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Finding Calm in The Storm: A Daily Investigation of How Trait Mindfulness Buffers Against Paranoid Cognition and Emotional Exhaustion Following Perceived Discrimination at Work

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Finding Calm in The Storm: A Daily Investigation of How Trait Mindfulness Buffers Against Paranoid Cognition and Emotional Exhaustion Following Perceived Discrimination at Work

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Abstract

Although much is known about the harmful effects of perceived discrimination on employees' psychological wellbeing, surprisingly few studies have examined why some individuals with stigmatized identities are able to rise above and overcome the effects of prejudicial work events. To address this gap in the literature, we integrate existing theory and research on workplace discrimination, mindfulness, and paranoid cognition to develop and test a dynamic, within-person moderated mediation model that explains why some employees are able to interrupt the process through which perceptions of discrimination lead to emotional exhaustion the next workday. Specifically, an experience sampling study conducted over two workweeks utilizing a sample of 105 transgender employees revealed that perceptions of discrimination predicted greater emotional exhaustion the following morning at work via heightened levels of paranoid cognition. However, trait mindfulness moderated this indirect within-person effect, such that individuals higher on mindfulness reported less paranoid cognition the morning after reporting discrimination at work and, in turn, were less emotionally depleted. By integrating the concept of mindfulness into the discrimination literature and examining the mediating role of paranoid cognition, the present study sheds light on one avenue by which employees with stigmatized identities are able to "weather the storm" of prejudicial experiences at work and has a number of key implications for future research on workplace discrimination, mindfulness, and paranoia.

Keywords

> "I've always found a way to find calm in focusing on the present. I'm able to sort of find a way through really challenging times, even though things are falling apart around me. I tend to find a way to keep marching forward by finding little pockets of peacefulness."

Study participant, transgender woman, non-profit sector

Experiences of discrimination remain a reality of organizational life, with 84,254 formal complaints reported to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2017 alone (EEOC, 2017). Whether objectively real or solely perceived, discrimination reflects a serious problem for organizations and their employees. Indeed, it is estimated that discrimination and unfairness cost U.S. employers $64 billion annually in turnover (Level Playing Field Institute, 2007). These effects may be largely due to the links found between perceived discrimination and targets' diminished wellbeing (see Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016 for a meta-analysis), including greater emotional exhaustion (Wood, Braeken, & Niven, 2013) and psychological distress (Waldo, 1999).

Despite subtle differences in their theoretical explanations, consistent with transactional models of stress (e.g., Folkman, 1984, Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), stigma researchers generally agree that perceived discrimination represents a social stressor, or identity threat, that undermines wellbeing by

depleting targets' psychological resources as they attempt to cope with perceived threats (Hatzenbuehler, 2009, Miller and Major, 2000, Pascoe and Smart Richman, 2009). Yet, as the opening quote suggests, some individuals are able to "find calm" and remain resilient in the face of prejudicial events at work. As such, it is striking that there has been little focus on the positive attributes that allow some people to rise above and overcome the effects of such events. From a theoretical view, although the challenges faced by stigmatized employees should not be ignored, the tendency of existing research to be problem-focused reflects a missed opportunity to understand the strengths of such individuals and their capacity to adjust and thrive despite prejudice. As Shih (2004) observed, the typical focus on stigma's harmful effects "paint[s] a very pessimistic outlook for individuals who are targets of stigma," underscoring the need for research on those "who are successful in overcoming stigmas" and the factors that allow them to do so (p. 182–183). Further, Dhanani, Beus, and Joseph (2018) noted that prior research suffers from a "myopic" focus on the direct effects of discrimination, overlooking boundary conditions that explain when, or for whom, it is most harmful and the pathways by which these effects occur. To be clear, we do not suggest those lacking certain positive traits should be blamed for not being resilient enough to prejudice. Rather, by adopting a positive psychological lens that examines for whom discrimination is more or less impactful and why, it is possible to achieve more nuanced theory about its effects at work.

Accordingly, the purpose of the present study is to examine the moderating role of one positive psychological factor, *trait mindfulness*, on the within-person links between perceptions of discrimination at work and employees' emotional exhaustion – a state of depletion and fatigue linked to perceived discrimination (e.g., Wood et al., 2013) and a key indicator of psychological wellbeing (Zapf, 2002). Mindfulness reflects a state of nonjudgmental attention to and awareness of present-moment experiences, which varies between individuals (trait mindfulness) and within them across situations (state mindfulness, Brown & Ryan, 2003). The concept of mindfulness is of increasing interest in organizations, in part due to its ability to promote employee wellbeing via greater self-regulation of thoughts and emotions (e.g., Hülsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013), as well as its openness to intervention (e.g., Carmody, Reed, Kristeller, & Merriam, 2008).

We focus on trait mindfulness because it may, as the opening quote alludes, enhance the capacity of stigmatized employees to find "little pockets of peacefulness" despite facing prejudice at work. Indeed, recent theoretical models suggest that the self-regulatory benefits of mindfulness may foster employee resilience (Glomb, Duffy, Bono, & Yang, 2011). As Good et al. (2016) note, mindful employees may be more adept at short-circuiting the "automatic link" between toxic work events and their reactivity, leaving them less depleted. In particular, Brown, Ryan, Creswell, and Niemiec (2008) theorized that mindfulness, by cultivating a receptive, pre-conceptual awareness of events as they occur, eases self-identification with social threats, leading to less inner reactivity, more adaptive responses, and, in turn, greater wellbeing. Despite existing theory, the concept of mindfulness has not been theoretically integrated into the discrimination literature to explain why some employees are more adaptable in the face of prejudicial work events. Highlighting this gap in the literature, Dhanani et al. (2018) called for greater research on how targets of discrimination recover from such events and, specifically, suggested mindfulness may play a central role in such processes. As such, we examine the possibility that trait mindfulness may enhance one's ability to interrupt the process by which prejudicial events lead to their subsequent emotional exhaustion.

Drawing on an established and growing body of theory and research on paranoia (Chan and McAllister, 2014, Freeman, 2007, Kramer, 1998, Marr et al., 2012), we further propose that one theoretical explanation for why trait mindfulness may protect against the psychologically depleting effects of perceived discrimination is because it decreases *paranoid cognition* – an aroused psychological state marked by hypervigilance, rumination, and sinister attribution tendencies (Chan & McAllister, 2014). Although frequently viewed as a product of psychopathology, consistent with transactional models of stress (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), research suggests milder, nonclinical forms of paranoid cognition are common, albeit suboptimal, responses to distressing situations involving appraised threats to the self (Fenigstein & Vanable, 1992), especially at work where failures at threat detection may be highly costly. Our decision to focus on paranoid cognition as a mediator is informed by evidence suggesting that perceptions of discrimination tend to induce feelings of anxiety and fear (Jones et al., 2016; see also Kish-Gephart, Detert, Treviño, & Edmonson, 2009), which, according to existing theories of paranoia, set in motion patterns of paranoid thinking that grip attention and demand resources for the purpose of social sensemaking and self-preservation (Chan and McAllister, 2014, Freeman et al., 2002, Frijda, 1986). As such, these defensive patterns of social cognition, when activated within a given context, are theorized to act as a central mechanism through which distressing social events exert harmful effects on psychological wellbeing (Freeman, 2007). Yet, as we discuss below, trait mindfulness, by enhancing self-regulatory processes that help stigmatized employees "stay in the moment" without becoming overly identified with and reactive to prejudicial events, may disrupt the link between such events and paranoid cognition the next morning when individuals reenter their workplace.

Taken together, we propose a first-stage, multilevel moderated-mediation model (Edwards & Lambert, 2007), whereby trait mindfulness at the between-person level moderates the indirect, within-person effect of perceived discrimination on emotional exhaustion the following morning at work via paranoid cognition, controlling forbaseline levels of paranoid cognition and emotional exhaustion (see Fig. 1). We employ a within-person, experience sampling methodology (ESM) given the workplace discrimination literature largely posits within-person relations (i.e., as one's level of perceived discrimination changes, so too do their cognitions, behavior, wellbeing, etc.). Moreover, based on their review of the extant literature, Dhanani et al. (2018) encouraged more within-person designs, including ESM studies, in order to gain a more fine-grained understanding of the processes through which discrimination impacts employee outcomes, as well as the factors that may attenuate these effects. To test our model, we utilize a sample of transgender employees given this is an identity group that historically has been highly stigmatized at work and for which encounters with discrimination are common (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016).
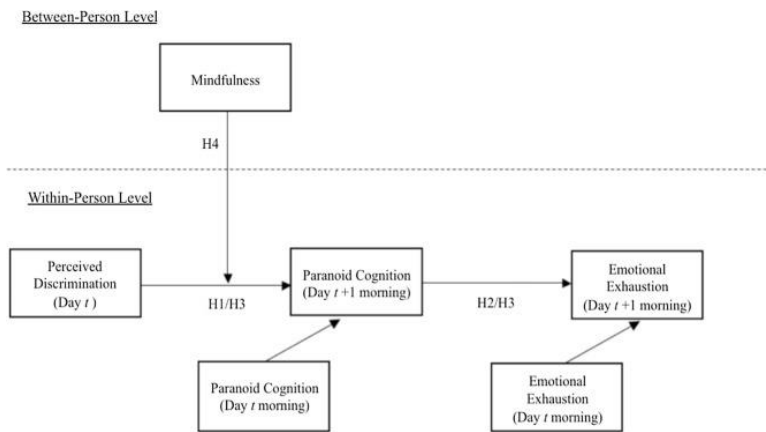
Fig. 1. Hypothesized multilevel moderated mediation model. Day t's paranoid cognition and Day t's emotional exhaustion are baseline control variables at the within-person level. H1 = Hypothesis 1 (within-person main effect), H2 = Hypothesis 2 (within-person main effect), H3 = Hypothesis 3 (within-person indirect effect), H4 = Hypothesis 4 (multilevel moderated mediation effect).

