Responding to Abusive Supervision: Opposing Arguments for the Role of Social Class in Predicting Workplace Deviance

by

Nea Powell

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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

This research examined the effect of social class on the relationship between abusive supervision and workplace deviance. Within the social class literature we found conflicting theoretical arguments regarding the effect that social class would have on responses to abuse. To address this discordance we examined the effect of social class on responses to abusive supervision in four samples using multiple methods. Results confirmed that social class moderates the association between abusive supervision and workplace deviance. Specifically, the effect of abusive supervision on workplace deviance was stronger for higher social classes. In our laboratory research, the use of an abusive supervision prime and a subjective social class manipulation provided preliminary evidence for this effect. Our multi-wave field research provided evidence that these findings extend to actual employee behavior (i.e., interpersonal and organizational deviance). Implications for the abusive supervision literature are discussed.

Keywords: abusive supervision, workplace deviance, interpersonal deviance, organizational deviance, social class

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To my family and friends

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INTRODUCTION

An estimated 13.6% of U.S. employees are affected by abusive supervision (Schat, Frone, & Kelloway, 2006), formally defined as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, pp.178). There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that when subordinates experience abuse from their supervisors such as ridicule, intimidation, and humiliation, they are likely to respond by engaging in deviant behaviors that are harmful to the organization and its members (e.g. Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006; Bies & Tripp, 1998; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Thau & Mitchell, 2010). These deviant responses have a staggering impact on corporations' financial and psychological health (Robinson, & Greenberg, 1998) contributing to the estimated $23.8 billion dollar loss that U.S. organizations incur annually as a result of abusive supervision (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006).

Importantly, abusive supervision does not provoke the same response in all subordinates (Tepper, 2007). Although the majority of research suggests that abusive supervision incites deviant and destructive responses from employees, there are a handful of studies revealing that some employees do not respond in these harmful ways (e.g., Keashly, Trott, & MacLean, 1994; Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001; Tepper, Moss, Lockhart, & Carr, 2007). Nevertheless, why some employees respond to abuse in harmful ways while others refrain remains largely ambiguous within the literature (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2012). Recently there has been a shift in the literature towards discovering how contextual factors might affect responses to abuse and injustice. Context is known to influence organizational behavior in both subtle and powerful ways (Johns, 2006) and is often considered the missing link in explaining anomalous research (Goodman, 2000; Hackman, 2003; Johns, 2001). Within organizational research, contextual factors such as

occupation and fear of retaliation have been shown to alter the perception of supervisory abuse (Restubog, Scott, & Zagenczyk, 2011) and even attenuate deviant employee responses (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2012). There is also preliminary evidence suggesting that non-work contextual factors that affect work behavior, such as culture (Johns, 2006), might have a similar moderating effect on fairness perceptions and deviant responses to supervisory abuse (Lian, Ferris, & Brown, 2012). Overall, these studies reveal that in order to understand employees' responses to abusive supervision it is invaluable to consider the contextual framework from which they are reacting.

Social class, or level of material resources, is a non-work context that influences work behavior (Johns, 2008). Akin to the impact of culture, social class sculpts the very foundation from which individuals derive construals for thought and action (Côté, 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individuals assimilate the tendencies and norms from the social-class context within which they develop, and then in turn, these norms for thought and action are brought into the workplace influencing interpersonal interactions. Unlike culture, however, class is much less visible and therefore it is often wrongly overlooked. As inequalities between social classes continue to grow (Papas, Queen, Hadden, Fisher, 1993), it becomes increasingly important to understand the effect of class on organizational behavior (Côté, 2011).

Social class may be particularly pertinent in understanding employee reactions to supervisory abuse as there is already a large body of literature that attests to its robust impact on behavior in social interactions and responses to perceived social threats (Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2011; Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, & Goldberg, 2007; Côté, 2011). Intuitively, one might expect that lower classes would react more strongly and negatively to being abused. Consistent with this lay belief, evidence affirms that lower classes have higher levels of hostile reactivity in interpersonal interactions (Kraus et al., 2011). In stark contrast to this prediction however, an

opposing perspective, equally supported by theory, suggests that lower social classes might be *less* likely to engage in deviance in response to being abused by their supervisors. This standpoint focuses on normative differences between social classes in their acceptance of social hierarchies and respect for authority (Côté, 2011). In the current paper, we aim to clarify how social class can influence responses to abusive supervision, explicate opposing theoretical arguments, and take initial steps to resolve this lack of conceptual consensus by empirically testing the moderating effect of social class.

