

License to Misbehave: Organizational Citizenship Behavior as a Moral License for Deviant  
Reactions to Abusive Supervision

by  
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A thesis  
presented to the University of Waterloo  
in fulfillment of the  
thesis requirement for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
Psychology

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2014

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## Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## Abstract

Abusive supervision research has found that subordinates engage in deviance following abuse despite the negative consequences of doing so. Why do individuals engage in deviance despite the expected sanctions? To explain this relationship a model is proposed based on moral licensing theory wherein the relationship of abusive supervision and subsequent negative voluntary work behaviors will be moderated by the extent to which subordinates performed positive voluntary work behaviors. In Study 1, I demonstrate that high organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) as rated by subordinates' significant others significantly increased the relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance, while the relationship was not significant at low levels of significant other rated OCB. In Study 2 I replicate and extend this finding using time-lagged data, finding that in the context of abusive supervision, OCB directed at the supervisor at day  $t$  significantly increased the incidence of counterproductive work behaviors directed at the supervisor and organization at day  $t + 1$ . Implications for moral licensing and abusive supervision research are discussed.

*Keywords:* abusive supervision, moral licensing theory, organizational citizenship behaviors, organizational deviance, counterproductive work behaviors

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Douglas Brown, and my readers, Dr. James Beck and Dr. Lisa Keeping for their guidance and helpful comments during this process. I'd also like to extend my gratitude to my Brown lab mentor, Lindie Liang, for all of her help with this thesis. Maintaining my sanity during graduate school would not have been possible without my fantastic friends and classmates in Toronto and Waterloo: for those in Toronto, thank you for tolerating my absence and always picking up exactly where we left off, and for those in Waterloo, thank you for the frequent office chats, lunch breaks and sound advice. I'd like to thank my family for their invaluable guidance at this and every other stage of my life, especially my mom Brigitte Kiefer and sister Megan Skyvington for being the type of women I aspire to be. Finally, this thesis would not exist without the love and support of my better half, Jeffrey Robinson. I can hardly find the words to express how much your patient guidance has meant to me.

To my family and Jeff

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## INTRODUCTION

On a daily basis, employees must make decisions about how to conduct themselves in the workplace. When opportunities exist to engage in negative behaviors, what pushes employees to stray down this dark path? Workplace deviance has been defined as counter-normative behaviors initiated by employees that target employers, peers and supervisors (Bennett & Robinson, 2003) and has been tied to a myriad of negative organizational outcomes, including financial losses (Needleman, 2008) and lost productivity (Taylor, 2007), as well as decreases in employee morale and well-being (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). As such, it can be argued that workplace deviance is morally unacceptable as it causes harm to both organizations and individuals. Additionally, employees who engage in deviance may face increased hostility and repercussions (Tepper, Carr, Breaux, Geider, Hu, & Hua, 2009). As the negative consequences of deviance are often readily apparent, why do employees engage in these misdeeds?

Research suggests that how supervisors treat employees is one of the primary precursors of employee deviance, where employees react to perceived supervisor unfairness with deviant acts (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). In particular, numerous authors have proposed that abusive supervision, or the perception of being the continued target of a supervisor's hostile verbal and nonverbal behavior (Tepper, 2000), is a primary cause of deviance (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper et al., 2009; Thau, Bennett, Mitchell & Marrs, 2009; Thau & Mitchell, 2010). Past research has employed a number of theoretical frameworks to explain this relationship, including justice theory which states that employee misdeeds can be perceived as justified because the employee feels that he/she is restoring justice to the employee-supervisor relationship (Tepper, 2000). Additionally, social exchange theory (Thau

et al., 2009) proposes that employees may feel justified in responding to their supervisor's behavior with actions of a similar valence, and thus when the supervisor abuses them they will feel justified in retaliating via deviant behaviors.

In addition to research tying deviance to a variety of negative outcomes for both the organization and individuals, it can result in increased hostility and further abuse from the supervisor (Tepper et al., 2009). However, despite the negative consequences of deviance the link between abusive supervision and deviance has been well documented (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper et al., 2009). Thus, the question arises as to why individuals engage in deviance despite the negative consequences of doing so. Research examining moderators of the abuse-deviance relationship is common in the abusive supervision literature (e.g. Tepper et al., 2009), with much of the past literature focusing on the relationship between supervisor behaviors and employees' subsequent behavioral reactions without considering the effect of employee behaviors and their effect on subsequent reactions. For example, social exchange theory focuses on the balance between the supervisor's past treatment of the employee and the employee's subsequent behavioral reactions (Thau et al., 2009). However, the overall balance of behaviors in the supervisor-subordinate relationship may matter in pushing subordinates to engage in deviance. More specifically, in assessing whether their relationship with the supervisor is fair and equitable, employees may consider their own previous behaviors as well as the supervisor's actions. Moral licensing theory (Klotz & Bolino, 2013) argues that subordinate behavior matters when moderating subordinates' willingness to engage in deviance, and that they will feel that they have a moral license to misbehave if they have previously engaged in positive behaviors. Individuals are motivated to maintain an accurate view of themselves and so will strive to balance good and bad deeds in such a way that they

remain as close as possible to their moral equilibrium, or the threshold level of moral self-regard at which one would like to remain over time (Zhong, Liljenquist & Cain, 2009). Thus, moral licensing theory proposes that individuals' recent behavior matters in deciding whether to engage in deviance, and that positive voluntary work behaviors will license subsequent negative voluntary work behaviors.

Given the positive relationship between abusive supervision and deviance demonstrated in past research (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010), and the moral licensing perspective that suggests that subordinate behaviors matter in evaluating the quality of the employee-supervisor relationship for subsequent interactions, the relationship between abusive supervision and positive subordinate behaviors should also be considered. In particular, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is a positive behavior that has been examined as a potential outcome of abusive supervision and research has subsequently demonstrated a negative relationship between abusive supervision and OCB, such that as abuse increases, OCB decreases (Zellars, Tepper & Duffy, 2002; Aryee, Chen, Sun & Debrah, 2007). However, in proposing a model that highlights the importance of subordinate behaviors in the interplay of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, I propose re-conceptualizing the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB. While OCB has typically been tested as an outcome of abusive supervision and a negative relationship has subsequently been found, the correlation between these variables is small (Zellars et al., 2002), and thus it may be argued that the relationship between these variables can be alternatively explained. I propose that OCB acts as a moderator of the relationship between abuse and deviance in accordance with moral licensing theory (Klotz & Bolino, 2013), such that subordinates' own behavior and their supervisor's behavior influences their future behavior: when they have previously engaged in OCB a moral license is

granted that allows for subsequent deviant behaviors. Specifically, in the context of abusive supervision, individuals who engage in OCB will be licensed to respond to abuse with deviance. Thus, behaviors that an individual engages in are expected to change based on their estimation of their personal moral equilibrium, and this may serve as a justification to engage in negative behaviors.

The current research contributes to the abusive supervision literature by using moral licensing theory to provide a novel explanation for deviant subordinate reactions to abuse. By considering the effects of past subordinate behavior on intentions to engage in deviance, the current research clarifies the circumstances under which subordinates are likely to respond to abuse with deviant behaviors. This expands the current theorizing on abusive supervision by identifying conditions under which abuse is likely to result in more severe organizational and interpersonal consequences, such as when employees choose to respond to abuse with deviant behaviors. This research also provides a new perspective on the relationship between OCB and abuse. While previous research has found a small negative relationship between abuse and subsequent OCB, the current research proposes that OCB can be considered a moderator of the abuse-deviance relationship, such that individuals who have engaged in OCB will subsequently engage in higher levels of deviance. In a similar manner, while OCB has generally been conceptualized as an impression management tool (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002) that provides benefits for the company (Spector & Fox, 2002), I propose that individuals who have engaged in OCB are granted a moral license that may be used to justify subsequent deviant acts.

### **Abusive Supervision and Deviance**

Abusive supervision has numerous documented negative effects on subordinates and their performance in the workplace. Tepper (2000) identified major consequences of abusive

supervision including higher turnover, conflict and psychological distress. Subordinates who are the victims of abusive supervision are also at higher risk of problem drinking (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006) and family undermining (Hoobler & Brass, 2006). As a result of these negative consequences resulting from abuse, Lian, Brown, Ferris, Liang, Keeping, and Morrison (2014) have characterized abusive supervision as an interpersonal provocation that should increase aggressive responses as a result of employees' hostile affect and related action tendencies. When angered, individuals are more likely to disregard the long-term consequences of their actions (Leith & Baumeister, 1996), and thus are more likely to directly retaliate.