We believe the present investigation makes several contributions. First, as noted above, by introducing the concept of mindfulness into the discrimination literature, we are among the first to take a positive psychological approach to considering how stigmatized employees may be able to "weather the storm" of prejudicial events at work. In so doing, we not only answer calls for greater empirical attention to the personal strengths of stigmatized minorities (e.g., Kwon, 2013), but also address Dhanani et al. (2018) call for more nuanced research that challenges and advances our understanding of workplace discrimination by examining when, or for whom, such experiences are more or less harmful. Second, despite existing theory suggesting mindfulness moderates negative responses to stressful events at work (Glomb et al., 2011, Good et al., 2016), previous research in support of this hypothesis has largely relied on cross-sectional analyses and reactions to laboratory stressors (e.g., Long & Christian, 2015) or conceptualized mindfulness as an independent variable in relation to employee wellbeing (e.g., Hülsheger et al., 2013, Hülsheger et al., 2014). By utilizing a within-person design that conceptualizes mindfulness as a between-person moderator of the relation between a naturally occurring, day-to-day social stressor and emotional exhaustion, we thus provide a more theoretically consistent investigation of the stress-buffering properties of trait mindfulness at work. Finally, by examining paranoid cognition as a within-person mediator of this moderated effect, we answer Good et al. (2016) call for greater research that illuminates the processes by which mindfulness may allow employees to overcome stressful events at work.

1. Theoretical background and hypothesis development

1.1. Mindfulness

As noted earlier, mindfulness, a concept based in Eastern Buddhist traditions, represents a state of consciousness marked by a "receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience" (Brown et al., 2007, Brown and Ryan, 2003). As Brown et al. (2007) note, despite this deceptively simple definition, this quality of attention possesses several core characteristics. First, mindfulness involves a clarity of awareness that allows one to come into direct contact with inner experiences (e.g., thoughts, emotions, sensations) and external events (e.g., sounds, smells, actions, Brown & Ryan,

2003). Second, mindful attention is pre-conceptual in nature; that is, instead of evaluating or reflecting upon events and experiences based on memory, it allows stimuli to "enter awareness in a simple noticing of what is taking place" (Brown et al., 2007, Teasdale, 1999). As such, one tends to purely observe what is happening within and around them without analyzing or assigning any meaning to their experiences (Hülsheger et al., 2013). Third, mindfulness is a form of present-oriented consciousness, whereby one focuses on moment-to-moment experiences rather than dwelling on memories of the past or fantasizing about the future (Baer et al., 2006, Bishop et al., 2004, Brown and Ryan, 2003, Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

These core elements of mindfulness are believed to be central to healthy self-regulation of thoughts and emotions and thus are at the heart of the mindfulness construct's salutary effects on psychological wellbeing (Brown et al., 2007, Glomb et al., 2011), including greater vitality (Allen & Kiburz, 2012) and lower emotional exhaustion (Hülsheger et al., 2013, Reb et al., 2015) in employee samples. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, although mindfulness represents an innate human capacity, or state of mind, that naturally varies between people and within them across situations (Brown, Ryan, Loverich, Biegel & West, 2011), research suggests one's capacity for mindful awareness can be enhanced via training initiatives involving mindfulness meditation, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR, e.g., Carmody and Baer, 2008, Carmody et al., 2008). As such, the benefits of mindfulness are not restricted to those naturally disposed to it, but rather, through training, mindful awareness can become a regular part of one's work and nonwork lives (Allen & Kiburz, 2012). By investigating the role of trait mindfulness in buffering against the effects of prejudicial work events, we thus call attention to a powerful psychological resource that employers can cultivate in order to enhance the work lives of stigmatized minority members.

Having defined the concept of mindfulness, in the following sections, we first review relevant theory and research related to stigma and discrimination at work. Next, we develop our multilevel model by first articulating the role of paranoid cognition in mediating the within-person relation between perceptions of discrimination and emotional exhaustion the following workday, then describe how trait mindfulness may serve as a protective factor that interrupts this process.

1.2. Stigma and discrimination at work

For many people, stigmatization is a regular part of their work experience. Stigmatization occurs when one possesses, or is believed to possess, some characteristic that conveys a devalued social identity within a given context (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). These "marks" become associated with negative stereotypes that form a basis for discrimination (Goffman, 1963), which involves denying equal treatment to others based on their group membership (Allport, 1954). As noted earlier, discrimination reflects a significant social stressor for stigmatized employees (Major & O'Brien, 2005), especially at work. Indeed, research consistently links perceived discrimination toward women (Shaffer, Joplin, Bell, Lau, & Oguz, 2000), racial minorities (Sanchez & Brock, 1996), gay employees (Waldo, 1999), and other groups to diminished psychological wellbeing.

For transgender individuals, stigma and discrimination arise out of their deviation from entrenched societal gender norms, which espouse a traditional male-female dichotomy based on one's birth sex. Because gender is likely the most basic social identity that people use to classify themselves and others (Bem, 1983), it is not surprising why transgender employees tend to report pervasive prejudice and

mistreatment at work (e.g., feeling forced to act "traditionally gendered," backlash related to their bathroom usage). Indeed, a recent survey showed that a striking 77% of transgender employees who held a job in the past year took steps to avoid mistreatment at work, such as hiding or quitting their job (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016). Moreover, despite the recent public gender transitions of some celebrities (e.g., Caitlin Jenner) and the greater visibility of transgender people in the news and on television (e.g., *Transparent*), these challenges tend to be compounded by a general lack of awareness of gender identity issues in the public.

Given the effects of discrimination, other disciplines have begun to explore the processes that explain these effects. Expanding on Meyer (2003) minority stress model, Hatzenbuehler (2009) argued that a more complete understanding of stigma's effects "must take into account both group-specific stressors and general psychological processes…exclusive focus on either…may hinder the development of effective theory" (p. 707). In his psychological mediation framework, Hatzenbuehler theorized that stigma-related stressors trigger maladaptive social (e.g., isolation), cognitive (e.g., hopelessness), and emotion regulation (e.g., alcohol use) processes that lead to health disparities. Indeed, studies suggest perceived discrimination is related to lower wellbeing, in part, via lower perceived control (Moradi & Risco, 2006) and self-esteem (Fischer & Holz, 2007).

Despite the importance of such research, little attention has been given to the pathways by which perceived discrimination is related to lower psychological wellbeing in employee samples. Accordingly, below we draw on a rich body of theory and research on paranoia (Chan and McAllister, 2014, Freeman, 2007, Kramer, 1998) to explain why paranoid cognition may be a key mechanism by which perceived discrimination is related to emotional exhaustion the next morning at work.

1.3. Perceived discrimination, paranoid cognition, and emotional exhaustion

According to theories of paranoid cognition (Freeman et al., 2002, Kramer, 1998, Kramer, 2001), stressful social experiences reflect sources of psychological trauma that tend to initiate paranoid thought processes. In this study, we define such experiences in terms of perceived transgender discrimination at work (e.g., feeling pressure to act "traditionally gendered," being the target of transphobic remarks). By threatening one's core sense of self and undermining their perceived status within a given social context, distressing social events tend to promote feelings of social uncertainty and evaluative scrutiny, leading to a heightened focus on the self as an object of others' attention and behavior (Kramer, 1998). By activating the self in social information processing and imputing self-referent thoughts to others, this sense of self-consciousness creates a basis for paranoid cognition (Fenigstein & Vanable, 1992). In turn, it is theorized that individuals will be motivated to reduce their self-consciousness by attempting to make sense of situations they deem threatening and by devising responses to them (Kramer, 2001). Thus, this need for sensemaking gives rise to defensive, distrustful social-cognitive processes, namely hypervigilance, rumination, and sinister attribution tendencies, which define a paranoid mindset (Chan and McAllister, 2014, Kramer, 1998). When triggered, states of paranoid cognition allocate disproportionate mental resources to monitoring for and making sense of perceived threats within a given social context.

These theoretical ideas align with transactional models of stress and coping (Folkman, 1984, Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), which maintain that for individuals to cope with situational events or demands, they must first appraise them as significant to their wellbeing, thus directing affective, cognitive,

behavioral, and physiological responses to the situation. Next, secondary appraisals determine whether the situation is believed to be harmful, threatening, or challenging. Stigma-related stressors, including perceived discrimination, tend to be appraised as threatening, thereby eliciting fear and anxiety (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Paranoid thought patterns, in turn, can be viewed as consequent responses to these negative emotions. Indeed, self-consciousness, stemming from one's sense of social uncertainty and evaluation, is related to a state of paranoid arousal – marked by fear, anxiety, and a sense of threat (Chan & McAllister, 2014) – and negative emotions, namely anxiety, have been found to shape states of paranoid thought (Freeman, 2007).