In examining the effect of social class on employee reactions to abusive supervision, our paper makes several significant contributions. First, our model advances our understanding of how contextual factors can moderate deviant responses to abusive supervision. Although organizational researchers have only very recently become cognizant of the explanatory potential of social class in examining organizational phenomena (Côté, 2011), there is already ample research within Sociological and Psychological literatures that attests to its robust effect on cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to others (Kraus et al., 2011; Roberts et al., 2007; Côté, 2011). As social class pervades all social environments, dramatically shaping responses in interactions (Kraus, et al., 2011), understanding how these effects manifest within the workplace should lead to a more nuanced view of the conditions in which abuse results in deviance. The social class literature will therefore both add theoretical depth to our appreciation of the role contextual factors and refine our understanding of these prevalent and costly responses to abusive supervision.

Second, we extend the abusive supervision literature by introducing social class as an important contextual factor that has a strong potential to advance our understanding of employee responses to abusive supervision. The social class literature provides a rich foundation for

understanding how reactions in interpersonal settings differ due to class. Resolving conflicting perspectives concerning the effects of class on deviant responses to abusive supervision will elucidate which theoretical stream to draw upon for subsequent mediator analyses. Furthermore, the results of our study might convey the potential of social class in explaining variance in other important workplace behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), counterproductive workplace behaviors (CWB), supervisor directed deviance (SDD), and job performance. Thus our preliminary research will hopefully align and energize efforts to deepen and broaden our understanding of reactions to supervisory abuse by turning to social class research.

Lastly, by challenging the implicit assumption that responses to abusive supervision generalize across classes, our study also has practical implications. Understanding the effect of context helps us as researchers to better convey the applications of our studies to managers and other interested practitioners (Johns, 2006). It is important to note that the organizational literature is predominantly made up of higher class employee participants (Côté, 2011). Without understanding how this inequity might bias the literature we are limiting the generalizability the abusive supervision research and potentially falsely informing practitioners who are attempting to apply research to workplaces with a higher ratio of lower class employees. In this way we hope that the current study will take initial steps towards addressing this concern and reducing the researcher-practitioner gap.

To outline the remainder of the paper, we begin by reviewing the abusive supervision literature and explaining how supervisory abuse incites workplace deviance from employees. Next, we present two contending theoretical rationales for the effect of social class on the

abusive supervision-workplace deviance link. Finally we test the effect of social class on responses to abusive supervision in two studies and explicate the results.

Abusive Supervision and Workplace Deviance

Abusive supervision represents employees' perception of willful and sustained non-physical mistreatment (Tepper, 2007). Not surprisingly, this type of mistreatment evokes negative reactions from subordinates; supervisors are perceived to be the primary source of interpersonal mistreatment in organizations (Bies, 1999), and interpersonal mistreatment is a primary antecedent of workplace deviance (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). Workplace deviance refers to harmful behaviors that violate organizational norms by targeting the organization itself (organizational deviance) or other employees (interpersonal deviance) (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). The term organizational deviance refers to behaviors such as internal theft, or shirking hours, and interpersonal deviance includes behaviors such as pranking or saying hurtful things about others (2000). Conventional theoretical frameworks explaining this relationship regard deviant responses to supervisory abuse as intentional acts motivated by reciprocity norms or as a way of seeking retribution for the perceived injustice (Aquino, Lewis, & Bradfield, 1999; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

A proliferation of research in this domain substantiates the link between abusive supervision with both forms of employee workplace deviance and underscores a number of distressing potential consequences (e.g., Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002; Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001; Bies & Tripp, 1998; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). For instance, internal theft alone costs U.S. retailers a stunning $15.1 billion per year— a rate that continues to rise (Hollinger & Davis, 2003). In addition to hard costs, workplace deviance is also linked to decreased productivity and performance (Dunlop & Lee, 2004). Given the substantial

negative impact of these behaviors, understanding the factors that enhance or mitigate reactions to abusive supervision has become a serious concern for organizations and researchers alike.