The positive relationship between abusive supervision and deviance has been documented in the literature (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010), and previous work by Tepper and colleagues (2009) suggests that employees who retaliate directly against a supervisor are likely to face escalating hostility and further abuse from a supervisor. The link between abusive supervision and deviance is also supported by the social exchange (Thau et al., 2009) and justice (Tepper, 2000) literatures, as abusive supervision is thought to decrease perceptions of justice and social exchange quality with organizations resulting in deviant behaviors that cause harm to the organization (Lian, Ferris & Brown, 2012). Although some research on revenge and retaliation suggests that individuals will tend to refrain from retaliating against high status offenders due to fear of counter-revenge (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001; 2006), there is also evidence that individuals disregard the negative consequences of retaliating and choose to do so regardless of these consequences (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Thau & Mitchell, 2010). However, much of the research examining the link between abusive supervision and deviance focuses on the connection between supervisor behavior and subsequent employee reactions,

but does not take into account behaviors of the subordinate. It may be that individuals who choose to retaliate despite the consequences differ in their previous behavior and thus are more willing to respond to abuse with deviance. The current research takes into account positive subordinate behaviors and its effect on reactions to abusive supervisors.

### **Moral Licensing and Abusive Supervision**

Moral licensing theory can be used to explain the relationship between abusive supervision and deviance. Klotz and Bolino (2013) propose that after an individual has engaged in a positive behavior that can be considered morally praiseworthy they grant themselves a moral license to engage in immoral behaviors. This work builds on the earlier moral balance model proposed by Nisan (1990; 1991) who states that when faced with a moral decision, “morally upright” people will engage in a limited number of potentially immoral behaviors, which is acceptable because the estimation of our moral self is not tied to specific acts or decisions, but instead to the overall moral balance. This moral balance is compared to the moral equilibrium point that individuals consider the threshold level of moral self-regard at which they would like to remain over time (Zhong et al., 2009). Nisan (1991) theorized that individuals strive to maintain a consistent overall equilibrium point because those who behave inconsistently with their moral standard will be judged harshly. Additional theorizing suggests that counterproductive work behavior (CWB) that follows OCB will have a lesser effect on the reputation of an employee (Klotz & Bolino, 2013) because the positive behaviors prevent the individual from falling below his/her overall equilibrium point. This claim is strengthened by work from Merritt, Effron and Monin (2010) who cite evidence that the moral elevation gained from performing OCB grants individuals the right to transgress.



## **License to Misbehave: The Moderating Role of OCB**

What kinds of behavior are considered morally praiseworthy, and thus capable of elevating one's momentary moral balance? Miller and Effron (2010) have broadly defined morally praiseworthy behaviors as those that improve the standing of the individual in the eyes of themselves or others, such as expressing unbiased opinions, performing helpful behaviors, or choosing "high brow" versus "low brow" consumer products. For example, in a study by Jordan, Mullen, and Murnighan (2009) individuals who wrote about a time when they had helped someone subsequently expressed weaker prosocial intentions to help people in other ways (as cited in Miller & Effron, 2010). In particular, behaviors that benefit others are seen as more highly morally praiseworthy than those that benefit oneself exclusively (Klotz & Bolino, 2013).

In the work domain, subordinate job performance has traditionally been evaluated by measures of task behaviors where evaluations are based on tasks directly related to their role (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). However, recent research has highlighted the importance of voluntary work behaviors where employees perform extra-role tasks as important to the quality of overall job performance (Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch & Hulin, 2009; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Research examining positive voluntary work behaviors has most commonly examined OCB, defined as employee behavior that is at least somewhat volitional and that improves the functioning of an organization (Organ, 1988; Organ & Paine, 1999). Although varying definitions of OCB exist, a key characteristic of OCB is that these behaviors go beyond the core tasks that define an individual's job performance and thus represent an opportunity to elevate one's moral status in the workplace because they may willingly choose to engage in these behaviors. In particular, OCB that benefits others should

be seen as particularly helpful and thus morally praiseworthy, as defined by Miller and Effron (2010). Thus, based on moral licensing theory (Klotz & Bolino, 2013), individuals who have engaged in OCB will feel that they are elevated above their momentary moral balance and thus will feel licensed to engage in subsequent negative behaviors.

By contrast, employees may also choose to engage in a variety of negative voluntary work behaviors, from theft to stealing to slacking off. Robinson and Bennett (1995) define workplace deviance as voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and that threatens the well-being of the organization or its members, or both. In particular, organizational deviance consists of negative voluntary acts that harm the functioning of the organization. Similarly, counterproductive behaviors (CWB) have been defined as voluntary, potentially destructive or detrimental acts (Spector & Fox, 2002) that have been further divided into negative acts that target the supervisor, coworkers and the organization (Dalal et al., 2009). Negative voluntary work behaviors lower the standing of the employee in the eyes of supervisors and coworkers and may affect employees' estimations of their own moral balance, but individuals do choose to engage in these behaviors despite the numerous negative effects.

When faced with an abusive supervisor, individuals will evaluate both their task behavior as related to the formal requirements of their job and the voluntary work behaviors in which they have recently engaged. Deviance and OCB have opposite effects on perceptions of an individual in the workplace, and have opposite effects on the individual's estimation of his/her moral self. When employees choose to engage in an OCB they elevate their momentary moral balance point based on the positive valence of their actions: the positive consequences of their actions raise them above their moral equilibrium. As previous theorizing (Nisan, 1990; 1991) has proposed that individuals are motivated to maintain a consistent

threshold level of moral identity to avoid harsh judgments from others, this momentary elevation can act as a disinhibiting mechanism that allows individuals to retaliate against an abusive supervisor. Thus, moral licensing theory can be used to explain how the strong relationship between abusive supervision and deviance demonstrated in previous literature is moderated by the extent to which individuals have engaged in OCB.

Although individuals who behave very inconsistently with the moral standard they have set for themselves are judged harshly (Nisan, 1991), the moral elevation granted by performing OCB gives individuals the right to transgress (Merritt et al., 2010) while still maintaining their overall moral standard. Counterproductive work behaviors that follow OCB have a lesser effect on the personal reputation of the employee than those not preceded by OCB (Klotz & Bolino, 2013), so employees who have engaged in OCB directed at an abusive supervisor should feel particularly disinhibited to engage in counterproductive work behaviors.

Additionally, recent research has shown that individuals often engage in OCB and CWB in close succession, providing further theoretical support to the proposition that individuals engage in both types of behavior over time (Spector & Fox 2010a; 2010b). Thus, moral licensing theory provides a potential explanation for why individuals are willing to engage in deviance following abusive supervision despite its negative consequences: individuals who have recently engaged in positive behaviors deviate less from their moral equilibrium overall than those who have not recently engaged in positive behaviors (Nisan, 1991), and thus feel disinhibited when faced with an opportunity to engage in deviance.

Previous research has uncovered positive links between abusive supervision and deviance (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010) while the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB is negative (Zellars et al., 2002; Aryee et al., 2007). However, I believe that individuals

who have engaged in positive voluntary work behaviors such as OCB will feel morally licensed to engage in subsequent deviant behaviors. The extent to which an individual has a moral license can be considered a level variable, such that licensing builds over time when an individual performs OCB. I predict that the relationship between abusive supervision and negative voluntary work behaviors will be moderated by the extent to which subordinates typically engage in positive voluntary work behaviors. More formally, I predict:

*Hypothesis 1. Organizational citizenship behaviors will moderate the positive relationship between abusive supervision and organizational deviance, such that the relationship will be stronger when subordinates' significant others report high subordinate OCB compared to those who report low subordinate OCB.*

## STUDY 1

I tested Hypothesis 1 in a cross-sectional study with significant others' ratings of OCB and participant ratings of abusive supervision and organizational deviance. Significant others' ratings of OCB were collected to reduce the possibility that results will be caused by common source effects (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Additionally, other ratings have high levels of accuracy, particularly for intimate relationships such as those with significant others (Connelly & Ones, 2010). Finally, OCB is likely to license subsequent deviance to the extent that the participant believes that others are aware of the positive behaviors, as they are attempting to avoid harsh judgments (Nisan, 1991).

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 193 (54.4% male) full-time employees from a wide array of occupations (e.g., registered nurse, secretary, courier) whose significant others also completed survey measures (75.39% of a larger sample of 256 participants). Participants had a mean age of 33.40 years ( $SD = 9.54$ ) and worked an average of 41.67 hours a week ( $SD = 6.00$ ). Significant others ( $N = 193$ ) had a mean age of 34.22 years ( $SD = 11.21$ ) and 54.5% were female.

#### Procedure

Potential participants were recruited using recruitment posters placed in public places that invited them to complete an online survey. The advertisement provided information regarding the researchers' university affiliation and indicated that the researchers were seeking employed individuals to participate in an investigation of workplace attitudes and behavior. The recruitment poster also indicated that the study had received ethics approval from the

university's ethics board. In exchange for their participation, they were entered in a drawing for a 1-in-20 chance of winning a \$75 gift certificate for a national electronics store. The poster directed interested individuals to complete an online pre-screen survey, which included demographic questions and a question regarding how many hours a week they worked. Participants who indicated that they were employed full-time were sent an email with a unique identifier code and a link to the online survey. At Time 1, participants completed the abusive supervision scale, and at Time 2, two weeks later, they completed the organizational deviance scale. Participants were also asked to provide contact information for significant others, who were subsequently sent an email with a unique identifier code and a link to an online survey which included the OCB scale.