As such, to the extent that employees perceive discrimination during the workday, these experiences can be expected to enhance their feelings of social uncertainty and evaluation. This may initiate a state of hypervigilance upon their arrival to work the following day, whereby they incessantly monitor their work setting for threats and remain "on guard" in the hopes of reducing their self-consciousness (Kramer, 1998). This is consistent with research suggesting stigmatized minorities may often adopt a "zero miss" signal detection strategy, whereby prejudicial situations foster heightened vigilance for cues that threaten their social identities (Feldman Barrett and Swim, 1998, Kaiser et al., 2006). In turn, because a hypervigilant mindset involves a singular focus on scanning for and detecting future threats, what Kramer (1998) termed "perceptual tunneling," it leads to a vicious cycle that continually grips attention and consumes psychological resources.

In conjunction, rumination may also occur as one dwells on their recent experiences with prejudice and how others may view them. Rumination involves repetitive, recursive thinking that centers around perceived gaps between actual and desired states or status (Smith & Alloy, 2009). Because discrimination threatens, most centrally, a person's need for belonging (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009), as well as their desire to be treated with dignity and respect (Cortina, 2008), it may signal a gap between one's current and desired status at work. This may trigger a pattern of rumination that focuses on the reasons for (e.g., coworkers) and consequences of (e.g., injustice, rejection, disrespect) this perceived discrepancy. Importantly, rumination tends to involve a past orientation; thus, it prolongs and intensifies distress by activating event-related thoughts (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008, Smith and Alloy, 2009). As such, like hypervigilance, it tends to consume and control people by redirecting attention back to threatening social events.

Finally, because a paranoid mindset prioritizes threat detection over objective accuracy to avoid failures in detection, it involves a tendency to "go beyond the data" and to make sinister attributions about others' motives (Kramer, 1998). Thus, individuals may overpersonalize social events and ascribe validity to information that confirms their fears. In terms of discrimination, this may be especially likely to occur given the often subtle nature of prejudice in organizations (Cortina, 2008) and the heightened costs of failures in threat detection (Kramer, 2001). In turn, by injecting added "raw data" into social perceptions, these attributions become self-reinforcing, causing one to direct further mental energy toward detecting and deciphering situational threats.

Because paranoid thought patterns grip attention and demand psychological resources (Chan & McAllister, 2014), they should contribute to feelings of being psychologically depleted at work (i.e., emotional exhaustion, Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). In sum, we expect that those who perceive greater discrimination during the workday are more likely to experience paranoid cognition and, in

turn, emotional exhaustion the next morning as they reenter their workplace and reengage with the source of their distress. Accordingly, we make the following predictions:

Hypothesis 1

Perceptions of discrimination during the workday will be positively related to experiences of paranoid cognition, defined by hypervigilance, rumination, and sinister attribution tendencies, the following morning at work.

Hypothesis 2

Experiences of paranoid cognition will be positively related to emotional exhaustion in the same morning at work.

Hypothesis 3

Experiences of paranoid cognition will mediate the positive within-person relation between perceptions of discrimination during the workday and emotional exhaustion the following morning at work.

1.4. The moderating role of trait mindfulness

Given these relations, how might trait mindfulness disrupt paranoid thought patterns and, in turn, protect employees against the psychologically depleting effects of prejudicial work events? First, at a basic level, because mindfulness represents a form of present-oriented consciousness, which enables employees to skillfully redirect their attention back to present experiences and away from what has happened or what may happen at work (Bishop et al., 2004, Hülsheger et al., 2014), its present-oriented attentional processes contrast with the past-focused (rumination) and future-oriented (hypervigilance) attentional processes involved in states of paranoid cognition. As such, a negative work event, such as being subjected to a prejudiced remark from a coworker, typically might cause one to mull over their past experience and surveil their work environment for future threats the following workday, thereby draining psychological resources. Yet, mindful employees should be less likely to slip into paranoid modes of thinking because of their tendency to "stay in the moment," rather than becoming distracted by negative event-related thoughts of the past or potential threats in the future. Indeed, mindfulness is thought to be linked to decreased levels of rumination (e.g., Borders et al., 2010, Brown and Ryan, 2003), in part, because it counteracts the habitual tendency to allocate attention to negative events in the past (Bishop et al., 2004, Teasdale, 1999). Similarly, it is argued that mindfulness may reduce hypervigilance to socially threatening stimuli by allowing one to exert control over their attention and direct it back to present events (Bögels & Mansell, 2004). By decreasing rumination and hypervigilance, this may also limit the amount of "raw data" generated via these processes (Kramer, 2001), thus restricting the extent to which one develops increasingly sinister theories about their workplace. Indeed, one study found that an intervention meant to reduce interpersonal sensitivity, which included training people on how to refocus their attention, led to decreases in persecutory thinking (Bell & Freeman, 2014).

Second, it is also the quality of attention that mindful individuals bring to bear on their experiences that matters. As mentioned earlier, mindfulness involves a receptive, pre-conceptual awareness of internal/external events. A defining element of this quality of awareness is a process known as

decoupling (Glomb et al., 2011), or decentering (Bishop et al., 2004), whereby one is able to mentally "step back" from and observe stressful events and their associated thoughts and emotions more objectively, without becoming immersed in them. As Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, and Freedman (2006) aptly observed, "We experience what *is* instead of a commentary or story about what is" (p. 379). For those who experience prejudicial work events, mindful decoupling may interrupt the development of paranoid cognition for two related reasons. First, it should ease self-identification with these events, what Brown et al. (2008) termed "ego quieting," whereby the self does not become overly activated in social interactions and thus defensive in response to identity threats. Given paranoid cognition represents a self-focused pattern of thinking triggered by stressful social experiences (Fenigstein and Vanable, 1992, Freeman et al., 2002, Kramer, 1998, Kramer, 2001), by "quieting the ego," decoupling should therefore prevent over-activation of the self in social information processing following prejudicial experiences, restricting the rise of hypervigilant, ruminative, and sinister attribution responses inherent of paranoid states. Consistent with this notion, it is suggested that mindfulness, by rendering toxic work events less personally threatening, promotes more adaptive stress appraisals and less inner reactivity (Hülsheger et al., 2013). Second, even when prejudicial events are appraised as threatening, mindful people may be quick to move into a state of decentered, metacognitive awareness, whereby they stand back from their initial stress appraisal, notice and disidentify from negative thoughts, and "redefine or reframe [their] circumstances as meaningful in a way that engenders hope and resilience" (Garland et al., 2009, Garland et al., 2011). This ability to personally separate from and reappraise inner states and external events may allow mindful employees to disrupt much of the self-focused inner dialogue that emerges in the wake of prejudicial experiences and which define states of paranoid cognition (i.e., "I can't believe what was said to me," "I need to be 'on guard' today," "I know people are talking behind my back").

Third, in addition to decoupling, because mindful awareness allows one to come into direct contact with and vividly observe their thoughts in a dispassionate, non-evaluative way, it is further distinguished by an additional process involving deautomaticity of mental processes (Glomb et al., 2011). That is, by consciously sensing thoughts as they arise in the mind, observing them in clear and penetrating detail, and recognizing them as impermanent mental phenomena, mindful people are able to "free" themselves from automatic maladaptive thought patterns and, in turn, are less likely to react quickly and unskillfully to them based on schemas from the past (Brown and Ryan, 2003, Shapiro et al., 2006, Teasdale et al., 2000). Accordingly, given states of paranoid cognition are largely automatic or schema-driven, with hypervigilance, rumination, and sinister attributions tending to manifest outside of conscious awareness and voluntary control (Beck and Clark, 1997, Bögels and Mansell, 2004, Main et al., 2007, Philippot and Brutoux, 2008), mindful employees should be more adept at noticing and accepting their emergence, without "mindlessly" reacting to them in ways that perpetuate their depleting effects. Following an encounter with a bigoted supervisor, for example, one may notice themselves replaying thoughts of the event, growing more vigilant of their surroundings, and drifting into elaborative analysis of others' motives the next workday. Yet, rather than becoming controlled by these thoughts, mindful employees should be more likely to view them as short-lived events as they "move from heuristic modes of information processing to more systematic modes" (Glomb et al., 2011, p. 126). As such, they should be able to disengage more easily from paranoid thought processes the

following workday, thereby leaving them less psychologically depleted. Based on these theoretical arguments, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 4

The indirect within-person relation between perceptions of discrimination during the workday and emotional exhaustion the following morning at work via paranoid cognition will be weaker when individuals are higher (vs. lower) on trait mindfulness.