A number of theoretical frameworks have been invoked to explain the relationship between abusive supervision and workplace deviance. However, the two most widely accepted include interactional justice and social exchange explanations. Interactional justice refers to the extent to which employees feel that they have been treated with dignity and respect (Colquitt, 2001). According to justice-based theories, justice violations evoke anger (Folger 1993; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997) and may be experienced as a threat to ones' position within the group (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Folger, 2001). From this perspective retributive action is motivated by these negative emotions associated with perceptions of unfairness (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Therefore when employees perceive that organizational authorities are treating them unfairly, it leads to resentment that may be expressed by performing retaliatory acts of deviance (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Schaubhut, Adams, & Jex, 2004; Thau & Michell, 2006).

Comparatively, social exchange based theories account for retaliatory deviance using negative reciprocity principles (Homans, 1961; Gouldner, 1960; Cook & Emerson, 1978; Meeker, 1971; Pruitt, 1968; Thau & Mitchell, 2010; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Reciprocity norms establish a quid-pro-quo standard of behavior such that beneficial interactions generate obligations to return the benefit, and negative treatment will elicit negative returns (Gouldner, 1960). Based on these principles, when organizational authorities interact with their employees in harmful ways it will elicit harmful reciprocation towards the organization, supervisors, and other organizational members (Gouldner, 1960; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). The expectation of self-gain is the fundamental to social exchange and negative

reciprocity explanations of retaliatory workplace deviance (Thau & Mitchell, 2010). Retaliation can offer a number of attractive gains such as restoring balance to the exchange, deterring future harm, demonstrating the ability to defend oneself, and enjoyment or satisfaction (Bies, 1987; Bies & Tripp, 1996; Gouldner, 1960; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Tripp & Bies, 1997).

Together, social exchange and justice frameworks both explain why victims of abusive are motivated to retaliate. However, it is important to note that in the context of hierarchical workplace relationships where the abuser has control of the outcomes of the abused, retaliatory deviance is likely to be directed towards targets that are more available, less powerful, and less likely to counter-retaliate (Aquino, et al., 2001; Miller, 1941; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Thau & Mitchell, 2010). In this way, when employees are abused by their supervisors they often choose to express deviance against their coworkers or the organization (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Thau & Mitchell, 2010).

Although the link between abusive supervision and workplace deviance has been well-established, we know that not all victimized employees engage in deviance (Bies & Tripp, 1998; Keashly, et al., 1994; Tepper et al., 2001). It remains unclear however why abusive supervision can provoke destructive responses in some individuals but not others (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2012). In line with the recent shift in the literature emphasizing the role of contextual factors, the current research hopes to shed new light on the conditions under which abusive supervision leads to deviance by investigating the effect of social class.

Social Class and Responses to Abusive Supervision

Social class is defined as "a dimension of the self that is rooted in objective material resources (income, education, and occupational prestige) and corresponding subjective perceptions of rank vis-à-vis others"(Côté, 2011, p.47). A large body of research has examined

how rank in the social hierarchy alters affective and physiological responses to stressors and threat in social interactions (Adler & Ostrove, 1999; Chen & Matthews, 2001; Gallo & Matthews, 2003; Link, Lennon, & Dohrenwend, 1993). Humans, as with other mammals, have evolved a threat detection system that allows for adaptive responses to different survival based threats (Blascovich & Mendes, 2000; MacDonald & Leary, 2005; Picket & Gardner, 2005; Williams, 2007). This system not only detects physical threats but also social threats such as ranking low in the social hierarchy (Chow, Tiedens, & Govan, 2008; Ohman, 1986). When a threat is detected, it triggers elevated arousal in the sympathetic autonomic nervous system; a system known to prime the fight-or-flight response (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Rank within human social hierarchies is determined by an individual's social class which directly signals to others one's level of material resources (Kraus, Piff, & Keltner, 2009). Correspondingly, accumulating research suggests that social class shapes emotional responses in social interactions such that lower social classes have a heightened sensitivity to the anger of others (Evans, et al., 2008) and higher levels of hostile reactivity (Kraus, Horberg, Goetz, & Keltner; 2011). Galo and Matthews' (2003) systematic review revealed that lower classes were associated with cognitive, affective, and behavioral correlates of hostility.