## **Measures**

***Abusive supervision.*** I assessed abusive supervision using Tepper's (2000) 15-item abusive supervision scale. Participants were instructed to indicate the frequency with which their supervisors performed behaviors such as "Ridicules me" and "Puts me down in front of others" on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *I can't remember him/her ever using this behavior with me*; 5 = *he/she uses this behavior very often with me*;  $\alpha = .96$ ; see Appendix A).

***Significant others' ratings of OCB.*** I assessed OCB using a shortened 10-item version of Bolino and Turnley's (2005) individual initiative scale, an OCB scale that focuses on OCB salient to significant others. Participants were instructed to indicate how often the target person had engaged in behaviors such as "Stays at work after normal business hours" and "Checks back with the office even when he/she is on vacation" on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*;  $\alpha = .92$ ; see Appendix B).

**Organizational deviance.** I used Bennett and Robinson's (2000) 16-item organizational deviance subscale of the Workplace Deviance Scale to measure organizational deviance. Participants were instructed to indicate how often they engaged in behaviors such as "Intentionally work slower than you could have worked" and "Taken property from work without permission" on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *never* to 7 = *daily*;  $\alpha = .89$ ; see Appendix C).

### **Analytical Strategy**

I tested Hypothesis 1 with hierarchical multiple regression in SPSS. In the first step, I entered main effects (abusive supervision and significant others' ratings of OCB). The two-way interaction of abusive supervision and significant others' ratings of OCB was entered in the second step. To reduce nonessential multicollinearity, all lower-order terms used in interactions were centered. Consistent with abusive supervision research, variables were not transformed prior to analysis (as in Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone & Duffy, 2008).

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analyses**

To evaluate the distinctiveness of the key constructs, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Mplus. The results showed that the hypothesized three-factor model provided an acceptable fit to the data ( $\chi^2_{776} = 1,687.92$ , RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .08; RMSEA values no higher than .08 and SRMR values no higher than .10 suggest an acceptable fit [Hu & Bentler, 1999]). The hypothesized three-factor measurement model also yielded significant improvement in chi-square values over a more parsimonious model in which I set up abusive supervision, significant others' ratings of OCB and organizational deviance to load on a single factor ( $\Delta\chi^2_3 = 1,767.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

## Hypothesis Testing

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations, and coefficient alphas of the measured variables. An examination of the table shows that consistent with previous research, abusive supervision is significantly positively correlated with organizational deviance ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ) although significant others' ratings of OCB are not significantly correlated with organizational deviance, ( $r = -.11, p = .14$ ). Abusive supervision is not significantly correlated with OCB ( $r = .03, p > .05$ ), which is somewhat inconsistent with previous research that finds a negative relationship between abusive supervision and OCB (e.g. Zellars et al., 2002). This result may be caused by the use of significant others' ratings of OCB, as significant others would not have the chance to directly observe abusive supervisory behaviors.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics, Zero-order Correlations, Reliabilities (Study 1)*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Organizational deviance	1.97	.88	<b>.89</b>		
2. Abusive supervision	1.53	.69	.32***	<b>.96</b>	
3. Significant others' ratings of OCB	2.50	.94	-.11	.03	<b>.92</b>

*Note.* Coefficient alpha is reported on the diagonal.  $N = 193$  participants with associated significant others. OCB = Organizational citizenship behaviors. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 2 presents the results of regression analyses testing Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 concerns the association of organizational deviance with abusive supervision as moderated by significant others' ratings of OCB. Results of the first step are displayed in the first portion of Table 2 and were significant overall, indicating that 11% of the variance in organizational deviance was predicted by abusive supervision and significant others' ratings of OCB,  $F(2,190) = 11.99, p < .001$ . Additionally, this analysis indicated a significant positive main effect of abusive supervision,  $B = .40, SE = .09, t(191) = 4.65, p < .001$ , while the main effect



of significant others' ratings of OCB was not significant,  $B = -.11$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $t(191) = -1.68$ ,  $p = .10$ .

Table 2

*Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Organizational Deviance from Significant Others' Ratings of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors and Abusive Supervision (N= 193)*

Variable	B(SE)
Step 1	
Intercept	1.97***(.06)
Abusive supervision	.40***(.09)
Significant others' ratings of OCB	-.11(.06)
<hr/>	
$R^2$	.11***
Step 2	
Intercept	1.97***(.06)
Abusive supervision	.34***(.09)
Significant others' ratings of OCB	-.09(.06)
Abusive supervision* Significant others' ratings of OCB	.29**(.09)
<hr/>	
$\Delta R^2$	.04**

*Note.*  $B$  = unstandardized regression coefficient,  $SE$  = standard error of  $B$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Analyses of the second step revealed a significant positive effect of the interaction of abusive supervision and significant others' ratings of OCB,  $B = .29$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $t(190) = 3.05$ ,  $p < .01$ , which accounted for an additional 4% of the variance in organizational deviance,  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(3,189) = 11.45$ ,  $p < .001$ . As depicted in Figure 1, tests of simple slopes (Aiken & West, 1991) estimated at higher (+1  $SD$ ) and lower (-1  $SD$ ) levels of the moderating variable, significant others' ratings of OCB, reveals a significant positive association between abusive supervision and organizational deviance when significant others' ratings of OCB were high,  $B = .61$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $t(190) = 5.61$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, the association between abusive supervision and organizational deviance was not significant when significant others' ratings of OCB were

low,  $B = .07$ ,  $SE = .14$ ,  $t(190) = .54$ ,  $p = .59$ , providing support for Hypothesis 1. Thus, it appears that while abusive supervision tends to increase organizational deviance overall, this positive effect only holds when significant others' ratings of OCB are high.

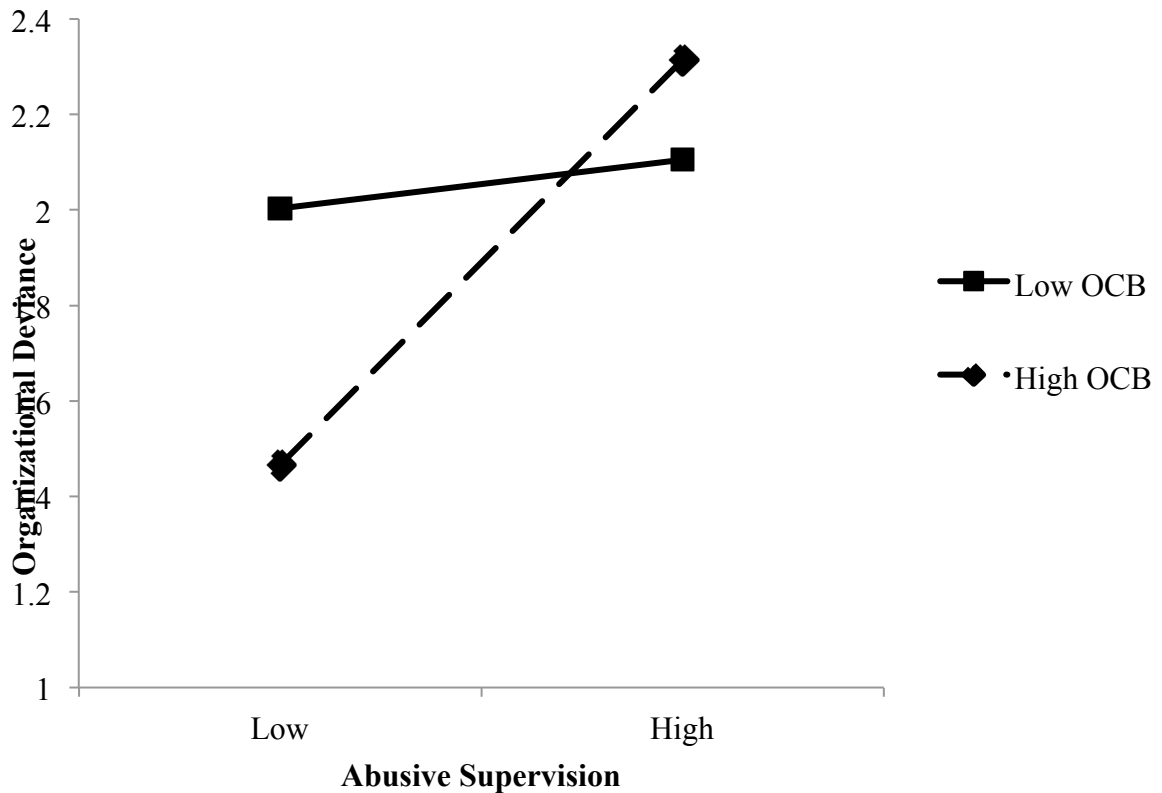


Figure 1. Interaction of Abusive Supervision and Significant Others' Ratings of OCB on Organizational Deviance

### Study 1 Discussion

Drawing upon moral licensing theory, in Study 1 I found support for the hypothesis that when targets of abusive supervision had engaged in high levels of OCB (as rated by their significant others) they were more likely to react to abusive supervision with organizational deviance. Thus, it appears that not all individuals respond to abusive supervision in the same manner, but rather, that employees' responses to abusive supervision depend on their recent behavior. This result is supportive of the contention that individuals who are the targets of

abusive supervision may feel more licensed to engage in negative voluntary work behaviors when they have previously engaged in positive voluntary behaviors. It should be noted that from examining Figure 1 it would appear that there is a potential main effect of OCB on organizational deviance such that individuals at low levels of OCB engage in deviance across levels of abuse, while individuals who engage in high levels of OCB respond to increased abuse with increased deviance. However, the main effect of OCB on organizational deviance is not significant so such assumptions cannot be made using the current results.