2. Method

2.1. Sample and procedure

Participants included 105 transgender individuals recruited at a large conference in the northeastern U.S. that focuses on transgender health issues. One of the authors obtained a booth at the conference and invited attendees to learn more about the study and to sign up if they were interested in participating. Of the 168 individuals who signed up, 136 completed the preliminary survey (81%) and, of these individuals, 105 participated in the two-week experiencing sampling portion of the study (77%). Respondents were, on average, 36.0 years of age (SD = 11.7), held an average organizational tenure of 4.6 years (SD = 6.6) and represented a range of industries, including education (19.0%), healthcare (9.5%), and business (4.8%). The sample was 78.1% White, 8.6% Hispanic, 7.0% African American, 2.4% Asian, and 3.9% "other." With respect to education, 26.7% held a masters or doctoral degree, 47.6% had a bachelors or associates, and 20.0% had a high school diploma. Most participants identified as either female-to-male (42.9%) or male-to-female (39.0%) transgender. The remainder of the sample identified as gender queer (i.e., those who do not identify with any gender category, 14.2%) or reported "other" (3.9%).

Following other ESM investigations (e.g., Wang et al., 2013), we collected survey data in two phases during the summer of 2015. In the first phase, we emailed participants a link to an online survey that contained demographic and individual-level variables. To ensure anonymity, we asked participants to provide the last six digits of their phone number and their mother's maiden name, which we used to assign them a unique identifier in order to link their responses to their daily surveys. At the end of this preliminary survey, participants were instructed to follow a separate survey link where they could enter their name and email address in order to record their participation. We emailed participants a $15 gift card for completing this survey. To ensure the quality of our sample, we excluded from the remainder of the study individuals who completed this survey but who reported being unemployed, only working part-time, or working remotely.

Two weeks later, participants began the ESM portion of the study, which lasted two full workweeks (ten days total). Following Fisher and To (2012) recommendations, we utilized an interval-contingent data collection strategy in which participants completed the predictor measure (perceived discrimination at work) in the evening (between 5:00 and 9:00 pm) and the mediator (paranoid cognition at work) and outcome measures (emotional exhaustion) in the morning of the next workday (between 8:00 and 10:00 am). This strategy decreases retrospective bias in reports of stressors and stress responses (Ptacek, Smith, Espe, & Raffety, 1994), while allowing the stress process to unfold without disruption (Tennen, Affleck, Armeli, & Carney, 2000). Using Qualtrics™ survey software, we

arranged for the survey links to be automatically emailed prior to these timeframes and according to participants' geographic time zone. Six participants had non-traditional work schedules in which they worked over the weekend (e.g., Wednesday-Sunday), yet still worked the same daytime hours as the rest of the sample. For these individuals, we arranged for them to receive the daily surveys at the same time intervals in the evening and following morning, but on the appropriate days in which they were at work. We asked participants to complete the evening surveys at the end of their workday and the morning surveys within the first two hours after arriving at work. If individuals failed to complete a daily survey in the designated timeframes, the surveys automatically closed, reducing the potential errors of retrospective reporting (Wang et al., 2013). For completing the first and second weeks' daily surveys, we emailed participants gift cards for $30 and $50, respectively.

Because our hypothesized model includes relations between perceived discrimination at work (measured in Day t's evening survey), paranoid cognition (measured in Day $t + 1$'s morning survey) and emotional exhaustion (measured in Day $t + 1$'s morning survey), we matched evening surveys of the predictor variable (perceived discrimination at work) with morning surveys of the mediator (paranoid cognition at work) and outcome (emotional exhaustion), respectively. Our decision to assess paranoid cognition and emotional exhaustion in the morning of each workday aligns with existing theory suggesting states of paranoid cognition are most likely to be activated when people enter a social context in which they have experienced some form of mistreatment or distress that engenders self-consciousness (Kramer, 1998). Because the morning hours reflect a time in which individuals would have reengaged with the source of their distress, we chose this temporal window in which to assess paranoid cognition and its relations to emotional exhaustion. Moreover, due to transgender employees' heightened exposure to discrimination at work (Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Herman, Harrison, & Keisling, 2010), employing a longer time lag may have resulted in missing important, more proximal effects of perceived discrimination on our mediator and outcome within this population. In total, participants completed 86.90% of the daily surveys across the two workweeks of data collection.

2.2. Preliminary survey

2.2.1. Mindfulness

We assessed trait mindfulness using the fifteen-item Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale (MAAS, Brown & Ryan, 2003, $\alpha = 0.86$). This well-established measure is explicitly designed to assess mindfulness in the general population and is often used in studies appearing in top management and I/O psychology journals (e.g., Hülsheger et al., 2013, Hülsheger et al., 2014, Liang et al., 2016, Long and Christian, 2015). Sample items include, "I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention" and "It seems I am 'running on automatic' without much awareness of what I'm doing." All MAAS items are reverse scored. Participants rated each of the scale items on a 1 (*Almost never*) to 7 (*All the time*) Likert scale.

2.2.2. Control variables

At the between-person level, we controlled for perceptions of past discrimination and passability related to one's transgender identity given their potential to offer alternative explanations for the hypothesized relations in our model. With respect to the former, Feldman Barrett and Swim (1998) argued that past discrimination sensitizes people to perceiving discrimination, noting that "anyone who has previous, pervasive experiences with threat will be pre-attentively prepared to see

threat in a current situation because they have learned a decision rule through interactions with the environment" (p. 28). Supporting this notion, previous studies point to a "persistent injustice effect" in which one's prior experiences with prejudice shape their current perceptions of discrimination (Davidson & Friedman, 1998). From this perspective, those who report higher exposure to discrimination in the past may perceive greater discrimination in the present and, in turn, experience more paranoid cognition and emotional exhaustion on a daily basis at work. To measure perceptions of past discrimination, we adapted six items from Ragins, Singh, and Cornwell (2007) measure of prior sexual orientation discrimination to focus on past transgender discrimination (e.g., "In prior positions, have you ever faced discrimination because you are transgender?"). Consistent with Ragins et al., the items were coded as *no* = 0, *unsure* = 1, and *yes* = 2 and summed to create an overall measure of perceived past discrimination (α = 0.85).

Additionally, transgender individuals who are less able to "pass" as male or female have been found to report greater levels of discrimination than individuals who are more able to "pass" (Moolchaem, Liamputtong, O'Halloran, & Muhamad, 2015). Because of the greater salience of their stigmatized identity, they may also experience a heightened sense of social distinctiveness at work – that they "stand out" amongst their coworkers – thereby increasing their feelings of self-consciousness and evaluative scrutiny and, in turn, laying the foundation for more pervasive experiences of paranoid cognition (Chan and McAllister, 2014, Kramer, 2001). Accordingly, one's level of passability may directly impact their exposure to discriminatory behavior and augment their tendency to feel paranoid at work. To measure participants' perceptions of their passability, we asked one question: "How likely do you think it would be for someone to know that you are transgender just by looking at you?" Ratings were made on a 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7 (*very likely*) scale and reversed scored such that higher scores indicate greater perceptions of passability. It is important to mention that our results hold with or without these control variables. We chose to retain them, however, as a more conservative test of our hypotheses (Spector & Brannick, 2011).

2.3. Daily evening survey

2.3.1. Perceived discrimination at work

Because daily survey measures must remain short to limit the response burden on participants and keep them motivated to respond on a daily basis, it is common practice to shorten existing scales for use in ESM studies (Fisher & To, 2012). Thus, following Fisher and To (2012) recommendations, we selected six items from Brewster, Velez, DeBlaere, and Moradi (2012) transgender workplace discrimination scale based on their factor loadings, their coverage of the relevant content domain, and their likelihood of fluctuating on a day-to-day basis. Before responding, we provided participants these instructions: "The following statements describe many situations that may occur in your interactions with others at work. Please think over your workday and indicate the frequency with which others treated you in the following ways today at work." The six items included, "Today, people at work..." "...made me feel it was necessary to pretend to be 'traditionally gendered'," "...made transphobic remarks about me personally," "...made me afraid that I would be treated poorly because I'm transgender," "...ignored me in the office or in a meeting because I'm transgender," "...left me out of social events because I'm transgender," and "...avoided touching me because I'm transgender." Participants rated all scale items on a 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*All the time*) scale. The mean reliability for this measure was 0.90 across days.[1]

2.4. Daily morning survey

2.4.1. Paranoid cognition at work

Like the perceived discrimination measure, we utilized a shortened measure of paranoid cognition from Thoroughgood, Sawyer, and Webster (2017) to reduce the response burden on participants over the study's two workweeks. We selected nine items based on their factor loadings, their coverage of paranoid cognition's multi-dimensional content domain, and their likelihood of fluctuating on a daily basis at work. Consistent with other researchers, who define paranoid cognition as a psychological state defined by three interrelated patterns of thought (hypervigilance, rumination, and sinister attribution tendencies, e.g., Chan and McAllister, 2014, Kramer, 2001), this scale is designed to assess paranoid cognition as a higher-order construct comprised of these three dimensions, within work settings. We reworded the items (three per facet) for use in the daily surveys. Sample items include, "This morning…" "…I'm 'on guard' around others at work" (hypervigilance), "…I keep replaying over and over in my mind interactions with others at work" (rumination), and "…I'm suspicious of others' intentions toward me at work" (sinister attributions). Participants indicated the extent to which the items described their thoughts at work on a 1 (*Not at all true of me*) to 7 (*Extremely true of me*) scale.

