

# Journal of Applied Psychology

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Online First Publication, April 28, 2022. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/apl0001016>

### CITATION

King, D. D., Fattoracci, E. S. M., Hollingsworth, D. W., Stahr, E., & Nelson, M. (2022, April 28). When Thriving Requires Effortful Surviving: Delineating Manifestations and Resource Expenditure Outcomes of Microaggressions for Black Employees. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/apl0001016>

# When Thriving Requires Effortful Surviving: Delineating Manifestations and Resource Expenditure Outcomes of Microaggressions for Black Employees

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Although overt racism is condemned by many organizations, insidious forms of racism persist. Drawing on the conservation of resources framework (Hobfoll, 1989), this article identifies forms and outcomes of racial microaggressions—daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities that denigrate individuals from racially minoritized groups (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). Leveraging survey data from 345 Black employees, open-ended question qualitative insights delineate three overarching themes of workplace microaggression toward Black employees: anti-Black stereotype expression, racialized role assignment, and interactional injustice. We also detail how these themes manifest in nine distinct ways. Then, we model the cognitive and emotional resource recovery and protection processes that Black employees engage in to overcome workplace microaggressions. Quantitative results demonstrated that workplace microaggressions related to subsequent resource replenishment (i.e., co-rumination, or discussing feelings and venting about problems with coworkers; Rose, 2002) and protection (i.e., racism-related vigilance, or mentally preparing for anticipated racism; Clark et al., 2006) efforts. Further, results suggested undesirable effects of microaggressions on burnout and job satisfaction. Finally, we found a positive relationship between resourcing efforts and job satisfaction but found no support for trait resiliency or organizational support as buffers of microaggression effects. Implications for future research and direct interventions are discussed.

*Keywords:* racism, anti-Black racism, microaggressions, conservation of resources

Racism remains a pressing issue in society and organizations. Racist beliefs, defined by Ruth Benedict (1945) as “the dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group is destined to congenital superiority” (p. 87), are said to induce discriminatory actions against racial minorities (Duckitt, 1992; Jones, 1997). This effect on behavior is observed whether racist beliefs are consciously (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991) or implicitly held (Greenwald et al., 2009). Such findings are particularly concerning when paired with empirical evidence demonstrating commonly held beliefs about Black people. Black individuals, and characteristics associated with Blackness, are often associated with “bad” (Nosek et al., 2002), criminal guilt (Levinson et al., 2010) and subhumanness (e.g., ape-like; Goff et al., 2008). In line with theory concerning the effect of racist beliefs, there currently exists a myriad of inequitable experiences and outcomes for

Black people (Hammond et al., 2020). As racism has been shown to harm the physical and psychological well-being of Black people (Chakraborty & McKenzie, 2002; Clark et al., 1999; Wyatt et al., 2003), it remains imperative to understand and redress its manifestations and effects. Further, scholars have noted variation in how racism is expressed against different racially minoritized groups (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015; Ruggs et al., 2013) and in different contexts (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). Thus, this work focuses on uncovering the specific manifestations of racism experienced by Black people and examining the effects of such racist encounters in the workplace.

Racialized history and resulting structures have worked to push and hold Black employees to the lowest rung on the racial hierarchy (see Roediger & Esch, 2012). Compared to White counterparts, Black employees experience formal discrimination and disparate access to resources throughout the career cycle (e.g., Bell et al., 2020; Nkomo, 2020). Specifically, they consistently receive 36% fewer callbacks for jobs, regardless of educational attainment or labor market conditions (Quillian et al., 2017); receive lower salary outcomes from negotiation (Hernandez et al., 2019); face greater disciplinary sanctions despite no racial difference in the number of allegations of misconduct (Walter et al., 2021); and are evaluated as less effective leaders (Rosette et al., 2008). Although governmental agencies (e.g., Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; EEOC) and organizations have worked to develop policies to address overt racism and discrimination (Civil Rights Act 1964, 1991), racism in organizations morphs and persists (Avery et al., 2015).

In addition to overt disparities, organizational discrimination is complicated by other elusive and pervasive forms of racism

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The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Government or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

All analysis code and research materials are available upon request. Data are not publicly available due to their sensitive, identifiable nature and the assurances given to study participants.

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(Jones et al., 2007). Scholars have theorized that racism is dynamic (see Bonilla-Silva, 1997) and that, because public displays of racism typically violate cultural and organizational norms (Dovidio et al., 2002), racist beliefs often manifest covertly (e.g., Brief et al., 2000; Colella et al., 2017; Dovidio et al., 1998; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Although covert discrimination may seem less harmful on the surface compared to overt discrimination, meta-analytic evidence confirms the equally deleterious effects of subtle discrimination on physical, psychological, and work outcomes (Jones et al., 2016; Lui & Quezada, 2019).

A valuable medium for studying subtle manifestations of racism is the concept of *racial microaggressions*—daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities that disparage members of racially minoritized groups (Pierce, 1970; Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions research is informed by the domain of *everyday discrimination*—routine and chronic experiences of unfair treatment (Essed, 1991; Williams et al., 1997). The examination of microaggressions concerns itself with “the lived realities of marginalized groups in our society” and is “a study of powerful emotions, subjective experiences, biases, values, and beliefs, as well as . . . the pain and suffering of oppression” (Sue, 2017, p. 171). Microaggressions permeate speech (e.g., complimenting an employee for being a “credit to their race”), actions (e.g., excluding a colleague who is a person of color from a social event), and spaces (e.g., organizations located in ethnically diverse regions and/or serving a diverse set of customers/clients that nonetheless lack internal racial representation). Racial microaggressions predict adverse mental health outcomes such as anxiety (Banks et al., 2006; Blume et al., 2012) and depression (Huynh, 2012; Nadal et al., 2014), and, given their common occurrence, constitute a form of chronic stress that results in physical afflictions including hypertension and impaired immune response (e.g., Berger & Sarnyai, 2015; Clark et al., 1999).

Black employees may be especially vulnerable to the adverse mental and physical health outcomes of microaggressions given that Black people experience significantly more racial microaggressions than any other racial minority population (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015; O’Keefe et al., 2015), and that racial microaggressions manifest in the workplace (Sue et al., 2009). However, it is not yet understood what mechanisms help explain the deleterious effects of microaggression or the specific, unique types of microaggressions that manifest at work for Black employees. Unveiling such information would help guide theory development and usher in practical improvements in the microaggressions space. Provided that context and identity-related factors influence microaggressions (Wong et al., 2014), this article addresses the need to identify the manifestations and mechanisms of anti-Black microaggressions in organizations.

The purpose of this article is to understand anti-Black microaggressions in the workplace by theoretically delineating and empirically demonstrating their forms and effects. Previous counter-storytelling, case studies, and narrative analyses have revealed the vexing nature of anti-Black microaggressions in the workplace (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Butler-Byrd, 2010; Louis et al., 2016; Pitcan et al., 2018; Pittman, 2012), with individuals regarding microaggressions as barriers to job performance (Truscott et al., 2014). What remains unknown is how (un)conscious anti-Black racism manifests via microaggressions targeting Black employees and what processes Black employees must leverage to overcome these encounters. Using quantitative and qualitative insights, the current work addresses these research needs. Given the call to include

more underrepresented minorities in psychological science research, especially within racism-related studies (Roberts et al., 2020), we build upon prior work with a large-scale survey of Black employees including validated quantitative measures and open-ended questions for an in-depth synthesis of experienced anti-Black racial microaggressions in organizations.

This work develops and tests a model of anti-Black microaggressions at work using the conservation of resources framework (COR; Hobfoll, 1989, 2011). Specifically, the depleting nature of microaggressions on Black employees’ cognitive and emotional resources, as reviewed below, is theorized to foster resource replenishment efforts (i.e., co-rumination: discussing and venting feelings and problems with coworkers; Rose, 2002) and resource protection efforts (i.e., racism-related vigilance: cognitively bracing for anticipated racism; Clark et al., 2006). Based on COR corollaries, we hypothesize that employees will engage in these resourcing efforts when they work in organizations where they experience microaggressions to preserve their job satisfaction. However, these very efforts may also lead to feelings of burnout. In addition to the mediating role of resourcing efforts in relating microaggressions to work outcomes, this study also tests the potential for individual and organizational resources to buffer microaggression effects. Specifically, the buffering effects of perceived organizational support (POS; i.e., beliefs concerning whether one’s organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and trait resiliency (i.e., the capacity to overcome adversity; King, 2016) are modeled to determine whether these factors limit the need to replenish or protect psychological resources. Overall, this work delineates racial microaggressions targeting Black employees and models the effect of such microaggressions on employee resourcing efforts and job outcomes while evaluating potential buffers.

As an extension of prior scholarship, this work also qualitatively examines the types of microaggressions experienced by Black individuals in the workplace. This is an important advancement for a number of reasons. First, the original microaggressions taxonomy development process (conducted by Sue et al., 2007) was theoretical in nature—the taxonomy of racial microaggressions was created by (a) reviewing social psychological literature on aversive racism; (b) considering formulations about the manifestation and impact of everyday racism; and (c) reading personal narratives of racial majority and minority counselors about their racial/cultural awakening. The current work uses microaggression-specific qualitative insights to extend this taxonomy. Qualitative work, which offers insight from the perspective of the population studied, contributes unique depth and richness to theory development (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Indeed, the specific, lived experiences of a diverse set of Black employees is currently absent from workplace microaggressions literature.

In addition, the work context is unique, warranting theory development. Although workplaces often reflect race relations in broader society (Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2021) and people who hold racist beliefs will likely (un)consciously express such biases across life domains (including the workplace; Sue et al., 2009), organizations offer less autonomy in choice of interactions (e.g., an inability to choose one’s coworkers or clients) and potentially restricted options for manifestations of and responses to discrimination (e.g., situational strength conveying professional and

organizational norms that must be met to sustain employment). For example, employees who hold racist views may express these biases in unique ways to comply with organizational standards, and Black employees may be expected to maintain cordial relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and/or clients who express racial bias. Thus, uncovering the manifestations and outcomes of racial microaggressions toward Black employees offers unique insights to this important domain.

Further, delineating the types of microaggressions that Black employees face is important as these experiences likely manifest within and affect multiple stages of the organizational process (e.g., recruitment, promotion, retention; Sue et al., 2009). By perpetuating White-centric ideals via means that are unidentified, and thus go unaddressed, workplace microaggressions may be undermining career-advancing opportunities for Black employees. Current work rewards (e.g., wages) and structures (e.g., leadership) may mirror and underpin societal systems of (dis)advantage. As historic underrepresentation of racial minority groups in organizations, particularly Black employees and especially in leadership roles, is expected to exacerbate the presence and effects of microaggressions, it is important to qualitatively identify microaggression manifestations that Black employees face so that these can be redressed.

There are three key contributions of this scholarly pursuit. First, this article delineates resource-related mechanisms that link anti-Black racial microaggressions to critical work outcomes. Specifically, this work investigates the relationship between microaggressions and resource recovery–protection mechanisms, namely co-rumination and racism-related vigilance, to elucidate the associations between microaggressions and job satisfaction, as well as burnout. Although the study of racial microaggressions has gained popularity, the theoretical mechanisms that link such experiences to important outcomes remain unclear. Second, this work extends understandings of racial microaggression via an in-depth assessment of Black employees' lived experiences. The unique manifestation of subtle anti-Black racism in the workplace is examined to offer more specific theoretical and practical implications in this domain. Finally, this article provides insights that can inform future research and organizational intervention. Study findings outline the potential importance of proactive work and policy-based changes to limit the occurrence of racial microaggressions, in addition to examining resources that may buffer the negative effects of microaggressions. Such insights answer the call to “make the ‘invisible’ visible” (Sue, 2004, p. 762)—a necessary step in readdressing racism in organizations.

### A Resource Model of Workplace Racial Microaggression Mechanisms

The COR model (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) provides an overarching framework for understanding the effects of workplace racial microaggressions. COR highlights that resources—“objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies”—enable individuals to achieve their goals and fulfill their needs (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 339). Two central tenets comprise COR theory: *primacy of resource loss* and *resource investment*. The former principle stipulates that resource losses (e.g., loss of promotion opportunities) are more salient to individuals than resource gains (e.g., increase in promotion opportunities). The impact of resource loss is evident in the speed of

felt impact and length of time the impact remains salient to the individual. The latter tenet postulates that individuals invest resources to protect against and recover from resource loss while striving to acquire more resources. Overall, when resources are threatened or lost, individuals experience stress (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). Thus, this work examines the depleting experience of microaggression encounters, as well as the resource protection and recovery processes that employees engage in to possibly overcome such experiences.