## STUDY 2

In Study 2 I sought to go beyond the findings of Study 1 by investigating the relationship between positive and negative voluntary work behaviors within person. It may be that participants in Study 1 were answering questions based on overall perceptions of abusive supervisory behaviors, OCB, and organizational deviance rather than behaviors that necessarily follow one another. By using time-lagged data in Study 2, I am able to examine variation in positive and negative voluntary work behaviors within person following abusive supervision.

Additionally, because Study 1 used significant others' ratings of OCB I was unable to directly determine whether subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which they engaged in OCB impacted their subsequent behavior, as these perceptions may differ from their significant others' perceptions. While personality research has highlighted the accuracy of other ratings, particularly those of intimate others (Connelly & Ones, 2010), it is worthwhile to empirically confirm that these perceptions match those of the subordinate. Thus, in Study 2 I measure subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which they engaged in OCB directed at their supervisor to directly examine whether subordinates' interactions with their supervisors impact their behavior.

Finally, I want to examine whether subordinates' subsequent negative behaviors directed at their supervisor and the organization are equally affected by previous positive voluntary work behaviors. In particular, I am interested in whether positive behaviors directed at the perpetrator of the abuse, the supervisor, will license subsequent negative behavior directed at both the supervisor and the organization. In addition to engaging in subsequent deviance directed at the perpetrator of the abuse, I expect that the licensing effect will generalize to behavior directed towards the organization because supervisors may be seen as

agents of the organization (Shoss, Eisenberger, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013) and thus the licensing granted by behaviors directed at the supervisor will generalize. More formally, I hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 2a. Daily organizational citizenship behaviors directed at one's supervisor (OCB-S) at day t will moderate the positive relationship between daily abusive supervision and counterproductive work behaviors directed at one's supervisor (CWB-S) at day t+1, such that the relationship will be stronger for employees who engage in high daily OCB-S compared to those who engage in low daily OCB-S.*

*Hypothesis 2b. Daily OCB-S at day t will moderate the positive relationship between daily abusive supervision and counterproductive work behaviors directed at one's organization (CWB-O) at day t+1, such that the relationship will be stronger for employees who engage in high daily OCB-S compared to those who engage in low daily OCB-S.*

I test these hypotheses using a time-lagged diary study, which records participants' daily ratings of the extent to which they had been targets of abusive supervision and had engaged in OCB directed at the supervisor and CWB directed at the supervisor and the organization. The diary design allows for examination of variation in the extent to which subordinates engage in behaviors over time.

### **Method**

The hypotheses in the current study pertain to the relation between OCB-S and CWB-S and CWB-O at the daily level, across time. It was therefore necessary to collect repeated measures from the same participants, over time. To collect this data, I employed an interval

contingent experience sampling methodology (ESM; Nezlek, 2001). In an interval contingent ESM, participants complete daily questionnaires over the course of several days.

### **Participants**

Participants were 96 (49% female) full-time employees from a wide array of occupations (e.g., registered nurse, secretary, courier). Participants had a mean age of 33.30 years ( $SD = 7.41$ ), worked an average of 40.2 hours a week ( $SD = 8.96$ ), had been with their current organization for an average of 4.42 ( $SD = 45.76$ ) years, had been with their current supervisor for 2.56 ( $SD = 34.75$ ) years, and had been in their current position within their organization for 2.92 ( $SD = 33.86$ ) years. Approximately 75% of the sample held a university degree, 5.3% held less than a university degree, and 17% held a Master's degree.

### **Procedure**

Potential participants were recruited using procedures similar to those described in Study 1. The advertisement provided information regarding the researchers' university affiliation and indicated that the researchers were seeking interested employed individuals to participate in an investigation of workplace attitudes and behavior. The advertisement also indicated that the study had received ethics approval from the university's ethics board and indicated that eligible participants could earn up to \$28 in compensation for their participation. Finally, the advertisement directed interested individuals to complete an online pre-screen survey (see Appendix D), which included demographic questions and a question regarding how many hours a week they worked. Potential participants also completed Tepper's (2000) abusive supervision scale (see Appendix A). Participants who indicated that they were employed full-time (greater than 35 hours per week) and indicated experience with abusive supervision

(average rating greater than 1 on the abusive supervision measure) were sent an email with a unique identifier code and a link to the online daily surveys.

Participants were emailed a survey in the afternoon (at 4:00 p.m., survey closed at 11:59 p.m.) for ten consecutive workdays. Participants were asked to report their daily perceptions of abusive supervision, OCB-S, CWB-S and CWB-O. Had all 96 participants completed every questionnaire across the 10 days it would have resulted in 960 data points. However, some participants did not complete every daily questionnaire, as a result, I obtained 613 data points (response rate = 64%). After computing the lagged values of CWB-S and CWB-O, I obtained a total of 517 data points. To examine if there were any systematic response rates, I looked for associations between the number of surveys participants completed and their demographic information. I did not find any significant correlations between the number of surveys participants completed and their age, gender, education, hours a week they worked, years with current organization, or years in current position (correlations ranged from  $r = .03$  to  $r = .10$ ).

## **Measures**

***Daily abusive supervision.*** I assessed abusive supervision using a version of Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) 5-item short version of the abusive supervision scale developed by Tepper (2000), adapted for daily perceptions. Participants were instructed to indicate the frequency with which their supervisors performed behaviors such as "Ridiculed me" and "Put me down in front of others" that day on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Never*; 2 = *Once*; 3 = *Twice*; 4 = *Three times*; 5 = *More than three times*;  $\alpha = .96$ ; see Appendix E).

***Daily OCB-S.*** Organizational citizenship behaviors directed at the supervisor were measured using a 6-item subscale of an 18-item OCB scale created by Dalal and colleagues

(2009). Items presented behaviors directed toward the respondent's immediate supervisor and responses were indicated using a yes/no scale (*yes* = 1; *no* = 0). Responses were summed to generate a total daily OCB-S score for each participant. An example item is "Went out of my way to be nice to my supervisor" ( $\alpha = .86$ ; see Appendix F).

**Daily CWB-S and CWB-O.** CWB-S and CWB-O were measured using subscales of an 18-item scale (6 items per facet) created by Dalal et al. (2009). Items presented behaviors directed toward the respondent's immediate supervisor and the organization. Responses were made using a yes/no response scale (*yes* = 1; *no* = 0). Responses were summed to generate daily CWB count scores for each participant. Items for CWB-S included "Behaved in an unpleasant manner toward my supervisor" ( $\alpha = .85$ ; see Appendix G) and items for CWB-O included "Spent time on tasks unrelated to work" ( $\alpha = .80$ ; see Appendix H).

### **Analytical Strategy**

Because the data in Study 2 were nested within participants, I used multilevel modeling (MLM; e.g., Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) via SPSS Mixed to estimate the Level 1 fixed effects (Peugh & Enders, 2005). All daily predictor variables were grand mean centered, as recommended by Bickel (2007). To control the between-individual differences in abusive supervision and OCB-S, I added the aggregate of these variables in the level-2 model, as suggested by Hofmann and Gavin (1998).

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analyses**

To examine the extent to which the daily variables demonstrated between person variability I calculated the unconditional residual intra-class correlation coefficients (ICCs) by running several null models with no predictors but with daily abusive supervision, daily CWB-



$S_{t+1}$ , daily CWB-O $_{t+1}$ , and daily OCB-S $_t$  as the dependent variable for each of the CWB and OCB facets. The results show a substantial amount of variance (45%-83%) in daily abusive supervision, daily CWB-S $_{t+1}$ , daily CWB-O $_{t+1}$ , and daily OCB-S $_t$  at the between-person level. Table 3 displays intraclass correlation coefficients for the daily abusive supervision, daily CWB-S $_{t+1}$ , daily CWB-O $_{t+1}$ , and daily OCB-S $_t$  facets.