The social class context from which we develop also shapes our sense of personal control and strengthens this tendency for heightened reactivity. Social class contexts differ markedly in terms of their stability, safety, and opportunity for choice and autonomy (Fiske & Markus, 2011; Kraus, et al., 2009, 2011; Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010; Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Stephens, Fryberg, & Markus, 2011). These differences instill a sense of diminished personal control in lower classes (Christie & Barling, 2009; Lachman & Weaver, 1998; Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Stephens, Markus, & Townsend, 2007). Correspondingly, uncertainty management theory

(UMT) (Lind & Van den Bos, 2002; Van den Bos & Lind, 2002) explains that individuals have the need for predictability (Hogan, 1983; Stevens & Fiske, 1995), and suggests that within workplace contexts individuals attempt to regain a sense of control through heightened attention to fairness treatment from authorities (Tangirala & Alge, 2006). Thau and colleagues (Thau, Bennett, Mitchell, & Mars, 2009) recently integrated UMT and justice frameworks to explain retaliatory workplace deviance, describing how increased attentiveness to fairness treatment increases the salience of justice violations, which in turn, motivates retributive actions. Consistently, there is evidence to suggest that a perception of low control exacerbates the impact of organizational injustice on psychological, behavioral, and physical reactions (Elovainio, Van den Boss, Linna, Kivimaki, Ala-Mursula, Penti, &Vahtera, 2005; Van den Boss, 2001). Taken together this perspective explains that lower classes not only have higher levels of hostile reactivity but they are also more highly motivated to restore their sense of personal control. In this way, lower classes are likely to be more vigilant and reactive to a justice violation such as abusive supervision.

A second line of reasoning, however, suggests the opposite prediction –namely that differences in social class shape individuals' sense of self and their construals for interaction such that *higher* rather than lower classes are more likely to respond to supervisory abuse with deviance. Differences experienced between social class contexts during development shapes construals for social interaction. Stephens and colleagues (2007) argue that lower classes adapt to the challenges inherent in their environment by developing an interdependent self-construal that manifests in a higher attention to, reliance on, and adjustment to others. In support of this assertion, evidence suggests that lower classes have a normative preference for conformity (Stephens et al., 2007). In contrast, the increased autonomy and independence experienced

within higher social class contexts (Fiske & Markus, 2011; Stephens, et al., 2007) appears to give rise to a more independent sense of self, characterized by self-focused patterns of cognition and behavior (Kraus, et al., 2011). For example, in an economic game, higher classes were more likely to pursue personal gain at expense to the welfare of others (Piff, et al., 2010).

Moreover, social class creates distinctive parenting styles that accentuate these differences between classes. Higher-class parents adopt a much more child-centered approach, offering more opportunities for self-expression, negotiation, and contestation (Lareau, 2002; Kusserow, 1999; Miller, Cho, Bracey, 2005; Wiley, Rose, Burger, & Miller, 1998). Higher-class children are taught to think of themselves as special and that their parents' desires can sometimes be subordinated by their own (Lareau, 2002). This parenting style fosters a sense of entitlement and self-directedness that trains children to be able to intervene on their own behalf (Lareau, 2002; Kohn & Schooler 1983; Miller, et al., 2005). Where higher-class parents teach their children to assert themselves, lower-class parents emphasize obedience and respect for authority (Kusserow, 1999). Evidence suggests that this lower-class parenting style fosters a sense of constraint that leads to a feeling of powerlessness in their institutional relationships (Lareau, 2002). Correspondingly, there is evidence that social classes differ in their conceptualization of morality such that higher classes place greater importance on justice, fairness, and reciprocity, while lower social classes place greater importance on establishing and maintaining hierarchy and order (Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993). These differences were exemplified in a workplace study by Kohn and colleagues (Kohn, 1969; Kohn, Naoi, Scoenbach, Schooler, & Slomczynski, 1990) who found that lower class employees were more likely than higher class employees to defer to external leadership and adhere to socially accepted standards of behavior.