To assess paranoid cognition as a higher-order construct, we conducted a second-order multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), whereby the items were specified to load on their respective first-order factors and these factors were loaded on a single second-order factor. This model fit the data well [χ^2 = 134.87 (*df* = 49), CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.05]. Each of the items loaded on its intended factor, with items at the within- and between-person levels loading at 0.79 and 0.96 and above, respectively. As such, consistent with Thoroughgood et al. (2017), we combined the nine items into a single measure of paranoid cognition. Mean reliabilities were 0.96 for hypervigilance, 0.97 for rumination, 0.94 for sinister attributions, and 0.97 for the overall scale.

2.4.2. Emotional exhaustion

We measured daily emotional exhaustion with one item from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI, Maslach & Jackson, 1981): "This morning, I feel emotionally drained." This one-item scale has been used in prior ESM studies of mindfulness in work settings (e.g., Hülsheger et al., 2013) and was rated on a 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*) scale.[2] Consistent with our hypothesized model, this measure was presented after the paranoid cognition scale, with these two measures separated by several "filler" scales to create proximal separation.

2.5. Multilevel confirmatory factor analysis

To examine the distinctiveness of the study variables, we conducted a set of multilevel confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs). The first model specified the daily items (perceptions of discrimination, paranoid cognition, and emotional exhaustion) to load on their respective factors at the within- and between- person levels and the mindfulness items to load on their respective factor at the between-person level. This model demonstrated an acceptable fit [χ^2 = 490.08 (*df* = 302), CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.02, SRMR = 0.04 (within)/0.09 (between)]. All items loaded on their intended factors and in the expected direction. We then compared this model to a model in which all daily items were specified to load on a single factor. Results showed the comparison model displayed a poorer fit to the data [χ^2 = 821.24 (*df* = 305), CFI = 0.80, TLI = 0.78, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.12 (within)/0.09 (between);

Satorra-Bentler scale χ[S-B χ] = 331.16, *p* < .01]. As such, these results provide empirical evidence that the study variables reflect distinct constructs.

2.6. Analytical strategy

Because our hypothesized model includes mindfulness as a cross-level, between-person moderator that operates on the first stage of the indirect within-person relation between perceived discrimination and emotional exhaustion, we used a two-level, first-stage multilevel moderated mediation model to analyze the data (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). In this model, the link between the predictor and outcome variable through the mediator depends on the level of the moderator. The moderator can strengthen or weaken the relation between the predictor and mediator, in turn influencing the outcome variable. Given the hierarchical structure of the data, we accounted for two levels of observation [within- (Level 1) and between- (Level 2) persons] to avoid inaccurate standard errors and erroneous interpretations of results (Bliese, 2000). To simultaneously estimate the hypothesized relations, we utilized dynamic structural equation modeling (DSEM) based on Bayesian estimation (Asparouhov, Hamaker, & Muthén, 2017) in Mplus 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). DSEM is a multilevel time series model that accounts for individual differences in lagged effects by allowing the parameters of the within-person model to also have a distribution at the between-person level. This approach estimates the person-specific effects and autocorrelations, or serial dependency of longitudinal data (for a detailed discussion, see Asparouhov et al., 2017).

To test our hypotheses, we estimated two DSEM models. In the first model, we tested the within-person main and mediating effects, excluding the between-person moderating effect of mindfulness. In the second model, we included mindfulness as a cross-level moderator of these mediated relations. Specifically, we specified mindfulness as a Level 2 predictor of the Level 1 random slope between Day *t*'s perceived discrimination and Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition. For both models, we accounted for potential autocorrelation in the data by creating random slopes for two lagged factors, one for paranoid cognition and one for emotional exhaustion. For paranoid cognition, the factor reflected a linear regression over the two workweeks of paranoid cognition at Day *t* + 1 on paranoid cognition at Day *t*. Similarly, for emotional exhaustion, the factor reflected a regression over the two workweeks of emotional exhaustion at Day *t* + 1 on emotional exhaustion at Day *t*. For both models, we specified Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition as a function of Day *t*'s perceptions of discrimination and Day *t*'s paranoid cognition and, in turn, Day *t* + 1's emotional exhaustion as a function of Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition and Day *t*'s emotional exhaustion. In both models, at the between-person level, we regressed each control variable (i.e., perceptions of past discrimination and passability) on Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition and emotional exhaustion.

Before testing our hypotheses, we ran a "null model" to examine the degree of variation in the two endogenous variables (i.e., paranoid cognition and emotional exhaustion) attributable within- and between-persons (Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Culpepper, 2013). Results showed that for the mediator (paranoid cognition), the variance attributable within- and between-persons was 0.34 and 0.66, respectively. For the outcome (emotional exhaustion), the variance attributable within- and between-persons was 0.33 and 0.67, respectively. Thus, results showed sufficient unexplained variance at both levels to justify use of DSEM. Moreover, to interpret the between-person links, we grand-mean centered the between-person variable (mindfulness) (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998).

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, between- and within-person correlations, and reliabilities among the study's variables. At the within-level, perceived discrimination during the workday was positively correlated with paranoid cognition the next morning at work ($r = 0.25$, $p < .01$), and paranoid cognition was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion in the same morning at work ($r = 0.26$, $p < .01$). These results provide initial support for Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities among study variables.

Variable	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Passability	3.25	1.54	–					
2. Past discrimination	4.52	3.94	−0.17	(0.85)				
3. Perceived discrimination (Day *t*)	1.65	0.91	−0.23*	0.27**	(0.90)	0.25**	0.07*	
4. Paranoid cognition (Day *t* + 1)	2.00	1.28	−0.21*	0.29**	0.83**	(0.97)	0.26**	
5. Emotional exhaustion (Day *t* + 1)	3.87	1.77	−0.25*	0.25*	0.55**	0.66**	–	
6. Trait Mindfulness	4.74	0.85	0.32**	0.18	−0.36**	−0.40**	−0.47**	(0.86)

Note. Correlations below the diagonal are between-person correlations ($N = 105$). Between-person correlations are calculated for within-person variables by averaging across days. Correlations above the diagonal represent within-person correlations ($N = 1825$). Cronbach's alpha for day-level variables are mean internal consistencies averaged across days.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

3.2. Tests of main effects and indirect effect

Table 2 presents the unstandardized coefficients and their 95% credibility intervals (CIs) from the first DSEM model described earlier. Of note, *p*-values in Bayesian analysis are typically reported as one-tailed (Simon, Hurst, Kelley, & Judge, 2015). Because we propose directional hypotheses, we follow this norm and use a one-tailed value of $p < .05$ as a measure of statistical significance. Inspection of the within-person model revealed that the mean value of the random slope for Day *t*'s perceived discrimination on Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition was significant ($\gamma = 0.40$, $p < .01$; CI [0.30, 0.50]), after controlling for Day *t*'s paranoid cognition, perceptions of past discrimination, and perceptions of passability. That is, on days when participants perceived more discrimination at work, they reported higher levels of paranoid cognition related to these events the next morning at work. As such, results support Hypothesis 1. Moreover, the variance of this random slope was significant ($\gamma = 0.09$, $p < .01$; CI [0.06, 0.14]), suggesting that there was enough unexplained variance that could be further accounted for by Level 2 predictors. In total, Day *t*'s perceived discrimination accounted for 32% of the variance in Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition ($R^2 = 0.32$). Further, results revealed that the mean value of the random slope for Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition on Day *t* + 1's emotional exhaustion was significant ($\gamma = 0.70$, $p < .01$; CI [0.41, 0.96]), after controlling for Day *t*'s emotional exhaustion and perceptions of past discrimination and level of passability. That is, on days when participants reported greater levels of paranoid cognition at work, they also reported greater emotional exhaustion. As such, results

support Hypothesis 2. In total, paranoid cognition accounted for 32% of the variance in emotional exhaustion (R^2 = 0.32).

Table 2. Unstandardized coefficients of first DSEM model for testing main effects and indirect effect.

Effect type	Coefficient	SD	95% CI
Random slopes			
Day *t*'s perceived discrimination → Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition			
Intercept	0.40**	0.05	[0.30, 0.50]
Variance	0.09**	0.02	[0.06, 0.14]
Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition → Day *t* + 1's emotional exhaustion			
Intercept	0.70**	0.14	[0.41, 0.96]
Variance	1.11**	0.21	[0.80, 1.60]
Day *t*'s paranoid cognition → Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition			
Intercept	0.12**	0.04	[0.05, 0.19]
Variance	0.05**	0.02	[0.03, 0.09]
Day *t*'s emotional exhaustion → Day *t* + 1's emotional exhaustion			
Intercept	0.03	0.04	[−0.04, 0.10]
Variance	0.04**	0.02	[0.02, 0.08]
Indirect effect			
Day *t*'s perceived discrimination → Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition → Day *t* + 1's emotional exhaustion	0.27**	0.07	[0.15, 0.42]
Between-person effects			
Passability → Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition	−0.01	0.05	[−0.11, 0.09]
Past discrimination → Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition	0.04*	0.02	[0.01, 0.08]
Passability → Day *t* + 1's emotional exhaustion	0.04	0.07	[−0.11, 0.18]
Past discrimination → Day *t* + 1's emotional exhaustion	0.05*	0.03	[0.01, 0.10]

Note. Level 1 *N* = 1825, Level 2 *N* = 105. DSEM = dynamic structural equation model; Coefficient = unstandardized coefficients; *SD* = standard deviation of the posterior distribution; CI = credibility interval. The *p*-value for a positive coefficient indicates that the proportion of the posterior distribution of effects in the population is below zero, whereas a *p*-value for a negative coefficient indicates that the proportion is above zero (Muthén, 2010).

