personal competence or ability is consistent with TPB’s inclusion of control beliefs, in that if an individual perceives intervention to involve actions beyond his or her competence or ability, the perception may be that this factor may impede the performance of intervention behavior.

Moreover, victim characteristics such as sex of victim and how much the victim “deserves” help fit well into the area of normative beliefs, in that these types of characteristics
would affect an individual’s perceptions of how relevant others would want them to behave in a given situation. Finally, situational factors such as number of bystanders present and severity of situation may fit, in some ways, into several aspects of the theory, as the number of bystanders present may affect one’s personal evaluation of likely outcomes, severity of situation may affect one’s perception of what relevant others would perceive as the appropriate course of action, and severity of the situation may also affect one’s perception of control. Therefore, it seems that TPB may account for most all previously studied factors affecting bystander intervention, and, because of this, the utilization of TPB in studying bystander intervention creates an excellent opportunity for further understanding.

Race of the target. Based on analysis of previous research in the area, it seems that further study concerning bystander intervention in racism is necessary. First, much of the research on bystander intervention in racism has involved white racism towards blacks (Stukas, 2006), often excluding understudied minorities that are undoubtedly affected by racism (e.g., the Asian minority) (Alvarez & Kimura, 2001; Paek & Shah, 2003). Additionally, because much of the early research took place over 50 years ago (Citron et al., 1950), it seems further study in this area is warranted. Moreover, as our society’s demographics continue to change (e.g., the increase in Latino population) (Mastro et al., 2008), it is necessary to begin to include races other than African-American in research concerning factors affecting bystander intervention in racism. Thus, the current study will focus on racism involving Asian and Latino victims. As previously discussed, though somewhat understudied, racism against Asians and Latinos is a significant issue. Therefore, I offer the following research questions:

RQ1a: How does the race of the target of racism (Asian vs. Latino) affect the frequency of bystander intervention in racism?
RQ1b: How does the race of the target of racism (Asian vs. Latino) affect the types of intervention behaviors utilized by bystanders in their intervention in racism?
RQ1c: How does the race of the target of racism (Asian vs. Latino) affect the factors that motivate/promote bystander intervention in racism?
RQ1d: How does the race of the target of racism (Asian vs. Latino) affect the factors that inhibit bystander intervention in racism?

Severity of racism. Further, it is evident perceived severity may affect bystander intervention (Ashton & Severy, 1976; Murray & Vincenzo, 1976; Piliavin, Rodin, & Piliavin, 1969). However, there has been disagreement as to how severity of the situation may affect bystander intervention (positive relationship vs. inverted-U) (Ashton & Severy, 1976; Piliavin, Rodin, & Piliavin, 1969). Thus, I offer the following research questions:

RQ2a: How does the severity of the racism (low, moderate, or high) affect the frequency of bystander intervention in racism?
RQ2b: How does the severity of the racism (low, moderate, or high) affect the types of intervention behaviors utilized by bystanders in their intervention in racism?
RQ2c: How does the severity of the racism (low, moderate, or high) affect the factors that motivate/promote bystander intervention in racism?
RQ2d: How does the severity of the racism (low, moderate, or high) affect the factors that inhibit bystander intervention in racism?

Thus, the current study offers a more well-suited theory, TPB, to explore bystander intervention. Additionally, examining racism involving lesser-studied races, Asians and Latinos, offers a unique opportunity for exploration into the effects of the victim’s race on bystander intervention. Most importantly, the current study offers a communication perspective. This study seeks to
explore social motivations for specific communicative responses in the context of racism. The communication perspective is employed by investigating both racism and bystander intervention in racism through the lens of not only TPB but also social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, through the study, it should become evident how society’s co-creation of meaning determines definitions of racism itself, perceptions concerning severity, as well as factors that affect intervention and what communicative behaviors are appropriate during intervention. Therefore, by extending the study of bystander intervention beyond psychology and other related fields and beginning to explore bystander intervention in racism in the context of communication studies, this study advances study in the field as a whole. Finally, questions remain about how not priming participants to the topic of racism may affect results, as past studies concerning bystander intervention in racism have primed participants by making them aware of the nature of the study. Therefore, the present study offers insight into this factor.

In the next chapter, the methods of research are explained thoroughly, as descriptions of how each research question explored during the study is included.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

To answer the research questions concerning bystander intervention in racism, the study initially included a mixed methods approach, involving quantitative and qualitative methods. To answer the Research Questions 1a and 1b, and 2a and 2b, a 2 (target of racism: Asian vs. Latino) x 3 (severity of racism: low, moderate, or high) experimental design was utilized. This method was important as solely using survey-based methods would be severely limited by social desirability concerns. However, the present study’s methodology avoids this limitation. To answer Research Questions 1c and 1d, and 2c and 2d, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews were conducted. The experiment was conducted in order to observe how participants might truly behave when confronted with racism, in an effort to avoid self-reporting bias. In addition, the researcher conducted post-experiment interviews, as opposed to distributing questionnaires, in an effort to promote a more rich, in-depth explanation of participants’ behavior.

Participants

Participants included a convenience sample of college students. All participants were recruited from communication studies classes at a large southwestern university. Students were offered extra credit in their classes in exchange for their participation in the study. Initially, the total number of participants was 48. However, 8 of the participants were not exposed to the stimuli because their race matched that of the assistant (either Asian or Latino). Therefore, the total number of participants was 40 ($N=40$). Participants included 18 males (45%) and 22 females (55%). In the area of ethnicity, 62.5% of the participants were Caucasian, 22.5% African American, 2.5% Latino, 2.5% Asian American, 5% International (born outside of the U.S.), and 5% self-identified as “other.” Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 26, with the average age being
20.55 (SD=1.99). The participants were randomly assigned to 1 of the 6 conditions: Condition 1 (Asian, low-7 participants), Condition 2 (Asian, moderate-7 participants), Condition 3 (Asian, high-4 participants), Condition 4 (Latino, low-5 participants), Condition 5 (Latino, moderate-4 participants), Condition 6 (Latino, high-13 participants).

Procedures

Upon arrival, participants reviewed an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved consent form which included an explanation of the purpose of the study (written in vague terms to avoid priming: Title of Study- Interpersonal Communication in Unfamiliar Partnerships). After consenting, participants then completed the initial questionnaire. The initial questionnaire included a scale called the Loss of Face Questionnaire, as well as a brief demographic information section. Next, participants were escorted to a separate room where they were told a partner (a trained confederate) was waiting for them. The participants were informed that an assistant would be sent in to explain further instructions. The “assistant” that entered was one of two trained female confederates, of either Asian or Latino descent, who delivered task instructions to the participants and then left the room. Participants were then given 3 minutes to complete a task with their partner, who was always the confederate playing the part of the “racist.” During the task, the “racist” confederate delivered one of six racist scripts (based on the race of the assistant, Asian or Latino, and severity level of the current condition; see Appendix B) which each consisted of two racist comments concerning the “assistant” that had entered the room. The first comment was made at the beginning of the task, and the second comment was made approximately mid-way through the task. Each participant was given a case ID number prior to the activity, which was written on an index card to inform the confederate of the current condition (1100s: Asian, low; 1200s: Asian, moderate; 1300s: Asian, high; 2100s: Latino, low;
2200s: Latino, moderate; 2300s: Latino, high). Each conversation was audio recorded via an audio-recording device. After three minutes, the assistant re-entered the room and escorted the participants to a separate room for the post-task interview.