Table 3

*Intraclass Correlation Coefficients of daily Counterproductive Work Behaviors directed at the Supervisor and Organization at day  $t + 1$  and daily Organizational Citizenship Behaviors directed at the Supervisor at day  $t$  (Study 2)*

Variables	Between Person ( $\tau_{00}$ )	Within Person ( $\sigma^2$ )	ICC(1)
AS $_t$	.60**	.12**	.83
CWB-S $_{t+1}$	1.04**	.87**	.54
CWB-O $_{t+1}$	1.00**	1.21**	.45
OCB-S $_t$	3.27**	1.52**	.68

*Note.* AS $_t$  = Abusive Supervision at day  $t$ , CWB-S $_{t+1}$  = Counterproductive work behaviors directed at the supervisor at day  $t + 1$ , CWB-O $_{t+1}$  = Counterproductive work behaviors directed at the organization at day  $t + 1$ , OCB-S $_t$  = Organizational citizenship behaviors directed at the supervisor at day  $t$ . \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Additionally, because the data were collected at the same time each day, I wanted to establish the discriminability of the daily focal constructs (abusive supervision, OCB-S, CWB-S and CWB-O). To do so, I used multilevel confirmatory factor analyses (MCFA; Muthén, 1994). MCFA was used because I was interested in confirming the factor structure of the focal constructs at the daily level. Given the nested structure of the data, conventional confirmatory factor analysis is inappropriate because it would require aggregating the daily measures or ignoring the nested structure of the data set, which would result in discarding the level of analysis that I am interested in or ignoring dependencies and creating estimation biases (Muthén, 1994). MCFA addresses these issues by allowing for confirmation of the structure of the nested data at different levels of analysis (Dyer, Hanges, & Hall, 2005).

The MCFA was conducted using Mplus. To confirm the distinctiveness of the level 1 constructs, I ran a one-factor model with all abusive supervision, OCB-S, CWB-S, and CWB-O items loaded on a single latent variable ( $\chi^2_{460} = 6,400.91$ , RMSEA = .12, SRMR = .19) and then a model where each item was loaded onto its respective construct ( $\chi^2_{448} = 1,368.55$ , RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06). These two models were compared using a chi-square difference test to see if the more restrictive model (single factor) demonstrated significantly worse fit than the less restrictive model (four factors). Following the guidelines outlined by Muthén and Muthén (2005) the chi-square difference was computed using the scaling correction factor. The results of the analyses revealed that the four-factor model fit the data significantly better than the one factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2_{12} = 5,032.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Similarly, I wanted to confirm the discriminability of the CWB-S and CWB-O facets, so I ran a three factor model with CWB-S and CWB-O loaded onto one factor and abusive supervision and OCB-S as the other factors ( $\chi^2_{454} = 1,717.21$ , RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .07) and compared it to the four factor model described above. The results of the chi-square difference analysis revealed that the four-factor model again fit the data significantly better than the three-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2_6 = 348.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ), demonstrating that the CWB-S and CWB-O facets represent discriminable factors.

## **Hypothesis Testing**

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics, zero-order correlations, and coefficient alphas of the measured variables. Table 5 presents the results of MLM testing of the hypotheses. Hypothesis 2a predicted that OCB-S moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and day-lagged CWB-S. Consistent with Hypothesis 2a, there was a significant interaction of abusive supervision and OCB-S in predicting CWB-S at day  $t+1$  ( $\gamma_{30} = .14$ ,  $p =$

.002; Table 5, Model 1). As depicted in Figure 2, tests of simple slopes (Aiken & West, 1991) at higher (+1 *SD*) and lower (-1 *SD*) levels of the moderating variable (OCB-S) indicated that abusive supervision was significantly positively related to CWB-S at day  $t+1$  when OCB-S are high ( $\gamma = .41, p = .05$ ), but not when OCB-S are low ( $\gamma = -.21, p = .27$ ), providing support for Hypothesis 2a.

Hypothesis 2b predicted that OCB-S moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and day-lagged CWB-O. Consistent with Hypothesis 2b, there was a significant interaction of abusive supervision and OCB-S in predicting CWB-O at day  $t+1$  ( $\gamma_{30} = .11, p = .01$ ; Table 5, Model 2). As depicted in Figure 3, tests of simple slopes at higher (+1 *SD*) and lower (-1 *SD*) levels of the moderating variable (OCB-S) indicated that abusive supervision was significantly positively related to CWB-O at day  $t+1$  when OCB-S are high ( $\gamma = .60, p = .03$ ), but not when OCB-S are low ( $\gamma = .12, p = .67$ ), providing support for Hypothesis 2b.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics, Zero-order Correlations, Reliabilities (Study 2)*

	Mean	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. AS	1.41	.80	<b>.96</b>					
2. OCB- $S_t$	2.54	2.21	-.04	<b>.86</b>				
3. CWB- $S_t$	.67	1.42	.34	.27	<b>.85</b>			
4. CWB- $O_t$	.96	1.55	.21	.11	.55	<b>.80</b>		
5. CWB- $S_{t+1}$	.61	1.34	.35	.25	.53	.37	--	
6. CWB- $O_{t+1}$	.89	1.49	.19	.10	.35	.57	.54	--

*Note.* Coefficient alpha is reported on the diagonal.  $n = 96$  participants, with 517 observations. AS = Abusive Supervision, OCB- $S_t$  = Organizational citizenship behaviors directed at the supervisor at day  $t$ , CWB- $S_t$  = Counterproductive work behaviors directed at the supervisor at day  $t$ , CWB- $O_t$  = Counterproductive work behaviors directed at the organization at day  $t$ , CWB- $S_{t+1}$  = Counterproductive work behaviors directed at the supervisor at day  $t + 1$ , CWB- $O_{t+1}$  = Counterproductive work behaviors directed at the organization at day  $t + 1$ .

Table 5

*MLM Analyses of Abusive Supervision and OCB-S in Predicting the Lagged Effect of CWB-S and CWB-O (Study 2)*

Variables	Model 1: DV = CWB-S <sub>t+1</sub>			Model 2: DV = CWB-O <sub>t+1</sub>		
	$\gamma$	SE	t	$\gamma$	SE	t
Intercept, $\gamma_{00}$	.59**	.08	7.81	.88**	.13	6.82
AS (Level-2), $\gamma_{01}$	.46*	.21	2.16	-.02	.30	-.06
OCB-S (Level-2), $\gamma_{02}$	.07	.06	1.14	.12	.08	1.47
AS <sub>b</sub> , $\gamma_{10}$	.10	.18	.54	.36	.27	1.36
OCB-S <sub>b</sub> , $\gamma_{20}$	.06	.06	1.00	-.05	.05	-1.13
AS <sub>t</sub> x OCB-S <sub>t</sub> , $\gamma_{30}$	.14**	.04	3.25	.11**	.04	2.52

Note.  $n = 96$  participants, with 517 observations.

AS = Abusive Supervision (aggregate value), OCB-S = Organizational citizenship behaviors (aggregate value), AS<sub>t</sub> = Abusive supervision at day  $t$ , OCB-S<sub>t</sub> = Organizational citizenship behaviors directed at the supervisor at day  $t$ , CWB-S<sub>t+1</sub> = Counterproductive work behaviors directed at the supervisor at day  $t + 1$ , CWB-O<sub>t+1</sub> = Counterproductive work behaviors directed at the organization at day  $t + 1$ . \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

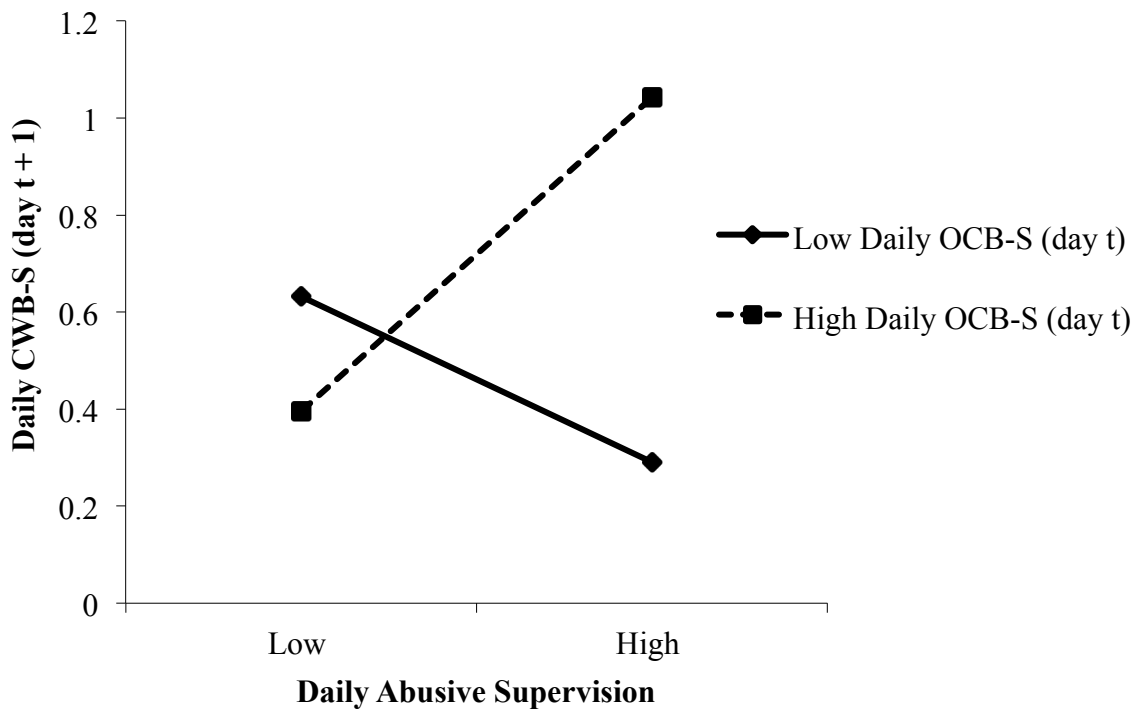


Figure 2. Interaction of Daily Abusive Supervision and OCB-S predicting Day-Lagged CWB-S