This perspective therefore suggests that lower social classes develop a self-construal that motivates normative behavior and a sense of morality that impedes defiance towards authority (Haidt, et al., 1993; Kusserow, 1999; Stephens et al., 2007). Since workplace deviance is by definition both a violation of authority and organizational norms (Bennett & Robinson, 2000), it seems very unlikely that lower classes would retaliate against abuse from supervisors by engaging in workplace deviance. Individuals from higher social classes however have no such inclination to conform, are disposed to feel entitled to a certain standard of behavior from others regardless of status, and have a sense of morality that promotes reciprocity (Haidt, et al., 1993; Lareau, 2002; Stephens et al., 2007). Furthermore, considering their penchant to pursue self-interest even at the cost of others (Piff, et al., 2010), it is not hard to imagine that after feeling victimized they might pursue the gains that retaliatory deviance can offer (e.g. satisfaction) by aggressing against the organization or other coworkers.

To briefly summarize, the high vigilance and low control experienced by lower classes promotes higher attention and reaction to justice violations (e.g., Kraus, et al., 2011). From this standpoint we would expect class to moderate the abusive supervision-workplace deviance link such that the relationship would be stronger for lower social classes. The opposing perspective describes lower classes' deeply rooted values promoting compliance to authority and higher classes' willingness to pursue self-interest at a cost to others (Haidt, et al., 1993; Piff, et al., 2010). This line of reasoning suggests that social class would strengthen the relationship between abusive-supervision and workplace deviance.

In accordance with the literature, we expect to replicate the main effect of abusive supervision on both forms of workplace deviance (organizational and interpersonal). However, in view of the opposing predictions regarding the effect of social class on responses to abuse, we

make the general prediction that social class will have a significant moderating effect but remain ambivalent with regards to the direction. We tested our hypotheses in two studies, across four samples. Both experimental and field research have strengths and weaknesses, and since the strengths of one can help compensate for the weaknesses of the other (Dipboye, 1990), we are using both types. In Study 1 we utilized a scenario experiment, whereas in Study 2 we used field surveys. The scenario experiment was designed to provide preliminary support for the internal validity of our model while the field studies allowed us to extend our results to actual organizational behavior.

STUDY 1

In Study 1 we primed abusive supervision with a scenario, manipulated social class with an imagery task, and measured implicit aggression. All participants were primed with an abusive supervision scenario that followed Tepper's (2000, 2007) definition of abusive supervision. Participants were then presented with the social class manipulation. Since the definition of social class captures both objective material conditions and subjective perceptions of social class, we focused on the subjective component of social class in Study 1, and the objective component in Study 2. Manipulations of social class temporarily activate the corresponding cognitions and motivations of a particular social class (Côté, 2011). We temporarily altered subjective perceptions of relative social class using a manipulation taken from similar research within the social class literature (Kraus, et al., 2010; Kraus, et al., 2011; Piff, et al., 2010). The manipulation we selected uses an image of a ladder to represent social standing and has participants compare themselves to individuals with either the highest or lowest standing depending on the experimental condition. It was initially adapted from measures of subjective perceptions of socioeconomic rank (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000; Kraus, et al., 2009). Because we were only temporarily altering participant's perceptions of their relative social class, we could not directly measure how this mindset would affect their workplace deviance. Instead, we measured implicit aggression as a proxy. It should be noted that workplace deviance shares many links to aggression and is often considered a form of aggression itself (e.g. Aquino, Galperin, & Bennett, 2004; Hershcovis, et al., 2007; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Judge, Scott, & Illies, 2006). One advantage of using an implicit measure is that it will provide insight into their unconscious reaction to these primes, this in turn, will decrease susceptibility to bias.

Method

Procedure

We collected our data from participants recruited through an advertisement posted on Mechanical Turk, an online forum. This type of recruitment method is endorsed by the American Psychological Association's Board of Scientific Affairs' Advisory Group (Kraut, Olson, Banaji, Bruckman, Cohen, & Couper, 2004) and moreover is found to provide data that at least equals the quality of more traditional methods (e.g. sampling college students, or individuals from specific organizations) with the added benefit that the sample is more diverse and therefore more likely to generalize (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004). The recruitment advertisement indicated that the study was designed to investigate individual differences in responding to supervisory style. The procedure and remuneration (75 cents) were also outlined as well as the specification that participants must be employed in a full-time job (at least 35 hours/week), speak English as a first language, and be located in USA or Canada. Interested participants were directed to complete a demographics questionnaire (see Appendix A) and a short English comprehension task (see Appendix B) that were used to screen individuals for participant requirements (e.g. full-time employment). Subsequently participants were asked to complete a series of computer-administered tasks. In the first task we primed perceptions of abusive supervision by having participants imagine a negative interaction with their supervisor, summarize it, and answer questions relating to the incident. In the next task, we manipulated participants' subjective construals of their social class rank relative to a comparison individual by asking them to compare themselves to another individual at the highest or lowest end of the social class spectrum, and describe an interaction with that person. Finally we assessed our

outcome variable, implicit aggression, using a word association task in which participants made judgments on several word pairs.