Task

Participants were given a task created by the researcher in which they were told to attempt to build a fort-like structure with multi-colored wooden building blocks using only the description of the structure from the other partner (the confederate) who described the structure from a picture provided for the experiment. The task itself was simply intended to serve as a guise in order to avoid priming participants for the true experiment. Different from experiments of the past (Stukas, 2006), one goal of this experiment was to observe how participants would react to racist comments without first being primed that the study examined racist behavior in any way.

Interviews

One-on-one interviews were conducted face-to-face in a private room, and participants were informed that interviews would be audio-taped. Interviews lasted between 2 and 7 minutes each, and participants were asked for feedback on their experience during the task. Participants were also asked why they did or did not intervene, along with questions derived from the theory of planned behavior (TPB), concerning behavioral beliefs (their personal attitudes toward intervening), normative beliefs (the attitude of relevant others concerning intervening), and control beliefs (if they felt able to intervene) (Ajzen, 1991). Questions were also derived from the research questions (motivation to intervene, etc.) (See Appendix C). Following the interviews, the researcher thoroughly debriefed participants and gave them a debriefing handout.
Independent Variables

Because little research has been conducted concerning how race of the target may affect bystander intervention in racism, the target’s race was manipulated during the experiment and served as the first independent variable. Two confederates of the same gender and of relatively similar age were recruited to play the research assistants in the experiment. One of the confederates was of Asian ethnicity and the other was Latino.

Moreover, because many researchers have cited severity as possibly affecting the likelihood of bystander intervention (Ashton & Severy, 1976; Murray & Vincenzo, 1976; Piliavin, Rodin, & Piliavin, 1969), the severity of the racist statements the confederate delivered was manipulated. Severity was categorized as low severity, moderate severity, or high severity, and severity levels were checked to ensure the categorizations were accurate.

Confederate’s Racist Statements and Manipulation Check

To derive the racist statements the confederate made during the task, an open-ended survey was distributed (through a convenience sample) to 6 students, 3 Asian and 3 Latino (2 male and 4 female, 2 graduate students and 4 undergraduates). The survey asked participants to list racist comments they had heard or experienced and to indicate how severe they perceived the statements to be by labeling them as low severity, moderate severity, or high severity. After analyzing the data from the surveys, looking for commonalities and indications of severity perceptions, the researcher produced 6 scripts of varying levels of severity (low, moderate, or high), each including two statements. Statements included comments involving perceptions of the target as a foreigner, insults concerning the need for members of the target’s race to “learn the language,” offensive references to stereotypes, etc. (See Appendix B). The researcher then distributed the scripts to 35 undergraduate students and asked them to rate each comment as low
severity (rated as 1), moderate severity (rated as 2), or high severity (rated as 3) according to how severe they perceived them to be. The data was then analyzed to determine if the participants’ ratings corresponded with the researcher’s intended severity levels. The mean score of the low severity comments was 2.007 ($M = 2.007$). The mean score of the moderate severity comments was 2.214 ($M = 2.214$), and the mean score for the high severity comments was 2.707 ($M = 2.707$). Thus, the students’ ratings of the severity levels of the comments supported the researcher’s intended severity level. This served as a manipulation check for severity level.

**Dependent Measures**

Dependent variables for the experiment included whether or not participants intervened when confronted with the confederate’s racist statements, and what types of intervention behaviors the participants employed. In the context of this experiment, intervention was considered to be a participant’s verbal indication of disagreement in some form when confronted with the racist scripts. In order to determine types of intervention, participants’ behavior was compared to Stukas’ (2006) list of 9 types of “principled stands” (“expressions of disbelief, questions asked, rejections of statements, accusations of prejudice, use of emotional terms, differences cited, personal anecdotes recounted, declarations of agreement, [and] admissions of prejudice”) (p. 116) (see Appendix D).

**Measures**

The Loss of Face Questionnaire, utilized in the initial questionnaire for the study, is a scale that measures to what degree an individual avoids situations involving loss of face and, the scale was intended to serve as a control for the experiment by comparing scores across participants to determine if concern for face significantly affected intervention behaviors (Zane, 2000) (see Appendix A for list of items).
Data Analysis

Change in Method

Approximately half-way through data collection (one week in), the racist confederate declined to continue in his role, citing extreme personal difficulties with the subject matter, role, scripts, participant reactions, and the experience as a whole. He stated that he had become uncomfortable playing the role of the racist, making the racist statements from the scripts, enduring the reactions of the participants, and stated he had “reached his breaking point.” Due to his concerns, it seemed too great a risk to simply replace the confederate with another volunteer, as it was evident that it was a real possibility, based on the concerns the original confederate experienced, that a new confederate would also become distressed due to the demands of the role. Thus, instead, data collection ceased at this point. Subsequently the data analysis became largely qualitative, and the researcher primarily utilized the participants’ post-interview transcriptions as the data source for analysis. The Loss of Face Questionnaire data were no longer utilized, and quantitative data (frequency of intervention counts, etc.) were descriptively noted in analysis of the qualitative data rather than statistically analyzed on their own, as the abrupt end in data collection significantly reduced the total number of participants, which were necessary for proper quantitative study. Due to the changes in method, it also became necessary to develop new/alternative research questions. The revised research questions follow.

RQ1: How well does TPB explain bystander intervention in racism?

RQ2: What factors of bystander intervention in racism do not fit into the TPB framework?
Interview Analysis

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), interviewing is an exceptional method of data collection in that it allows for both a broad and deep understanding of individuals’ experiences and realities. Thus, the data collected through the interviews following the experiment provided a great deal of enlightening descriptions and explanations from the perspective of the participant. After all participant interviews were transcribed and combined, the result was 115 double-spaced pages of data. To analyze the data from the interviews, transcripts of the interviews stored in word files were “content coded [by the researcher] using objective analytical codes” derived from TPB and the research questions (Elwood et al., 2003). Specifically, first the transcriptions were coded for common themes, using a grounded theory approach. Following this step, 55 themes emerged from the data. Next, the researcher utilized content analysis to categorize the themes into the three main components of TPB, behavioral beliefs (9 themes), normative beliefs (7 themes), and control beliefs (8 themes). Seven of the themes were simply descriptions of the participants actual behavior, five of the themes were deleted, as they were not relevant to the research questions, and the remaining 19 themes did not fit readily into the components of the TPB model.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Interventions

The aim of the study was to explore whether or not individuals would intervene when faced with racist comments made by their task partner concerning an Asian or Latino assistant during an activity. An additional goal was to discover what factors affected intervention. Out of the 40 participants who experienced the racist scripts as stimuli, only 3 participants (7.5 %) verbally intervened by questioning or making statements toward the racist confederate during the task. All of the individuals who intervened were Caucasian women (two of which were 21 years old, while the other was 20) (see Table 1). All of the individuals who intervened were in the same experimental condition: Latino assistant with highly severe comments. Although the intervention messages of the participants differed in some ways, all of the intervention methods could reasonably fit into one or more of Stukas’ (2006) intervention behaviors categorizations.

The first participant who intervened utilized responses that fell into Stukas’ (2006) categories of “expressions of disbelief” and “questions asked.” Though her comments were minimal, they were more than any other participant had said up to that point in data collection. To the racist confederate’s first comment, the participant exclaimed, alarmed, “Come on!” (expression of disbelief). To the racist confederate’s second comment, the participant replied, “Are you serious?” (questions asked).

