

Black Employee Mistreatment, Social Pain Minimization, and Employee Silence

by

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the relationship between mistreatment in the workplace and defensive employee silence and to explore the underlying socioemotional psychological mechanisms involved. The current study conducted two separate studies to address this empirical gap. The first study was a cross-sectional study examining Black American employees to provide initial evidence of the mediating role of social pain minimization (SPM) in the relationship between mistreatment and defensive employee silence. The results supported the hypothesis that SPM partially mediates the relationship between mistreatment and defensive employee silence. The second study employed a six-week longitudinal design to provide convergent evidence for SPM's hypothesized mediational role in the relationship between mistreatment and defensive silence. It was hypothesized that increasing experiences of mistreatment over time would predict increasing feelings of SPM, which would partially mediate increases in defensive silence. The findings from this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying the relationship between mistreatment and defensive employee silence, which can inform interventions aimed at reducing workplace mistreatment and promoting employee voice.

Black Employee Mistreatment, Social Pain Minimization, and Employee Silence

Black Americans experience more workplace mistreatment than White Americans, and these negative events have multiple adverse consequences for both employees and employers, including; stress, poor mental health, absenteeism, work withdrawal, decreased workplace satisfaction, productivity, and work quality (Klitzman et al., 1990; Krieger et al., 2006; Leiter et al., 2014; McCord et al., 2018; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Nunez-Smith et al., 2009; Rospenda et al., 2008; Sharma & Singh, 2016; Steers & Rhodes, 1978; Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2020). As this research attests, mistreatment hurts individuals and threatens organizational productivity and efficacy.

Another consequence of worker mistreatment is a lack of engagement and employee silence. Employee silence is the active, conscious decision to withhold vital information and suggestions about organization-related issues (Vakola & Bouradas, 2005). Employee silence has been linked to crucial individual and organizational outcomes such as stress, depression, decreased organizational functioning, lower work commitment, and job satisfaction (e.g., Cortina & Magley, 2003; Dyne et al., 2003; Vakola & Bouradas, 2005). Although the harmful consequences of employee silence are many (Beheshtifar et al., 2012; Pager et al., 2009), less work has focused on the antecedents of silence, and the research that has been done has primarily focused on perceptions of punishments and rewards within organizations (e.g., Brinsfield, 2012; Dyne et al., 2003; Vakola & Bouradas, 2005). The current work addresses these gaps in the empirical literature by exploring a potential socioemotional antecedent of employee silence: social pain minimization (SPM).

Drawing upon the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), I propose that among Black employees, social pain minimization represents a potential mechanism linking

workplace mistreatment and employee silence. Social pain minimization is operationalized as the perception that listeners devalue, dismiss, and downplay speakers' experiences with hurtful social events (i.e., negative emotions following exclusion, disrespect, and unfairness). As a product of their more frequent experiences with unfairness and discrimination, evidence suggests that Black individuals report feelings of minimization more than their White counterparts (Benbow et al., 2022). Moreover, minimization adversely influences well-being and is associated with heightened stress and poor mental health (Benbow et al., 2021; Benbow & Kunstman, 2023; Kinkel-Ram et al., 2020). According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), when people are stressed, they attempt to reduce the net loss of available resources. From this perspective, workplace mistreatment and subsequent feelings of pain minimization represent primary and secondary social stressors that may silence employees in organizational settings. When people experience mistreatment and feel their hurt has been invalidated, they may use silence to prevent further threats to their psychological (e.g., well-being), social (e.g., work relationships), and professional resources (e.g., status, promotion opportunities). Using this COR framework, I hypothesized that experiences with mistreatment (e.g., discrimination) and subsequent minimization would be associated with employee silence among Black employees. Moreover, mistreatment's effect on silence was expected to be partially mediated by social pain minimization. To test these hypotheses, I first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of a new measure of workplace SPM (Study 1), and then conducted cross-sectional (Study 2) and a longitudinal study with Black employees (Study 3).

Racial and Workplace Mistreatment

Workplace mistreatment refers to "a variety of organizational deviance, involving a situation in which at least one [individual] takes counter normative negative actions, or

terminates normative, positive actions, against another member" (Cortina & Magley, 2003).

Mistreatment often captures a wide range of interpersonal interactions, which range from incivility, harassment, and discrimination to physical violence. Below I outline the negative effects of mistreatment on the professional success and health of Black employees and the consequences of mistreatment on the culture and finances of affected organizations.

First, workplace mistreatment disproportionately negatively impacts the professional success of Black employees. For instance, most Black employees polled in a nationally representative sample reported race-based discrimination as a serious problem (Jackson, 1991). Black individuals report mistreatment at work more than other racial groups (McCord et al., 2018), sometimes experiencing more than twice the workplace mistreatment of their White and Asian peers (e.g., Krieger et al., 2006; Nunez-Smith et al., 2009). Subsequent meta-analyses assessing race-based experiences with harassment, bullying, and chronic incivility find that Black employees consistently experience greater workplace mistreatment than White employees (McCord et al., 2018).

Critically, mistreatment extends beyond hurtful workplace experiences (e.g., harassment, incivility) to encompass the absence of workplace opportunities essential to successful career advancement (e.g., mentoring and leadership evaluations). For example, using qualitative methods, Khosrovani and Ward (2011) found that most Black employees believed they had not received equal opportunities in job training, mentoring, and promotions relative to their White counterparts. Similarly, Rosette et al. (2008) found that race affects the judgment of employees' leadership abilities, which can undermine career advancement. Race has also been found to bias employee evaluations in merit-based reward systems, such that despite earning equivalent performance evaluations, Black employees received fewer merit points than White employees

(Castilla, 2008). When viewed collectively, the following research illustrates the many forms of mistreatment Black employees experience, ranging from hostile treatment (e.g., harassment, incivility, bullying) and the absence of rewards and career opportunities (e.g., training, mentoring, merit points). Black employees experience considerable interpersonal workplace mistreatment.

Second, race-based workplace mistreatment negatively affects the health and well-being of Black employees. In organizational contexts, workplace mistreatment is associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes (Leiter et al., 2014; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012; Rospenda et al., 2008; Sharma & Singh, 2016). For example, Din-Dzietham et al. (2004) found that Black individuals' self-reported stress following workplace racism was associated with spikes in blood pressure and physician-diagnosed hypertension (Din-Dzietham et al., 2004). Perceptions of race-based workplace mistreatment were also significantly associated with reported job stress for Black women and females (Mays et al., 1996; Wadsworth et al., 2006). The above research highlights workplace mistreatment's considerable negative professional and health effects on Black employees.

Third, in addition to these interpersonal harms, the mistreatment of Black employees also carries organizational costs. Specifically, workplace mistreatment damages organizational culture and collegiality. For instance, workplace mistreatment undermines perceptions of procedural justice, damages organizational climate, and fractures employee groups and teams (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Lau & Murnighan, 1998). Racial harassment in the workplace has also been linked to employees' emotional exhaustion and deficits in work engagement (Jun & Wu, 2021). Workplace mistreatment corrodes the healthy organizational culture and climate for groups to function efficiently.