Participants and design

Out of the 108 individuals who completed our survey, 94 met our participant requirements (e.g. full-time workers). We removed another 9 participants because they did not follow the instructions in our social class manipulation (e.g. compared themselves to the wrong social class) or they failed to demonstrate adequate English proficiency (e.g. failed the English comprehension questions). The remaining sample of 85 working adults was 45.2% male, with a mean age of 35.02 years (*SD* = 10.80). On average, participants worked 41.96 hours per week (*SD* = 6.26), been employed at their current organization for 4.28 years (*SD* =5.06), held their present position for 2.58 years (*SD* =2.94), and had been under the same supervisor for 1.92 years (*SD* =2.65). These individuals worked in a variety of industries including: sales (15.3%), education (8.2%), arts/design/entertainment/sports/media (8.2%), food preparation and service related (8.2%). Participants were randomly assigned to one of our 2 conditions (high vs. low relative social class) in our independent groups design.

Measures

Abusive Supervision. We primed perceptions of abusive supervision with a mental imagery task we had developed based on Tepper 's (2000, 2007) definition of abusive supervision. Participants read the following instructions:

> Please imagine and visualize a particular incident in which your supervisor treats you in a hostile manner. A supervisor is defined as the individual that you report directly to, or who is responsible for assessments of your work. In particular, in the incident, your supervisor treats you with hostile verbal and/or nonverbal behaviours, such as being rude to you, making negative comments about you, unacknowledging your hard work, and so on. Overall, you feel being mistreated by your supervisor.

Participants were then asked to describe the incident and how they felt about their supervisors during the incident (see Appendix C). It should be noted that although the current study did not

include a control condition or manipulation check, previous unpublished studies in our lab have validated this prime.

Social class. Following other social class researchers (e.g., Kraus, et al., 2010; Kraus, et al., 2011; Piff, et al., 2010) we manipulated social class with an imagery task. Participants were presented with an image of a ladder with 10 rungs and instructed to think of the ladder "as representing where people stand in North America.". They were then randomly assigned to experience either high or low relative social class based on the following instructions:

> Now, please compare yourself to the people at the very bottom [top] of the ladder. These are people who are the worst [best] off—those who have the least [most] money, least [most] education, and the least [most] respected jobs. In particular, we'd like you to think about how you are different from these people in terms of your own income, educational history, and job status. Where would you place yourself on this ladder relative to these people at the very bottom [top]?

In keeping with similar studies, we strengthened the manipulation by instructing participants to imagine and write about a hypothetical interaction with a person from the bottom or top of the ladder. This type of writing task is a commonly used technique to activate rank related states (e.g., Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Kraus, et al., 2009). Participants then placed themselves on the ladder relative to the people at the very top or the very bottom (10 = *top rung*, 1 = *bottom rung*) depending on their condition (see Appendix D).

Implicit Aggression. We used Anderson and Morrow's (1995) word pair similarity task to indicate an aggressive cognitive bias (see also Anderson, Carnagey, & Eubanks, 2003). This task was originally adapted from Bushman's (1991; 1996) work on the cognitive networks of hostile vs. non-hostile individuals. Participants are presented with all possible pair combinations of 10 aggressive and 10 ambiguous words. The aggressive words include: blood, butcher, fight, gun, hatchet, hurt, kill, knife, and wound. The ambiguous words include: alley, animal, bottle, drugs, movie, night, police, red, rock, and stick. For each word pair we asked participants to rate how "similar, associated, or related" the word pairs seem to be (see Appendix E). Ratings are

signalled on a 7-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 (*not at all similar, associated, or related*) to 7 (*extremely similar, associated, or related*). Similarity ratings were averaged separately for each word pair type (AMDAMB, AGGAGG, AMBAGG). The level of aggressive affect/cognition is indicated by the similarity ratings for ambiguous-aggressive word pair types.