The second participant responded to the confederate’s statements with “questions asked” and “use of emotional terms.” To the confederate’s first statement (“I can’t believe they let that beaner give us the instructions. I don’t speak Spanish!”), the participant asked, “Why do you care whether or not she speaks Spanish? She gave us the instructions in English” (questions asked).
Following the confederate’s second statement, the participant said, “You’re being a little bit ridiculous, don’t you think?...You’re gonna have a tough time in this world.” These statements fit into both the “questions asked” category and the “use of emotional terms” category.

Finally, the last participant to intervene had the strongest reaction and utilized “questions asked,” “accusations of prejudice,” “rejections of statements,” and “expressions of disbelief” during her intervention. To the confederate’s first statement, the participant exclaimed, “What the hell, dude? She was speaking English…That’s ridiculous, dude!” (questions asked, rejections of statements). Following the confederate’s second comment, the participant said, “Dude! You just pissed me off…You’re being like a total racist, dude!” (expressions of disbelief, accusations of prejudice). Thus, Stukas’ intervention behaviors categorizations provided categories for all of the responses from participants who intervened.

Motivation to Intervene

When the three participants who intervened spoke about their motivations for interventions in their post-interviews, though certain aspects overlapped, their explanations seemed relatively distinct. One participant said,

I just think all people are made equally. Not one person is gonna be better than the other because of color or race or anything like that. So it was just weird to hear that because it’s something that never crosses my mind like “Oh that person is such and such. Put them in that category.” So that’s what it was.

Thus, for this participant, a belief in equality motivated her intervention. These beliefs a shaped by the participant’s social surroundings, which further highlights the important role social construction plays in intervention acts (Vygotsky, 1978).

Another participant who intervened described her motivation in this way:
Because it really irritates me when people act like that. It’s not okay. It bothered me, so I had to say something. And it was only the two of us in that room. It’s not like I was calling him out in front of a group. Chances are I’ll never see him again so if he doesn’t like me for it, too bad…Just because you know it’s wrong. I just know it’s wrong, so I was like “Don’t do that. That’s stupid.”

Thus, this participant was motivated by a belief that racism is wrong, a general intolerance and frustration toward racist behavior, the fact that there were no other bystanders, and the lack of expectation for a future interaction. Both number of bystanders (Latané & Darley, 1970) and expectation of future interaction (Gottleib & Carver, 1980) were factors present within the bystander intervention literature, which proved to affect this occurrence of bystander intervention in racism as well. Just as Latané and Darley (1970) theorized, the participant perceived that if more bystanders had been present, it may have been more difficult to intervene. This control belief (TPB) highlights the truly social aspect of intervention, as this participant’s perception was greatly affected by the possible influence of others. Moreover, contrary to the bystander intervention literature, which states that anticipation of future interaction often motivates individuals to intervene (Gottleib & Carver, 1980), the participant noted that it was actually the lack of expectation for future interaction that affected her decision to intervene. However, for Gottleib and Carver (1980), the bystander intervention context was one of an emergency in which the bystander took on helping behaviors (positive). Therefore, it stands to reason that in the case of bystander intervention in racism, a lack of expectation for future interaction with the racist may be perceived as a positive motivating factor.

Finally, the last participant who intervened spoke of her emotion upon hearing the racist comments, saying,
I’m like shaking because I wanted to punch the guy…Well, just like anybody, I could be Mexican. He doesn’t know that. It’s just completely ridiculous and my nephew is half Mexican and I just – there’s no reason for people to act like that towards other people. It really pissed me off. I’m really glad it was just [an experiment].

However, when asked specifically what motivated her to intervene, it seemed inexplicable to her. She simply said, “I don’t know. I just did.” Thus, for this participant, intervening simply seemed the natural response. For her, the socially constructed definition of racism and the inappropriate nature of the statements (communicated through social interaction) led to what seemed like a natural negative reaction in the context.

RQ 1: Application of TPB

In reference to the remaining 37 participants who did not exhibit verbal intervention behaviors, most participants either ignored the racist comments they experienced, or laughed at them (some out of discomfort and others because they found the statements amusing). One participant spoke of ignoring the comments by saying, “Yeah, blow it off. There’s always gonna be a closed minded person out there. You can’t expect everyone to be perfect.” Additionally, one participant who laughed at the comments said, “You know, the comment he made, I thought it was funny. I was like, okay, you know, that’s – all right. But I’m not gonna come out and be like, really, what’s the deal?” Other participants stated that they simply laughed the comments off.

To answer RQ 1, the researcher performed a thematic analysis of the post-task interviews to determine how participants’ responses fit into the TPB framework. First, themes that draw a parallel to TPB’s Behavioral Beliefs component are discussed.
Behavioral Beliefs

As previously stated, behavioral beliefs are those beliefs that involve an individual’s perceptions concerning the expected outcomes of a specific behavior as well as the individual’s evaluation of those likely outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). Behavioral beliefs lead to an individual’s attitude toward a particular behavior. Thus, in this context, behavioral beliefs might complete the following statement: “If I intervene in the racism, then [expected outcome]...may/will occur.” Behavioral beliefs, from a communication standpoint, originate through our interactions with society (i.e., through parents, church, peers, etc.). Similar to past bystander intervention literature, participants’ statements categorized as behavioral beliefs fit well into one of four subcategories: Behavioral beliefs concerning 1) personal factors 2) the “racist” confederate 3) the target/victim of racism 4) or the context (situational factors).

Personal factors. Two themes from the behavioral beliefs category were based upon beliefs concerning personal factors. First, some participants noted that their lack of intervention was affected by their belief that intervening might affect their personal image. One participant referred to this by saying, “I didn’t want to be like the one person who’s like, ‘Wow, she was mean.’ So I just skipped over [the racist comments].” Here, a participant expressed concern for how her intervention may have been viewed by her partner as “mean,” and she did not wish to be viewed in this way. Another participant spoke of the fear of embarrassment in much the same way.

A second theme characterized by personal factors was the behavioral belief that intervention was the “right thing to do” and doing the “right thing” would lead to positive feelings about oneself. Several participants spoke about this factor. One participant remarked about this by saying, “[What makes intervening e]asy: doing what’s right. It’s for the feeling
later; that good karma; those good vibes.” This sentiment was also echoed in the bystander intervention literature in reference to the “warm glow of good will” that often affects intervention behaviors (Lord, 1997).

Factors concerning “racist.” Two additional themes from the behavioral beliefs category were based upon concerns having to do with the racist confederate. First, many participants expressed concern that if they intervened, they might find that they had misinterpreted the confederate’s sentiment. Many people, from all three levels of severity, felt that their partner may not have had any racist intent, and thus intervening was perceived as having a negative outcome. One participant from the high severity condition noted this sentiment by saying,

My attitude towards [racism] is not okay. I think you should absolutely be confronted, but at the same time, there’s certain scenarios where I don’t know if this person actually does hate these people, and then it could be a joke, off the cuff and they weren’t thinking about it before they said it, and I don’t want to make them feel ridiculous, but at the same time if he continues to persist, he should be confronted.

Another participant from the moderate severity condition echoed this outlook in the following response:

Um, [intervening] would have been probably kind of difficult because …I think that just going off like that, maybe he doesn’t mean it that way. You know he just said it because, but I don’t think he meant it, kind of confront him because it’s kind of rude.