Mistreatment also carries considerable financial costs. Mistreatment is inversely related to employee productivity and positively related to turnover intention and healthcare costs (Tepper et al., 2006; Willness et al., 2007). Moreover, the legal ramifications of racial discrimination are also high. For example, in 2020, over 22,000 racial discrimination cases were filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2020), resulting in over \$74 million in settlements. When viewed together, these results highlight mistreatment's staggering social and material costs. Due to the disparity in the experience of mistreatment and discrimination, Black individuals shoulder a disproportionate cost to these personal, professional, and organizational harms.

Social Pain Minimization

Just as mistreatment and discrimination contribute to racial disparities in health and organizational outcomes, so too does it increase the likelihood that Black employees will feel their social pains are invalidated at work. *Social pain* refers to the distress and negative effect created by hurtful experiences with others (e.g., disrespect, exclusion, and unfairness; MacDonald & Leary, 2005). By extension, social pain minimization (SPM) refers to the perception that listeners devalue, dismiss, and downplay speakers' hurt when they share their social pains with others. The experience of SPM occurs when people speak about their negative social experiences, and listeners are inattentive and apathetic to their feelings. For example, individuals experience SPM when they feel listeners dismiss their sadness after being excluded from a party with friends; or when individuals feel listeners downplay their distress after describing workplace disrespect. From this perspective, minimization represents a secondary stressor triggered after people share negative social events with others and feel those listeners are apathetic to their hurts (Benbow et al., 2021).

Empirical evidence suggests that Black individuals are particularly likely to have their social pain minimized. For instance, research on dehumanization and microinvalidations find that people devalue the emotional capabilities of Black individuals, and Black individuals frequently feel their racial experiences—or racial reality—are dismissed and marginalized (Albarello & Rubini, 2012; Cuddy et al., 2007; Goff et al., 2008; Leyens et al., 2000; Nadal, 2011; Pierce, 1970; Sue et al., 2008; Torres-Harding et al., 2012). Research also finds the people regularly underestimate the social hurts of Black relative to White individuals. For example, Deska et al. (2020) found that evaluators judged Black individuals as less sensitive to socially painful events than White individuals. When presented with the same hurtful event (e.g., being disrespected by coworkers; or being dumped by a romantic partner), participants consistently expected socially painful experiences to harm Black individuals less than White individuals. Moreover, these race-based biases in social pain judgments informed racial biases in support judgments. Evaluators expected Black individuals to feel less pain and consequently need less social support to cope with negative events than White individuals. This research presents convergent evidence from third-party judgments and first-person experiences that Black individuals' social pains are regularly minimized.

In keeping with this indirect evidence, a direct assessment of first-person experiences with SPM revealed that Black Americans felt their pain was minimized more than White Americans (Benbow et al., 2021). Subsequently, multiple studies have identified that SPM connects experiences with discrimination and negative health outcomes (e.g., stress, sleep quality, and suicidality; Benbow et al., 2021; Deska et al., 2020; Kinkel-Ram et al., 2021). Complementing research from developmental and clinical psychology, which finds that general emotion invalidation increases negative affect, disrupts emotion regulation, and threatens core psychological

needs, ultimately to the detriment of mental health (e.g., self-esteem; Bontempo, 2022; Thomsen et al., 2003; Yap et al., 2008), greater SPM was similarly associated with poorer well-being. In the wake of discrimination, Black individuals frequently feel SPM, which partially accounts for discrimination's negative effect on mental health and well-being. As this work collectively attests, SPM is associated with various negative health outcomes in the wake of discrimination.

Employee Silence

Sometimes employees choose to withhold their ideas, information, and opinions from organizations (i.e., employees engage in organizational silence). Researchers define silence as an active, conscious, intentional, and purposeful withholding of information that is based on particular motivations including feelings of resignation, fear, and self and organizational protection (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). For example, employees may refuse to disclose experiences about abusive supervision or choose not to share potential ideas about how to improve work outputs.

Although typically detrimental to organizational outcomes, research consistently finds that employee silence is pervasive within organizations (Johannesen, 1974; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). A recent poll revealed about 50% of employees do not regularly speak their minds at work and withhold feedback and opinions from colleagues and managers (Quantum Workplace & Fierce Conversations, 2017). When employees withhold critical information, it can have devastating effects on organizations. For example, silence has been implicated in large scale organizational crises like Enron's financial collapse, the Tailhook incident in the U.S. Air Force, epidemics of sexual harassment in the military, violence and corruption among police, and the *Columbia* space shuttle crash (Caproni & Finley, 1997;

Greenberg, 2010; Milliken & Morrison, 2003). By inhibiting communication, decision-making, and systems of error-detection, employee silence can critically wound organizations.

In addition to its negative effects on organizational efficiency and outputs, silence also harms employees. By withholding grievances and negative experiences, employee frustrations can mount and result in heightened absenteeism, learned helplessness, turnover intention, and potential counterproductive work behaviors (Chou & Chang, 2020). Silence has also been linked with numerous stress-related ailments including feelings of isolation, resentment, anxiety and physiological issues such as increased headaches (Maji & Dixit, 2020; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Perlow & Repenning, 2009; Perlow & Williams, 2003). Considerable evidence illustrates that silence negatively impacts employees' professional and psychological outcomes.

Finally, beyond harming employees and organizational efficiency, silence also corrodes organizational culture. Employee silence can allow mistreatment to go underreported and allow perpetrators to go unpunished (Maji & Dixit, 2020). For instance, after witnessing sexual harassment and abuse, employees may remain silent because they fear retaliation and threats to future job prospects (e.g., Milliken & Morrison, 2003). Studies suggest that 90% of victims of sexual harassment do not report their abuse to anyone in authority (Lonsway et al., 2013; Rosenthal, 2016). In an interview with 37 employees within an organization, Cunningham et al. (2021) found that perpetrators build "networks of complicity" to protect themselves from punishment and help disseminate misinformation regarding their actions. From this perspective, employee silence not only undermines personal work experiences and organizational efficiencies, but also contributes to toxic and hostile work environments that harm individuals and poison organizational culture.

Silence as a Multidimensional Construct

Rather than function as a single, unidimensional variable, several vital empirical papers have defined employee silence as a multidimensional construct (Brinsfield, 2012; Dyne et al., 2003; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). These constructs differ in antecedents, underlying motives, and the type of situation or concerns that influence silence (Brinsfield, 2012; Dyne et al., 2003). Dyne et al. (2003) created a conceptual framework that suggested three distinct types of silence: prosocial, acquiescent, and defensive. Critically, whereas acquiescent and defensive silence have been linked with negative interpersonal and organizational outcomes, prosocial silence has been linked with positive intentions and professional actions.