Microaggressions are stress-inducing and may lead employees to feel devalued, threatened, and isolated, as well as perplexed (Sue et al., 2008). In illustration, Sue et al. (2008) theorize that “a potential microaggressive incident sets in motion a perceptual questioning aimed at trying to determine whether it was racially motivated. During this process, considerable psychic energy is expended” (p. 334). Thus, dealing with a microaggression, its ambiguity, and its emotive aftereffects likely requires effortful cognitive and behavioral investments. Such effort investments may offer adaptive benefits but may also further resource loss. Relevant to developing a model of racial microaggression effects, prior work has asserted that stressful encounters and depleting experiences necessitate resourcing—an effortful process that creates social, material, and cognitive assets (Feldman, 2004; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).

COR underscores that responding to workplace stressors depletes resources. In accordance with this framework, when a Black employee experiences a microaggression at work, subsequent cognitions, behaviors, and reactions (e.g., confronting the perpetrator, ignoring the comment, disguising exasperation) will require effort. Given that psychological resources are finite, the energy expended appraising and responding to microaggressions cannot be devoted elsewhere (e.g., toward desired work tasks). Thus, this theory underpins our proposed model concerning effortful energy expenditures that follow the stress-inducing experience of facing workplace microaggressions and the dually adaptive and depleting outcomes that follow. Investing resources to process and recover (i.e., co-rumination) and to guard against future depleting encounters with workplace racism (i.e., racism-related vigilance) is adaptive and, thus, may limit negative effects on overall job evaluations (e.g., job satisfaction), but may also exacerbate resource depletion (i.e., burnout) given the effortful nature of each process.

### Hypotheses Justifications

Theoretically, Hobfoll and Freedy (1993) present a specific COR perspective which describes the etiology of burnout in cases of continued resource depletion, especially in cases of chronic, relatively low-level work-related stress. Prior literature also characterizes microaggressions as a form of racial stress that negatively relates to adjustment outcomes. Specifically, microaggressions are commonplace and cumulative in nature and relate to adverse outcomes in part by depleting targets' resources (e.g., time, emotions, cognition) as they communicate harmful messages about the target's group, and by way of appraisal (e.g., “was that comment racially motivated?”) and response (e.g., “should I confront the perpetrator?”). Indeed, focus groups with African American participants revealed feelings of frustration and powerlessness, as well as concerns about how they would be perceived for responding to a

microaggression. Further, within an organizational context, research suggests that Black employees believe microaggression encounters negatively influence their career experiences and potential for advancement (Pitcan et al., 2018). Based on the depleting and harmful nature of subtle, everyday discrimination, we predict that microaggressions relate to undesired organizational outcomes for Black employees, such as increased burnout and decreased job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 1:* Microaggressions are positively related to burnout.

*Hypothesis 2:* Microaggressions are negatively related to job satisfaction.

Based on COR, working in organizations laden with microaggressions may lead employees to engage in more co-rumination—the discussion of problems with peers marked by a focus on detailing feelings and fixation on problems (Haggard et al., 2011; Rose, 2002). Co-rumination is theorized here to serve as a form of resourcing that Black employees engage in when they are subjected to microaggressions at work. Co-rumination may help employees make sense of their work experiences and environment while enabling them to seek social support. This expectation aligns with Hobfoll et al.'s (2018) resource crossover principle: There is potential for dyadic interindividual transmission of psychological experiences and this mechanism is the manner by which resources are transferred within social and organizational contexts. Westman (2001) specifically detailed positive experience crossover mechanisms including direct crossover (i.e., resources are transmitted via empathy) and indirect crossover (i.e., transmission via social support). Westman's work aligns with research demonstrating the need for and value in sensemaking processes following experienced discrimination (e.g., Roberson & Stevens, 2006). In illustration, previous research shows that individuals talk with others about stressful experiences (Rimé, 1995), and that individuals who frequently experienced racial bias were more likely to coruminate about racial problems (Hacker et al., 2016). Such findings are particularly relevant for understanding microaggression-related resourcing processes. Given that microaggressions are not overt in nature, they engender attributional ambiguity. With subtly prejudicial undertones, microaggressions can disguise bias and shield perpetrators behind plausible deniability. Indeed, scholars highlight that microaggressions can be hard to identify and targets are often unsure whether or not they have been wronged but nonetheless feel slighted, attacked, and/or disrespected (Franklin, 2016; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). For instance, Sue recounted from his own experience with a microaggression that “were it not for my colleague who validated my experiential reality, I would have left that encounter wondering whether I was correct or incorrect in my perceptions” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 275). Subsequent work also described such “sanity checks” with others as common after experiencing microaggressions. Given that microaggressions often leave targets feeling confused and irresolute, co-rumination may occur more frequently as an attempt to regain lost resources in organizations marked by microaggression encounters. Thus, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 3:* Microaggressions are positively related to co-rumination with coworkers.

Experiencing a microaggression may also lead individuals to engage in racism-related vigilance—the act of bracing for and thinking about how racism may present itself in everyday life (Clark et al., 2006; LaVeist et al., 2014). In line with COR, racism-related vigilance might help individuals protect themselves from future resource loss by anticipating the ways in which microaggressions might disrupt their workday. Specifically, Hobfoll et al. (2018) detail that individuals strive to preserve the self when resources are outstretched or exhausted in the fourth principle of COR theory. Although this is one of the least researched principles of COR theory, it is described as one with high explanatory power to help us understand responses to stress (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Concerning this principle, Hobfoll et al. (2018) assert, “like other aspects of COR theory, this is likely to be a built-in evolutionary strategy that may be defensive (i.e., conserve energy)” (p. 106). Relevant to vigilance in response to racial microaggressions, Sue et al. (2008) qualitatively showed that “healthy paranoia” (p. 332) was common after an experienced microaggression—participants spoke about a general suspiciousness as a necessary reaction to the overwhelming number of microaggression incidents that occur in a given day. We assert that racism-related vigilance is a likely compensatory strategy—a behavior adopted in an attempt to reduce or eliminate interpersonal discrimination (Singletary & Hebl, 2009)—meant to protect one's resources in environments known for depleting them via racial microaggressions. Given these considerations, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 4:* Microaggressions are positively related to racism-related vigilance at work.

Based on COR, we assess the role of resourcing efforts (i.e., co-rumination and racism-related vigilance) in relating microaggressions to work attitudes and outcomes. Specifically, we model the effect that such resourcing responses, which are meant to help Black employees cope with microaggressions, may have on job satisfaction and burnout. As Hobfoll et al. (2018) assert, “the obtaining and retaining of personal, social, and material resources creates in people, families, and organizations the sense that they are capable of meeting stressful challenges” (p. 104). Thus, resourcing efforts may offer benefits to Black employees, such as higher job satisfaction. Yet, Halbesleben et al. (2014) simultaneously highlight that variability in degradation of resources as they are replaced and conserved is an area of research that has not yet been adequately explored but has important implications for understanding how individuals approach resourcing. Specifically, understanding both the adaptive and potentially depleting effects of resourcing efforts is needed.

Although we theoretically argue that both co-rumination and racism-related vigilance will have beneficial effects on employees' global evaluations of their work experiences (i.e., job satisfaction) due to the resource-recovering and protective nature of these activities, we also expect such resourcing to relate to greater levels of burnout. First, co-rumination can be maladaptive despite its potential to generate social support resources. Researchers have linked co-rumination to increased cortisol blood levels, a physiological marker of the stress response, and depression (Byrd-Craven et al., 2010; Haggard et al., 2011). Although co-rumination may help

employees cope with microaggressions in the workplace, engaging in this behavior may also lead to depleted psychological resources by shifting employees' focus from their goals to negative affect. Much like co-rumination, racism-related vigilance is a "double-edged sword." While anticipating microaggressions may help employees feel prepared to cope with subtle discrimination in the workplace, studies indicate that racism-related vigilance negatively relates to cardiovascular health (Clark et al., 2006) and sleep quality (Hicken et al., 2013). COR helps explicate these seemingly paradoxical findings: Although co-rumination and racism-related vigilance may occur in response to racial microaggressions because they help build and protect resources, these time-intensive, resource-depleting coping strategies may simultaneously exert detrimental effects on Black employees. Thus, we expect:

*Hypothesis 5:* co-rumination will partially mediate the relationship between microaggressions and (a) burnout and (b) job satisfaction, with microaggressions relating positively to co-rumination and co-rumination relating positively to burnout and job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 6:* Racism-related vigilance will partially mediate the relationship between microaggressions and (a) burnout and (b) job satisfaction, with microaggressions relating positively to racism-related vigilance and racism-related vigilance relating positively to burnout and job satisfaction.

In addition to evaluating co-rumination and racism-related vigilance as mediators between microaggressions and work-related outcomes, we propose that protective individual and organizational resources may buffer the need for effortful resourcing postmicroaggression experiences. Specifically, we examine the potential moderating role of POS—employees' beliefs that an organization cares about them and values their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986)—and trait resiliency—one's ability to adaptively overcome difficult experiences (King, 2016). In line with COR, we propose POS and resiliency may serve as resources that diminish the need for resource recovery and protection. High POS may help employees cope with microaggressions by drawing on this source of support when faced with microaggression-related stress. When an employee experiences a microaggression, sufficient organizational support may decrease co-rumination and racism-related vigilance, thereby alleviating the link between microaggressions and potentially depleting effortful resourcing processes. In a meta-analysis of 70 studies on POS, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) found that beliefs about organizational support related to favorable employee outcomes (e.g., positive mood, job satisfaction), as well as beneficial organizational effects (e.g., performance, lower absenteeism) across industries (e.g., private industry, health, manufacturing). The buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985) offers theoretical and empirical credence to the idea that supports resources can buffer the negative effects of stressful experiences. Similarly, prior work has shown that individual trait resiliency serves as an internal resource for healthy recovery from adversity (Smith et al., 2008), like racism (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Crosnoe & Lopez-Gonzalez, 2005; Karairmak & Figley, 2017), potentially by reducing the need for co-rumination or vigilance. Individuals high on resiliency are typically self-reliant/independent, have a positive outlook despite adversity, and have a strong sense of self (Gámez et al., 2017; Jaccelon, 1997). Thus,

resiliency may serve as a protective factor against the potentially harmful effects of stressors like racism and discrimination. Thus, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 7:* POS will moderate the relationship between microaggressions and (a) co-rumination and (b) racism-related vigilance, such that the negative relationship will be weakened at high levels of POS.

*Hypothesis 8:* Trait resiliency will moderate the relationship between microaggressions and (a) co-rumination and (b) racism-related vigilance, such that the negative relationship will be weakened at high levels of resiliency.

### Specific Microaggressions Experienced by Black Employees

In addition to examining mechanisms that foster microaggression outcomes and potential moderators of such effects, we also seek to uncover the unique forms of microaggression that are experienced by Black employees. Sue et al. (2007) presented a taxonomy of racial microaggressions experienced by racial minority groups based on their theoretical review of the psychology literature on aversive racism and everyday racism in conjunction with personal narratives of counseling professionals (both White and non-White individuals). This original taxonomy includes nine specific racial microaggression manifestations: (a) *alien in own land*, or assuming that someone is foreign-born; (b) *ascription of intelligence*, or assigning intelligence to a person based on racial group membership; (c) *color blindness*, or comments negating racialized existence; (d) *criminality/assumption of criminal status*, or presuming a person of color is dangerous/deviant; (e) *denial of individual racism*, or denying racial biases; (f) *myth of meritocracy*, or asserting that race does not play a role in success; (g) *pathologizing cultural values/communication styles*, or denoting that the values and communication styles of White culture are superior; (h) *second-class citizen*, or giving a White person preferential treatment over a person of color; and (i) *environmental*, or macro-level messages, such as underrepresentation, that make biases against persons of color apparent on systemic and environmental levels.<sup>1</sup> This seminal taxonomy has provided a foundation for work examining forms and effects of racial microaggressions faced by all racial/ethnic minority groups (e.g., African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx/Hispanic Americans; see Wong et al., 2014). However, the role of context and the potential for unique racial group-based expressions is absent from this work.

One aim of the current work is to extend this original framework via examining the experiences of Black people in organizations. Although some social scientists assert that stereotyping, racism, and discrimination operate under similar principles for all marginalized groups (Biernat, 2003; Jones, 1977), others have hypothesized that there are qualitative differences in how racism is expressed toward each specific racial minority group (e.g., Asian Americans as opposed to African Americans; Liang et al., 2007; Yoo & Lee, 2005). In illustration of the latter, Sue, Bucceri, et al. (2007)

<sup>1</sup> Some authors do not include the ninth factor (environmental) and instead consider it a mechanism for delivering microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007).

observed unique emergent microaggression themes in the qualitative experiences of Asian Americans, including a positive ascription of intelligence (e.g., “you are really good at math,” p. 76) and the exoticization of Asian American women (e.g., “Asian women have beautiful skin . . . and have silky hair,” p. 76). Specifically, one Asian American participant expressed that when Asian Americans are depicted as intelligent while other people of color are characterized as less intelligent, these portrayals create tensions between racially minoritized groups. Further, Asian American participants described feelings of invisibility tied to microaggressions implying that they “are not an ethnic minority group, experience little or no discrimination, and that their racial concerns are unimportant”, which is likely not observed in some other racial minority individuals’ experiences (e.g., Black people). Concerning the original themes from Sue et al. (2007), a review of microaggressions (Wong et al., 2014) asserts that “there may be other possible manifestations of racial microaggressions not identified by Sue et al., which may pertain to specific racial or ethnic groups” (p. 6). Although racial minority groups share a common experience of *encountering* microaggressions, research examining unique microaggression *manifestations* can contribute detailed, nuanced insights. Thus, the current work delineates the types of microaggressions experienced by Black employees.