Thus, many participants felt that uncertainty concerning their partner’s true sentiment served as a behavioral belief that framed intervention outcomes as negative. This factor was also noted in bystander intervention literature as “degree of uncertainty” (Austin, 1979). It is important to note that while participants discussed how ambiguity of intention affected their decisions, none of the
participants who were unsure of their partner’s intent questioned the confederate in an attempt to clarify.

The second theme concerning the racist confederate was the worry that intervening would provide the racist with the attention he desired by dignifying his racist comments with a response. One participant in the highly severe condition described this outlook by saying, “I didn’t give him what he wanted, which was any kind of response. I just kind of looked at him funny, and then we started [the activity].” Thus, a few participants felt that by intervening, they would actually bring a level of satisfaction to the racist.

Factors concerning victim/target. One theme from the behavioral beliefs category concerned the victim/target of racism. A few participants expressed concern that intervening might actually cause the victim more harm than good, if the assistant were able to hear the exchange. One participant explained this concern by saying, “I figured she could probably hear it…I didn’t want to say anything that would further hurt her feelings if she heard me saying something back.” Therefore, concern for causing further harm to the victim caused some participants to view intervention outcomes as negative.

Factors concerning context/situational factors. The final themes reflecting the behavioral beliefs component involve the context of the experiment or situational factors. First, many of the participants felt that intervening would simply cause the exchange to be awkward or uncomfortable. One participant expressed this concern when he said, “In that situation? I think it would’ve made it really awkward. Because…it would’ve made it really uncomfortable. And then I don’t think we would’ve been able to build the attempted fort that we built.” Thus, some participants expressed concern that intervention would cause awkwardness during the task, thus framing the perceived intervention outcome as negative.
Another theme concerning context was that many participants felt that due to the three minute time constraint for the activity, intervening would simply interrupt the progress of the task (which participants’ perceived to be the primary concern for the study). One participant noted this concern in the following statement:

I guess it would be – it was difficult because I didn’t want to – we had three minutes, so I didn’t want to deter the activity. So I was just listening to what he said about the blocks instead of what he said about [the assistant].

Another participant alluded to similar concerns by saying,

[Intervening] probably would have affected how well we got the task done. He probably would have been thinking about what I said, and I probably would be thinking about what he said. So we wouldn’t be able to concentrate fully.

Therefore, the perception that intervening would interrupt the task was a factor in causing many of the participants to perceive intervention outcomes negatively.

Thus, in sum, many factors falling under TPB’s definition of behavioral beliefs, according to participants, played a role in intervention behaviors. Here it also evident that one’s behavioral beliefs are significantly affected by one’s perception of “the other.” This further demonstrates how communication (through social interaction and co-creation of meaning) affects behavioral beliefs and the context as a whole.

**Normative Beliefs**

The second main component of TPB is the normative beliefs component. Normative beliefs, as previously discussed, are beliefs involving an individual’s perception of what relevant others believe and expect concerning a particular behavior and the individual’s motivation to comply with the expectations (Ajzen, 2006). Normative beliefs produce individuals’ subjective
norm, which is defined as individuals’ perceptions of social pressure concerning a particular behavior. Much of the information concerning participants’ normative beliefs arose from questions inquiring how participants thought relevant others would have wanted them to behave in the context of the experiment.

Participants felt differently concerning their perceptions of relevant others’ reactions and expectations. While some participants thought that relevant others would have approved of their behavior (most of which did not intervene), many participants felt relevant others would have wanted them to intervene, some felt relevant others would not have expected them to intervene, and still others believed relevant others would have been neutral in the context. Example statements for each of these views follow.

One participant (from the low severity condition) who felt that relevant others would have approved of his reaction said,

I think they would pretty much say the same thing, “just don’t let it bother you,” you know? And if it was really blatant, like something really, really blatant, to say something about it, but because it wasn’t so like in your face, just kind of like leave it alone.

Many participants felt the opposite, that relevant others would have wanted them to intervene, and one participant expressed that sentiment by saying,

Uh, they would’ve wanted me to say something…Um, I was just taught that, from my parents and my like good friends, that you stand up for anyone, if you know ‘em or not. And um they would definitely probably be disappointed that I didn’t.

Another participant echoed this viewpoint when he said, “They would’ve wanted me to probably say something and be like ‘don’t talk about Hispanics that way’ because like I have friends and some family that are Hispanics and that’s just not nice.”
Conversely, a few participants claimed that relevant others would have been neutral or indifferent in their opinions of whether or not the participants should intervene. One participant expressed this when he stated, “I don’t know. That’s a weird question because like everybody in my life is just like ‘Whatever.’ They don’t really care; they don’t really talk about racism too much.”

Additionally, a few participants stated that relevant others would not have encouraged them to intervene. One participant with this viewpoint said, Well, I actually have a girlfriend, she’s Latino but she’s the type that tries to avoid confrontation. She could get a little aggressive too, but like, just subtle statements like that, I think she would have just been like, “Just do whatever. People are like that.”

Moreover, several participants noted difficulty in determining how relevant others in general would want them to behave because many of them had conflicting normative beliefs. One participant noted this predicament by saying, “My mom probably would have just been like, ‘Don’t say anything.’ My dad probably would have said, ‘You need to say something.’ He’s more outspoken. Well, she is too.” Another participant noted that different relevant others would have felt differently about intervention based on their attitudes concerning the situation, thus normative beliefs were difficult to determine in general terms.

Finally, participants noted two important factors that affected their perceptions of normative beliefs. First, several of the participants admitted to having family or friends that were racist. One remarked, “That’s kind of a hard question because both of my parents are a little bit racist. My grandparents, definitely. My close friends aren’t, but they’re not really very conflicting (confrontational).” Another participant said,
I actually come from a pretty Midwestern, Anglo-Saxon family that has very strong ideas and it really bothers me. So I get in fights with my dad a lot about it, actually. I stand up for it because my best friend is Hispanic and I just don’t like it. I think it’s stupid.

Further, one participant explained her experience by saying, “Just, I guess it’s a lot to do with my upbringing. I’ve got a lot of very, very country relatives in Arkansas that are pretty racist themselves.” Finally, one other participant noted, “I have a problem with my dad. He’s a good ol’ boy, so I’ve always kind of learned through his actions not to be like that. It just – I can’t stand any of that.” Even through these participants’ distancing themselves from the perceptions of certain relevant others, the concept of social influence through communication is evident.

A final factor that participants noted as affecting normative beliefs was general social norms. One participant spoke of this, saying “if he would’ve continued to make little comments, I probably would’ve slowly started to say something, but not necessarily go off on him because social norms and stuff, it’s not really good to do that.”

Thus, in sum, several varied factors affected participants’ perception of normative beliefs. These normative beliefs then, according to TPB, likely affected participants’ decision on whether or not to intervene in some way. Communicatively, this further illustrates how communication (social interaction) is the key to understanding bystander intervention, especially in the context of racist acts. Participants form their perceptions of how to communicate in the context by calling on past experience and perceptions of how others might expect them to react, which has, inevitably, been constructed through past communication.

Control Beliefs

The final component of TPB is control beliefs. Control beliefs are perceptions of “factors that may facilitate or impede performance of the behavior and the perceived power of these
factors” (Ajzen, 2006, para. 1). Control beliefs lead to perceived behavioral control, or one’s ability to perform a behavior. Participants discussed several factors that seemed to facilitate or impede their intervening.