Prosocial silence occurs when employees withhold ideas, information, and opinions to benefit the organization. For instance, if supervisors make mistakes that could embarrass stakeholders, subordinates might intentionally withhold incriminating information to protect the organization's reputation. Prosocial silence is theorized as a relational maintenance strategy to help gain social capital and satisfy an organization's interpersonal needs of inclusion and control (Adler & Kwon, 2002). It is also suggested that employees with strong organizational and coworker attachments may use prosocial silence to benefit their colleagues and organizations (Umpress et al., 2010). Consistent with this reasoning, Hawass (2016) found that highly relational employees engage in prosocial silence if they are involved in networking and shared tasks. Prosocial silence positively correlates with organizational citizenship behavior, task performance, and job satisfaction (Acaray & Akturan, 2015; Hao et al., 2022). Unlike silence motivated by acquiescence and defensive concerns, prosocial silence offers some positive effects in organizations.

By comparison, acquiescent silence occurs when employees withhold ideas, opinions, and organizational information based on feelings of resignation. Acquiescent silence is suggested to be a disengaged behavior and is intentionally passive and uninvolved. When employees believe sharing opinions and input no longer benefits them and their organizational goals, they are more likely to stop contributing ideas and suggestions. For example, if employers fail to act on employees' repeated suggestions for improving office and work settings, they may engage in acquiescent silence. After these failed attempts at change, the employee ceases to make any suggestions regarding any other work-related topics. Employees who engage in acquiescence silence have given up hope of improvement and are more likely to engage in withdrawal behaviors (Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Subsequent research finds low organizational identification is an antecedent to acquiescent silence (Knoll & Van Dick, 2012). When people feel disconnected from their organizations, acquiescent silence often follows. Moreover, acquiescent silence is positively related to employee turnover intentions and strain (Knoll & Van Dick, 2012) and is negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Hao et al., 2022; Knoll & Van Dick, 2012). This research suggests that resignation and low work identification contribute to acquiescent silence, undermining work experiences and performance.

Finally, defensive silence occurs when employees withhold organizational information and ideas as a form of self-protection. Defensive silence is suggested to be an intentional, conscious strategy to withhold ideas and protect the self from threats (Schlenker & Weigold, 1989). Defensive silence is rooted in fear of consequences for speaking out. For instance, employees fear that sharing information will result in retaliation from their supervisors. Indeed, consistent with this example, past research on defensive silence has connected this experience with mistreatment, workplace ostracism, and abusive supervision (Dedahanov et al., 2021;

Jahanzeb et al., 2018; Kiewitz et al., 2016). Organizational environments shape defensive silence, as social cues give employees the impression of what to expect if they speak up (De Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Kim et al., 2005; Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). When employees perceive a climate of fear, it enhances their likelihood of engaging in defensive silence (Kiewitz et al., 2016). Conversely, when employees feel their organization is caring, supportive, and nurturing, their incidences of defensive silence decline (De Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Critically, defensive silence has several negative effects on employees and organizations. For instance, defensive silence is linked with harmful health behaviors, such as stress and cynicism (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Defensive silence is also negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Deniz et al., 2013; Hao et al., 2022; Knoll & Van Dick, 2012; Vakola & Bouradas, 2005). In a four-wave longitudinal study, defensive silence significantly predicted emotional exhaustion and organizational detachment across six months (Knoll et al., 2019). As this research illustrates, mistreatment, workplace ostracism, and a climate of fear are all related to defensive silence, which is related to deleterious consequences for employees and employers.

Mistreatment, Minimization, and Employee Silence in a Conservation of Resources Framework

In the current work, I use the framework of COR theory to integrate research on workplace mistreatment, social pain minimization, and employee silence. The conservation of resources theory argues that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect resources they centrally value (Hobfoll, 2010). COR theory also posits that stress occurs when key resources are lost or when there is a failure to gain key resources following significant effort (Hobfoll, 2010). COR theory predicts that individuals will try to minimize the net loss of resources under

conditions of heightened stress (Hobfoll, 1989). In this context, resources are operationalized as “physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs or are functional in achieving work goals or stimulating personal growth, learning, and development.” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Resources can be at the task level (such as performance feedback) and the interpersonal level (such as colleague support). In this framework, coworker support can be conceptualized as a resource that increases employee engagement and other positive work outcomes such as job satisfaction, well-being, and managing difficult work-related emotions (Ariani, 2015; Barnes & Lightsey, 2005; Jose & Mampilly, 2015; Knudsen et al., 2008; McGuire, 2007; Sloan, 2011). As COR theory argues, social support is a valuable organizational resource.

In line with a COR framework, workplace mistreatment, and SPM minimization represent primary and secondary stressors (respectively), which may cue resource protection strategies like defensive silence. From this perspective, workplace mistreatment and discrimination threaten personal (e.g., self-esteem), social (e.g., peer networks and status), and professional outcomes (e.g., promotion potential). In the wake of these negative events, employees may turn to their supervisors and peers to share negative emotions and distress. To the extent that employees feel their emotions are invalidated and experience SPM, these secondary events increase stress and elicit protective workplace behavior like defensive silence. For example, following workplace mistreatment, Black employees share their hurt with colleagues and feel their pain was minimized. COR theory would predict that these related stressors (i.e., mistreatment and subsequent SPM) should motivate employees to withdraw to protect their remaining organizational resources and social standing (Hobfoll et al., 2018). From

the perspective of COR theory, one way that individuals may seek to protect their remaining resources in the face of mistreatment and consequent SPM is to engage in silence.

In keeping with this theorizing, Tepper et al. (2006) found that abused subordinates engage in avoidance-coping behaviors (i.e., regulative maintenance tactics) to relieve discomfort associated with threatening people and situations and retain resources such as employment advancement opportunities. Conversely, Whitman et al. (2012) found that abusive supervision led subordinates to avoid feedback to prevent potential resource loss. This research suggests that employees choose silence over voice when they fear their input will be disregarded, ineffective, and elicit retaliation (Chamberlin et al., 2017). This evidence indicates that mistreatment and incivility are primary stressors, leading to potential SPM and silence as a resource-maintaining strategy.

The Contribution of the Current Work

The proposed research stands to make several contributions to work on mistreatment, SPM, and employee silence. First, the current work provides evidence for under-studied psychological processes connecting workplace mistreatment and behavior. Although discrimination and workplace mistreatment are consistently linked to negative health and professional outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression, stress, job satisfaction and productivity; Cropanzano et al., 2007; McCord et al., 2018; Namie, 2000; Richman et al., 1999; Rospenda et al., 2008; Tepper et al., 2006; Willness et al., 2007), far less work has examined the psychological and social processes that underlie this relation, particularly within organizational contexts. The current work intends to identify a socioemotional mechanism (i.e., SPM) that bridges mistreatment and negative

organizational responses like silence. The research addresses the untested mechanisms that link mistreatment and employee silence.