Preliminary qualitative work has begun to uncover themes concerning Black people’s experiences with racial microaggressions and specifically Black employee encounters with microaggressions in the workplace. In the counseling psychology domain, Pitcan et al. (2018) interviewed 12 early career Black men working in predominantly White organizations to gain insights into their reactions to microaggressions. These authors detailed themes including cognitive questioning of their perceptions, restriction of self-expression, and depression and anxiety. In addition, Holder et al. (2015) interviewed 10 Black women in senior-level management roles to gain insights into their experiences with microaggressions. These authors described microaggression themes of (a) *stereotypes against Black women*, (b) *assumed universality of the Black experience*, (c) *invisibility*, and (d) *exclusion*. Indeed, “there is an urgent need to bring greater awareness and understanding of how microaggressions operate, their numerous manifestations in society, [and] the type of impact they have on people of color” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273). Thus, the current work extends prior research by gaining insight from a larger and more representative sample of Black employees across industries, organizational levels, and regions to answer the following:

*Research Question:* What are the types of racial microaggressions that Black employees encounter in the workplace?

## Method

### Sample and Procedure

Using a variety of methods—community flyers, social media posts, radio and newspaper ads, Prolific, and snowball sampling—we recruited full-time Black employees from across the United States to participate in our study, which received institutional review board approval. Eligible participants were (a) Black/African American, (b) at least 18 years old, and (c) full-time (worked at least a 40-hr workweek) employees. After providing their electronic

consent, participants completed study measures, provided their demographic information, and answered qualitative questions about workplace microaggressions via the Qualtrics platform. On average, participants completed the questionnaire in 37 min and all received \$10 US in exchange for their participation. The study protocol (institutional review board [IRB]-FY2019-235: Clinical and I-O Psychology) was approved by a university ethics review board.

A total of 374 participants completed the survey. Recruitment source data indicated that, of the total recruited sample, 1% learned about this study via community flyers, 55% via social media posts (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit, or Craigslist), 1% via radio and/or newspaper ads, 31% via Prolific, and 12% via word-of-mouth snowball sampling. After removing 29 participants due to failed attention checks, the final analytic sample consisted of 345 participants, of which 55.1% identified as females, 44.1% as males, and .8% chose not to disclose. Most participants were between the ages of 25 and 34 years old (66.7%) or between 35 and 44 years old (20.9%). Seven percent of participants were between the ages of 18 and 24 years old and 5.4% of participants were over the age of 44. All participants identified as Black/African American and, in addition this category, 2.3% of participants identified as biracial, including Black and White, Latinx, or Asian. Participants reported an average organizational tenure with their current employer of 4.76 years ( $SD = 3.93$ ) and worked in a diverse set of industries, including manufacturing or warehousing (21.4%), sales/retail (20%), finance (15.1%), technology/IT (10.4%), education (6.1%), health care (5.8%), hospitality or transportation (3.8%), construction (3.5%), government (3.2%), and marketing/advertising (2%). See Table 1 for a full list of occupations represented in the current sample. Twenty-five percent of the sample indicated they had completed some college, 10.7% had earned a high school diploma, 13.3% earned a vocational certificate or an associate’s degree, 25% earned a bachelor’s degree, and 21% of participants completed a graduate school degree program.

## Measures

### Quantitative Measurement

We adapted the 32-item Racial Microaggressions Scale (RMAS; Torres-Harding et al., 2012), which is based on the Sue, Capodilupo, et al.’s (2007) taxonomy, to measure *workplace racial microaggressions* by adding an “at work” or “in my workplace” descriptor to each item (see the Appendix for the full list of items). We assessed these experiences via a summed (reflecting a total number of experiences) 5-point Likert-type scale (0 = *never* to 4 = *all the time*). A sample item includes “Others at work suggest that my racial heritage is dysfunctional or undesirable.” We removed one item we deemed inapplicable to the work context: “I receive poorer treatment in restaurants and stores because of my race.” This scale includes six microaggression factors, each representing a unique microaggression theme: (a) *foreigner/not belonging* ( $a = .86$ ): being made to feel as if one is not a “true” American because of one’s racial group; (b) *criminality* ( $a = .84$ ): being treated as if one is aggressive or dangerous; (c) *sexualization* ( $a = .89$ ): being treated in an overly sexual manner and being sexually stereotyped; (d) *low-achieving/undesirable culture* ( $a = .87$ ): being treated as if people from one’s racial group are incapable, incompetent, or dysfunctional, and as if successes are due to unfair special treatment; (e) *invisibility*

**Table 1**  
*Prevalence of Microaggression Types by Occupation*

Industry	n	Foreign		Criminality		Sexualization		Low-achieving		Invisibility		Environmental	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Manufacturing or warehousing	74	4.50	2.28	6.03	2.36	4.31	2.18	13.69	4.10	9.46	4.10	7.58	3.03
Sales/retail	69	4.52	2.63	5.39	2.97	4.10	2.45	13.45	5.58	9.61	4.83	8.26	4.22
Finance	52	4.19	2.94	4.56	3.35	3.27	2.86	13.08	6.87	8.60	6.44	8.08	4.20
Technology/IT	36	4.50	3.08	4.92	3.64	3.39	2.92	11.17	7.35	6.64	5.40	7.89	4.52
Education	21	2.00	2.90	3.24	2.81	1.29	2.41	11.76	7.87	8.19	7.54	11.24	3.19
Health care	20	3.15	.383	3.15	4.79	1.85	3.48	12.85	9.02	8.55	8.41	10.00	5.09
Hospitality or transportation	13	4.85	3.08	8.85	3.95	5.00	3.56	21.62	7.07	14.38	5.75	12.54	5.32
Construction	12	3.17	2.29	2.25	2.53	2.33	2.93	11.17	6.32	3.58	3.58	7.25	4.31
Government	11	3.09	1.87	2.45	2.07	2.55	2.02	11.00	3.69	7.09	4.21	9.27	4.67
Marketing/advertising	7	2.43	2.37	3.71	4.82	2.00	2.24	11.14	5.52	6.43	9.55	6.14	6.84
HR or management consulting	4	.33	.58	.00	.00	.00	.00	2.67	3.06	.33	.58	4.33	5.13
Engineering	3	.00	.00	1.33	.58	1.00	1.73	4.67	3.06	3.33	4.16	13.67	5.51
Nonprofit	3	.33	.58	.00	.00	.00	.00	2.67	3.06	.33	.58	4.33	5.13
Art, music, or entertainment	3	4.00	3.61	4.33	4.51	4.33	2.31	10.67	11.59	7.33	6.51	11.33	7.77
Law/legal services	3	4.00	.00	5.00	3.61	3.33	4.04	22.67	9.45	14.67	10.21	10.33	6.81
Administration assistance	2	5.00	7.07	10.50	3.53	4.50	6.36	9.00	7.07	11.50	9.19	7.00	.07
Energy	2	3.00	2.83	3.50	.71	1.00	1.41	7.50	3.54	6.50	2.12	3.50	3.54
Military	2	1.00	1.41	2.00	.00	1.00	1.41	12.50	6.36	2.00	2.83	10.00	4.24
Architecture	1	8.00	—	11.00	—	10.00	—	28.00	—	17.00	—	17.00	—

( $a = .90$ ): being treated as if one is not visible or being dismissed; (f) *environmental invalidations* ( $a = .81$ ): observing that people from one’s racial group are largely absent from work or from positions of power at work (see the Appendix for the full scale and list of items that correspond to each factor). We assessed *POS* via the brief 8-item version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986;  $a = .88$ ), which employs a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). A sample item includes “My current organization values my contribution to its well-being.” We measured *trait resiliency* via the 6-item Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008;  $a = .72$ ), which utilizes a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) on items such as “I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.” We adapted the 27-item Co-Rumination Questionnaire (CRQ; Rose, 2002;  $a = .97$ ) by substituting “friend” with “coworker” in all items to measure general *workplace co-rumination*. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all true* to 5 = *definitely true*) to items such as “When we talk about a problem one of us has, we will talk for a long time trying to figure out all of the different reasons why the problem might have happened” (see the Appendix for the full list of items). We adapted the 6-item Racism-Related Vigilance Scale (RRV; Clark et al., 2006;  $a = .83$ ) to measure *workplace racism-related vigilance* via a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *never* to 6 = *almost every day*). A sample item includes “In dealing with day-to-day experiences at your current job, how often do you try to prepare for possible insults before leaving home?” We administered the 16-item Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti et al., 2001;  $a = .82$ ), which uses a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), to assess *burnout*. A sample item includes “During my work, I often feel emotionally drained.” We utilized Hackman and Oldham’s (1980) shortened 3-item measure, which employs a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*), to assess participant *job satisfaction* ( $a = .89$ ). A sample item includes “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with

my job.” Finally, based on prior research that demonstrates the relationship between negative affect and our focal dependent variables (DVs) of burnout (e.g., Zellars et al., 2004) and job satisfaction (e.g., Judge & Larsen, 2001) and the need to examine microaggression effects beyond the role of negative affectivity (NA; see Williams et al., 2018), we measured *trait NA* via the positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988), as a control variable. Participants read a list of 10 emotion words and rated, on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *all the time*), the extent to which they generally feel each emotion ( $a = .88$ ). Example items include “upset,” “hostile,” and “irritable.”

**Qualitative Measurement**

To provide specific insight into types of workplace microaggressions encountered, participants read the following definition: “Racial microaggression = verbal, behavioral, and environmental racial slights or insults directed to a person who is an ethnic minority group member.” Participants were then asked to detail (a) a specific, vivid workplace microaggression they had experienced at their current job, (b) who perpetrated the microaggression, (c) how they felt during and after the incident, and (d) how they responded to the microaggression.

**Analyses**

**Quantitative Analyses**

To first assess the fit of our hypothesized measurement model, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). To test study hypotheses, we then conducted observed variable path analysis using structural equation modeling (SEM) in MPlus with maximum likelihood estimation (Kelloway, 2014). We chose this approach as “the goal of path analysis is to test a ‘structural’ model, that is, a model comprising theoretically based statements of relationships among constructs” (Kelloway, 2014,



p. 94). It is permissible to conduct observed variable path analysis here, as all study variables met the requirement for this method: a reliability level  $>.70$  (as outlined by Kelloway, 2014).” We report the overall model chi-square measure<sup>2</sup>; the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990); the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR; Asparouhov & Muthén, 2018), which has been shown to accurately estimate effects in larger models (see Maydeu-Olivares et al., 2019); and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA; Kaplan, 2000). Based on published standards, the following statistical guidelines are used to describe idea model fit (Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999): a value close to or greater than .90 for CFI, a value close to or less than .08 for SRMR, and a value close to or less than .07 for RMSEA.

We conducted CFA to supplement the SEM observed variable path analysis. Specifically, CFA provided information concerning the distinctiveness of the multi-item scales and whether the scale items aligned with the latent variables in the manner we theoretically expected (see Brown, 2015). This is an important first step, as the measurement models theoretically underpin the path analysis models. To determine the best-fitting measurement model, we compared the fit indices of hypothesized models with multiple alternative models: (a) an alternative model that combined the six dimensions of the workplace RMAS and (b) an alternative model that combined the items that comprised variables with a bivariate correlation above .50 in our data (a moderate to large relationship effect size; Cohen, 1988). We chose this comparative model strategy for two reasons: (a) to ensure that the theoretical multi-factor structure of the workplace microaggressions scale was supported in our data and (b) to ensure that variables with moderate to large correlations should be treated as separate variables in our path analysis model. To evaluate the relative fit of hypothesized versus alternative models, we used Akaike’s (1987) information criterion (AIC): The model with the smaller AIC value is considered a better fitting model (Jöreskog et al., 2001).