First, many participants stated that intervening would have been difficult or impeded because their partner was a stranger. One participant remarked,

What would make it difficult? I don’t really think, well maybe it would be just because this case, I don’t know who he is at all. And I’m just telling him not to act a certain way or not to be a certain way. It’s kind of weighing the whole pros and cons of it. I could say something but what good would that really do in the end? I don’t know him. I’m not gonna see him again if I choose not to. If he’s a racist, I don’t want to. But if it was somebody I was gonna see like maybe in a work environment or one of my friends, you know, I definitely, well they wouldn’t be my friend, but I would have definitely called them out on it if it was somebody I was gonna have to see on a regular basis. You can feel that certain way, but I don’t want that type of comments around me at all.

A second control belief that participants noted as having affected their decision to intervene was the perception that it would be difficult if not impossible to cause any real change in a racist. One participant spoke about this, saying,

If I did say something to him I don’t know what I would have said or what difference it would have made. If someone makes a comment like that and it’s so insignificant to them then that means their mind is already set.

Several other participants shared this opinion, and one said,
Speaking out against [racism], I guess [racism]’s wrong and we can all try to make a difference, but it’ll be hard to just try to change everybody’s mind at once. So I can do a small part, I can do what I can, but I can’t just change everybody’s mind.

A third factor perceived as a control belief was one that facilitated a positive perception of control in intervention. Some participants believed that because there were only two people in the room during the activity (the participant and his or her partner), intervening would be easier than if there were more than two people present.

Moreover, another control belief some participants discussed was the fear of the racist’s possible reaction if they did intervene, which was an impediment to perceived control. One participant spoke of this in saying, “Not knowing what was gonna happen, not knowing the person, what his reaction would be when I confronted him because he could be pissed off or he could’ve walked out of the room. So you never know.”

An additional control belief involved participants’ past experiences with intervening in racism. Some participants said that they had intervened in the past. One remarked

I’m really not a confrontational person unless it like affects somebody. If it was like a boss saying that about somebody or if it was like someone who was in charge of something like I worked with – well, I was in construction. So there was a lot of Mexican people and I had a boss that just sometimes he’d say some F’d up stuff and I’d just be like “You know, [boss’s name], that makes me uncomfortable.” It was like he’d just be like “Oh look who’s laying down” kinda thing. I was just like “Come on man.”

Another participant echoed this sentiment, saying, “In general, I’m very opposed to it because I’m from—I’m also ethnically different as well, and there have been times where I’ve called people out and I’ve jumped in on things, and I have done it at Costco.”
Other participants cited control beliefs that might impede intervention as personality traits, such as being non-confrontational. Additionally, a few participants noted that intervening would not be difficult because of similarities shared with their partner, such as race. For example, one participant said, “[Intervening would] not [be] very difficult for the fact that he was the same race as me. It’s usually harder to speak out against racism against another race but when it’s your race it is — you’re “Hey man, that’s not cool.”

Finally, two other common control beliefs cited by participants were conflicting or created dilemmas. Some participants stated that intervening would have been easier because it was unlikely that the participants would see their partner again. This then was a control belief that would have facilitated the likelihood of the performance of the behavior. However, other participants stated that the fact that a future meeting was unlikely made them less likely to intervene because, in essence, they did not feel it was worth the trouble considering that their partner was someone they would probably only ever see once.

Thus, in sum, many of the participants’ responses illustrated perfectly the usefulness of the control beliefs component of TPB in the context of bystander intervention in racism, in that many participants spoke of control beliefs having affected their decisions concerning intervention.

RQ 2: Factors Beyond TPB

It is evident from the above section that TPB worked well to capture many of the factors that participants described as influenced whether or not they intervened. However, there were also factors that did not seem to fit readily into the TPB model. These factors are discussed below and have been categorized as factors concerning the racist statements, factors concerning racism in general, and factors concerning the context of the experiment/study. Additionally,
specific factors that participants stated would have changed or greatly affected their intervention decisions are presented.

**Factors Concerning Racist Statements**

First, several participants, from both the low and moderate severity conditions, stated that they simply did not notice the comments. One participant in the low severity condition remarked, “I didn’t catch any racist statements that I can think of. Even thinking back, I can’t think of any that he made.” Another participant spoke about why it may have been easy to miss such comments, saying, “I guess it’s just one of those things. Like if you really notice that kind of stuff, then you might have noticed, but I just don’t notice that kind of thing.” Here, the participant implied that one must be especially attuned to racism to notice it when it occurs. This is an implication that, indeed, one person’s racist statement is another person’s everyday language. This, then, highlights the socialized nature of defining racism.

Additionally, some participants did not intervene because they perceived the comments to be completely unfounded. One participant in the low severity condition said, “[I]n this experience right now, it happened so quickly, and it was just something you brush off like you totally don’t know why he said that or what, but I felt like maybe I just let that one go.” Thus, the perception that the comments were unfounded affected some participants’ intervention behaviors.

Finally, some participants noted that because the statements had nothing to do with them personally, they chose not to intervene. One participant discussed this, saying, “I don’t know because the context for me is I’m just white, and so the statement doesn’t directly affect me.” Moreover, in this same vein, some participants noted that if the comments had been about their race, they would have, in all likelihood, intervened. One participant noted, “I would have been
motivated probably if it was more against my race, and the fact that he was saying it against the Asian race, I didn’t really have a comment about it.” Thus, the nature of the comments, in many ways, affected the participants’ perception of the exchange.

Factors Related to Racism

Many participants spoke of factors relating to their views on racism in general, how their definitions of racism affected their perception of the specific comments made during the task, and how their past experience with racism affected their perceptions. A summary of these factors is described below.

First, many participants clarified that they did not agree with racism at all. One participant stated, “I think racism is terrible. We’re all people it doesn’t matter what your orientation, your skin color, where you were born, your religion. It doesn’t matter. We’re all people, so I think that’s stupid.” One other participant stated, “I think for anybody to be racist in any context of the word is ignorant, it’s selfish, it’s judgmental, and that would be – that would be like me being racist toward them even though I don’t know them.” However, other participants indicated a more neutral outlook on racism. For example, one participant explained, “It’s just the way I am. The way I am, I don’t pay attention to nothing like that because I don’t really care.” Thus, participants’ outlooks on racism in general were a factor in their decisions concerning intervention.

Additionally, the way in which participants defined racism and its boundaries affected their perceptions of the comments made during the task. Some participants stated that they did not perceive the statements to be racist at all. One participant from the low severity condition said, “[I]t didn’t even seem racist to me how he stated it.” Moreover, several participants noted that they perceived the comments as comedic. One participant remarked, “No, I laughed at one
of [the comments] just because my friends and I crack jokes like that. I don’t really look at it as like racism. We look at it more as a stereotype.” Thus, perceptions concerning how racism is truly defined affected some participants’ perceptions concerning intervention.

Finally, participants’ past experiences with racism affected their perceptions of the exchange as well, in some cases. First, several participants who were members of ethnic minorities discussed how their past experiences with racism affected their perceptions. One participant explained by saying, “Well, I probably should’ve said something but I didn’t. I think that it’s wrong being a black woman, so I’ve experienced it, so I probably should’ve said something.” Other participants discussed how their having witnessed racism in the past, or for some, the fact they had never witnessed racism, affected their perceptions as well. For example, one participant said,

If it’s blatant racism, I mean – I’m not offended by a whole lot. I was in the military. I was exposed to things that not a lot of people are exposed to. But when it’s blatant racism, like if there’s somebody out there dropping the N bomb, I’m gonna go up to them and be like, watch your mouth.