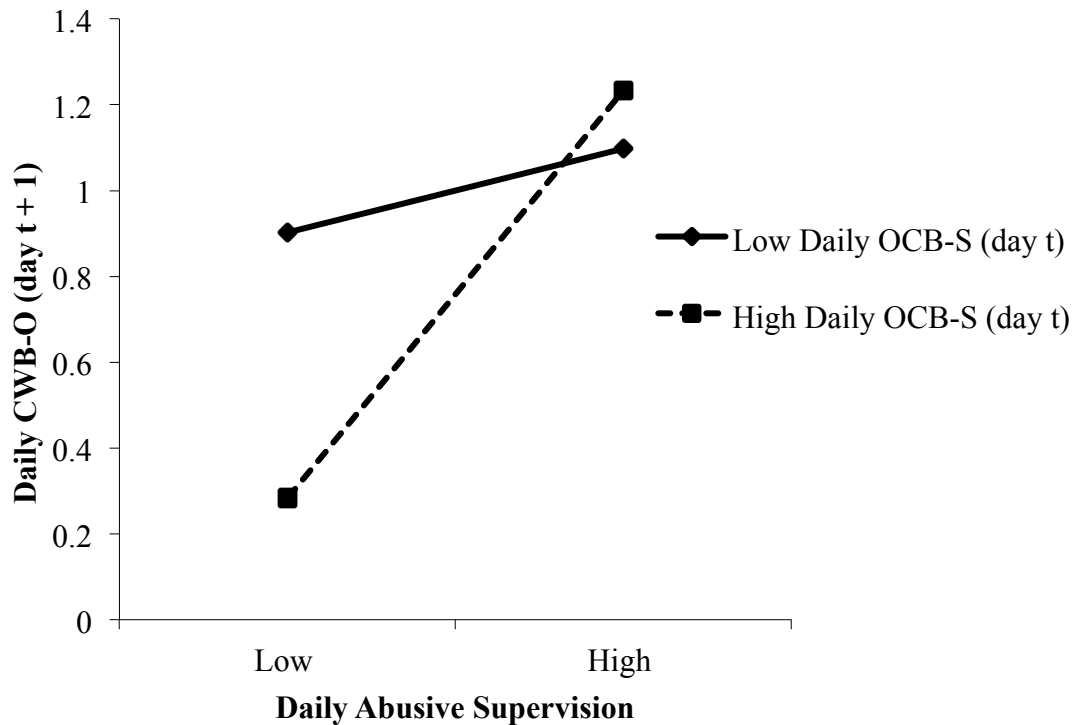


Figure 3. Interaction of Daily Abusive Supervision and OCB-S predicting Day-Lagged CWB-O

### Supplementary Analyses

I conducted a number of supplementary analyses to test an alternative explanation for the results presented. One possible explanation proposes a reverse model, where the relationship between abusive supervision and day-lagged OCB-S and OCB-O would be moderated by the extent to which an individual engaged in CWB-S. MLM testing showed that the interaction of abusive supervision and CWB-S in predicting OCB-S at day  $t+1$  was not significant ( $\gamma_{30} = .03, p = .75$ ; Table 6, Model 1). Similarly, the interaction of abusive supervision and CWB-S in predicting OCB-O at day  $t+1$  was not significant ( $\gamma_{30} = .03, p = .69$ ; Table 6, Model 2). Implications of these analyses are discussed below.

Table 6

*Supplementary MLM Analyses of Abusive Supervision and CWB-S in Predicting the Lagged Effect of OCB-S and OCB-O*

Variables	Model 1: DV = OCB-S <sub>t+1</sub>			Model 2: DV = OCB-O <sub>t+1</sub>		
	$\gamma$	SE	<i>t</i>	$\gamma$	SE	<i>t</i>
Intercept, $\gamma_{00}$	2.39**	.20	11.99	2.00**	.18	11.11
AS <sub><i>t</i></sub> , $\gamma_{10}$	.08	.16	.50	-.14	.14	-.98
CWB-S <sub><i>t</i></sub> , $\gamma_{20}$	.06	.21	.29	.06	.19	.30
AS <sub><i>t</i></sub> x CWB-S <sub><i>t</i></sub> , $\gamma_{30}$	.03	.10	.32	.03	.09	.40

Note. *n* = 96 participants, with 517 observations.

AS<sub>*t*</sub> = Abusive supervision at day *t*, CWB-S<sub>*t*</sub> = Counterproductive work behaviors directed at the supervisor at day *t*, OCB-S<sub>*t+1*</sub> = Organizational citizenship behaviors directed at the supervisor at day *t* + 1, OCB-O<sub>*t+1*</sub> = Organizational citizenship behaviors directed at the organization at day *t* + 1. \*\* *p* < .01.

### Study 2 Discussion

Study 2 provided support for Hypotheses 2a and 2b and implies support for the contention that the positive relationship between abusive supervision and negative voluntary work behaviors is moderated by the extent to which a subordinate previously engaged in positive voluntary work behaviors. In addition, Study 2 extended Study 1 through the use of time-lagged data, allowing examination of the variation in positive and negative voluntary work behaviors performed by an individual following abuse from a supervisor and demonstrating that moral licensing theory is consistent with the pattern of behaviors observed in this study.

Study 2 provided support for the contention that positive behaviors directed at the supervisor will license negative behaviors directed at both the supervisor and organization. This may occur because the supervisor is seen as an agent of the organization and thus acting in a positive manner towards one's supervisor allows for deviant behaviors directed at the organization. However, it should be noted that the pattern of results differs somewhat for CWB-S and CWB-O: while CWB-S were uniformly low across levels of abusive supervision when OCB-S was low, CWB-O were uniformly high when OCB-S was low. There may be

differences in how willing or able an employee is to engage in deviance directed at the supervisor or organization when they have not engaged in positive licensing behaviors: behaviors directed at the supervisor may be more visible and risky and thus will be avoided by these individuals, while by contrast CWB-O may be more covert and thus can be engaged in when an individual has not engaged in OCB-S. However, in both analyses individuals who engaged in high levels of OCB-S responded to increased abuse with subsequent increased levels of CWB, suggesting that these positive behaviors licensed individuals to respond to abuse with deviant behaviors. This finding has implications for how seriously organizations should treat incidents of abusive supervision, as it appears to have far reaching consequences for the organization. This implication is discussed in greater detail below.

The supplementary analyses also strengthen the contention that engaging in positive voluntary work behaviors may disinhibit individuals to engage in subsequent negative behaviors. Although positive behaviors licensed increased levels of subsequent negative behaviors, the reverse pattern whereby negative behaviors lead to increased levels of positive behaviors does not hold. While positive behaviors appear to grant a moral license to engage in increased negative behaviors the following day in support of a moral licensing explanation, it appears that individuals do not engage in increased positive behaviors in order to correct for previous negative behavior. As moral licensing theory proposes that positive behaviors act as a disinhibiting mechanism, this result is in line with the theoretical explanation proposed. Thus, in line with moral licensing theory, positive behaviors act as a licensing mechanism that frees future behavior, but the reverse pattern does not hold.

## DISCUSSION

I conducted two studies to better understand how the relationship between abusive supervision and subsequent negative work behaviors is moderated by positive work behaviors. I theorized, and subsequently found, support for the proposition that individuals who are targets of abusive supervision and engage in OCB will engage in more negative voluntary work behaviors than those who did not engage in OCB. This result is in line with moral licensing theory (Klotz & Bolino, 2013) whereby individuals judge their actions against an assessment of their current moral balance, which they compare to their overall personal moral equilibrium point. I propose that when individuals have recently engaged in positive voluntary work behaviors they feel licensed to engage in subsequent negative voluntary work behaviors because they will simply be brought back to their moral equilibrium point rather than falling below this point. As a result, the moral license can reduce the negative consequences that would normally result from counterproductive work behaviors or organizational deviance.