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

Next, we tested for the indirect effect of Day t's perceived discrimination on Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion through Day t + 1's paranoid cognition, controlling for Day t's paranoid cognition, Day t's emotional exhaustion, perceptions of past discrimination, and perceptions of passability. To do this, we took the product of the mean value of the random slope coefficients, aj and bj, where aj is the effect of the independent variable on the mediator and bj is the effect of the mediator on the dependent variable. Results revealed that the indirect effect was significant ($\gamma = 0.27$, $p < .01$; CI [0.15, 0.42]), suggesting that Day t's perceived discrimination during the workday was positively related to Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion the following morning at work through Day t + 1's paranoid cognition. As such, results of the first DSEM model support Hypothesis 3.

3.3. Test of multilevel moderated mediation effect

Table 3 presents unstandardized coefficients and their 95% CIs for the second DSEM model that included mindfulness as a cross-level, between-person moderator of the above within-person indirect relation. Additionally, Fig. 2 summarizes all hypothesis-related coefficients in this second DSEM model. After controlling for Day t's paranoid cognition and Day t's emotional exhaustion, as well as perceptions of past discrimination and passability, there was a significant effect of mindfulness on the random slope between perceived discrimination during the workday and paranoid cognition the next morning at work ($\gamma = -0.20$, $p < .01$; CI [−0.29, −0.04]). Following the recommendations of Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003), we plotted the interaction effect at conditional values of mindfulness (1 SD above and below the mean). Results revealed that the relation between Day t's perceived discrimination and Day t + 1's paranoid cognition was weaker for individuals higher (vs. lower) on mindfulness (see Fig. 3). Next, following Bauer, Preacher, and Gil (2006) multilevel moderated mediation procedure, we estimated the indirect relation between Day t's perceived discrimination and Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion via Day t + 1's paranoid cognition at high (1 SD) and low (−1 SD) levels of mindfulness. As also shown in Table 3, the indirect effect of Day t's perceived discrimination on Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion via Day t + 1's paranoid cognition was weaker for individuals higher on mindfulness (*Estimate* = 0.13, $p < .05$; CI [0.03, 0.28]) compared to individuals lower on mindfulness (*Estimate* = 0.39, $p < .01$; CI [0.21, 0.59]). This suggests that, compared to those low on mindfulness, those high on mindfulness who perceived greater discrimination reported experiencing less paranoid cognition and, in turn, emotional exhaustion the next morning at work. These findings are consistent with the negative index of moderated mediation (*Estimate* = −0.13, $p < .01$ CI [−0.23, −0.02], which indicates that the indirect effect of Day t's perceived discrimination on Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion through Day t + 1's is negatively moderated by mindfulness at the between-person level (Hayes, 2015).

Table 3. Unstandardized coefficients of second DSEM model for testing multilevel moderated mediation effect.

Effect type	Coefficient	*SD*	95% CI
Random slopes			
Day t's perceived discrimination → Day t + 1's paranoid cognition			
Intercept	0.39**	0.05	[0.29, 0.49]

Mindfulness	−0.20**	0.06	[−0.29, −0.04]
Variance	0.07**	0.02	[0.04, 0.11]
Day t + 1's paranoid cognition → Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion			
Intercept	0.68**	0.14	[0.40, 0.96]
Variance	1.09**	0.20	[0.78, 1.56]
Day t's paranoid cognition → Day t + 1's paranoid cognition			
Intercept	0.12**	0.04	[0.05, 0.20]
Variance	0.04**	0.02	[0.02, 0.08]
Day t's emotional exhaustion → Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion			
Intercept	0.03	0.04	[−0.05, 0.11]
Variance	0.04**	0.02	[0.02, 0.08]
Conditional indirect effect			
Day t's perceived discrimination → Day t + 1's paranoid cognition → Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion			
Average	0.26**	0.06	[0.15, 0.40]
High Mindfulness (+1 *SD*)	0.13*	0.06	[0.03, 0.28]
Low Mindfulness (−1 *SD*)	0.39**	0.10	[0.21, 0.59]
Index of Moderated Mediation	−0.13**	0.05	[−0.23, −0.02]
Between-person effects			
Passability → Day t + 1's paranoid cognition	−0.01	0.05	[−0.10, 0.09]
Past discrimination → Day t + 1's paranoid cognition	0.03	0.02	[−0.01, 0.08]
Passability → Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion	0.04	0.07	[−0.11, 0.10]
Past discrimination → Day t + 1's emotional exhaustion	0.06*	0.03	[0.01, 0.11]

Note. Level 1 N = 1825, Level 2 N = 105. DSEM = dynamic structural equation model; Coefficient = unstandardized coefficients; SD = standard deviation of the posterior distribution; CI = credibility interval. The p-value for a positive coefficient indicates that the proportion of the posterior distribution of effects in the population is below zero, whereas a p-value for a negative coefficient indicates that the proportion is above zero (Muthén, 2010).
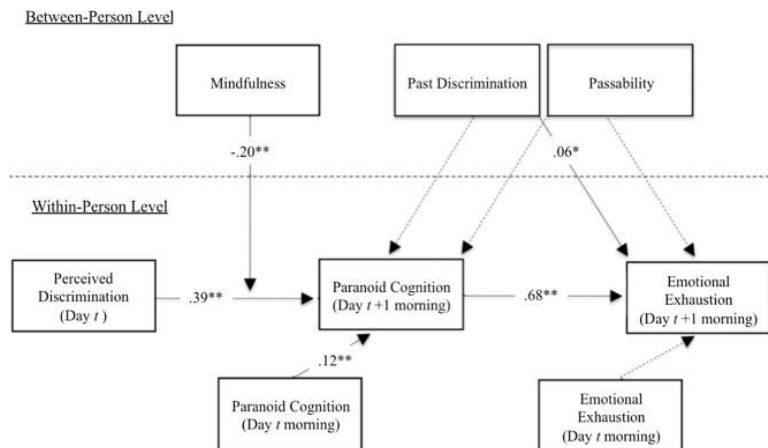
*p < .05.

Fig. 2. Second DSEM model with unstandardized coefficients. Day t's paranoid cognition and Day t's emotional exhaustion are baseline control variables at the within-person level. Past discrimination and passability are control variables at the between-person level. Dotted lines denote nonsignificant paths. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.
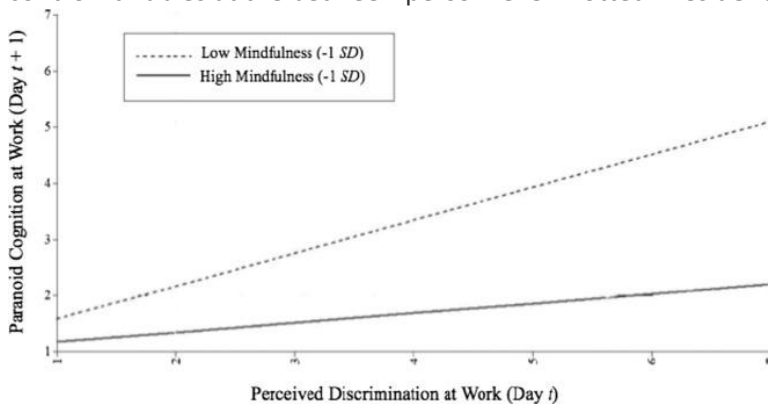

Fig. 3. Moderating effect of **mindfulness** on the relation between Day t's perceived discrimination and Day $t + 1$'s paranoid cognition.

3.4. Supplementary analyses

Although we are constrained in making strong causal conclusions given our correlational data structure and because paranoid cognition and emotional exhaustion were assessed in the same survey, we performed a series of supplementary analyses to examine the potential for alternative causal orderings among the study variables. First, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer, given emotional exhaustion involves negatively toned feelings of being overextended and depleted at work (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998), it might be that perceived discrimination leads to emotional exhaustion the following morning at work, rendering individuals susceptible to adverse thought patterns, including paranoid cognition. To explore this possibility, we tested a DSEM model that included Day $t + 1$'s emotional exhaustion as a mediator of the relation between Day t's perceived discrimination and Day $t + 1$'s paranoid cognition, controlling for Day t's emotional exhaustion, Day t's paranoid cognition, and perceptions of past discrimination and passability. Results of this alternative DSEM model, however, revealed a nonsignificant relation between Day t's perceived discrimination and Day $t + 1$'s emotional exhaustion ($\gamma = 0.11$, *ns*; CI [−0.05, 0.25]), a positive link between Day $t + 1$'s emotional exhaustion and Day $t + 1$'s

paranoid cognition (γ = 0.23, p < .01; CI [0.15, 0.31]), and a nonsignificant within-person indirect effect (*Estimate* = 0.02, *ns;* CI [−0.01, 0.06]).