However, some participants spoke in the opposite regard, saying they had no experience with racism. One participant stated, “I don’t know. I’ve never – I come from a school where there’s literally two other kids who weren’t Caucasian. So I’ve never really dealt with that. So I’ve never had that experience.” Therefore, it is evident that perceptions concerning racism did affect participants’ views concerning intervention.

Factors Concerning Context

Finally, participants noted several issues concerning the context of the experiment that they felt affected their perceptions concerning intervention. First, some participants noted that
they did not feel the need to intervene because they did not think the comments would affect the assistant, as she was not present at the time that the confederate made the comments. One participant remarked,

Well, he didn’t say it in a mean way. To me, that’s how I took it. He was just saying it. But if he would’ve said it to her face or – I mean, she was out of the room with the door this much open. So yes it was hurtful, but no it wasn’t like saying it to her face. I would’ve been like, “You – wow. Easy.” So that would’ve made a difference.

Moreover, several participants perceived the “racist” as nice, or a good person, despite his comments. For example, one participant said, “Well, he’s really nice. He’s cool.” Thus, the participants’ perception of the confederate as a nice or good person also affected their perceptions concerning intervention.

Additionally, many participants stated that the comments simply caught them off guard. Several of the participants said their shock from hearing the comments or the unexpected nature of the comments affected their perceptions. For example, one participant said,

I think [intervention was] a little difficult because again, like I said it’s not common at least for me, to hear comments like that. It’s something I don’t even think of. So that’s the main thing. I was just caught off guard and didn’t know what to say.

Thus, several participants cited shock and being caught off guard as factors affecting the perceptions of intervention.

Finally, some participants felt that the views of the racist and/or the situation, in general, were none of their concern. One participant said, “I feel like he was entitled to his beliefs and it didn’t affect me directly.” Another participant echoed this sentiment, saying, “As long as I wasn’t saying it, I didn’t care what he was saying.” Thus, some participants felt the racist
comments and racist attitudes of the confederate were none of their business, which affected their perceptions of intervention.

Factors Participants Claim Would Have Changed their Decision

In addition to the aforementioned factors, many participants mentioned four specific factors that they believed would have changed their intervention decision. First, a few participants said that if the environment in which they heard the race statements were different, they would have intervened. For example, one participant said, “So, it is kinda difficult but if it was like someone who’s like trying to talk shit like on a bus or something, then I’d really say something.” Another participant remarked, “If we were standing in line somewhere for five minutes maybe I would have [intervened] or something like that.” Thus, some participants felt that a different environment would have changed their intervention decision.

Further, some participants noted that if they had known or been friends with the victim of racism, they would have intervened. One participant spoke of this, saying,

Probably if I knew her. It’s probably bad but if you don’t really know someone like say me and you were really good friends and someone had said something about you then I would definitely like step up immediately, but if you hear something – if someone says something about like a person or something you may not be so quick to step up because you don’t really know, and it doesn’t really affect you as much.

Thus, some participants felt that having a personal relationship with the assistant would have changed their intervention decision. This factor was also discussed in the bystander intervention literature (Gottleib & Carver, 1979).

An additional factor that participants noted would have caused them to change their intervention decision was if the participants would have had like-minded friends present to give
them support. Contrary to the opinion of some participants who felt that having only two people present made intervention more likely, some participants felt the need for additional support. One participant said, “But I think it would’ve been easier if like maybe I’d had a friend with me or something who would’ve had the same viewpoints as me.” This opinion goes against Latané and Darley’s (1970) research concerning how the number of group members affects likelihood of intervention, as the researchers predicted that as the number of group members increases, the likelihood of intervention decreases. However, the relationship of the group members, who in this case would be friends, may serve to alleviate this effect.

Finally, and certainly most commonly, many participants, from all levels of severity, stated that if the racist statements had been more severe or harsh, their intervention decision would have changed. One participant from the low severity condition remarked, “I think if what he said would’ve been more harsh, and not maybe just—I didn’t find them harsh, I guess, not as harsh, even though I knew it was racist.” Several researchers have studied how severity of the situation affects bystander intervention, but, as previously mentioned, the research differs in that while some researchers (Piliavin et al., 1969) posited that as the severity of the situation increases, the likelihood of intervention increases, other researchers (Ashton & Severty, 1976) posited that the trend is more like an inverted-U, with intervention being most likely in moderate severity situations.

In sum, though TPB provided a well-suited framework for most of the factors participants’ reported as affecting their perceptions of intervention, some factors did not seem to fit readily into the TPB framework.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore whether or not bystanders would intervene after hearing racist comments, what factors affected bystander intervention, and how severity of the racist comments and the race of the target of racism would affect bystander intervention. To explore this, the researcher sought to utilize TPB as a theoretical framework as well as employ a mixed methods approach in which participants took part in an activity during which a confederate would make two racist comments about a research assistant of either Asian or Latino descent. Although data collection was ended early, a significant amount of qualitative data was collected that could be utilized to draw plausible conclusions. A total of forty participants took part in the study, and after transcribing each of their post-interviews, 55 themes emerged. The researcher then performed a thematic analysis, utilizing TPB as a framework to categorize the 55 themes into the components of TPB, behavioral beliefs (9 themes), normative beliefs (7 themes), and control beliefs (8 themes). Seven of the themes were simply descriptions of the participants’ actual behavior, five of the themes were deleted, as they were not relevant to the research questions, and the remaining 19 themes did not fit readily into the components of the TPB model.

First, regarding the number of participants who intervened as compared to those who did not, it is evident that the percentage of participants who intervened (7.5%) seemed quite low. In Stukas’ (2006) study concerning principled stands (a type of intervention) in racism, 61% of the participants took a principled stand (intervened). However, it is important to note that in the case of the Stukas study, participants were primed to the topic of racism, as they were asked to watch a video about racism to offer an opinion on its possible use for a college course. Thus, it seems
that studying bystander intervention in racism may be greatly affected by whether participants are primed to the topic of racism. Researchers have noted that priming participants to a particular topic or mindset prior to an experiment (or in the stimuli stage) greatly affects experiment outcomes (Dalisay & Tan, 2009). In their study, Dalisay and Tan (2009) found that presenting participants with media that depicted Asians as the model minority affected participants’ post-evaluation ratings.

Moreover, regarding how severity of the racist comments affects bystander intervention, the low number of interventions greatly affected the results in this area. According to the bystander intervention literature, Piliavin et al. (1969) found that as severity of the situation increased, the likelihood of bystander intervention increased. However, Ashton and Severy (1976) predicted that the relationship between severity of the situation and bystander intervention would resemble an inverted-U. With the data from this study, it seems that the Piliavin et al. assertion was supported as opposed to that of Ashton and Severy. However, the data may have provided stronger or more convincing support had interventions occurred, as expected, with few or no participants intervening in the low severity condition, a greater number of participants intervening in the moderate severity condition, and the greatest number of participants intervening in the high severity condition.

Finally, regarding how race of the target/victim of racism affected intervention, all of the interventions took place when the Latino assistant was the target of racism, as opposed to the Asian assistant. However, because data collection ended early, there were 13 participants in the Latino/high condition, as compared to only 4 participants in the Asian/high condition. This disproportionate distribution of participants, in all likelihood, affected the outcome and comparison of the conditions, as more participants had the opportunity to intervene in the
Latino/high condition. However, it does seem plausible that the number of interventions in Latino conditions would be higher than that of the Asian condition, even when the numbers of participants were even in the conditions. This could be because the Latino population in the area where the study took place is much greater than that of the Asian population, thus participants may be more likely to know Latinos, have interacted with Latinos, and be more familiar with any cultural differences (Petersen & Assanie, 2005). However, because this can only be speculated, the issue warrants further exploration.