Second, the proposed work examines SPM's effects on organizational behaviors like employee silence. Previous work on SPM has exclusively focused on health-related outcomes and has not been tested in organizational contexts (Benbow et al., 2021; Kinkel-Ram et al., 2021). By testing SPM's link with employee silence, this study would be the first to extend SPM into organizational behavior and localizes SPM in an organizational context. In connecting SPM with employee silence, the current work stands to provide evidence that pain minimization may have downstream consequences for various organizational outcomes (e.g., stress, cynicism, and job dissatisfaction; Knoll & Van Dick, 2012; Morrison & Milliken, 2000)

Third, the current work also contributes to research on COR theory by answering Hobfoll et al. (2018) call for diversifying samples and assessing distinct cultural experiences of employees. In the U.S. cultural context, Black Americans report experiencing race-based discrimination and mistreatment in daily life (Kessler et al., 1999) and these experiences undermine professional development and impact health outcomes (McCord et al., 2018; Namie, 2000; Richman et al., 1999; Rospenda et al., 2008). Despite these race-based effects, little research on COR has considered how cultural factors like employee race influence resource-related behaviors like silence (employee performance; Singh et al., 2019). The current work addresses this gap in the COR literature and tests how race-based experiences with discrimination and SPM affect resource defensive behaviors like employee silence.

Lastly, by examining coworker experiences of SPM, the proposed study advances work on interpersonal crossover processes integral to COR theory. *Crossover* is the interpersonal

process that occurs when occupational stress or psychological strain experienced by one person affects others within the same environment. One proposed crossover mechanism is the indirect process, the mediating or moderating mechanism that intervenes between partners within the same work setting. Little research has investigated the effects of interpersonal processes on behavioral outcomes and potential resource-protecting strategies (Carlson et al., 2010). SPM represents such an interpersonal crossover process. By linking SPM with employee silence, the current work advances work on an important but understudied component of COR theory.

The Current Work

The current research tested relationships between workplace mistreatment, SPM, and employee silence with three studies. First, I analyzed a new, work-focused measure of SPM to ensure that the scale loads on a single latent factor (Study 1). Second, I then used this new measure to test relations between workplace mistreatment, SPM, and employee silence. Across these two studies, I hypothesized that experiences with mistreatment would be positively correlated with SPM and employee silence. I further hypothesized that feelings of SPM would partially mediate workplace mistreatment's effect on employee silence. To test these hypotheses, Study 2 used a cross-sectional design to identify direct and indirect relations. Study 3 used a longitudinal method to test whether increasing experiences with mistreatment heightened feelings of SPM and employee silence across six weeks.

Study 1

To better understand the SPM scale performed a CFA on a sample of responses from Black employees. The primary purpose of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is to assess the underlying factor structure and test a hypothesized measurement model. CFA provides insights

into the number of latent factors underlying the observed variables. By examining the factor loadings (the strength and pattern of relationships between factors and items), researchers can determine whether the scale aligns with the proposed theoretic. CFA provides statistical indices to evaluate the fit of the hypothesized measurement model to the observed data. Fit indices, such as chi-square, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), help assess how well the model fits the data, providing evidence for the validity of the proposed factor structure.al framework and identify potential modifications or improvements to the measurement model.

I hypothesize that the theoretical model of SPM is influenced by one latent factor. The model will be tested using fit indices, such as chi-square, comparative fit index (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The fit indices will evaluate the model's goodness of fit to the data and compare alternative models.

Methods

Participants. I sampled and collected data from 286 Black Americans (60.5% female; $M_{age}=33.06$ years [$SD_{age}=10.27$]; 70.5% worked full-time positions). Participants' modal income was \$50,000-\$75,000. Participants were recruited through the Prolific online participant platform. Data from 8 participants were incomplete and could not be analyzed.

Materials. *Social pain minimization.* We measured participants' feelings of social pain minimization with an eight-item measure (e.g., "Others do not fully appreciate how much disrespect and mistreatment hurt my feelings," "When I tell others about times I have been

treated unfairly, I feel people underestimate my hurt”; $\alpha = .93$). Participants expressed (dis)agreement on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Procedure. Participants completed the social pain minimization measures. Participants then provided demographic information, were thanked, debriefed, and compensated for their time. Data for Study 1 was collected in the Spring of 2022.

Results

Before conducting the CFA, I had to determine the number of factors for a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). I performed a parallel analysis to determine the number of factors to extract. Parallel analysis is a statistical method that compares the eigenvalues from the actual data with the eigenvalues from randomly generated datasets of the same size. Kaiser's criterion suggests retaining factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. This approach assumes that factors with eigenvalues above 1.0 explain more variance than a single observed variable. The parallel analysis indicated that the first eigenvalue of our dataset (6.3) exceeded the corresponding eigenvalues generated from randomly generated data, suggesting the extraction of one factor for our model.

I tested the fit of two nested one-factor CFA models to our data. The first model was an unrestricted model, which is a type of model where all observed variables are hypothesized to load on a single latent factor without any restrictions on the factor loadings or covariances between the observed variables. The second model was a restricted model, where all observed variables are hypothesized to load on a single latent factor, but with certain restrictions imposed on the factor loadings or covariances between the observed variables.

The first model yielded a chi-square statistic of 86.568 ($df = 20$, $p < .001$), a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of .97, a Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of .96, and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of .11. The second model, a restricted model with one factor, yielded a chi-square statistic of 175.6 ($df = 34$, $p < .001$), a CFI of .94, a TLI of .95, and an RMSEA of .12. A comparison of the two models revealed that the chi-square difference test was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 89.10$, $\Delta df = 14$, $p < .001$), indicating that the unrestricted model fit the data significantly better than the restricted model. Additionally, the CFI and TLI indices were higher, and the RMSEA index was lower for the unrestricted model than for the restricted model, further supporting the superior fit of the unrestricted model.

Based on these results, we concluded that the unrestricted model with one factor better fits our data than the restricted model with one factor.

Discussion

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results support the hypothesized one-factor model of social pain minimization. Interpreting the results of the unrestricted single factor model involves examining the factor loadings to understand the relationship between the latent factor and the observed variables. The high factor loadings indicate that the observed variable is strongly associated with the latent factor. In this case, the eigenvalues suggest a single latent factor underlying the SPM scale.

The model fits the data well, as indicated by several fit indices including Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and chi-square goodness-of-fit test. The chi-square test was significant, indicating discrepancies

between the model and the data. However, the other fit indices suggest that the model reasonably approximates the data.

The factor loadings indicate that all observed variables had significant and strong loadings on their respective factors, which supports the construct validity of the measures. The correlations among the items were positive and significant. The results also suggest that the one-factor model of SPM is a better fit for the data than alternative models. This supports the idea that SPM is a single-dimensional construct.

Overall, the CFA results strongly support the validity of the hypothesized one-factor model of social pain minimization and the measure used to operationalize it. Future research could examine the generalizability of these findings across different populations and contexts and investigate the predictive validity of the SPM measures for important outcomes for interpersonal relationships.

Study 2

Guided by the results of Study 1, the current study provided an initial, cross-sectional test of the hypothesized mediational role of SPM in the mistreatment-to-silence relation. Full and part-time employed Black adult participants completed measures of mistreatment, SPM, and silence. Mistreatment and SPM were expected to relate positively to defensive silence. Moreover, I expected that SPM would partially account for mistreatment's effect on defensive silence.