### Qualitative Analyses

We used inductive thematic analyses (see Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gill, 2014) to understand how participants experienced and psychologically made sense of their organizational realities concerning racial microaggressions encounters. Inductive thematic analysis entails (a) familiarization with the data; (b) generating initial, emergent data codes; (c) searching for themes in the data and codes; and (d) defining and labeling the themes that are relevant to the psychological phenomenon under study (for similar analyses, see Dwivedi et al., 2021; Johnson & Joshi, 2016). Using a two-step coding process (Charmaz, 2006), the first and second author initially independently coded all open-ended question responses to find codes that were based on participants’ language. Then, these authors met on multiple occasions to compare their respective codes and to resolve any discrepancies. Themes emerged as the two authors iteratively compared units of text with each other, with previously coded data, and with existing literature (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through this process, the authors reached agreement concerning the final set of data codes and themes. Further, reliability analyses assessed fit of data into the authors’ assigned codes (to test dependability of coding; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three doctoral students, blind to study research questions and hypotheses, read direct quotes from participants and the final set of data codes. In an online

Qualtrics survey, they indicated which code best represented each quote. Agreement among the students and the researchers was acceptable (Fleiss’  $\kappa = .74$ ), exceeding the minimum requirement of .70 (Cohen, 1968; Fleiss, 1971).

### Transparency and Openness

We describe our sampling plan, all data exclusions (if any), all manipulations (if any), and all measures in the study, and we adhered to the *Journal of Applied Psychology* methodological checklist. All analysis code and research materials are available upon request. Data are not publicly available due to their sensitive, identifiable nature and the assurances given to study participants. Data were analyzed using MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). This study’s design, hypotheses, and its analysis were not preregistered.

## Results and Discussion

### Quantitative Hypotheses Results

As Hypotheses 1–6 were tested in one SEM observed variable path analysis model, we first tested a hypothesized 11-factor CFA model (Model 1) that included the following measures: the six dimensions of workplace racial microaggressions, co-rumination, race-related vigilance, burnout, job satisfaction, and trait NA (AIC = 80391.42). We also tested an alternative six-factor model (Model 1A) that combined the workplace racial microaggression dimensions (AIC = 81537.23); an alternative seven-factor model (Model 1B) that grouped the workplace RMAS into two factors: experienced (foreign, criminality, sexualization, low-achieving/undesirable culture, and invisibility) and observed (environmental) microaggressions, based on correlation analyses showing that the first five factors of this measure correlate above .50 with one another (AIC = 81112.03); and an alternative 10-factor model (Model 1C) that combined the DVs (burnout and job satisfaction), based on the correlation among these two variables exceeding .50 (AIC = 80452.07). All alternative models evidenced larger AIC values, which suggest poorer fit (Jöreskog et al., 2001), compared to the hypothesized factor solution. In addition, the observed CFI value was higher and the SRMR and RMSEA values were lower for the hypothesized model, also signifying a better fitting model (Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999; see Table 2). Thus, CFA results supported the distinctiveness of the variables in the hypothesized model.

Further, to assess the measurement model that corresponds to Hypothesis 7, we tested a nine-factor hypothesized model (Model 2) that included the following measures: the six dimensions of workplace racial microaggressions, co-rumination, race-related vigilance, and POS (AIC = 64004.38). This was compared to an alternative four-factor model (Model 2A) that combined the workplace racial microaggression dimensions (AIC = 65140.44). Finally, to assess the properties of the measurement model that corresponds to Hypothesis 8, we tested a nine-factor hypothesized model (Model 3) that included the following measures: the six dimensions of workplace racial microaggressions, co-rumination, race-related

<sup>2</sup> We include the chi-squared statistic and significance, while noting that prior research has demonstrated the low likelihood of obtaining a nonsignificant test statistic with a large (e.g., over 200) sample size (Kelloway, 2014).

**Table 2**  
Results of Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Model	$\chi^2$	df	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	AIC
Model 1 (hypothesized mediation)	8342.21*	4,130	.80	.09	.05	80391.42
Model 1A (alternative: one-factor RMAS)	9568.02*	4,170	.73	.10	.06	81537.23
Model 1B (alternative: two-factor RMAS)	9130.82*	4,164	.75	.10	.06	81112.03
Model 1C (alternative: one-factor combined DVs)	8422.85*	4,140	.79	.09	.06	80452.07
Model 2 (hypothesized POS moderation)	5338.99*	2,448	.83	.08	.06	64004.38
Model 2A (alternative: one-factor RMAS)	6535.04*	2,478	.76	.09	.07	65140.44
Model 3 (hypothesized resiliency moderation)	4849.89*	2,309	.84	.08	.06	60788.77
Model 3A (alternative: one-factor RMAS)	6046.50*	2,339	.77	.09	.07	61925.38

Note.  $N = 345$ . CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; AIC = Akaike's information criterion; RMAS = Racial Microaggressions Scale; DVs = dependent variables; POS = perceived organizational support. Model 1 (11 factors): six separate dimensions of workplace racial microaggressions, co-rumination, race-related vigilance, burnout, job satisfaction, and trait negative affectivity; Model 1A (6 factors): combined workplace racial microaggression dimensions, co-rumination, race-related vigilance, burnout, job satisfaction, and trait negative affectivity; Model 1B (7 factors): experienced microaggressions dimension (foreign, criminality, sexualization, low-achieving/undesirable culture, and invisibility), observed microaggressions dimension (environmental), co-rumination, race-related vigilance, burnout, job satisfaction, and trait negative affectivity; Model 1C (10 factors): six separate dimensions of workplace racial microaggressions, combined DVs (burnout and job satisfaction), co-rumination, race-related vigilance, and trait negative affectivity; Model 2 (9 factors): six separate dimensions of workplace racial microaggressions, co-rumination, race-related vigilance, and perceived organizational support; Model 2A (4 factors): combined workplace racial microaggression dimensions, co-rumination, race-related vigilance, and perceived organizational support; Model 3 (9 factors): six separate dimensions of workplace racial microaggressions, co-rumination, race-related vigilance, and trait resiliency; Model 3A (4 factors): combined workplace racial microaggression dimensions, co-rumination, race-related vigilance, and trait resiliency.

\*  $p < .01$ .

vigilance, and trait resiliency (AIC = 60788.77). We compared this model to an alternative four-factor model (Model 3A) that combined the workplace racial microaggression dimensions (AIC = 61925.38). Results indicated that both hypothesized moderation measurement models (Models 2 and 3) evidenced smaller AIC values, which suggests better fit (Jöreskog et al., 2001), compared to the alternative models (Models 2A and 3A).<sup>3</sup> Further, the CFI values were higher and the SRMR and RMSEA values were lower in the hypothesized model, supporting better model fit (Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999; see Table 2). Thus, CFA results supported the distinctiveness of the variables in these hypothesized models.

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations are presented in Table 3. All racial microaggression subscales except for the foreign dimension were positively related to Black employees' burnout ( $r = .11-.27$ ). All racial microaggression subscales except for the *foreign* and *environmental* dimensions were negatively related to Black employees' job satisfaction ( $r = .11-.25$ ). All racial microaggression subscales except for the *environmental* dimension were positively related to co-rumination ( $r = .33-.46$ ). Further, co-rumination with coworkers was not significantly related to burnout ( $r = .01, p = .86, ns$ ), but was positively and significantly related to job satisfaction ( $r = .14, p = .01$ ). All racial microaggression subscales were positively related to racism-related vigilance ( $r = .13-.37$ ). Moreover, racism-related vigilance was not significantly related to burnout ( $r = .08, p = .14, ns$ ), but was positively and significantly related to job satisfaction ( $r = .15, p = .01$ ). Finally, the control variable, trait NA, was positively related to co-rumination, racism-related vigilance, and burnout ( $r = .13-.38$ ) and was negatively related to job satisfaction ( $r = -.26, p = .00$ ).

Table 1 provides the mean and standard deviation of each racial microaggression dimension for the 19 occupations represented in our data. Interestingly, this table demonstrates that microaggressions involving *ascriptions of low-achievement/undesirable culture* are the most commonly encountered form of microaggressions (highest

mean occurrence rating in 14/19 occupations). Exceptions include human resources/management consulting, engineering, nonprofit, and art, music/entertainment, where environmental microaggressions were the most common form of microaggression encountered. In addition, for the administration assistance occupation, *invisibility* was the form of microaggression most often encountered in the workplace. Overall, *sexualization* (9/19) and *foreigner* (9/19) microaggressions were least often encountered by Black employees, and criminality was least likely to occur in the construction, government, human resources/management consulting, and nonprofit occupations.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1 presents the SEM results for the hypothesized paths. The parallel mediation structural equation model demonstrated good fit:  $\chi^2(3) = 10.12$ ; CFI = .99, SRMR = .02. The following section details the results for each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1 stated that microaggressions are positively related to burnout. As hypothesized, the *assumed criminality* ( $\beta = .26, SE = .10, p = .01, 95\% CI [.10, .42]$ ) and *environmental* microaggression factors ( $\beta = .19, SE = .08, p = .01, 95\% CI [.06, .31]$ ) were significantly, positively related to burnout. Contrary to our hypothesis, however, the microaggression factors of *foreigner* ( $\beta = -.18, SE = .08, p = .03, 95\% CI [-.31, -.04]$ ) and *low-achievement* ( $\beta = -.21, SE = .10, p = .03, 95\% CI [-.37, -.05]$ ) were significantly, negatively related to burnout. Thus, results partially support Hypothesis 1.

<sup>3</sup> For measures corresponding to Hypotheses 7 and 8, no variable pairings evidenced a correlation above .50. Thus, no additional alternative models based on correlations were tested.

<sup>4</sup> Some occupations are represented more than once in this frequency count denoting least often occurring microaggressions. Specifically, participants from human resources/management consulting and also from the nonprofit sector reported no encounters with criminality or sexualization microaggressions. In addition, participants from the military averaged 1.00 across items assessing experiences with sexualization and also foreigner microaggressions.

**Table 3**  
Means (*M*), Standard Deviations (*SD*), and Correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
(1) Age	6.28	.81	—													
(2) Gender	.44	.50	-.02	—												
(3) NA	2.42	.64	-.06	-.09	—											
(4) Foreign	4.02	2.90	-.11*	.04	.24**	—										
(5) Criminality	4.99	3.56	-.07	.03	.33**	.65**	—									
(6) Sexualization	3.46	2.88	-.14**	.02	.31**	.70**	.72**	—								
(7) Achievement	13.11	6.86	-.06	.04	.18**	.63**	.70**	.63**	—							
(8) Invisibility	8.79	6.07	-.09	-.01	.29**	.60**	.76**	.64**	.75**	—						
(9) Environmental	8.61	4.57	-.05	-.07	.04	.19**	.36**	.19**	.49**	.48**	—					
(10) POS	4.75	1.11	.13*	.09	-.33**	-.22**	-.38**	-.25**	-.21**	-.43**	-.20**	—				
(11) Resiliency	3.34	.67	.14**	.13*	-.49**	-.17**	-.25**	-.27**	-.03	-.21**	.01	.29**	—			
(12) Co-rumination	2.71	.82	-.05	.03	.15**	.37**	.37**	.46**	.40**	.33**	.08	.06	-.07	—		
(13) Vigilance	3.77	1.07	-.03	.05	.13*	.21**	.23**	.13*	.38**	.27**	.32**	-.02	.04	.20**	—	
(14) Burnout	2.83	.52	-.15**	-.10	.38**	.05	.27**	.14**	.11*	.26**	.23**	-.57**	-.39**	.01	.08	—
(15) Job satisfaction	3.40	1.02	.12*	.06	-.26**	-.06	-.25**	-.14*	-.04	-.25**	-.11*	.61**	.32**	.14**	.15**	-.67**

Note.  $N = 345$ . Gender: 0 = women; 1 = men. NA = negative affectivity; POS = perceived organizational support. Age: 1 = less than 18 years old (excluded from participating); 2 = 18–24; 3 = 25–34; 4 = 35–44; 5 = 45–54; 6 = 55–64; 7 = 65–74; 8 = 75–84; 9 = 85–94, 10 = 95–104 years old.  
\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Hypothesis 2 stated that microaggressions were negatively related to job satisfaction. As predicted, the microaggression factors of *criminality* ( $\beta = -.28$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .00$ , 95% CI  $[-.42, -.11]$ ) and *invisibility* ( $\beta = -.30$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .00$ , 95% CI  $[-.46, -.12]$ ) were significantly, negatively related to job satisfaction. However, the microaggression factor of *low-achievement* ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .02$ , 95% CI  $[.07, .39]$ ) was significantly, positively related to job satisfaction. Overall, results partially support Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 stated that microaggressions are positively related to co-rumination with coworkers. As predicted, the microaggression factors of *sexualization* ( $\beta = .32$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .00$ , 95% CI  $[.15, .48]$ ) and *low-achievement* ( $\beta = .26$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .01$ , 95% CI  $[.09, .43]$ ) were significantly, positively related to workplace co-rumination. Thus, results support Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4 stated that microaggressions are positively related to racism-related vigilance at work. The factors of *low-achievement* ( $\beta = .38$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .00$ , 95% CI  $[.25, .50]$ ) and *environmental* microaggressions ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p = .01$ , 95% CI  $[.07, .26]$ ) were significantly, positively related to racism-related vigilance. However, the microaggression factor of *sexualization* was significantly, negatively related to racism-related vigilance ( $\beta = -.20$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p = .01$ , 95% CI  $[-.33, -.07]$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