Theoretical Implications

TPB, as predicted, was quite well-suited for the context of bystander intervention in racism. The majority of the themes that emerged from the interview transcriptions fit easily into one of the three main components from the TPB model, behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs. The categorization of the themes into the TPB components helped explain how each of the factors described by participants may have affected their perceptions concerning verbal intervention upon hearing the racist comments. Framing factors such as concern for the task, fear of causing the exchange to be uncomfortable and awkward, and uncertainty concerning the confederate’s sentiment as behavioral beliefs facilitated understanding. Further, framing factors involving how relevant others would have wanted participants to react in the context of the experiment as normative beliefs facilitated understanding. Finally, framing factors such as non-confrontational personality, past intervention experience, and the belief that racist beliefs cannot be changed as control beliefs also facilitated understanding.

However, several of the themes proved more difficult to readily apply to the TPB framework. This could be due, it seems, to two factors. First, although TPB does include a component that deals with social norms (normative beliefs, subjective norm), it seems that in the
context of racism, normative beliefs play a significant role. However, although TPB allows for explanation of how relevant others and even society in general may feel about a specific behavior, the TPB model does not offer a good fit for factors affected by society and relevant others that are not directly associated with the specific behavior. To explain, racism and how racism is defined is a highly social issue, in that perceptions concerning whether certain actions and statements are racist is influenced by socialization and society, and different people define racism in different ways. However, in the current study, the TPB framework was being utilized to explain participants’ intent to intervene upon hearing racist comments. Therefore, according to the theory, the specification of this behavior must be kept constant across all components of the model (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, one might ask, “Would relevant others want me to intervene upon hearing these racist comments?” However, it was evident that participants do not only ask themselves whether relevant others would want them to intervene in the given situation upon hearing the racist comments, but participants also considered how relevant others perceived racism in general. Moreover, decisions regarding whether or not to intervene do not only involve a consideration of how relevant others would view the specific behavior but also how relevant others would view things like the necessity for politeness or courtesy in the context, what type of intervention behaviors would be appropriate, and so forth. Thus, it seems, in this way that TPB requires further expansion in dealing with issues such as the aforementioned to be better suited for the context.

Second, when utilizing TPB in a qualitative study, as opposed to the quantitative contexts in which it is customarily utilized, it seems that TPB does not properly support the presence of conflicting norms. In a quantitative context, normative beliefs are considered along with subjects’ motivation to comply with the opinions of relevant others. Though there may be
numerous examples of relevant others, motivations to comply, in these cases, are quantified to bring about a prediction of how much an individual values specific outlooks. Thus, in quantitative methods, statistics may offer a solution to the problem of conflicting norms. However, in a qualitative context, conflicting norms are not dealt with with such ease. To illustrate, in the context of the present study, many participants spoke of their parents as relevant others. However, in some cases, participants noted that their parents represented different perceptions on the behavior at hand. For example, as previously mentioned, one participant said, “My mom probably would have just been like, ‘Don’t say anything.’ My dad probably would have said, ‘You need to say something.’” If a participant has an equal motivation to comply with his mother and father, how then does that participant decipher a clear subjective norm? The TPB model, at least in the context of qualitative methods, does not seem to offer a clear solution to this problem. Therefore, researchers should consider adjusting the normative component of the TPB model to account for conflicting norms, and future research should test how the adjusted component affects the utility of the model.

Practical Implications

Results from the current study have several practical implications. First, it was evident that many of the conditions that participants stated were necessary for them to intervene were conflicting. Thus, according to the participants, in the context of intervening in racism, the racist must be someone the participant knows, although confronting loved-ones is sometimes more difficult than confronting strangers; the victim must be someone the participant knows; the participant must not have a non-confrontational personality; it helps if the participant has past experience with racism, but if the participant has past experience with racism, he or she may be somewhat desensitized or think the racist comments are a joke; the racist and the participant
must share common personality traits; the participant must not fear the racist’s reaction; the participant must perceive an ability to change the racist’s mind; the participant must not anticipate future interaction with the racist; the participant must perceive future interaction with the racist; the participant and the racist must be alone when the comments are made; and the participant must have like-minded friends present at the time when the comments are made that would offer him support in his intervention. From this list, it is evident that the excuses individuals offer for not intervening upon hearing racist statements are plentiful and contradictory. It seems from this, many individuals believe they would intervene if the conditions were ideal, but it is likely that most people would never intervene because ideal conditions, for most, do not seem possible. Therefore, it is important to begin a more pronounced dialogue on the subject of racism, how it is defined, and the necessity for intervention in racism. This could involve a discussion of how not intervening could lead to guilt after the fact. Several participants spoke of this feeling, saying things such as, “I guess I’m kinda disappointed. I should’ve said something.”

Moreover, information garnered from this study concerning how rare intervention is and what factors may impede or facilitate intervention would be of great use to diversity consultants. Consultants who visit workplaces and organizations to discuss the importance of diversity sensitivity could benefit from the current study by utilizing the factors discussed by the participants to begin a dialogue with employees to determine common definitions of racism and expectations and appropriate methods for intervention in racism. The information would be valuable in similar ways in the context of schools, as students can begin to become more aware of issues of racism and speaking out against racism at an earlier age.
Methodological Implications

The current study brought about interesting methodological implications as well, as data collection was ended early after the confederate playing the role of the racist declined to continue. The individual cited difficulties with the subject matter, feeling uncomfortable playing the role, fear and discomfort concerning participant reactions, and he stated that he had “reached his breaking point.” Because of this, it became easy to draw certain parallels to the well-known Stanford Prison Study (SPS). This comparison comes as in the SPS, the experiment was abruptly ended early due to a high degree of uncertainty concerning the conditions and issues of participants taking on their roles too fully or convincingly (Zimbardo, 2009). It is possible that the racist confederate feared taking on his role too fully or convincingly as well, and thus, he opted to end his participation in the study.

This occurrence highlights the difficulties of utilizing confederates in this type of research. Specifically, when confederates are placed into significantly negative roles, in which researchers ask them to possibly offend others, there is a danger of actually negatively affecting the confederates. Additionally, in the case of the current study, the participant who exhibited the strongest intervention behaviors actually stood up during her angry intervention outburst, making the confederate begin to fear that others may become a physical threat. Thus, it is important, methodologically, to begin to brainstorm better safeguards for confederates in studies such as this. One possibility might be to always employ more than one confederate in for difficult roles, in an attempt to avoid emotional fatigue.

Limitations

There were several limitations that came about during the course of the study. The early ending to data collection was, in and of itself, a limitation, in that the planned quantitative
aspects of the study had to be removed or greatly revised, and the anticipated number of participants was greatly reduced. Further, the early ending brought about several additional limitations. Namely, because the early ending to data collection was unexpected, the six conditions of the experiment (Asian/low, Asian/moderate, Asian/high, Latino/low, Latino/moderate, Latino/high) were left with significantly disproportionate distributions of participants. This incongruity made deriving statistical results and conclusions from the data more difficult.

Additionally, because the post-interviews with participants were conducted by the researcher, and because the researcher is, herself, a minority member, it may have been that participants were more apt to speak of racism negatively. In fact, it was evident that some participants were quite conscience of the possibility of the researcher’s being a minority member affecting her perception of others’ opinions on matters of racism, as one participant began one response by saying, “I hope you don’t take this the wrong way…” Thus, the researcher’s minority membership may have affected some participants’ responses.