Methods

Participants. A priori power analysis using a medium-sized effect estimate ($r=.30$, $\alpha=.05$) indicated that 76 participants would provide 80% power for primary multiple regression

analyses. Participants for this study were recruited using the online participant platform Prolific. Prolific is a widely used platform that allows researchers to select participants based on pre-set criteria. For this study, we specifically targeted African-American individuals over 18 currently employed. To be eligible to participate, participants needed to identify as Black, African-American, or Multi-racial with Black ancestry and indicate they held full or part-time employment. Utilizing Prolific provided the advantage of obtaining a sample that was not constrained by geographical location, allowing for greater generalizability across the United States context. To ensure maximum power, I over-sampled and collected data from 278 Black Americans (60.5% female; $M_{age}=33.06$ years [$SD_{age}=10.27$]; 70.5% worked full-time positions). Participants' modal income was \$50,000-\$75,000. Data from three participants were incomplete and could not be analyzed. Sensitivity analysis indicated this sample would have 80% power ($\alpha=.05$) to detect effects with multiple regression (two predictors) as small as $r=.167$.

Materials. *Mistreatment.* To measure mistreatment within the workplace, the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS; Cortina et al., 2001) measured the frequency of participants' experiences of disrespectful, rude, or condescending behaviors from superiors and coworkers at work. Responses were indicated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Participants were asked, "During the last six weeks at your current employer, have you been in a situation where your coworkers or supervisors..." with sample items including "Made unwanted attempts to draw you into a discussion of personal matters," "Ignored or excluded you from professional camaraderie?" "Put you down or was condescending to you?" ($\alpha=.90$). Cortina et al. (2001) showed the reliability and construct validity of this measure.

Social Pain Minimization. SPM was measured with a modified version of Benbow et al. (2021) eight-item self-report measure from Study 1. Participants responded on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Items were averaged such that larger values indicate greater SPM.

Employee Silence. The three types of silence were measured with the scale created by Van Dyne et al. (2003), which includes five items for each dimension. Example items include: “I passively withhold ideas, based on resignation” (acquiescent silence; $\alpha=.89$), “I do not speak up and suggest ideas for change, based on fear” (defensive silence; $\alpha=.89$), and “I protect proprietary information to benefit the organization” (prosocial silence; $\alpha=.82$). Participants responded on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Higher scores indicate more frequent use of silence behaviors.

Procedure. Participants completed the aforementioned social pain minimization, mistreatment, and employee silence measures in random order. Participants then provided demographic information and were thanked, debriefed, and compensated for their time. Data for Study 2 was collected in the Spring of 2022.

Results

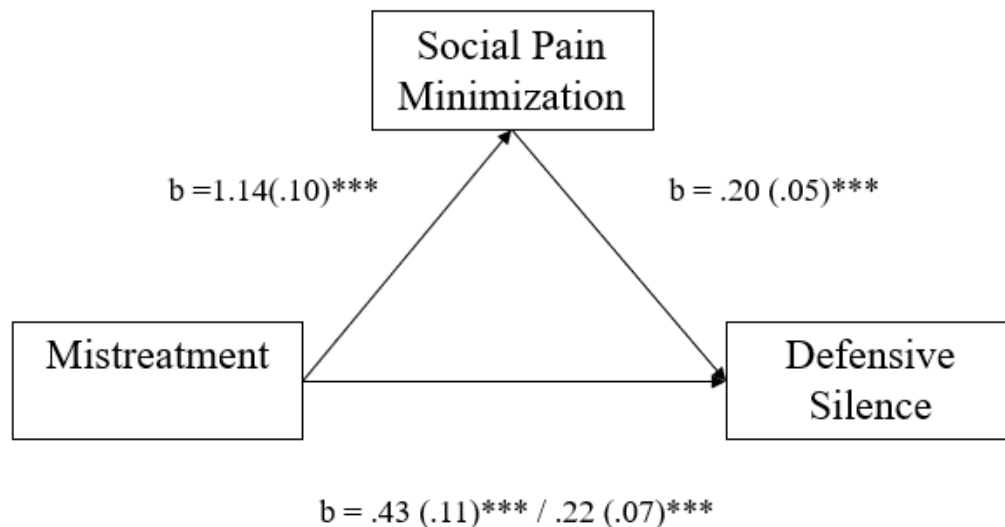
Table 1 features descriptive statistics and bivariate relations between study variables for Study 2. As hypothesized, mistreatment, SPM, and defensive silence had significant positive relationships.

Table 1. Zero-order correlations for SPM, incivility, and defensive silence variables in Study 2.
 $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Mean (SD) Study 1</i>	3.46 (1.68)	2.00 (.86)	2.83 (1.38)	3.04 (1.47)	4.27 (1.48)
1. Social Pain Minimization	-	.	.		
2. Incivility	.58***	.	.		
3. Defensive Silence	.41***	.40***	.		
4. Acquiescence Silence	.36***	.41***	.77***		
5. Prosocial Silence	.09	.03	.03	.04	

To test whether social pain minimization partially accounted for mistreatment's relationship with defensive silence, I used PROCESS model 4 with 10,000 bootstrapped samples (Hayes, 2013). Incivility's effect on defensive silence was partially mediated by SPM, $b = -.22$, $SE = .08$, 95% CI [.10, .37]).

Figure 1. Social pain minimization partially mediates mistreatment on defensive silence (Study 2). $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.



Discussion

The current results provide initial evidence consistent with SPM's hypothesized mediating role in the mistreatment-employee silence relation. Mistreatment and SPM were positively related to defensive silence. Also in keeping with hypotheses, SPM partially mediated mistreatment's effect on defensive employee silence. These results suggest that in the wake of workplace mistreatment, feeling others invalidate and minimize one's social hurts may contribute to defensive silence.

Defensive silence, mistreatment, and SPM were also positively related to acquiescent silence. Although unexpected, this finding is consistent with COR theory, as acquiesced silence is defined as the silence generated from feelings of resignation. In keeping with this theorizing, it makes sense that the feelings of SPM mediate mistreatment's effect on acquiescent silence. When people share mistreatment with others and feel others are unresponsive to their hurts, resignation and acquiescent silence may follow.

Although the current results provide initial evidence for SPM's hypothesized mediational role connecting mistreatment and defensive silence, these results are limited by their cross-sectional nature. To provide stronger causal evidence, Study 3 used a longitudinal design to test SPM's mediating role in the relation between mistreatment and defensive silence. The advantage of Study 3's longitudinal design is the ability to collect data on the same variables at multiple time points, allowing me to observe changes in the key variables and associations between these changes across the study's six-week design. By testing effects across this six-week period, the study's longitudinal design will also allow me to observe the temporal sequence of events more clearly (i.e., increases in mistreatment lead to increases in SPM and defensive silence).