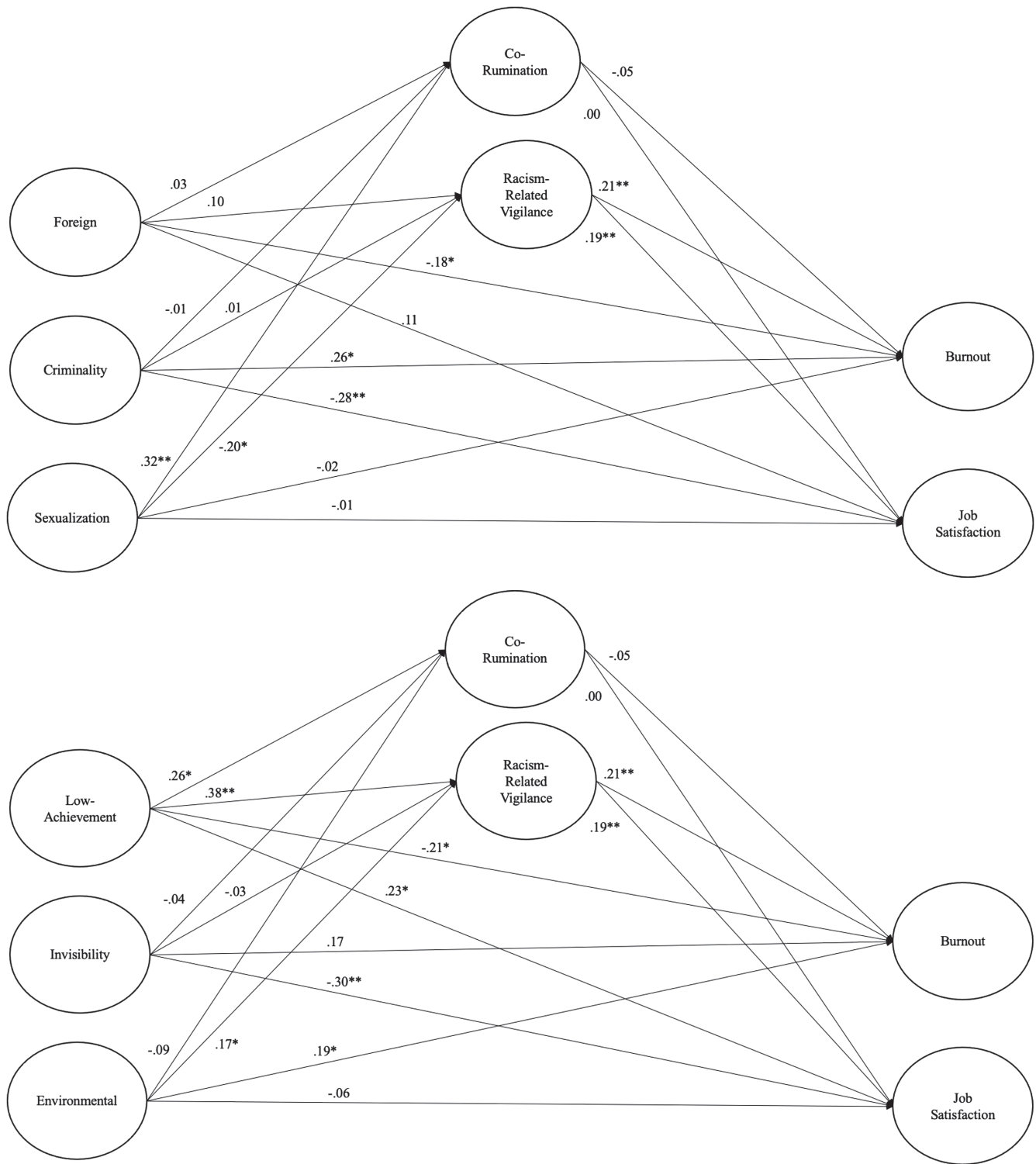
Hypotheses 5 and 6 stated that co-rumination and racism-related vigilance each partially mediate the relationship between (a) burnout and (b) job satisfaction. Neither co-rumination ( $\beta = -.05$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .46$ , 95% CI  $[-.15, .06]$ , *ns*) nor racism-related vigilance ( $\beta = .00$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p = .97$ , 95% CI  $[-.09, .09]$ , *ns*) were significantly related to burnout. However, both co-rumination ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p = .00$ , 95% CI  $[.12, .31]$ ) and racism-related vigilance ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p = .00$ , 95% CI  $[.10, .27]$ ) were significantly, positively related to job satisfaction. No indirect effect of microaggressions on burnout via either co-rumination or racism-related vigilance was observed. The indirect effects of *sexualization* microaggressions on job satisfaction via

co-rumination ( $\beta = .07$ , 95% CI  $[.03, .13]$ ) and racism-related vigilance ( $\beta = -.04$ , 95% CI  $[-.07, -.01]$ ) were significant, supporting mediation. The indirect effects of *low-achievement* microaggressions on job satisfaction via co-rumination ( $\beta = .06$ , 95% CI  $[.01, .11]$ ) and racism-related vigilance ( $\beta = .06$ , 95% CI  $[.01, .11]$ ) were significant, supporting mediation. Finally, the indirect effect of *environmental* microaggressions on job satisfaction via racism-related vigilance was significant ( $\beta = .03$ , 95% CI  $[.01, .06]$ ). Overall, Hypotheses 5a and 6a (mediation by co-rumination and vigilance between microaggressions and burnout) were not supported, while Hypotheses 5b and 6b (mediation by co-rumination and vigilance between microaggressions and job satisfaction) were supported. See Table 4 for full mediation results.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that POS buffers the relationship between microaggressions and (a) co-rumination and (b) racism-related vigilance. The moderator model for POS interacting with racial microaggressions in the prediction of co-rumination and racism-related vigilance demonstrated good fit:  $\chi^2(1) = 4.44$ ; CFI = .98, SRMR = .01. However, POS did not significantly moderate the relationship between microaggressions and co-rumination. In the prediction of racism-related vigilance, the interaction between POS and microaggressions was also not significant. Interestingly, POS was related positively with co-rumination ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .00$ , 95% CI  $[.12, .33]$ ) but did not significantly related to vigilance ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .06$ , 95% CI  $[.01, .23]$ , *ns*). Overall, results did not support Hypothesis 7a or 7b.

Finally, Hypothesis 8 predicted that trait resilience buffers the relationship between microaggressions with (a) co-rumination and (b) racism-related vigilance. The moderator model for trait resiliency interacting with racial microaggressions in the prediction of co-rumination and racism-related vigilance demonstrated good fit:  $\chi^2(1) = 5.35$ ; CFI = .98, SRMR = .02. However, trait resiliency did not significantly moderate the relationship between the six microaggression factors and co-rumination or between microaggressions and racism-related vigilance. Trait resiliency also did not evidence a

**Figure 1**  
*Structural Model of Racial Microaggressions Relating to Resource Processes and Work Outcomes*



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

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**Table 4**  
*Microaggressions Mediation Results*

Mediator	Independent variable	Dependent variables							
		Burnout				Job satisfaction			
		$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Co-rumination	Foreign	-.00	.01	.91	-.02, .01	.01	.02	.75	-.02, .04
	Criminality	.00	.01	.97	-.01, .01	-.00	.02	.95	-.04, .03
	Sexualization	-.02	.02	.48	-.06, .01	.07*	.03	.02	.03, .13
	Low achievement	-.01	.02	.52	-.06, .01	.06*	.03	.04	.01, .11
	Invisibility	.00	.01	.83	-.01, .03	-.01	.02	.71	-.05, .03
Vigilance	Environmental	.00	.01	.58	-.00, .03	-.02	.02	.21	-.05, .00
	Foreign	.00	.01	.98	-.01, .01	.02	.01	.20	.00, .05
	Criminality	.00	.01	.10	-.01, .01	.00	.02	.92	-.03, .03
	Sexualization	.00	.01	.97	-.02, .02	-.04*	.02	.04	-.07, -.01
	Low achievement	.00	.02	.97	-.04, .04	.07**	.03	.00	.04, .12
	Invisibility	.00	.01	.99	-.01, .01	-.01	.02	.74	-.04, .02
	Environmental	.00	.01	.97	-.02, .02	.03*	.02	.04	.01, .06

Note.  $N = 345$ .

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

significant main effect on co-rumination ( $\beta = .02$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .76$ , 95% CI [-.11, .12, *ns*]) or vigilance ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .66$ , 95% CI [-.08, .15, *ns*]). Overall, Hypotheses 8a and 8b were not supported.

## Quantitative Results Discussion

We used existing taxonomies and measures available to demonstrate the presence and resource-related outcomes of microaggressions at work. Specifically, quantitative findings showed that Black employees face microaggressions in most occupations (see Table 1), which supports the importance of research examining this phenomenon in the work context. In addition, we quantitatively show that microaggressions that communicate assumptions about Black employees' "low-achievement/undesirable culture" are among the most commonly occurring across occupations. This is particularly alarming as the low-achievement microaggression factor was positively related to both co-rumination and racism-related vigilance in the workplace. The data also demonstrated a mediation effect by both co-rumination and vigilance between low-achievement microaggressions and job satisfaction, supporting the theoretical expectation that such resourcing processes may help replenish and protect resources and buffer against negative job outcomes. In addition to low-achievement microaggressions, sexualization microaggressions were positively related to the resource generation mechanism of co-rumination, and environmental microaggressions were positively related to the resource protection mechanism of racism-related vigilance.

The theoretical expectation that microaggressions are depleting in nature was supported by our study demonstrating that both criminality-related microaggressions and environmental microaggressions were related to increased burnout. Further, job satisfaction was depleted by reported criminality and invisibility microaggressions. Interestingly, our proposed resourcing model of microaggressions was also supported by observations that both co-rumination and racism-related vigilance were related positively to job satisfaction and that the positive relationship between environmental

microaggressions and job satisfaction occurred via the resource protective mediation mechanism of racism-related vigilance.

Overall, data garnered from this study allowed us to answer a key research question: What theoretical mechanisms help explain the effects of microaggressions on Black employee work outcomes? In the next section, we detail qualitative findings that answer a second key research question: What are the types of microaggressions that Black individuals experience in the workplace? By analyzing both qualitative and quantitative insights, we are able to better understand microaggression manifestations and effects.

## Emergent Qualitative Microaggression Themes

In providing answers to the research question, *what are the types of microaggressions Black individuals face in the workplace*, this section details the microaggression themes that emerged from inductive qualitative analyses. Ninety-four Black employees provided detailed qualitative insights on their experiences with racial microaggressions at work. Overall, emergent themes included anti-Black stereotype expression, racialized role assignment, and interactional injustice. Next, we provide details on each theme and selected illustrative quotes from participants. Names, and any other potentially identifying information, have been removed. Table 5 displays the nine specific codes that emerged from the data, along with definitions and additional illustrative quotes.