Second, we also tested for the possibility that emotional exhaustion in the morning hours may, in effect, create "mud-colored glasses" that dispose one to perceiving greater discrimination during the remainder of the workday (Dhanani et al., 2018), in turn leading to heightened levels of paranoid cognition the following morning at work. More specifically, we tested an alternative DSEM model in which Day *t*'s perceptions of discrimination acted as a mediator of the relation between Day *t*'s emotional exhaustion and Day *t* + 1's paranoid cognition, controlling for Day *t*'s paranoid cognition, perceptions of past discrimination, and perceived passability. The results of this analysis, however, revealed a nonsignificant link between Day *t*'s emotional exhaustion and Day *t*'s perceived discrimination (γ = 0.03, *ns;* CI [−0.01, 0.07]), a significant positive link between Day *t*'s perceived discrimination and Day *t* + *1*'s paranoid cognition (γ = 0.48, p < .01; CI [0.32, 0.66]), and a nonsignificant indirect effect (*Estimate* = 0.01, *ns;* CI [−0.01, 0.04]). In sum, although we cannot fully rule out the potential for different causal orderings among the study's variables, these supplementary analyses provide some additional confidence in our hypothesized model.

4. Discussion

We developed and tested a multilevel moderated mediation model that explicates why trait mindfulness at the between-person level may buffer against the harmful effects of perceived discrimination on individuals' psychological wellbeing at the within-person level. Specifically, an ESM investigation conducted over two workweeks using a sample of 105 transgender employees supported our prediction that greater perceived discrimination predicts higher levels of emotional exhaustion the next morning at work via paranoid cognition. Yet, trait mindfulness moderated this indirect effect, such that individuals higher (vs. lower) on mindfulness reported lower levels of paranoid cognition the morning after experiencing greater discrimination and, in turn, were less emotionally exhausted at work. These results suggest trait mindfulness may serve to interrupt the link between employees' perceptions of discrimination and their reactivity to such experiences the next day at work. Below, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our study.

4.1. Theoretical implications

A novel contribution of this study is the introduction of mindfulness into the workplace discrimination literature. Specifically, we provide a theoretical model that describes how those higher on trait mindfulness may be able to "bounce back" and recover from greater perceptions of discrimination at work. Despite several exceptions (e.g., Petriglieri, 2011, Shih et al., 2013), little attention has been paid toward understanding the psychological processes by which targets of discrimination adaptively respond to their experiences. As Kwon (2013) emphasized, although we cannot overlook the challenges faced by members of stigmatized groups, researchers "would benefit by being more captivated by the flourishing and strength [of such individuals]" (p. 379). As such, by calling attention to trait mindfulness as a positive psychological construct that may render prejudicial experiences less impactful on individuals' psychological wellbeing the next workday, we provide a more nuanced perspective on workplace discrimination that underscores the capacity of stigmatized employees to adjust and persevere despite prejudice. Moreover, our model goes further by proposing a key reason (lower paranoid cognition) why trait mindfulness may buffer employees against the harmful effects of

perceived discrimination. That is, employees higher on mindfulness may be able to interrupt paranoid thought processes in response to greater perceptions of discrimination, dampening the effects of such experiences on their psychological wellbeing. In sum, the explanation of how greater perceptions of workplace discrimination relate to emotional exhaustion the next morning at work is a complex process, whereby a key mediating construct (paranoid cognition) can be weakened by a person's capacity for mindful awareness.

Second, we expand knowledge regarding the stress-buffering properties of mindfulness in organizations. As noted earlier, despite existing theory suggesting that mindfulness attenuates the effects of social stressors on employee wellbeing (Glomb et al., 2011, Good et al., 2016), previous studies in support of this prediction have largely relied on cross-sectional analyses and reactions to laboratory-induced stressors (e.g., Long & Christian, 2015) or conceptualized mindfulness as an independent variable in relation to health outcomes (e.g., Hulsheger et al., 2013). Our model and results go beyond previous research by examining how mindfulness at the between-person level moderates the within-person effects of a naturally occurring social stressor on employee wellbeing. In so doing, our findings provide a unique temporal window through which to observe how trait mindfulness may foster greater recovery from experiences of discrimination at work. Additionally, given the relative lack of research on the cognitive and affective processes by which mindfulness may protect employees against stressful work events (Good et al., 2016; see Long & Christian, 2015 for an exception), we add to the literature by uncovering a key mediating variable (paranoid cognition) that mindfulness may operate on and which helps to explain its salutary effects on wellbeing. This moderating effect of trait mindfulness on experiences of paranoid cognition also lends support to the claim that mindfulness promotes employee resilience, in part, by enhancing one's capacity to regulate maladaptive modes of thinking (Glomb et al., 2011). Below, we shed light on other suboptimal responses that mindfulness may help targets of discrimination interrupt.

Third, with respect to the literature on paranoia in organizations, we answer Chan and McAllister (2014) call for greater research that considers the broader implications of paranoia scholarship for understanding the dynamics surrounding various forms of mistreatment at work, including experiences of discrimination. Indeed, as Kramer (2002) observed, because paranoid cognition, in milder forms, represents a common experience in people's lives, it has the potential to "poison almost every aspect of the workplace" (p. 64). Our results suggest that when it comes to the workplace experiences of stigmatized employees, this may be especially true. However, our model differs from prior theoretical treatments of paranoia at work (e.g., Thoroughgood et al., 2017) in that we suggest the insidious process linking social stress to paranoid cognition and, in turn, reduced wellbeing depends on one's capacity for mindfulness. As such, our model points to a key boundary condition impacting the development and effects of paranoid thinking at work.

4.2. Practical implications

From a practical standpoint, our findings are, again, not meant to suggest that the burden rests on victims to learn how to better cope with prejudicial work environments. Yet, as others note (Kwon, 2013, Shih et al., 2013), it is not enough to understand the risk factors and harmful effects of discrimination, nor is it realistic to assume that it can be eliminated quickly and easily via workplace initiatives (e.g., formal policies and protections, diversity training). As such, although the primary

objective of employers should be to root out prejudice at a structural level, understanding how the work lives of stigmatized employees can be enhanced by cultivating resiliency factors reflects another avenue by which organizations can combat the toxic effects of discrimination. To this end, our results are important with respect to informing interventions that complement, rather than replace, formal policies and practices intended to foster more inclusive organizational cultures. Indeed, as noted earlier, given prior studies suggesting that one's capacity for mindfulness is malleable and open to intervention (e.g., Carmody et al., 2008, Shapiro et al., 2011), our findings speak to the potential health-related benefits of employers investing in mindfulness programs that serve to promote the wellbeing of stigmatized employees and which can be incorporated into an organization's larger diversity and inclusion initiatives.

With respect to transgender employees specifically, our findings are also timely given recent controversial laws enacted in certain U.S. states and cities that remove protections from workplace discrimination based on gender identity, including prohibiting transgender employees from accessing appropriate bathrooms. In particular, organizations that permit discrimination toward transgender individuals to occur, or otherwise do not proactively encourage acceptance of employees across the gender identity spectrum, may create threatening workspaces that contribute to paranoid thought. Thus, educating employees on issues of gender identity, as well as spreading awareness regarding the experiences of transgender employees who regularly face prejudice at work, may foster more inclusive attitudes toward this highly marginalized employee population.

4.3. Future research directions

The present study highlights a number of avenues for future research. First, although our findings reflect an important step toward understanding the processes through which mindfulness may protect employees against the effects of perceived discrimination at work, questions remain regarding other mediating processes. In terms of other cognitive mechanisms, trait mindfulness might also mitigate the onset of pessimism in targets of workplace discrimination. Pessimism, which involves negative expectations of future outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 1985), contributes to more internal, global, and stable attributions for negative events, thereby interfering with one's ability to cope with stress (Scheier, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986). Hatzenbuehler (2009) theorized that stigmatized minorities exposed to recurrent forms of stigma-related stress may come to view these events as enduring and uncontrollable, impeding on their ability to cope and contributing to negative psychological outcomes. Yet, mindfulness, by decreasing the automaticity of negative thought processes, may free stigmatized employees from pessimistic thinking by allowing them to view prejudicial events as transitory and with less consequence for their futures. Consistent with these ideas, previous studies suggest that trait mindfulness and trait optimism are positively correlated (e.g., Brown and Ryan, 2003, Weinstein et al., 2009), and mindfulness training has been linked to increases in trainees' self-reported optimism (Carson, Carson, Gil, & Baucom, 2004).