Study 3

The current study aimed to provide a more robust test of SPM's mediational role in the relation between workplace mistreatment and defensive silence. To achieve this, a longitudinal study was conducted to assess experiences of mistreatment, SPM, and defensive employee silence across six weeks. In considering the timeframe for this longitudinal study, it is important to consider the findings of Matthews and Ritter (2016) regarding the impact of recall windows on bivariate relationships involving incivility and its antecedents and outcomes. Their research revealed that the observed relationships varied depending on the length of the recall window. Specifically, bivariate relationships with incivility tended to weaken as respondents were asked to consider longer recall windows. These results indicate that a shorter recall window may be more suitable for understanding the relationship between incivility and other outcomes, as it allows for a more focused understanding of individuals' incivility experiences. Selecting a longer timeframe between assessments may obscure the dynamic nature of the relationship between incivility and these constructs. Therefore, in this longitudinal study, a six-week timeframe was chosen to capture a sufficiently meaningful and accurate representation of participants' experiences and to avoid potential distortion caused by prolonged recall windows.

The mistreatment, SPM, and defensive silence were measured at three different time points within the six-week period. Time 1 (T1) captured experiences of the preceding three weeks before participants commenced the study. Three weeks later, participants completed Time 2 (T2) measures and reported on experiences during the intervening weeks. Finally, three weeks after T2, participants completed Time 3 measure (T3), which similarly assessed experiences with mistreatment, SPM, and silence during study weeks 3-6. By examining changes in mistreatment, SPM, and defensive silence over time, this study was able to capture the temporal sequence of

events between these constructs. Specifically, changes in mistreatment from T1-T2 were analyzed to observe whether they led to increases in SPM from T2-T3, ultimately predicting an increase in defensive silence across the study's six-week period (T1-T3). It was hypothesized that increases in SPM would partially mediate the effect of mistreatment on defensive silence.

Methods

Participants. Similar to Study 2, we specifically targeted African-American individuals over 18 that indicated they were currently employed. Black Americans were recruited via the Prolific platform. An a priori power analysis using a medium-sized effect estimate ($r=.30$, $\alpha=.05$) indicated that 168 participants would provide 80% power for mediation analyses. However, anticipating 30% attrition and attention check failures, we oversampled and recruited a sample of 376 full/part-time employed Black American adults. After attrition, there were 287 participants with data from all 3-time points. 68 Participants who worked from home were dropped from the final analysis after one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference in experiences in incivility between participants who worked from home and those who did not. Seven participants were dropped due to failed attention checks. 211 participants were left for final analysis.

Materials. *Mistreatment.* To measure mistreatment within the workplace, I used the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS; Cortina et al., 2001) from Study 1 and 2.

Social Pain Minimization. SPM was measured with Benbow et al. (2021) measure from Study 2. Items were averaged such that larger values will indicate more SPM.

Social Pain Minimization Frequency. Frequencies of experiences of social pain minimization were measured using a modified scale from the 8-item social pain minimization scale from study 1. Participants were asked about the frequency they experienced socialization after negative

social experiences at work (e.g., In the previous two weeks, coworkers or supervisors underestimated how much being excluded or disrespected hurts my feelings. $\alpha = .92$) Participants answered on a Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (often – 7+ times). Items were averaged such that larger values indicate more frequency of social pain minimization.

Employee Silence. The three types of silence were measured with the scale created by Van Dyne et al. (2003), which includes five items for each dimension. Higher scores indicate higher involvement in silence behaviors.

Procedure

Participants completed measures online at three timepoints across a 6-week period. Incivility, employee silence, and SPM were measured at T1-T3. T1 measures asked about experiences in the preceding 3-weeks and T2 measures will ask about experiences in the intervening 3-weeks between T1 and T2. T2 measures asked about experiences in the preceding 3-weeks and T3 measures asked about experiences in the intervening 3-weeks between T2 and T3. Data was collected via Prolific.

Bivariate Results

Mistreatment, SPM, and defensive silence were again closely related (See Table 2).

Mistreatment across all three-time points was related to greater SPM and higher defensive silence. As hypothesized and in keeping with the results of Study 2, SPM was also positively related to mistreatment and defensive silence. Similar to study 2, SPM and mistreatment were positively associated with acquiescent silence.

Acquiescent silence and defensive silence were also strongly correlated, indicating that individuals may use silence behaviors due to both feelings of resignation as well as a form of self-protection.

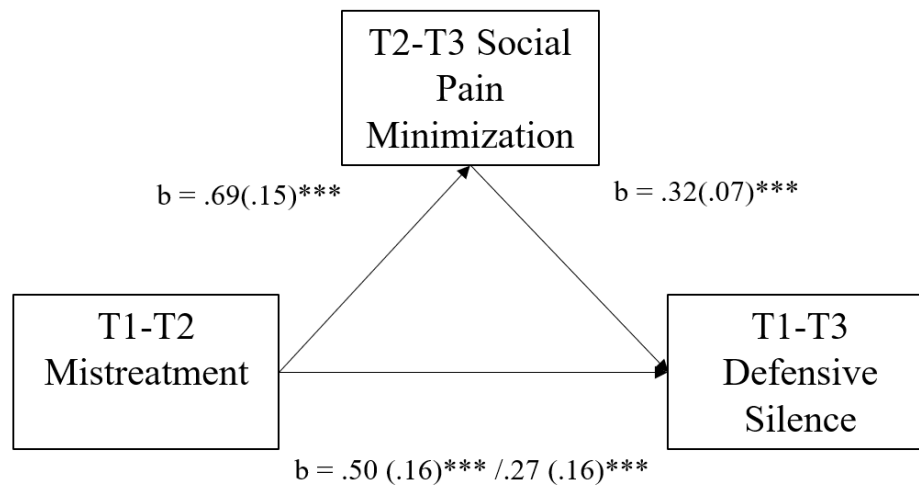
Table 2. Zero-order correlations for SPM, incivility, and variables across all three timepoints (T1/T2/T3) in Study 3. * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<i>Mean</i>	1.64	1.63	1.58	2.81	2.76	2.80	2.36	2.88	2.80	2.42	3.14	3.15	2.46	4.40	4.47
<i>(SD)</i>	(.80)	(.77)	(.73)	(1.64)	(1.66)	(.97)	(1.01)	(1.58)	(1.49)	(1.05)	(1.63)	(1.65)	(.94)	(1.44)	(1.50)
1. T1 Incivility	-	.													
2. T2 Incivility	.72***	-													
3. T3 Incivility	.66***	.72***	-												
4. T1 SPM	.75***	.63***	.59***	-											
5. T2 SPM	.58***	.71***	.52***	.64***	-										
6. T3 SPM	.57***	.66***	.69***	.64***	.66***	-									
7. T1 Def Sil	.57***	.47***	.44***	.63***	.50***	.54***	-								
8. T2 Def Sil	.50***	.57***	.49***	.48***	.55***	.51***	.65***	-							
9. T3 Def Sil	.45***	.46***	.48***	.46***	.45***	.58***	.68***	.70***	-						
10. T1 Acq Sil	.43***	.46***	.39***	.58***	.53***	.48***	.84***	.64***	.65***	-					
11. T2 Acq Sil	.43***	.53***	.39***	.44***	.53***	.45***	.58***	.82***	.62***	.70***	-				
12. T3 Acq Sil	.38***	.41***	.41***	.38***	.45***	.49***	.62***	.64***	.81***	.71***	.70***	-			
13. T1 Pro Sil	.13*	.09	.12*	.17***	.11*	.08	.22***	.05	.07	.18***	.02	.07	-		
14. T2 Pro Sil	.03	.13*	.11	.08	.12*	.11	.07	.26***	.14**	.04	.16**	.04	.39***	-	
15. T3 Pro Sil	-.04	.00	.03	.00	.01	.02	.03	.02	.16**	.01	.01	.13*	.48***	.54***	-