### Theme 1: Anti-Black Stereotype Expression

The first observed theme, which appeared in many different microaggression experiences shared, involved negative assumptions about Black employees' characteristics and abilities. This theme aligns with prior work demonstrating stereotypes of Black individuals as unintelligent, antagonistic, unrefined, unmannerly, criminal, and dangerous (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Niemann et al., 1994). The three specific codes that emerged within this theme included (a) *negative intelligence ascription*, signaling an expectation of inadequacy of intellectual ability and/or performance; (b) *negative interpersonal ascription*, signaling an expectation of

**Table 5**  
*Anti-Black Workplace Microaggression Overarching Themes and Specific Codes*

Code	Definition	Illustrative quotes
<b>Theme 1: Anti-Black stereotype expression</b>		
Negative intelligence ascription	Signaling an expectation of inadequacy of intellectual ability and/or performance	<p>“I walked into the Admissions Committee to present a workshop on implicit bias. I introduce myself as Dr. xxxx. One of the physicians stated, ‘YOU are giving the lecture?’. He laughed and went onto his computer. He then googled me because he did not think I was a credible presenter. After he saw that I published a few articles he was ready to listen.”</p> <p>“I often get remarks such as ‘Wow, you are much more articulate than I expected’ or people are surprised at my level of competence. Its difficult to take a compliment. Its hard to know if they actually believe I’m doing well, or just better than what they would expect.”</p>
Negative interpersonal ascription	Signaling an expectation of social/ interpersonal skill inadequacy	<p>“I was told by two separate peers that I was intimidating.”</p> <p>“A white female co-worker mentioned to me that another white female co-worker was having negative relationship issues with her Black boyfriend. She then insinuated that it was due to him being a Black male and wanted me to agree with her. I let her know that all relationships have issues.”</p>
Ascription of criminality	Signaling an expectation of delinquency	<p>“I got dinged on some financial paperwork that I submitted where I unintentionally made an error and violated a policy. I was asked by the auditing team to justify the purchase. When I went to my department financial specialist (a white woman older than me) for help she constantly emphasized, ‘tell the truth,’ as if I would lie to the auditing team in my justification.”</p> <p>“One day an envelope holding a fair amount of money was missing. The boss called me in private and requested that I confess to the crime and he would not make it public. I denied taking the money but everyone didn’t believe me. I felt bad and cried the drive home. The money was later found, it happened that the envelope was missing, he forgot it in his car and thought he filed it. He never apologized.”</p>
<b>Theme 2: Racialized role assignment</b>		
Prescribed subservience	An expectation of fit or assignment to servitude roles	<p>“One time an older white lady was going home for the evening. I was going to get a drink from the machine. We went down the elevator together and she acted like I was her doorman or servant; she asked me to hold this for her and get the door for her.”</p> <p>“I was named the leader of the minority networking committee. This ‘committee’ was set up for me to basically tell other black people how to assimilate into white culture in order to be more fit for promotions. I was honestly afraid of how I would be viewed in the organization if I didn’t accept the position but I did not want to do it.”</p>
Prescribed physicality	An expectation of fit or assignment to physically oriented roles	<p>“I was headed to do a training for a class and a professor stopped me to ask if I was ready for the football game on Saturday even though I had on a suit, tie and name badge that identified me as a staff member.”</p> <p>“I was mistaken for a football player by some administrative assistant.”</p>
Prescribed socioeconomic inferiority	An expectation of fit or assignment to low socioeconomic role status	<p>“A coworker made assumptions about my family’s economic status. I felt offended. I corrected that person.”</p> <p>“I purchased a home in the midtown. A white male coworker asked me where I bought and when he heard midtown he said, ‘I would never buy there. I’d feel so unsafe,’ then proceeded to say, ‘but we grew up differently.’”</p>
<b>Theme 3: Interactional injustice</b>		
Second-class citizen treatment	Interpersonal mistreatment that diverges from observed treatment of other racial group members	<p>“When I had an HR complaint I was told to ‘get over it’ by senior management and HR. However when a white female in my dept. had a less egregious HR complaint everyone came to her side.”</p> <p>“Whenever I need help, the current IT employee is rude, dismissive, and unprofessional in his interactions with me while he is courteous to my white coworkers.”</p>
Invisibility	Ignoring individual differences and/or expressing contempt for unique practices of the racial group	<p>“I was mistaken for another black worker by a white colleague and she went on to say, ‘wrong person, you lots look way too much alike.’”</p> <p>“During my first week on the job a partner at my firm made a comment about not understanding why Kwanzaa was included on the office holiday calendar. He said something to the extent of ‘I print this calendar for myself but I remove the unnecessary holidays—who celebrates Kwanzaa anyway?’”</p>
Pathologizing physical attributes	“Othering” one’s physical characteristics by drawing attention to their nature and/or problematizing their form	<p>“A customer touching my hair without asking for my consent, and commenting on how curly it was.”</p> <p>“I have had multiple people communicate their concern about the professionalism of my hair.”</p>

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social/interpersonal skill inadequacy; and (3) *ascriptions of criminality*, signaling an expectation of delinquency.

A Black woman, working in southern U.S., experienced a *negative intelligence ascription* microaggression:

I walked into the Admissions Committee to present a workshop on implicit bias. I introduce myself as Dr. [surname]. One of the physicians stated, "YOU are giving the lecture?" He laughed and went onto his computer. He then googled me because he did not think I was a credible presenter. After he saw that I published a few articles he was ready to listen. I feel that I always have to go above and beyond to establish my credentials are real and earned. It's aggravating because it's like although I have a Ph.D. that is not enough. I just welcomed him back to the conversation and stated, "Glad I now have your attention."

A Black woman, working in northeast U.S., experienced an *ascription of criminality* microaggression:

I work in a large office and it so happened that one day an envelope holding a fair amount of money was missing. The boss called me in private and requested that I confess to the crime and he would not make it public. I denied [taking] the money but everyone didn't believe me. I felt bad and cried [on] the drive home. The money was later found, it happened that the envelope was missing, he forgot it in his car and thought he filed it. He never apologized.

### **Theme 2: Racialized Role Assignment**

The second theme that emerged reflected historical and current race-based practices of systematically relegating Black individuals to lower hierarchical role placement in society and organizations (Roediger & Esch, 2012). In line with findings that Black employees remain disproportionately underrepresented in positions of leadership or high-paying jobs (Brown & Atske, 2021; Miller, 2020), this theme highlights the prescriptions of Black employees to roles (often incorrectly) assumed to fit their lower qualifications and experience. This also aligns with research that demonstrates stereotypes of physical ability and interest in sports among Black women and men (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Niemann et al., 1994). The three specific data codes that emerged within this theme included (a) prescribed subservience, or an expectation of fit or assignment to servitude roles; (b) prescribed physicality, or an expectation of fit or assignment to physically oriented roles; and (c) prescribed socioeconomic inferiority, or an expectation of fit or assignment to low socioeconomic role status.

A Black man, working in southern U.S., experienced a *prescribed subservience* role microaggression:

One time an older white lady was going home for the evening. I was going to get a drink from the machine. We went down the elevator together and she acted like I was her doorman or servant; she asked me to hold this for her and get the door for her. It started to get awkward so I told her I needed to get my drink and get back to work. I made sure not to ride with her again.

A Black man, working in midwestern U.S., experienced a *prescribed physicality* microaggression:

The microaggression was being mistaken for a football player by some administrative assistant. I felt upset because the commentary suggested that Black men, especially of my size, are on college campuses for athletics and nothing more. I simply told her that I am not a football player and that I'm also not a student, but a professional that works here and that not all Black males on campus play sports.

### **Theme 3: Interactional Injustice**

The third emergent microaggression theme experienced by Black employees involved disparate treatment that diverged from the treatment observed toward other non-Black individuals in the organization. Interactional justice—perceived quality of interpersonal treatment during the enactment of organizational policies, decisions, and procedures (Bies, 2015)—involves treating others with respect and dignity and exhibiting consideration and social sensitivity toward them. This theme included cases in which Black employees were treated in manners that were more insensitive, unkind, and unfair both in dyadic interactions and also in organizational processes (e.g., communicating that characteristics of Black employees are unwelcomed/unprofessional), compared to non-Black coworkers. The three specific codes that encompass the interactional injustice theme include (a) second-class citizen treatment, or interpersonal mistreatment that diverges from observed treatment of other racial group members; (b) invisibility, or ignoring individual differences and/or expressing contempt for unique practices of the racial group; and (c) pathologizing physical attributes, or "othering" one's physical characteristics by drawing attention to their nature and/or problematizing their form.

A Black woman, working in midwestern U.S., experienced a *second-class citizen treatment* microaggression:

I regularly have issues with getting assistance from the white male IT employee. . . . Whenever I need help, the current IT employee is rude, dismissive, and unprofessional in his interactions with me while he is courteous to my white coworkers. For example, if he's walking by and I stop him and ask a tech question, he dismisses me and says I need to make an appointment. Meanwhile, the white coworker that sits across from me regularly asks him for help without making an appointment and he helps her with no problem. Once, . . . he screamed at me when I said my boss told me to come get [a headset] because he picked up a pair without making an appointment recently. I was extremely frustrated and felt like I may cry. I'm always professional and courteous at work so I expect to be treated the same. I also find it extremely problematic that my white coworkers aren't treated this way.

A Black woman, working in southern U.S., experienced a *pathologizing physical attributes* microaggression:

I have had multiple people communicate their concern about the professionalism of my hair, [including a] senior administrator [and] peer. I felt like a fool. It surprised me because I did not realize that was the general perception. I chose to take this opportunity to educate this peer on the implications of that perception. I even explained what it felt like and why it felt that way.

Overall, this qualitative data provides rich evidence supporting the notion of racialized microaggressions directly tied to and grounded in specific racial minority group stereotypes, historical and current disparities, and interpersonal norms. These anti-Black microaggressions were subtle and ambiguous, as they did not directly communicate overt or hostile racism, yet each was still identified by participants as a racialized incident that felt unpleasant, uncomfortable, and unfair. Next, we present qualitative findings that supplement resource-related mechanism findings supporting our model, as directly tested in the quantitative assessments, and provide a discussion of study results.

## Microaggression Mechanisms Qualitative Observations

In addition to delineating the types of specific microaggressions that Black employees experience, we also used qualitative data to examine the external validity of our model—we observed whether the proposed resourcing model was reflected in the lived experiences participants shared. We asked participants who perpetrated the microaggression and how the participant responded to the workplace microaggression. Many individuals shared that the microaggression was committed by their supervisor,<sup>5</sup> and most participants in our study (73%) indicated that they did not report the racial microaggression to anyone in their organization. Specific to our model, experiencing microaggressions may make employees feel unsure and depleted in their work environment and, thus, relate to greater resourcing via co-rumination and vigilance. In asking participants to share how they responded to these instances of racial microaggression, we did uncover experiences of co-rumination and racism-related vigilance (see Tables 6 and 7 for specific quotes detailing co-rumination and racism-related vigilance responses to each racial microaggressions theme in our sample). One example co-rumination response to a *differential interpersonal treatment* microaggression follows:

My boss has recommended that I not let people at work get to me. I've taken that approach too, but it doesn't feel adequate because I value being respected and it feels like he's getting away with not being professional. I've also vented to several coworkers and friends about it. Venting helps more than simply ignoring the behavior.

Exemplifying racism-related vigilance in response to a *negative interpersonal assumption* microaggression, one participant shared: "At first I thought they were joking, but later I found out that they were discriminating. I felt I needed to walk into meetings with a shield." Tables 6 and 7 illustrate that the mediating mechanisms we expected to relate to experienced microaggressions do indeed occur in Black employees' lived experiences after encountering a microaggression. Further, these tables demonstrate that these resourcing processes (i.e., co-rumination and racism-related vigilance) occurred in response to all microaggression themes observed in our data. Overall, these tables illustrate external validity and generalizability to support the choice and causal ordering of our focal independent and mediating variables in the study.

## Qualitative Results Discussion

In addition to quantitatively utilizing existing taxonomies and operationalizations to provide an initial empirical assessment of Black employee microaggression effects, we extended this work with in-depth qualitative experiences that outline specific manifestations of microaggressions toward Black employees and lived experiences of co-rumination and vigilance processes following these experiences. Emergent themes concerning the types of microaggressions Black employees face included (a) *anti-Black stereotype expression*, (b) *racialized role assignment*, and (c) *interactional injustice*. The first theme involved conveying negative assumptions about Black employees' characteristics and abilities, in alignment with research demonstrating stereotypes of Black individuals as intellectually and interpersonally inept. The second major microaggression theme experienced by Black

employees concerned the assumed, cognitive assignment of Black people in organizations to lower hierarchical roles, in terms of status and power. Finally, the third microaggression theme reflected hostile, negative, and unfair treatment of Black employees in word, deed, and/or procedure.

In comparing our emergent anti-Black microaggression themes, we observed some overlap as well as some important extensions beyond the work of Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007). Specifically, three of the original eight codes outlined by Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) were similar and/or overlapping in our data (our corresponding detail code labels are in parentheses): *ascription of intelligence* (negative intelligence ascription), *criminality/assumption of criminal status* (ascription of criminality), and *second-class citizen* (second-class citizen treatment). Four of the original eight codes did not appear in our data: *alien in own land*, *color blindness*, *denial of individual racism*, and *myth of meritocracy*. Interestingly, two original codes emerged in a qualitatively different manner than was originally conceptualized, uniquely rooted in anti-Black racism and the Black employee historical experience: *pathologizing cultural values* (pathologizing physical attributes) and *second-class citizenship* (prescribed subservience). Finally, four novel anti-Black workplace microaggression codes emerged in our data: negative interpersonal ascription, prescribed physicality, prescribed socioeconomic inferiority, and invisibility.

Together, these studies tell us how microaggressions are affecting Black employees and how to begin addressing them. Specifically, the quantitative data allowed us to test current theory with the understudied (theoretical need) and underrepresented (practical need) population of Black employees. Further, the qualitative data allowed us to examine the generalizability of current microaggressions theory and operationalization via uncovering: (a) which typology themes are present in Black individuals' experiences in the workplace, (b) which themes manifest in qualitatively different ways in this population and context, and (c) which themes are currently missing from our understanding of racial microaggressions. Qualitative insights concerning Black employees' responses to microaggressions offered realism and empirical support to the proposed resource model, as instances of both co-rumination and racism-related vigilance were observed in response to each emergent microaggression theme.