Results

Manipulation of relative social class

To determine the success of our manipulation, we compared the ladder rankings of participants in the higher social class and lower social class conditions using an independent-samples *t* test. The manipulation was successful in shifting participants' perceptions of their relative social class. Participants in the high social class condition ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.33$) placed themselves significantly higher up on the ladder than participants in the low social class condition ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.80$), $t(83) = 2.70$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.59$.

Implicit aggression

We performed a one-way independent groups ANCOVA to test the effect of relative social class on implicit aggression responses to abusive supervision. In our analyses, we controlled for *age* (in years), *gender* (1 = male, 2 = female), and *tenure* with supervisor (in months). Past research has found that these variables can have a significant impact on responses to abusive supervision (Mitchelle & Ambrose, 2007; Thau et al., 2009; Thau & Mitchell, 2010). We also controlled for education (a social class indicator) to partial out the variance that might be due to participants' actual social class. Lastly, we included participants' averaged ratings of the ambiguous-ambiguous word pairs as a covariate since it serves as a baseline measure of their response tendencies. The main effect of relative social class was significant such that similarity ratings for

ambiguous-aggressive word pairs was higher for participants in higher relative social class condition (as compared to the lower social class condition), F (1, 77) = 4.47, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$ (see Table 1). Therefore, once abusive supervision was primed, individuals in the higher relative social class condition had higher aggressive affect/cognition as indicated by relatively high similarity ratings for ambiguous-aggressive word pair types.

Table 1

Analysis of Covariance for Implicit Aggression (Study 1)

Source	*Df*	*F*	η_p^2	*p*
Age	1	4.00	.05	.05
Gender	1	1.24	.02	.27
Tenure	1	.44	.01	.51
MeanNN	1	404.86	.84	.00
Social Class	1	4.47	.06	.04
Error	77			

Note. $N = 85$

STUDY 2

Study 1 provided preliminary evidence regarding how social class influences responses to abusive supervision. After experiencing the abusive supervision vignette, participants in the higher class group rated the ambiguous-aggressive word pairs more similarly than lower class group. This suggests that higher classes may respond to abusive supervision with higher levels of aggressive cognition than lower classes. The experimental nature of Study 1 also provided some precursory support for the internal validity of our model. An important next step was to test our full moderation model and examine whether these effects would also be observed in an organizational setting. With Study 2 we aimed to provide further support for the effect of social class on responses to abusive supervision and bolster the external validity of our results by using field research. To test our model we used three samples. All three data sets used online surveys, however in Sample A we measured all of our constructs at a single point in time. Since this can increase the likelihood of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), we supplemented our first sample with two multi-wave archival data sets (Study 1 and 3 from Lian, Ferris, & Brown, 2012). All three data sets measured the same focal constructs - social class, abusive supervision, organizational deviance, and interpersonal deviance. Unlike Study 1, in Study 2 we focused on objective measures of social class. Standard objective measures of social class include income, education, and occupational prestige (Côté, 2011; Christie & Barling, 2009; Kraus, et, al., 2011). The current study measures educational attainment, which is widely accepted as a valid proxy for social class (Côté, 2011; Elo & Preston, 1996; Krieger & Fee, 1994; Liberatos, Link, & Kelsey, 1988; Smith et al., 1998; Stephens, et al., 2007), and is particularly advantageous since it remains stable after young adulthood (Elo, 2009; Matthews & Gallo, 2011). Past research confirms the discriminant validity

of objective measures of social class with two related constructs: power and status (for more detail see Kraus & Horberg, 2011; Kraus et al., 2009).

Method

Procedure

In Study 2, we used three data sets to test our hypotheses. The first data set (Sample A) was collected in the same manner as Study 1 with the sole exception that instead of completing computer-administered tasks participants completed an online survey. As such, in addition to the demographics questionnaire and English comprehension task, participants completed measures of social class, abusive supervision, and organizational and interpersonal deviance.