SPM Mediates Mistreatment's effect on Defensive Silence

I conducted a mediation analysis using the PROCESS macro for SPSS Model 4 with 10,000 bootstrapped samples (Hayes, 2013) to test the hypothesis that the relationship between changes in mistreatment (Time 1 to Time 2) and changes in defensive silence (Time 1 to Time 3) would be mediated by changes in social pain minimization (Time 2 to Time 3). With this model in mind, T2 incivility was entered as a predictor of T3 defensive silence. T3 SPM was entered as the model mediator. T1 incivility, T1 defensive silence, and T2 SPM were entered as covariates to test for change relationships among variables. The results showed that increasing mistreatment (Time 1 to Time 2) was positively associated with increased feelings of social pain minimization (Time 2 to Time 3). Critically, increasing SPM mediated the effect of increasing mistreatment on increasing defensive silence $b=.22$, $SE=.07$, 95% CI[.09, .38].

Figure 2. Mediation Analysis of the Relationship between changes from Time 1 to Time 2 Mistreatment, changes from Time 2 and Time 3 Social Pain Minimization and changes from Time 1 to Time 3 Defensive Silence. *** denotes $p < .001$.



Discussion

The current longitudinal results support the work's main hypothesis that workplace mistreatment increases feelings of SPM, ultimately resulting in increased defensive silence. Using a 3-timepoint study over six weeks, I observed the hypothesized temporal sequence of events. Specifically, I hypothesized that increasing experiences with mistreatment across the first three weeks of the study would predict increasing feelings of SPM during weeks 3-6, which would partially mediate increases in defensive silence across the study's full duration. As hypothesized, mediational analyses indicated that increasing experiences with mistreatment from weeks 1-3 were positively associated with increased feelings of SPM from weeks 3-6, ultimately predicting increasing defensive silence across the study's 6-week period.

The current study's longitudinal results provide convergent evidence for SPM's mediational role in the relationship between incivility and defensive silence. First, in keeping with Study 2, T2 mistreatment predicted defensive silence six weeks later at T3. These results indicate the negative effects of workplace mistreatment on defensive silence. Across six weeks, mistreatment's effects lingered to the detriment of defensive silence. Second, T2-T3 SPM mediated the relationship between T1-T2 mistreatment and T1-T3 defensive silence. These results indicated that increases in mistreatment trigger an increase in SPM, accounting for increased defensive silence. In the wake of mistreatment, Black employees experience SPM, which leads to resource-protecting responses like defensive silence.

General Discussion

Racial discrimination is a costly national problem that hinders Black employees, diverse teams, and organizations. Previous studies indicate that Black employees face more workplace mistreatment than other ethnic groups (McCord et al., 2018). These work stressors hinder

professional and organizational success (Tepper et al., 2006; Willness et al., 2007). However, despite evidence of mistreatment's negative consequences, little research has considered mechanisms underlying these effects, and even less work has considered the perspectives of minority employees. The current research addresses these gaps in the literature by testing whether social pain minimization bridges mistreatment's effect on employee silence. Using a COR framework, I argue that mistreatment and subsequent SPM represent stressors that prompt resource protection strategies, particularly defensive silence. I hypothesized that workplace mistreatment would trigger SPM, resulting in defensive silence. The results from three studies provide consistent support for this prediction. Using CFA, Study 1 first provided evidence that my measure of SPM loaded onto the hypothesized single, latent variable within the construct of social pain minimization. These results allow me to make more accurate and meaningful interpretations of the data from Studies 2 and 3. Study 2 then provided an initial, cross-sectional test of the hypothesized mediational role of SPM in the relation between mistreatment and defensive silence. Mistreatment and SPM were positively related to defensive silence. Moreover, in line with predictions, SPM partially mediated this effect and accounted for part of the mistreatment effect on defensive silence. Consistent with theorizing that mistreatment and SPM might lead employees to become dejected, subsequent analyses indicated that SPM mediated mistreatment's effect on acquiescent, but not prosocial silence. These findings suggest that experiences of mistreatment and SPM can lead to silence motivated by self-protection and feelings of resignation.

Study 3 tested the temporal sequence of events between changes in mistreatment, SPM, and defensive silence across six weeks. As hypothesized, increasing experiences with mistreatment in the first three weeks were positively associated with increased feelings of SPM

from the last three weeks, ultimately predicting increasing defensive silence across the study's 6-week period. In keeping with hypotheses, workplace mistreatment increases SPM, which then increases defensive silence. Consistent with Study 2, mistreatment and SPM were positively related to acquiescent (but not prosocial) silence across all three-time points. Like defensive silence, increasing experiences with mistreatment from T1-T2 were positively associated with increased feelings of SPM from T2-T3 and predicted increasing acquiescent silence across the study's full duration (i.e., T1-T3). Overall, the three studies provide convergent evidence in keeping with my central hypothesis, showing that mistreatment and SPM were positively related to defensive silence, with SPM partially mediating mistreatment's effect on silence.

Implications of the Current Work

The current work contributes to research on workplace mistreatment and discrimination, social pain minimization, silence, and COR theory. First, the current work provides evidence for a specific underlying psychological process that links workplace mistreatment and employee silence. Although past work has linked workplace mistreatment with employee silence (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001), little work has explored the psychological and social processes underlying this relation. The current research fills this empirical gap by providing evidence that social pain minimization mediates mistreatment's effect on defensive and acquiescent silence.

Understanding how these processes affect employees provides insight into experiences with mistreatment and subsequent feelings of SPM. In the wake of mistreatment, employees may feel their hurts are invalidated, leading to defensive responses like silence. Results from two studies support this prediction and find that workplace mistreatment increases feelings of SPM, subsequently increasing defensive and acquiescent silence. These findings extend research by

identifying SPM as a key socioemotional mechanism underlying workplace mistreatment's effect on silence.

Second, these findings extend research on SPM by providing the first evidence linking social pain minimization and workplace behaviors (i.e., silence). Although previous work has connected social pain minimization and health-related outcomes (e.g., depression, anxiety, sleep, stress, suicidality; Benbow et al., 2021; Kinkel-Ram et al., 2021; Kunstman et al., 2023), research has not tested SPM's effect on behavior or workplace outcomes. The current findings extend SPM research into organizational contexts. The current findings suggest that experiencing social pain minimization can lead to silent behaviors in the workplace.