Second, beyond interrupting suboptimal cognitive responses, another question concerns whether mindfulness can help prevent targets of discrimination from succumbing to maladaptive behavioral responses that reinforce their distress. Hatzenbuehler (2009) further argued that discrimination may cause individuals to engage in social isolation as a way of avoiding future rejection, in turn preventing them from seeking social support during times of distress. Indeed, with respect to the present study,

avoidance reflects the most common form of "safety behavior" (i.e., actions aimed at decreasing the risk and magnitude of perceived social threats) associated with paranoid cognition (Freeman and Garety, 2004, Freeman et al., 2007). However, by fostering greater response flexibility (Glomb et al., 2011), mindfulness may promote more adaptive ways of coping with discrimination that focus on social connection rather than isolation. Consistent with this idea, Cohen and Miller (2009) found that a brief six-week mindfulness training, which included an added focus on relational awareness, reduced feelings of distress while concurrently fostering social connectedness and interpersonal wellbeing. By reducing the tendency to socially withdrawal following prejudicial experiences at work, mindfulness may increase the likelihood of stigmatized employees gaining the social support needed to effectively cope with such events.

Third, it is important to consider the key role that positive emotions may play within these processes. Prior research suggests that, during times of challenge and adversity, the experience of positive emotions may contribute to stress resistance and, in turn, adaptability by interrupting the ongoing experience of negative emotions and by facilitating more adaptive coping and recovery (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000, Fredrickson et al., 2003, Ong et al., 2006, Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004). Indeed, Fredrickson, 1998, Fredrickson, 2001 broaden-and-build theory maintains that positive emotions, by "broadening" a person's attentional focus and momentary thought-action repertoire, may "undo" the automatic arousal produced by negative emotions, thereby promoting faster recovery from stressful life events. Consistent with such work, there is evidence to suggest positive emotions may serve to counteract the effects of perceived discrimination on depressive symptoms (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2014, Ong and Edwards, 2008). Accordingly, because mindfulness is linked to more positive emotional states (e.g., Brown and Ryan, 2003, Jimenez et al., 2010), experiences of positive emotion may represent an additional mechanism through which mindfulness serves to protect stigmatized employees against the harmful effects of perceived discrimination at work.

Fourth, although our study points to the potential benefits of trait mindfulness in "softening the blow" of perceived discrimination, future investigations might also consider any unintended consequences of this decreased reactivity to prejudice. For example, Good et al. (2016) noted that mindfulness, by blunting the effects of workplace stressors, like coworker aggression, may cause employees to inadvertently convey their acceptance of mistreatment. In the context of workplace discrimination, this may precipitate further injustice and prevent individuals from proactively confronting such offenses, filing formal complaints with HR, or finding jobs in more inclusive organizations. In effect, mindful employees may be more passive toward acts of prejudice, thus reinforcing an insular, non-inclusive culture. Furthermore, given the moderating effects of trait mindfulness on paranoid cognition, this may undermine stigmatized employees' ability to detect imminent threats at work, which may be costly to their job status and careers (Kramer, 2001).

Taking this idea even further, questions remain regarding how mindfulness may impact the behavior of non-stigmatized employees who witness discrimination. On one hand, research suggests the self-conscious emotions of guilt and shame both play a powerful role in motivating prosocial behavior (e.g., Ahn et al., 2014, de Hooge et al., 2008) and are evoked by various moral transgressions or failures, including failing to help other people during times of need (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Thus, it might be argued that a decoupled perspective has the potential to dampen the pain and

discomfort of these emotions on bystanders and, in turn, their motivation to take action on behalf of victims of discrimination. Of note, however, shame involves a condemnation of one's core self, whereas guilt focuses on specific behaviors without generalizing to the entire self-concept (Tangney et al., 2007). As such, when individuals feel shame (vs. guilt), their primary motivation is to alleviate this threat to the self, and thus they may seek to restore a positive self-image in the eyes of those present during the shame event by engaging in prosocial acts (de Hooge et al., 2008). Because mindfulness is theorized to reduce reactivity to perceived ego threats, an interesting question surrounds whether it may inhibit bystanders from addressing prejudice primarily via its effects on shame (vs. guilt).

On the other hand, mindfulness may promote ally behavior by encouraging perspective taking, or the cognitive capacity to consider the experiences, worldviews, and plights of others (Davis, 1983). This ability to "put oneself in the shoes" of others is a key ingredient in altruism (Oswald, 1996, Underwood and Moore, 1982) and is linked to lower stereotype accessibility and expression (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) and greater helping toward outgroup members (Shih, Wang, Bucher, & Stotzer, 2009). Perspective taking is also related to mindfulness (e.g., Beitel, Ferrer, & Cecero, 2005). By enhancing awareness of one's emotions and the events that shape them, as well as promoting an accepting stance on these experiences, mindfulness may encourage greater understanding of the experiences of stigmatized coworkers without imposing judgment. The capacity to remain in the here and now, rather than becoming distracted by past events or future worries, may also increase one's awareness of injustices and foster a deeper understanding of how they impact stigmatized employees. As such, an interesting question concerns whether mindfulness can increase ally behavior by enhancing bystanders' capacity to see the workplace through the eyes of their stigmatized colleagues. In sum, the preceding arguments suggest there may be "bright" and "dark" sides to mindfulness as it relates to discrimination in organizations.

4.4. Limitations

Like all studies, ours is not without limitations. First, because we measured all variables via self-report, our findings may have been susceptible to common method variance (CMV). Yet, following Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) recommendations and consistent with other ESM studies (e.g., Wang et al., 2013), we collected our data in two stages (preliminary survey and daily surveys) separated by two weeks and imposed a temporal lag between our daily predictor (perceived discrimination) and mediator (paranoid cognition). Thus, it is unlikely that CMV influenced the observed relations, especially the moderating effect of mindfulness. Further, although same-source bias is of concern in workplace discrimination research, the sensitivity of the topic typically requires anonymous responses that cannot be provided or verified by others (Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006). Nonetheless, to the extent that future studies are able to access objective (e.g., verified reports of discrimination from HR) or other-reported measures (e.g., coworker reports of paranoid behaviors), such studies would serve to bolster our findings.

Second, because we collected our daily measures of paranoid cognition and emotional exhaustion in the morning of each workday, it is possible that self-reports of the latter may have influenced reports of the former. Although our design could not rule out the possibility of reverse causality, this argument makes less theoretical sense given prior theory suggesting that paranoid cognition consumes mental energy and leads to psychological depletion (Chan & McAllister, 2014). However, future studies might

employ another daily survey halfway through the workday that assesses emotional exhaustion to create a temporal gap between these two variables. Third, it is important to note that recent research has begun to focus on identifying different manifestations of perceived discrimination (e.g., subtle versus overt) and how they may differentially influence target outcomes, including wellbeing (e.g., Jones et al., 2016, Lindsey et al., 2015). Although a CFA of the abbreviated six-item scale used in our daily afternoon survey provided strong support for a one-factor solution, making it difficult to empirically distinguish between different forms of perceived discrimination, we highly encourage future researchers to focus more specifically on disentangling the potentially unique effects of different facets of the discrimination construct.

Fourth, although our use of a transgender sample provided a useful context for our ESM study given this is a population that remains highly stigmatized in the workplace, our results may not perfectly generalize to other minority groups. Accordingly, future investigations might explore how the within- and between-person effects identified in this study vary across minority groups. Lastly, because of the strong stigma and added stress faced by many transgender employees at work, this made it especially important to minimize the response burden on study participants by keeping the daily surveys short. For this reason, we only assessed mindfulness at the between-person level and cannot be certain that individuals actually engaged in mindfulness during their reported experiences with discrimination. Thus, future studies on mindfulness and various social stressors at work would benefit from measuring mindfulness at the within-person level as well.

Acknowledgments

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☆This article is part of the special issue "Mindfulness at Work: Pushing Theoretical and Empirical Boundaries," Edited by Dr. Jochen Reb, Dr. Tammy Allen, and Dr. Timothy J. Vogus.

[1]To examine the proportion of the sample who reported at least some level of discrimination each day at work, we dichotomized the perceived discrimination scale by coding the response "1 = *not at all*" to "0" and responses ranging from "2 = *very little*" to "7 = *all the time*" as "1." A frequency analysis revealed that 47% of participants perceived at least some discrimination each day at work. Based on previous ESM studies of daily perceived discrimination (e.g., Ong, Fuller-Rowell, & Burrow, 2009), this level of reported discrimination is consistent with what might be expected in the present study. Additionally, as rated on a 1–7 scale, participants' daily mean level of perceived discrimination (1.65) is comparable to ESM investigations of other workplace mistreatment constructs, including abusive supervision (e.g., Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave, & Christian, 2015), incivility (e.g., Rosen, Koopman, Gabriel, & Johnson, 2016), and customer mistreatment (e.g., Wang et al., 2013).

[2]The use of single-item measures is quite common in ESM studies, especially with respect to unidimensional constructs related to employee wellbeing (Fisher & To, 2012). Indeed, van Hooff, Geurts, Kompier, and Taris (2007) found that a one-item measure of daily fatigue

performed as well as an established six-item scale in their ESM investigation. Fisher and To (2012) noted that, for straightforward unidimensional constructs like emotional exhaustion, if the item displays content validity and correlates with other variables as it should, indicating construct validity, it is likely acceptable for ESM studies. Given we assessed a more complex, multi-dimensional construct in the same morning survey (paranoid cognition), we decided to use a one-item scale of emotional exhaustion to limit the response burden on participants as much as possible.