A final limitation was that the Asian and Latino assistants were different in age (25 versus 20) and general appearance (style of dress, etc.). This was a variable not controlled for, as, if participants perceived greater similarities with a specific confederate, that may have also affected intervention outcomes.

Suggestions for Future Research

The current study presents several opportunities for related future research. First, because the current study only utilized the Asian and Latino races as targets for racism, future studies should utilize others races in the context. A more common minority, such as African Americans,
or a more rare minority, such as Native Americans, could bring about significantly different results.

Additionally, in future studies, it is important to study the use of nonverbal intervention behaviors in addition to verbal behaviors. Although it was only the aim of this study to record verbal interventions, several participants described nonverbal behaviors they exhibited during the experiment, such as rolling their eyes or, shaking their heads, or “look[ing] at [the confederate] funny.” Therefore, important aspects of the research may be present in the nonverbal behaviors of the participants. Some of the past bystander intervention research has included study of the importance of nonverbal cues (DeJong, Marber, & Shaver, 1980; Marsh & Ambady, 2007).

Furthermore, future research should compare direct intervention behaviors to indirect intervention behaviors. Thus, although some participants would not choose to confront the racist directly, some participants may choose to report the racist’s comments to an authority if given the opportunity. Therefore, an experiment in which indirect intervention is made readily available will bring about an important experimental variable.

Additionally, although Citron et al. (1950) did study what types of intervention responses may bring about the most positive change, researchers should further study this in an effort to modernize previous researchers’ findings. It is inevitable that the most advantageous responses to racist remarks in the 1950’s will be quite different in the present.

Finally, future research should ask that some participants only complete a self-report questionnaire in which the same conditions are described in narrative form and they are asked whether or not they would intervene. It seems a real possibility that many of the respondents would report that they would intervene, but, when compared to experiment data such as the data
from the current study, this would indicate that self-report data in this area of research can be misleading.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to explore whether or not bystanders would verbally intervene after hearing racist comments, what factors affected bystander intervention, and how severity of the racist comments and the race of the target of racism would affect bystander intervention. Additionally, the study employed an application of TPB in an effort to determine its usefulness in the context, and the study included an experiment, absent of priming to the topic of racism, as well as post-interviews. Only three out of the 40 participants exhibited intervention behaviors, and all of those who intervened were Caucasian women in the condition of high severity with the Latino assistant as the target of racism. Although TPB was useful in explaining the majority of the data from the participant interviews, some aspects were not readily applicable. Social constructions of racism and its definition seem to have greatly affected results. Researchers should continue to explore this area of study, as results from further study may facilitate change concerning racism and intervention in racism in the future.
Figure 1. Theory of planned behavior model (Ajzen, 2006).
Table 1

*Frequency and Types of Intervention by Experimental Condition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Condition</th>
<th>Number of Participants In Experimental Condition</th>
<th>Number of Participants Who Intervened</th>
<th>Types of Intervention Behaviors Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race of Target: Asian Severity: Low</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of Target: Asian Severity: Moderate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of Target: Asian Severity: High</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of Target: Latino Severity: Low</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of Target: Latino Severity: Moderate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race of Target: Latino Severity: High</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Expressions of disbelief, questions asked, rejections of statements, accusations of prejudice, use of emotional terms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A

LOSS OF FACE QUESTIONNAIRE

Reproduced with permission from Dr. Nolan Zane.
Instructions: Use the scale below to indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement as it applies to you.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Moderately Disagree
3 = Mildly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree or Disagree
5 = Mildly Agree
6 = Moderately Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

___1. I am more affected when someone criticizes me in public than when someone criticizes me in private.
___2. During a discussion, I try not to ask questions because I may appear ignorant to others.
___3. I maintain a low profile because I do not want to make mistakes in front of other people.
___4. Before I make comments in the presence of other people, I qualify my remarks.
___5. I downplay my abilities and achievements so that others do not have unrealistically high expectations of me.
___6. I carefully plan what I am going to say or do to minimize mistakes.
___7. I say I may be in error before commenting on something.
___8. When I meet other people, I am concerned about their expectations of me.
___9. I hesitate asking for help because I think my request will be an inconvenience to others.
___10. I try not to do things that call attention to myself.
___11. I do not criticize others because this may embarrass them.
___12. I carefully watch others' actions before I do anything.
___13. I will not complain publicly even when I have been treated unfairly.
___14. I try to act like others to be consistent with social norms.
___16. I prefer to use a third party to help resolve our differences between another person and me.
___17. When discussing a problem, I make an effort to let the person know that I am not blaming him or her.
___18. When someone criticizes me, I try to avoid that person.
___19. When I make a mistake in front of others, I try to prevent them from noticing it.
___20. Even when I know another person is at fault, I am careful not to criticize that person.
___21. When someone embarrasses me, I try to forget it.
APPENDIX B

EXPERIMENT SCRIPTS
Asian
Low Severity:
1) I’m surprised I could understand her. They should really learn to speak our language.
2) Gosh, it would have been nice if that assistant could have brought us some sushi and rice to snack on, huh?

Moderate Severity
1) Wow, talk about fresh off the rice-paddy!
2) We should get her in here to do this puzzle since her people are supposed to be so smart.

High Severity:
1) I can’t believe they let that slant-eyed assistant give us the instructions. I don’t speak Chinese!
2) We better finish fast before I ask that chink assistant for her Green card.

Latino
Low Severity:
1) I’m surprised I could understand her. They should really learn to speak our language.
2) Gosh, it would have been nice if that assistant could have brought us some tacos and burritos to snack on, huh?

Moderate Severity:
1) Wow, talk about fresh off the boat!
2) We should get her in here to build this since her people are so good with construction.

High Severity:
1) I can’t believe they let that beaner give us the instructions. I don’t speak Spanish!
2) We better finish fast before I ask that wetback assistant for her Green card.
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
1). How would you describe your experience during the task?

2a). What, if anything, concerned you about your partner’s statements/behavior, and how would you characterize these statements/behaviors?

**If a participant answers that nothing concerned him/her during the activity, the researcher will reveal the purpose of the experiment by stating “The aim of this study was to evaluate whether or not individuals would verbally intervene when faced with racist comments.” Subsequently, these particular participants will be asked questions 3b, 6b, and 8b, rather than questions 4, 7, and 9.

3). Did you say anything to your partner concerning his statements?

4). Why did you confront your partner concerning his statements?

4b). Why did you not confront your partner concerning his statements?

5). How would you describe your attitude toward racism and speaking out against racism?

6). How do you think relevant others (meaning anyone significant in your life or significant to this specific context) would have wanted you to behave in this situation?

7). How difficult do you believe speaking out against the racist comments was in the given situation?

7b). How difficult do you believe speaking out against the racist comments would have been in the given situation?

8). What made speaking out against the statements difficult/easy?

9). What motivated you to speak out against the comments?

9b). What would have motivated you to speak out against the comments?
APPENDIX D

STUKAS’ (2006) INTERVENTION BEHAVIORS
1). Expressions of disbelief
2.) Questions asked
3). Rejections of statements
4). Accusations of prejudice
5). Use of emotional terms
6). Differences cited
7). Personal anecdotes recounted
8). Declarations of agreement
9). Admissions of prejudice
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