Third, these findings extend the Conservation of Resources theory in two critical ways. Specifically, by focusing on the socio-emotional experiences of Black employees, the current work answers Hobfoll et al. (2018) call for diversifying samples and assessing distinct cultural experiences of employees. By broadening the scope of research to include more diverse samples and cultural experiences, researchers can better understand how individuals from different backgrounds respond to stress and adversity in the workplace. Furthermore, diversifying samples and assessing cultural experiences can help identify potential cultural differences in how resources are defined, managed, and mobilized in different contexts, ultimately leading to a more nuanced and context-specific understanding of COR theory. The current findings address these goals and enhance the diversity of research on COR theory by providing evidence that for Black employees, workplace mistreatment sets the stage for SPM, which ultimately increases defensive and acquiescent silence.

Lastly, this work also advances in research on COR theory by investigating under-explored aspects of the interpersonal crossover process. Crossover refers to the interpersonal

process by which occupational stress or psychological strain experienced by one person affects others within the same environment. In the current work, SPM is a potential mediating factor within the indirect crossover process. Our study revealed that when individuals' feelings are dismissed or invalidated by their coworkers, they may withhold information regarding mistreatment as a protective strategy. In this case, the interpersonal crossover process involves feelings of emotion invalidation from professional colleagues. The current research contributes to research on COR theory generally and the crossover process specifically by highlighting that invalidating responses from coworkers can increase protective responses like defensive silence. Furthermore, research on indirect processes can help identify the factors that buffer the negative effects of stress and resource depletion. Overall, research on the indirect processes related to COR theory is critical for developing a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how stress and resources impact individuals and groups.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations of the current work offer opportunities for future research. My work looked at the experiences of Black Americans, given existing research that Black employees experience greater workplace mistreatment than employees from other racial groups and mistreatment (e.g., discrimination) is related to SPM (Benbow et al., 2021; McCord et al., 2018). Although this work adds to research on racism in the workplace and SPM's mediating role in these effects, it is limited by focusing only on Black Americans, making it difficult to generalize the findings to other stigmatized groups. For instance, research suggests that members of the LGBTQ+ community experience minority stress and are vulnerable to workplace mistreatment (Brown & Brooks, 1982; Woodford et al., 2014; Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016). In particular, Woodford et al.

(2014) found that sexual minority college students were more likely to experience incivility at school than their heterosexual counterparts. Zurbrügg and Miner (2016) found that sexual minority women reported the highest levels of incivility at work. These findings suggest that members of the LGBTQ+ community may be at risk for mistreatment and resultant SPM in the workplace. A future study could explore the relationship between workplace mistreatment and SPM among members of the LGBTQ+ Community. One interesting extension could look at identity concealment (i.e., concealing sexual identity to avoid workplace mistreatment). I hypothesize that members of the LGBTQ+ community who experience mistreatment in the workplace will be more likely to experience SPM, and this relationship will be mediated by perceived organizational support and identity concealment. Beals et al. (2009) found that those who disclosed their sexual identity reported greater perceived social support from people around them. Identity concealment could impact the experience of SPM, whereas individuals who conceal their identity may feel less social support and report more SPM. Future research could examine the impact of mistreatment on SPM and silence in a sample of LGBTQ+ individuals to determine if the results are similar to those found in the current study, further advancing our understanding of the interpersonal crossover process and social pain minimization in the workplace for marginalized groups.

In the current study, the focus was on the experiences of Black Americans across all areas of employment. Although the work provides valuable insight into mistreatment's effect on SPM and ultimately employee silence, one potential avenue for further exploration could be the impact of environmental factors on mistreatment and employee silence. Cortina et al. (2017) suggests that workplace perpetrators are more likely to take advantage of lax environments and instigate incivility when there is less reason to believe that doing so will be met with consequences.

Previous research indicates that organizational leadership and workplace culture influence establishing norms preventing mistreatment or allowing it to flourish. For instance, civility norms and intervention programs developed to foster such norms have been found to reduce workplace incivility (Leiter et al., 2014; Walsh et al., 2012). A potential follow-up study could investigate the impact of organizational leadership and workplace culture on workplace incivility and employee silence, focusing on a specific industry or sector. I hypothesize that workplaces with a culture that emphasizes civility and has intervention programs to prevent incivility will have lower levels of mistreatment, SPM, and employee silence compared to workplaces that lack such programs. Incorporating these environmental factors into future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the environmental factors that drive incivility.

Future research might also focus on participant characteristics, which could moderate reactions to mistreatment and SPM. For instance, research might examine how personality traits, such as agreeableness or neuroticism, may impact reactions to mistreatment and the subsequent experience of SPM. Individuals with high levels of neuroticism may be more likely to experience negative emotions at work and be less socially skilled, making them more vulnerable to mistreatment and less likely to speak up about it (Brinsfield, 2012; Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). Consequently, mistreatment and neuroticism might interact, such that those high in neuroticism experience greater SPM than those low in neuroticism. A potential follow-up study could investigate the relationship between personality traits and reactions to mistreatment in the workplace. Guided by this work, I predict that following discrimination, individuals high in neuroticism might experience more SPM and ultimately rely on silence behaviors more than individuals low in neuroticism. Future research might test whether personality characteristics like neuroticism moderate mistreatment's effects on SPM and silence.

Lastly, future research could explore how the status of support providers shapes SPM. For instance, research might examine whether mistreatment's effects on SPM and silence are moderated by the perpetrator's characteristics, such as whether the mistreatment came from a supervisor or coworker. Gathering more granular data on the experiences of SPM and mistreatment and how one's role within the organization impacts them could help identify potential interventions to prevent or address mistreatment from specific sources within the workplace. The Conservation of Resource theory suggests that individuals aim to acquire and safeguard resources, including social capital, and that resource loss can lead to negative outcomes. Research has found that supervisor mistreatment may be more damaging to social capital than coworker mistreatment because supervisors are influential authority figures who control resources such as promotion and demotion decisions (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Schilpzand et al., 2016). However, confronting supervisors can be risky as they may interpret any suggestion as a critique of their leadership abilities, and some may retaliate (Detert & Burris, 2007). Conversely, coworker incivility can have a strong effect on social capital since coworkers are more involved in everyday workplace interactions and can influence the quality of other relationships within the organization (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). In light of these competing predictions, future research might test whether the status of support providers (supervisor v. coworker) shapes SPM and downstream organizational behaviors like employee silence. Understanding the effect of status on SPM stands to not only extend research on minimization, but advance research on COR theory, which theorizes but has rarely tested how professional characteristics affect resource related responses.

Closing Remarks

The present research sheds light on workplace discrimination's detrimental effects on Black employees. The results provide evidence that mistreatment is linked to social pain minimization, which subsequently leads to coping strategies like defensive and acquiescent silence. These findings underscore the importance of addressing workplace mistreatment and the need for organizations to support employees who experience mistreatment to minimize the negative consequences of social pain minimization on employee well-being and organizational success. In the wake of discrimination, employees sometimes feel their emotions have been invalidated, which increases protective responses like silence.

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