Moral licensing theory also helps explain why targets of abusive supervision respond to abuse with deviance despite the well-documented negative consequences of doing so (Thau & Mitchell, 2010). These individuals may be relying on the perception that their previous actions grant them a moral license to engage in negative behaviors subsequently, and thus they discount the known negative consequences of retaliating against a supervisor. Moral licensing theory may also provide a theoretical rationale for an expanded social exchange perspective, whereby the quality of the employee-supervisor relationship is judged in the context of previous behavior of *both* the employee and the supervisor. Thus, previous positive behaviors by the employee lead to further imbalance in the exchange relationship that licenses subsequent deviance. The current research explicates the relationship between abusive supervision and



negative voluntary work behaviors by identifying a moderating condition, the performance of positive voluntary work behaviors, which increases the incidence of organizational deviance and CWB. Moral licensing theory provides a potential rationale for this result, replicated in two studies, and contributes to the theoretical literature in a number of ways.

However, it must be noted that while the results are in line with moral licensing theory the current studies do not provide a direct test of this theory, and the results could be alternatively explained. For example, a traditional social exchange theory perspective would predict that individuals would feel justified in responding to abuse with actions of a similar valence, and that following abuse they will retaliate using deviance. While this model does not take into account the additional licensing provided by performing OCB, it is able to explain the pattern of results demonstrated and thus is worthy of further study. This proposition is explored further in the Directions for Future Research section below.

### **Implications**

The results of the current research are consistent with the contention that individuals rely on a sense of moral license when deciding whether to engage in negative behaviors following previous positive voluntary behaviors, lending empirical support to the model proposed by Klotz and Bolino (2013). Additionally, the current research is strengthened by the use of multiple operationalizations for negative work behaviors (organizational deviance and counterproductive work behaviors) highlighting that individuals seeking to maintain a moral equilibrium will focus on the valence of their behaviors, a result which holds across several operationalizations of negative voluntary work behaviors. This research implies that while individuals may make seemingly inconsistent decisions, they are guided by a rationale of maintaining a moral balance above their threshold level (Nisan, 1990; 1991) that allows them

to engage in positive and negative behaviors in close succession. Moral licensing theory helps to clarify the relationship between abusive supervision and deviance identified in previous research. While previous research has linked abusive supervision with subsequent negative behaviors (e.g. Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Thau & Mitchell, 2010) this research has not examined within-person variation in the performance of voluntary work behaviors over time. I suggest that moral licensing can explain this variation, such that individuals who have engaged in positive voluntary behaviors will feel licensed to retaliate against their supervisors and thus will be more likely to engage in organizational deviance or CWB. Moral licensing theory expands on the social exchange literature (Thau et al., 2009) by proposing that both previous supervisor and subordinate behavior matters in determining the quality of the exchange relationship and thus, subsequent behaviors. Moral licensing theory contributes to the abusive supervision literature by clarifying the conditions under which targets of abusive supervision are likely to engage in deviance following abuse.

The current research also provides a novel understanding of the role of OCB in the workplace. While traditionally OCB has been used as an impression management tool (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002), the current research implies that individuals may rely on OCB for a variety of reasons. I propose that engaging in OCB elevates individuals' moral balance above the moral equilibrium, leading them to feel less inhibited when an opportunity to engage in deviance arises. It may be that employees who have engaged in OCB will be particularly reactive to abuse because of a perception that their previous behavior should protect them from abuse. Thus, companies may need to be particularly careful how they treat their high performing employees, as these employees appear to be most likely to respond to fluctuations in abusive behavior with deviance. Finally, the current research reconceptualizes the

relationship between abuse and OCB. Traditionally OCB has been conceptualized as an outcome of abuse with a resulting negative relationship (Zellars et al., 2002; Aryee et al., 2007), but the current research implies that OCB may be treated as a moderator of the relationship between abuse and deviance.

Moral licensing may have implications for a wide range of decision-making situations in the workplace, as workers must implicitly make decisions about how to balance positively and negatively valenced behaviors based on competing demands. As such, moral licensing research could have implications in a variety of domains. For instance, moral licensing has implications for work-life balance. Individuals who have difficulty balancing their work and personal life may feel that they gain moral credits when they spend more time at home that will justify subsequently neglecting family in favor of work, or vice versa. However, this implication rests on the idea that some individuals have a stronger sense of moral balance than others. It may be that some individuals will be better at balancing the domains of work and life because they are guided by an implicit understanding of the balance of behaviors that would allow for neglecting one domain in order to balance another. Additionally, some individuals may view work-life balance as having a moral connotation while others may not be preoccupied with this balancing act. Thus, future research could investigate individual differences in the extent to which an individual values maintaining a consistent moral identity and how these differences reflect the tendency to switch between positive and negative behaviors, or separate and competing domains, to gain a better understanding of the implications of moral licensing in a variety of domains.

This research also has practical implications for the workplace. In Study 2 I found that individuals who were targets of abusive supervision who had engaged in OCB directed at the

supervisor were more likely to engage in subsequent CWB directed at the supervisor *and* the organization. Thus, it appears that subordinates who have a moral license will not simply retaliate against their aggressor, but are also more likely to retaliate towards the organization as a whole. As such, organizations that tolerate abuse may be the targets of subsequent deviance that could result in further losses. The relationship between positive and negative voluntary work behaviors uncovered in the current data set and the implied support for a moral licensing explanation has implications not only for how subordinates respond to their supervisors, but also how they generalize the supervisor's actions to the organization and thus decide to engage in deviance. Organizations may need to be particularly cautious of how they treat their high performing employees, particularly in the context of abusive supervision, as these results imply that these employees may be more likely to react to abuse with increased deviance.

### **Limitations**

Although the current research implies support for moral licensing theory, a number of limitations should be noted. First, although I used a repeated measures design to examine within person variation in the performance of positive and negative voluntary work behaviors that allows us to make some inferences about the temporal nature of the relationship, the current data are correlational and do not allow me to make claims about the directionality of the relationship between positive and negative behaviors. However, as the supplementary analyses in Study 2 did not find support for the reverse relationship the current research supports the model presented. Additionally, as the majority of abusive supervision research is correlational because of the difficulty in experimentally manipulating abuse in a laboratory setting, the current results follow the standard set by the majority of published abusive supervision research conducted using a field sample. Nonetheless, future research should

experimentally manipulate the performance of OCB in the context of abuse to observe its effects on subsequent CWB in order to make claims that individuals engage in higher levels of CWB following OCB.

Additionally, common source effects may have influenced the findings as the data in Study 2 were collected from a single source. However, because I was able to collect significant others' ratings of OCB in Study 1 with similar results, and because the data in Study 2 was multi-wave and used lagged data with demonstrated similar results, the concern with common source effects is reduced. In addition, self-report data is generally considered to be a valid approach to assessing perceptual outcomes and internal states such as abusive supervision (Chan, 2009). Notwithstanding these points, future research should include multisource data to confirm the presence of the effect using other sources.

### **Directions for Future Research**

The current research is consistent with the theory that subordinates rely on a perception of their own moment-to-moment moral equilibrium point when responding to an abusive supervisor. The results demonstrate that positive behaviors such as OCB moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and deviance such that engaging in OCB will increase the likelihood of subsequently engaging in deviance. While the current research is supportive of the moral licensing explanation, future research should focus on a more direct test of the moral licensing hypothesis. Such research should test whether the extent to which individual differences in the propensity to maintain a consistent moral identity influences the relationship between abuse and negative voluntary behaviors as moderated by positive voluntary behaviors. Specifically, future research could test the strength of an individual's desire to maintain a consistent moral identity and the extent to which this moderates the

relationship between abuse, negative behaviors and the moderating role of positive voluntary behaviors. If the results of such a study were consistent with the current results, I would expect that the relationship between positive voluntary behaviors and subsequent negative voluntary behaviors would be stronger if an individual strongly values maintaining a consistent moral identity.

Additionally, because other theories may also explain the pattern of results demonstrated in the current research, it would be worthwhile to test an alternative model. For instance, social exchange theory would predict that the extent to which an individual endorses negative reciprocity beliefs should influence the extent to which they feel justified in engaging in negative behaviors following positive behaviors, such that stronger negative reciprocity beliefs would result in a stronger association between positive and negative voluntary work behaviors. Thus, future research could compare and contrast these two possible models.

Finally, future research could tease apart the distinction in the types of OCB that will license deviance. It may be that this relationship is strongest where the OCB is overt and thus the individual expects that others view them positively, while the relationship may not hold if the OCB is covert and less visible to others, for example fixing a mistake without pointing it out to anyone. The moral licensing effect may rely on subordinates' perceptions of how others perceive them in the workplace, with deviance only justifiable if they believe themselves to have a positive reputation. Additionally, future research should examine whether moral licensing occurs in more benign workplace situations. It may be that abusive supervision exaggerates individual perceptions of fairness and unfairness, increasing the likelihood that an individual will make more extreme moral decisions that may be unnecessary in a more balanced workplace. Finally, future research should focus on the distinctions between how

behaviors directed at the supervisor and those directed at the organization change perceptions of moral licensing: it may be that individuals who perceive the supervisor to be an agent of the organization (Shoss et al., 2013) will be more likely to engage in negative acts directed at the organization, while subordinates who do not perceive this link will be less likely to retaliate against the organization.