## General Discussion

This study identified manifestations and resourcing effects of racial microaggressions experienced by Black employees in the workplace, an important avenue of inquiry given that racism remains a pressing contemporary problem. In illustration, recent theoretical work highlights ongoing mega threats—negative, large-scale, diversity-related episodes that receive significant media attention (Leigh & Melwani, 2019)—that require Black individual resourcing and necessitate organizational resourcing support (McCluney et al., 2017, 2020). An accurate and full understanding of Black employee experiences is important for social scientists and the general public to redress the many overt and covert manifestations of racism directed toward this racially stigmatized group. We advance the initial microaggressions taxonomy by providing an

<sup>5</sup> Many participants did not detail who committed the microaggression, precluding quantitative summary of that information.



**Table 6**  
*Co-rumination Responses to Microaggressions Shared by Black Employees*

Mechanism	Microaggression theme encountered	Resourcing response details
Co-rumination	Differential interpersonal treatment	My boss has recommended that I not let people at work get to me. I've taken that approach too, but it doesn't feel adequate . . . I've vented to several coworkers and friends about it. Venting helps more than simply ignoring the behavior.
	Differential interpersonal treatment	[I vented to] a trusted coworker and senior level manager of AA descent. She recognized it for what it was.
	Negative interpersonal assumption	I spoke with another Black male friend that also works in my organization in another department. He let me know that he also faces this type of behavior from time to time.
	Negative interpersonal assumption	It wasn't until I discussed my concerns with some trusted friends, mentors, and a coach who helped me overcome my psychological barriers.
	Pathologizing physical attributes	I vented to a couple of coworkers that I trust, and they all agreed with my feelings, and that the comment shouldn't have been made. After the day went by, I just ended up letting it go.
	Negative interpersonal assumption	I talked to family, friends, and colleagues about the situation to see get their opinion/point of view and see if there was a better way to handle the situation and to see if there was anything wrong with how I acted or what I said.
	Negative intelligence assumption Assumption of criminality Assigned subservience	I confide in my closest coworker who belongs to the same race as mine. One of my black friends at work came to sympathize with my experience. I talked to a Spanish young lady that worked in her area and she told me stories about her and others who act the same way. That let me know that I was not alone.
	Negative intelligence assumption	I talked to someone else who was there to confirm that I wasn't being sensitive.

*Note.* This table provides possible examples of co-rumination. It is important to note that since co-rumination is a dyadic phenomenon, information about the other party's engagement in the conversation is required for some of these examples to be designated as such.

analysis specific to context (i.e., the workplace) and identity (i.e., African Americans). This study offers empirical insights concerning the (limitations to) generalizability and needed extensions of the original microaggressions theory outlined by Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007), while also generating and testing a theoretical resource model of mechanisms and work-related outcomes related to anti-Black microaggressions in organizations.

This work offers empirical evidence relating microaggressions to resourcing efforts (i.e., efforts to recover and protect resources) and important work outcomes. While microaggressions have been well researched, there is little research on the theoretical mechanisms that link experiences to outcomes. The depleting nature of

microaggressions is evident in the association of such experiences with more burnout, less job satisfaction, more co-rumination, and more racism-related vigilance. Further, based on COR, we tested the potential role of resourcing efforts in mediating the effect of microaggressions on work outcomes and the potential buffering effect of organizational (POS) and individual (trait resiliency) resources in limiting the need for resourcing to cope with microaggressions. In doing so, we begin to uncover *why* and *how* microaggressions affect employee experiences and outcomes. The mediating effect of the resource replenishing activity of co-rumination and the resource protection activity of racism-related vigilance helped explain the relationship between low-achievement

**Table 7**  
*Racism-Related Vigilance Responses to Microaggressions Shared by Black Employees*

Mechanism	Microaggression theme encountered	Resourcing response details
Racism-related vigilance	Differential interpersonal treatment	I fully expected what happened to happen. My family has strong women and men throughout. I have been prepped from an early age to deal with these situations. I look past the immediate anger towards the future that I desire . . . to be respected and successful despite and in spite of these individuals and situations. I was not at fault. She was. I can cope.
	Negative interpersonal assumption	I came back to work focused on work and not so focused on small talk.
	Negative interpersonal assumption	At first I thought they were joking, but later I found out that they were discriminating. I felt I needed to walk into meetings with a shield.
	Assumption of criminality	In my future interactions with her I'm cautious and try to avoid her at all costs when I need help. Just because, clearly, she had a preconceived notion about my trustworthiness as a Black woman.
	Pathologizing physical attributes	It happens all the time. So, I think I have just coped by accepting that it will happen.
	Assigned subservience	I was able to move on because I believe that is just the way corporate America is. I can't change it unless I work for myself.
	Differential interpersonal treatment	I avoid her like I avoid coronavirus.
	Assigned subservience	I made sure not to ride with her [in the elevator] again.
Individual and/or group invisibility	Individual and/or group invisibility	I have low expectations and the way I approach people is I allow them to reveal themselves and take note for later.
	Differential interpersonal treatment	All my life I've experienced microaggressions (people asking "are you lost?" older White men calling me "boy," etc.) that I've become quite ok with dismissing someone else's ignorance, especially when it doesn't cause physical/emotional harm.

and sexualization microaggressions with job satisfaction. Racism-related vigilance also mediated the relationship between environmental microaggressions and job satisfaction. Contrary to our expectations, we did not find a significant relationship between our resourcing mechanisms and burnout. Thus, the theoretical resource-depleting nature of these activities (i.e., relating to greater burnout) was not supported here, while the theoretical role of resourcing in protecting job outcomes (i.e., relating to higher job satisfaction) was supported.

Interestingly, we observed resourcing mediation effects for three of the six forms of microaggressions that the scale, which is based on the Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) taxonomy, assessed. We uncovered that Black employees who experience more sexualization, low-achievement/undesirable culture, and environmental microaggressions engage in greater resourcing, and this relates to higher job satisfaction despite experienced racial microaggressions. What remains unclear is how Black employees respond to foreigner, criminality, or invisibility microaggressions. Currently, there are no available theories or empirical insights that explain the unique processes for managing and responding to different types of microaggression, yet this data points to the utility of such work. Perhaps the direct physical threat of sexualization and environmental microaggressions (e.g., feeling alone via not experiencing “safety in number”) and the direct threat to one’s job role when presumed incompetent (i.e., low-achievement microaggressions) activate resourcing in the workplace (e.g., needing to make sense of one’s standing and environment with coworkers and needing to be more vigilant against these experience at work); while other forms of microaggression, although still unpleasant and unwanted (e.g., invisibility microaggressions), may be encounters that Black employees choose to navigate and recover from in contexts outside the workplace (e.g., at home with family or after work with friends). As organizations value intelligence (Hunter, 1986) and competence (Cuddy et al., 2004), assuming that Black employees have inferior intelligence is directly relevant in the work context. Indeed, there may be direct and immediate workplace needs to address (e.g., safety from sexualization or environmental microaggressions) and benefits to secure (e.g., keeping one’s role after low-achievement remarks) via resourcing at work that help explain the support observed for this workplace microaggressions model.

Contrary to our hypotheses, neither organizational support nor resiliency significantly moderated the relationship between microaggressions and co-rumination or racism-related vigilance. These results imply that neither perceiving general support nor being resilient can adequately protect targets from the possible deleterious effects or resourcing needs that follow microaggressions. Prior work demonstrating the role of specific support for diversity in moderating the effect of discrimination on employee outcomes (see Triana et al., 2010) offers an avenue for additional work in the microaggressions domain. In addition, other psychological characteristics and resources specifically relevant to experiences with discrimination (e.g., racial identity centrality; Sellers et al., 1997) may offer attenuating support for Black employees dealing with microaggressions.

Extending our understanding of microaggressions, qualitative insights provide nuance to make the “invisible” depleting encounters faced by Black employees “visible.” The in-depth examination of detailed experiences of microaggressions among Black employees and our analyses that generated three overarching and nine specific anti-Black workplace microaggression themes is a key

contribution of this work. We anticipated some overlap between the original themes proposed by Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) and our categories given that microaggressions in the workplace were expected to target work-relevant attributes (i.e., intelligence/ability, trustworthiness). Despite these similarities, the presence of these types of microaggressions in the workplace carries with them unique consequences. For instance, our qualitative data showed that ascription of criminality microaggressions contributed to the perception of Black employees as the perpetrators of counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs; i.e., stealing). Ironically, the presence of such microaggressions at work may decrease Black employees’ perceptions of organizational justice and increase their perceptions of job stress, factors known to increase CWBs including withdrawal, turnover, or absenteeism (Fox et al., 2001). Further, interpersonal relationships strained by microaggressions may spill over and hamper team dynamics. Indeed, the work context arguably heightens the harmful impact of these indignities. When a person with organizational power (e.g., a supervisor) expresses racial stereotypes via microaggressions, for instance, this bias can have tangible consequences at work; microaggressions may influence target evaluations (e.g., who receives a promotion) and target behaviors (e.g., who decides to seek that promotion in the first place). By communicating to targets that they are undesirably different, workplace microaggression may lower self-esteem and self-efficacy and increase stress and withdrawal among targets, outcomes that hinder organizational success.

The observed discrepancy concerning the four original codes that did not appear in our data (alien in own land, color blindness, denial of individual racism, and myth of meritocracy) is meaningful and warrants consideration. The absence of two of the four themes (i.e., alien in own land and myth of meritocracy) might be meaningful rather than inadvertent. Microaggressions often reflect historically rooted cultural narratives linked to specific devalued identities. Alien in own land microaggressions and myth of meritocracy microaggressions are commonly directed toward immigrants and/or Asian Americans. When Japanese immigrants achieved socio-economic stability in the 1960s, for example, the successful immigrant trope took hold in the American imagination, pigeonholing Asian Americans as model immigrants with unparalleled intellectual acuity (Wong & Halgin, 2006). The model minority myth does not apply to Black Americans, who are not perceived as foreigners in the U.S. Instead, Black Americans have been historically portrayed as intellectually inferior to White people—a racist belief that still permeates modern society (Crane, 1994) and manifests itself through ascription of intelligence microaggressions. In terms of color blindness and denial of individual racism, as we only collected one vivid example of microaggressions encountered by each participant, we cannot rule out the possibility that these themes would not to be observed if we instead gathered multiple, detailed microaggression experiences from each participant. We encourage future researchers to further this work with a greater focus on qualitative depth and also methodologies that allow multiple, within-person assessments of this phenomenon (e.g., experienced sampling methodology).

The qualitatively distinct microaggression themes we observed, pathologizing physical attributes and prescribed subservience, echoed the historic treatment and portrayal of Black bodies in North America. The U.S. has a “four-hundred-year-old legacy of slavery and barely a generation of (quasi) protected civil rights,” and as a

result, “the Black body is [still] deemed . . . strange, exotic, and fascinating” in postslavery culture (Yancy, 2016, pp. ix, xxx). Indeed, White hegemony has historically othered and pathologized Black bodies, especially the ones of Black women (Magubane, 2001). Microaggressions that pathologize Black employees’ physical attributes and/or ascribe them to servitude in contemporary society are a vestige of the narrative of Black inferiority. In fact, numerous women in our study recounted perpetrators not only gazing with amusement at their physical attributes but invading their personal space to touch these features without consent. Further, microaggressions that pathologized physical attributes often equated Black bodies with unprofessionalism, directly showcasing how White-centric standards are applied to Black employees. Based on our data, it appears that modern-day workplace microaggressions toward Black employees often call back to essentialist notions of race and the historical reality of anti-Blackness in slavery.

The four unique microaggression themes we uncovered (negative interpersonal ascription, prescribed physicality, prescribed socioeconomic inferiority, and invisibility) arise from the treatment of and discourse about Black Americans in the U.S. (and beyond). Stereotypes surrounding poverty, athleticism, conduct, and Black identity all surface in these new microaggression themes. In line with research on the out-group homogeneity bias (Ackerman et al., 2006), for example, Black employees were confused with each other (i.e., invisibility microaggression). Interestingly, gender and physical attributes also combined to create different kinds of microaggressions toward Black employees. In line with stereotypes of masculinity and Blackness (Majors, 2017), Black men reported being misidentified as athletes instead of staff on college campuses. The implication here is that Black men solely contribute value to and have a place in educational settings if they play for the university’s sports team. Notions of Black identity and femininity combined to give rise to microaggressions that pathologized the physical attributes of Black women (e.g., pathologizing Black women’s hair texture). Gender and racial identity combined in work settings to forge unique microaggressions toward women and men from this racial group. Thus, considering intersectionality—simultaneously considering the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of identity (e.g., race and gender; Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991)—in interpreting microaggression effects may offer valuable nuance to this domain.

Overall, we identified unique manifestations of anti-Black racism experienced by a large, diverse sample of Black employees across multiple age ranges, geographical locations, and 19 occupations. This work extends understandings of microaggressions via uncovering three overarching themes of anti-Black microaggressions experienced at work: anti-Black stereotype expression, racialized role assignment, and interactional injustice. The three major themes we delineate are informative as they replicate, contradict, and expand the themes that appear in the original microaggression taxonomy by Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007), which was not developed specifically for Black individuals, for racial minorities in the work context, or via qualitative data analysis.