## **Conclusion**

The current research provides support for the contention that employees who are the targets of abuse who have recently engaged in OCB will be more likely to respond to the abuse with acts of deviance or CWB. This result is in line with moral licensing theory (Klotz & Bolino, 2013), which proposes that individuals who have engaged in positive voluntary work behaviors will feel licensed to engage in negative behaviors as they are elevated above their moral equilibrium point. The current research expands the abusive supervision literature by implying that supervisor and subordinate behavior matters in predicting subordinate responses to abuse, and provides a new understanding of the role of OCB as a moderator of the relationship between abusive supervision and deviance.

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## APPENDIX A

### Abusive Supervision Scale

(Tepper, 2000)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements based on your typical thoughts and feelings about your **supervisor**.

My supervisor...

1. Ridicules me

1	2	3	4	5
I can't remember him/her ever using this behavior with me	He/she very seldom uses this behavior with me	He/she occasionally uses this behavior with me	He/she uses this behavior moderately often with me	He/she uses this behavior very often with me

2. Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid
3. Gives me the silent treatment
4. Puts me down in front of others
5. Invades my privacy
6. Reminds me of my past mistakes and failures
7. Doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort
8. Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment
9. Breaks promises he/she makes
10. Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason
11. Makes negative comments about me to others
12. Is rude to me
13. Does not allow me to interaction with my coworkers
14. Tells me I'm incompetent
15. Lies to me

## APPENDIX B

### Organizational Citizenship Behavior- Individual Initiative Scale

(adapted from Bolino & Turnley, 2005)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate, using the following scale, how often on average your spouse engaged in the following behaviors in the past six months.

My spouse...

1. Works on his/her days off (e.g. weekends).

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

2. Brings things home to work on.  
3. Takes work-related phone calls at home.  
4. Carries a cell phone or pager for work so he/she can be reached after normal business hours.  
5. Stays at work after normal business hours.  
6. Works late into the night at home.  
7. Attends work-related functions on his/her personal time.  
8. Works during his/her vacations.  
9. Rearranges or alters his/her personal plans because of work.  
10. Checks back with the office even when he/she is on vacation.



## APPENDIX C

### Organizational Deviance Scale

(Bennett & Robinson, 2000)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate, using the following scale, how often you have engaged in each of the following behaviors in the past six months.

1. Worked on a personal matter instead of work for your employer.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Once in the last six months	Twice in the last six months	Several times	Monthly	Weekly	D

2. Taken property from work without permission.  
3. Spent too much time fantasizing or daydreaming instead of working.  
4. Falsified a receipt to get reimbursed for more money than you spent on business expenses.  
5. Taken an additional or longer break than is acceptable at your workplace.  
6. Came in late to work without permission.  
7. Littered your work environment.  
8. Told someone about the lousy place where you work.  
9. Neglected to follow your boss' instructions.  
10. Intentionally worked slower than you could have worked.  
11. Discussed confidential company information with an unauthorized person.  
12. Left work early without permission.  
13. Left your work for someone else to finish.  
14. Used an illegal drug or consumed alcohol on the job.  
15. Put little effort into your work.  
16. Dragged out work in order to get overtime.

## APPENDIX D

### Prescreen Questionnaire (Study 2)

Please note that this is a short questionnaire (taking approximately 3 minutes to complete) designed to determine if you are eligible to participate in our study. Completion of this questionnaire does not ensure that you will be selected as a participant for this study, nor will you receive any remuneration for completing the present questionnaire. Should you be eligible to participate in our study, we will contact you within 14 days via email, with an ID and password for our study, and a web link to the next phase of the study. If it is determined that you are not eligible for the study, the information you have provided will be destroyed. All information provided is strictly confidential, and you can decline to answer any of the questions.

#### Demographics

1. Age:

2. Gender:     Male             Female

3. Race/Ethnicity: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

     **Black, Non-Hispanic** - A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

     **American Indian or Alaskan Native** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

     **Asian or Pacific Islander** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent or the Pacific Islands. This area includes China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands and Samoa; and, on the Indian subcontinent, includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal Sikkim and Bhutan.

     **Hispanic** - A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish Culture or origin, regardless of race.

     **White, Non-Hispanic** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.

4. How many jobs do you currently work at?

If you work at more than one job, please refer to your primary job (i.e., the job at which you work the most hours) when completing the following questions.

5. How many months have you been working at your current organization?
6. How many months have you been working in your current position?
7. How many months have you been working with your current supervisor?
8. What are your regular workdays? From \_\_\_ to \_\_\_. Or No regular work days

What are your regular work hours? From \_\_\_ am to \_\_\_ pm. Or No regular work hours

9. What gender is your supervisor (a supervisor is defined as the individual that you report directly to, or who is responsible for assessments of your work.)? Male Female
10. What race/ethnicity is your supervisor? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

\_\_\_ **Black, Non-Hispanic** - A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

\_\_\_ **American Indian or Alaskan Native** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

\_\_\_ **Asian or Pacific Islander** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent or the Pacific Islands. This area includes China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands and Samoa; and, on the Indian subcontinent, includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal Sikkim and Bhutan.

\_\_\_ **Hispanic** - A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish Culture or origin, regardless of race.

\_\_\_ **White, Non-Hispanic** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.

11. What is your job title?
12. What industry do you work in?
13. Do you work in a team? (Yes/No)  
If so,

how many people (excluding supervisors) are a part of your team? \_\_\_\_

are your team members: \_\_mostly male (>= 65%) \_\_mostly female (>= 65%) \_\_  
balanced (between 35% to 65%)

are your team members: \_\_mostly the same race/ethnicity as you are (>= 65%) \_\_  
 mostly different race/ethnicity from you are (>= 65%) \_\_ balanced (between 35% to  
 65%)

14. Do you supervise other employees as part of your role at work?  
 If so, how many?

15. How often do you interact with other people in your organization (e.g., work peers) during  
 a typical workday?

Never      Rarely      Somewhat Regularly      Regularly      Often

16. On average, how many hours a week do you work at your current job?

17. What is your highest level of education?

Less than High School      Some High School      High School      College/ University      Master's Degree      Doctorate

Please check the appropriate box(es) if any of the following events have happened **at work**  
 since you completed our last questionnaire (August, 2009):

<input type="checkbox"/> Promoted	<input type="checkbox"/> Demoted
<input type="checkbox"/> New position	<input type="checkbox"/> Laid off
<input type="checkbox"/> New supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Work for a new company
<input type="checkbox"/> Currently unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/> Retired
Other (please specify):	

Once we have verified that you are eligible to participate in our study, we will send you an  
 email with a link to the initial survey. In order to do so, please provide us with your name and  
 an email address where we can contact you. Please take note that your name and email  
 information will be stored separately from the questionnaire responses and discarded if you do  
 not qualify for the study.

Name:

Email:

Thank you for completing the eligibility survey! Once we have verified that you are eligible  
 for the study, we will send you an email containing a link to the first survey of the study.

## APPENDIX E

### Daily Abusive Supervision Scale

(adapted from Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements based on your thoughts and feelings about your **supervisor's behavior today**.

My supervisor...

1. Ridiculed me.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Once	Twice	Three times	More than three times

2. Told me my thoughts and feelings were stupid.

3. Put me down in front of others.

4. Made negative comments about me to others.

5. Told me I'm incompetent.

## APPENDIX F

### Daily Organizational Citizenship Behavior towards the Supervisor (OCB-S)

(Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch & Hulin, 2009)

Stem: During the last half of the day, I...

Response options: "Yes" and "No".

1. Went out of my way to be nice to my supervisor.
2. Tried to help my supervisor.
3. Defended my supervisor's opinion or suggestion.
4. Went out of my way to include my supervisor in a conversation.
5. Tried to be available to my supervisor.
6. Spoke highly about my supervisor to others.

## APPENDIX G

### Daily Counterproductive Work Behavior towards the Supervisor (CWB-S)

(Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch & Hulin, 2009)

Stem: During the last half of the day, I...

Response options: "Yes" and "No".

1. Behave in an unpleasant manner toward my supervisor.
2. Tried to harm my supervisor.
3. Criticized my supervisor's opinion or suggestion.
4. Excluded my supervisor from a conversation.
5. Tried to avoid interacting with my supervisor.
6. Spoke poorly about my supervisor to others.

## APPENDIX H

### Daily Counterproductive Work Behavior towards the Organization (CWB-O)

(Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch & Hulin, 2009)

Stem: During the last half of the day, I...

Response options: "Yes" and "No".

1. Did not work to the best of my ability.
2. Spent time on tasks unrelated to work.
3. Criticized organizational policies.
4. Took an unnecessary break.
5. Worked slower than necessary.
6. Spoke poorly about my organization to others.