## Implications

Although research on microaggressions has gained popularity in recent years, work specifically on anti-Black microaggressions and especially on anti-Black microaggressions in the workplace remains

limited. This lack of knowledge presents a challenge because microaggressions encountered in the workplace may be more complex and difficult to manage than those encountered in other domains. For example, employees may not be able to remove themselves from interactions marked by reoccurring microaggressions, such as those perpetuated by a boss or officemate. This is problematic because employees might not only be unable to fully remove and protect themselves from such encounters, but they may also feel powerless to address these harmful experiences due to anticipated economic backlash, jeopardized career progression, or compromised identity management goals. Recent work employs the term *secondary microaggression* to denote the harmful and invalidating responses that people of color receive when they confront microaggressions (Johnson et al., 2021). Taken together, these factors highlight that understanding and eradicating microaggressions in this context is critical. This work offers theoretical implications by identifying anti-Black microaggressions manifestations and the resourcing efforts Black employees engage in to protective themselves from depleting microaggression effects.

This work also offers theoretical insights concerning the importance of considering racial microaggressions in the workplace resourcing domain. As Sue, Capodilupo, et al. (2007) describe, continual and recurrent exposure to microaggressions cumulatively hampers the psychological well-being of targets. Reminding employees of anti-Black stereotypes, communicating expectations of lower role placement, and engaging in interactional injustice may be especially depleting and harmful within the organizational context due to the negative valence and potential internalization of such comments. In illustration, perhaps a stranger thinking all Black people are less intelligent or invisible is unpleasant and unwanted, but one’s supervisor or colleague subscribing to these beliefs could be destructive to career experiences and progression. Indeed, the microaggressions themes we uncovered are relevant to the work setting (e.g., mistaking professionals for athletes on college campuses; assuming that a Black person is criminal and would engage in CWBs in an office where money is present). These microaggressions reveal biases that can actively prevent career progression for targets (e.g., one respondent directly talked about being passed over for a promotion because of her race) and harm organizations (e.g., bias may prevent the most qualified job candidates from being chosen or promoted). While microaggressions in general may harm well-being and contribute to racial minority members’ stress, they arguably have a more direct, tangible impact in the workplace. This work highlights the importance of considering the unique, identity-based depleting adversities that some employees face in seeking organizational equity and inclusion. Considering the draining, and often unacknowledged, effects of anti-Black microaggressions have the potential to inform our understanding of multiple organizational processes (e.g., recruitment, retention, promotion).

This work also offers theoretical insights relevant to COR theory by investigating the dually adaptive and depleting outcomes that follow microaggression encounters for Black employees. Our results support the COR model by documenting that chronic, low-level work-related stress in the form of workplace microaggressions relate to higher burnout and lower job satisfaction. Furthermore, our results elucidate that co-rumination and racism-related vigilance are resourcing processes that follow microaggression encounters. Moreover, in relating these resourcing efforts back to work attitudes, we uncovered evidence that co-rumination and racism-related vigilance

mediate the relationship between microaggressions and job satisfaction, thereby detailing how and why microaggressions relate to adverse outcomes. Importantly, through our exploration of mediation via racism-related vigilance, we provide evidence for the fourth principle of COR theory, which is underresearched compared to the other tenants of the theory. Overall, this project demonstrates that workplace microaggressions are depleting for the Black employees who experience them and subsequently seek to protect and recover resources.

Another important implication of this work is that current microaggression scales, while offering useful data, may not be capturing the full construct space of microaggressions for some (e.g., Black people and other racial minority groups) and may not fully capture the experience of microaggression in all contexts. Here, the perspectives of the individuals we sought to understand were directly integrated into our work. The observation of unique microaggression themes in our data highlights that the current scales may not offer an optimal operationalization and there is room for scale improvement and expansion. We believe our qualitative findings offer useful insights that inform scale development via the inclusion of our novel microaggression themes and the utilization of specific quotes from this data to inform item development.

Practically, this work offers insights that can be used to advance allyship, leadership, and training. A current barrier to allyship from non-Black employees may be a lack of awareness of anti-Black microaggression manifestations and effects. Research suggests that perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware of the negative messages they communicate to people of color. Consequently, leaders and perpetrators often encourage the targets of microaggressions to simply ignore or dismiss their experiences (Johnson et al., 2021; Sue, Capodilupo, et al., 2007). These tendencies highlight a need for those not affected directly by microaggressions to better understand the experiences of those who must navigate such work impediments. As microaggressions are subtle and difficult to identify, even for targets, research delineating specific manifestations and effects helps discourage the dismissal of reported microaggressions and can inform efforts to prevent microaggressions.

For decision-makers and those creating training programs, this work also offers direction. Prior work examines the impact of leader fairness on microaggression experiences and outcomes (Offermann et al., 2013). Specific to the current work, if leaders seek to foster a work culture of inclusion and identity-safety, it may be particularly important that they model (a) not committing racial microaggressions and (b) adequately responding to and addressing reported microaggressions in a manner that encourages employees to come forward (i.e., ensuring voice safety and efficacy). This may be especially crucial considering that general organizational support and trait resiliency did not buffer the effect of microaggressions on resourcing efforts. Finally, understanding the manifestations of racism is critical to designing effective interventions to counter these negative events (Thompson & Neville, 1999). Informed insights into anti-Black stereotypes that are commonly (even unconsciously) held, implicit associations between lower status and Blackness, and the negative interpersonal treatment that likely results from these stereotypes and implicit views, is useful for assessing training needs, setting behavioral change targets, and subsequently evaluating the effectiveness of microaggression interventions.

## Limitations and Future Directions

As with any study, there are a number of potential limitations that should be considered when interpreting findings and extending this work. First, the cross-sectional nature of this study limits the ability to directly test and describe causal relationships between the quantitative scales collected. However, it is important to note that a cross-sectional approach is regarded as appropriate when theory supports the predicted relationship (Mathieu et al., 2008), particularly for relationships that have not been identified in prior research (Spector, 2019). Nevertheless, we encourage future research to continue to develop and assess models of microaggressions and resourcing to offer evidence of causality. This can be accomplished, in part, by measuring variables at multiple time points and by probing for potential alternative explanations.

Second, among our sample, about one third of participants chose to share details about their workplace microaggression experience. Although we still obtained a relatively large sample of responses, we believe this response rate is due to a number of potential factors including (a) the time-consuming nature of detailing one's experiences as opposed to answering scale items; (b) participants' right to skip any anxiety-inducing question per IRB regulations; and (c) participants' inability to readily recall or readily identify vivid workplace microaggression encounters at the time of survey completion. Future work would do well to gather multiple microaggression experiences from each participant to examine within-individual experiences, trends, and variability. However, we urge researchers to exercise caution and care, as asking participants to detail experiences of racism can be challenging and unpleasant for them.

Third, this work focused on the experiences of Black employees only. This sample was chosen because (a) research has called for greater inclusion of racial minorities in psychological sciences research (Roberts et al., 2020) and (b) racial microaggressions are subjective experiences that are best understood from the vantage point of targets (Jones, 1977; Keltner & Robinson, 1996; Sue et al., 2007). Despite the focus of the current work, we encourage scholars to examine intersectional microaggressions that consider multiple stigmatized identities (i.e., race with stigmatized gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and disability status). Such experiences may have equally powerful and potentially detrimental effects on employees.

Fourth, this work focused on two potential resourcing-related responses to microaggression and tested two potential protective resources that might buffer the effects of racial microaggression on Black employee experiences and outcomes. Given the positive association between POS and co-rumination in our results, future research should investigate the relationship between co-rumination in general, which may constitute a form of resource investment, versus co-rumination about race-related experiences specifically, which may constitute a form of resource depletion. Moreover, given that trait resiliency and POS did not buffer the relationships explored, indicating that other resources may be more relevant in the context of workplace microaggressions experienced by Black employees.

In general, additional work is needed to extend this model utilizing other potentially relevant theoretical frameworks and examining other adaptive responses to microaggressions that may both increase awareness of the problem and diminish negative effects on victims. Further, one potentially related domain that future work can consider in microaggressions model development

is the concept of incivility, defined by Andersson and Pearson (1999) as “low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” (p. 457). Although distinct from the concept of microaggressions—microaggressions are tied to identity in determining the target (e.g., racial minority) and the experience (e.g., racialized role assignment)—there is a relatively larger set of studies on incivility in the workplace. Future work that theoretically and empirically examines the similarities and distinctions between these two concepts, in addition to their relative and cumulative predictors and outcomes, would be informative for delineating their placement in the subtle discrimination nomological network.

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## Appendix

### The Racial Microaggressions Scale; Torres-Harding et al. (2012)<sup>A1</sup>

- (A) Foreign
1. Because of my race, other people at work assume that I am a foreigner.
  2. Because of my race, people at work suggest that I am not a “true” American.
  3. Other people at work ask me where I am from, suggesting that I don’t belong.
- (B) Criminality
4. Other people at work treat me like a criminal because of my race.
  5. People at work act like they are scared of me because of my race.
  6. Others at work assume that I will behave aggressively because of my race.
  7. I am singled out by police or security people at work because of my race.
- (C) Sexualization
8. People at work suggest that I am “exotic” in a sexual way because of my race.
  9. Other people at work view me in an overly sexual way because of my race.
  10. Other people at work hold sexual stereotypes about me because of my racial background.
- (D) Low-achieving/undesirable culture
11. Other people at work act as if they can fully understand my racial identity, even though they are not of my racial background.
  12. People at work act as if all of the people of my race are alike.
  13. Others at work suggest that people of my racial background get unfair benefits.
  14. Others at work assume that people of my background would succeed in life if they simply worked harder.
  15. Other people at work deny that people of my race face extra obstacles when compared to White employees.
  16. People at work assume that I am successful because of affirmative action, not because I earned my accomplishments.
  17. Others at work hint that I should work hard to prove that I am not like other people of my race.
  18. Others at work suggest that my racial heritage is dysfunctional or undesirable.
  19. Others at work focus only on the negative aspects of my racial background.
- (E) Invisibility
20. Others prefer that I assimilate to the White culture and downplay my racial background.
  21. I am mistaken for being a service worker or lower status worker simply because of my race.
  22. I am treated like a second-class citizen at work because of my race.
  23. Sometimes I feel as if people at work look past me or do not see me as a real person because of my race.
  24. I feel invisible at work because of my race.
  25. I am ignored in work environments because of my race.
  26. My work contributions are dismissed or devalued because of my racial background.
- (F) Environmental
27. When I interact with authority figures at work, they are usually of a different racial background.

<sup>A1</sup> This is the adapted scale that was used in this study to measure microaggressions in the work context.

28. I notice that there are few role models of my racial background in my organization.
29. I have been the only person of my racial background in my workplace.
30. Where I work, I see few people of my racial background.
31. I notice that there are few people of my racial background on the TV, in books, and in magazines at my workplace.
12. When I have a problem, my coworker always tries to get me to tell every detail about what happened.
13. We will keep talking even after we both know all of the details about what happened.
14. We talk for a long time trying to figure out all of the different reasons why the problem might have happened.
15. We try to figure out every one of the bad things that might happen because of the problem.

#### **Co-Rumination Questionnaire; Rose (2002)**

1. We spend most of our time together talking about problems that my coworker or I have.
2. If one of us has a problem, we will talk about the problem rather than talking about something else or doing something else.
3. After my coworker tells me about a problem, I always try to get my coworker to talk more about it later.
4. When I have a problem, my coworker always tries really hard to keep me talking about it.
5. When one of us has a problem, we talk to each other about it for a long time.
6. When we see each other, if one of us has a problem, we will talk about the problem even if we had planned to do something else together.
7. When my coworker has a problem, I always try to get my coworker to tell me every detail about what happened.
8. After I have told my coworker about a problem, my coworker always tries to get me to talk more about it later.
9. We talk about problems that my coworker or I are having almost every time we see each other.
10. If one of us has a problem, we will spend our time together talking about it, no matter what else we could do instead.
11. When my coworker has a problem, I always try really hard to keep my coworker talking about it.
16. We spend a lot of time trying to figure out parts of the problem that we cannot understand.
17. We talk a lot about how bad the person with the problem feels.
18. We will talk about every part of the problem over and over.
19. We talk a lot about the problem in order to understand why it happened.
20. We talk a lot about all of the different bad things that might happen because of the problem.
21. We talk a lot about parts of the problem that do not make sense to us.
22. We talk for a long time about how upset it has made one of us with the problem.
23. We usually talk about that problem every day even if nothing new has happened.
24. We talk about all of the reasons why the problem might have happened.
25. We spend a lot of time talking about what bad things are going to happen because of the problem.
26. We try to figure out everything about the problem, even if there are parts that we may never understand.
27. We spend a long time talking about how sad or mad the person with the problem feels.

Received May 15, 2021

Revision received February 21, 2022

Accepted March 3, 2022 ■