Unlike Sample A, where all measures are combined in a single survey, samples B and C both came from archival multi-wave data sets. These data sets used identical procedures. The recruitment advertisement posted to online forums indicated that the study was designed to investigate workplace attitudes and behaviors. The procedure and remuneration ($10 and a chance to win one of two $100 prizes) were also outlined as well as the specification that participants must be employed in a full-time job, speak English as a first language, and be located in USA or Canada. It was also explained that we would be collecting data in stages and that participation would therefore entail the completion of three online surveys each at separate intervals (approximately 1-2 weeks apart). Interested individuals were given an initial online demographics survey that assessed whether they met participant requirements (e.g. full-time employment) and included our variable of interest— social class. Subsequently, participants that met our participation requirements were each sent a unique identifier codes and links to the second and third surveys at appropriate intervals. At Time 2, participants' perception of abusive supervision was assessed. Finally, at Time 3 the outcomes variables were measured, including

interpersonal and organizational deviance. To maximize response rates (Dillman, 2000), participants who had failed to complete the survey were sent a maximum of three reminder emails (one week apart).

Sample A.

Of the 290 working adults who completed our survey, 274 met our participant requirements (e.g. working a minimum of 35 hours/week). The sample was 69.7% male, with a mean age of 29.58 years (*SD* = 9.16). On average, participants worked 41.22 hours per week (*SD* = 4.77), been employed at their current organization for 3.56 years (*SD* =6.91), held their present position for 2.71 years (*SD* =5.75), and had been under the same supervisor for 2.08 years (*SD* =3.31). These individuals worked in a variety of industries including: computer/math (12.1%), business & finance (9.89%), education/training/library (9.16%), sales and related (8.79%).

Sample B.

Six hundred and forty-one people completed the first survey. Of these individuals, 326 met the requirements and were invited to participate in Time 2 and Time 3. Two hundred and thirty-five participants completed the second survey (72% response rate) and 200 individuals completed the third ad final survey (85% retention rate). Only participants who completed all three waves were used in analyses. These individuals worked in a variety of industries including: computers and mathematics (12%), business and finance (10%), sales and related (9%), production (8%), education (7%), and health care support (7%). The sample was 44% male, with a mean age of 32.48 years (*SD* = 8.26). On average, participants worked 41.29 hours per week (*SD* = 7.13), been employed at their current organization for 4.48 years (*SD* = 4.46), held their

present position for 3.29 years (*SD* = 3.30), and had been under the same supervisor for 2.73 years (*SD* = 3.61).

Sample C.

In the same manner as above (Sample B), 559 people completed the first survey and 398 fulfilled our prescreen requirements and were invited to continue participating. Two hundred and ninety-seven participants completed the second survey (75% response rate) and 268 individuals completed the third ad final survey (90% retention rate). Of the individuals who completed all three waves, 16% worked in computers and mathematics, 13% in business and finance, 10% in sales, 8% in education, and 7% in administrative support. The sample was 46% male, with a mean age of 31.62 years (*SD* = 8.16). On average, participants worked 39.58 hours per week (*SD* =5.04) and been employed at their current organization for 3.99 years (*SD* = 4.89). Individuals held their present position for an average of 2.84 years (*SD* = 3.78) and had been working under the same supervisor for 2.12 years (*SD* = 2.61).

Measures

Social Class. Participants were asked to report their highest level of education by selecting from six response options including: less than high school, some high school, high school, college/university, master's degree, and doctorate. This question was completed as part of the demographics questionnaire.

Abusive Supervision. We used Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) 5-item version of Tepper's (2000) abusive supervision scale in Sample A (See Appendix B). Samples B and C used Tepper's (2000) full 15-item scale to assess abusive supervision. Participants were instructed to indicate their level of agreement to a number of statements based on their typical thoughts and feelings about their supervisor. Sample statements include "My supervisor ridicules me" or "My

supervisor tells me I'm incompetent". Agreement was signaled on a 5-point Likert scale based on the frequency with which participants perceived these behaviors (1 = I can't remember him/her ever using this behavior with me, and 5= he/she uses this behavior very often with me) (see Appendix F).

Organizational and Interpersonal Deviance. Bennett and Robinson's (2000) scale was used to measure workplace deviance. Organizational deviance was assessed using 16-items including "Came in late to work without permission" and "Put little effort into your work". 8-items assessed interpersonal deviance. Sample items include "Said something hurtful to someone at work" and "Cursed someone at work". Participants were asked to indicate using a 7-point Likert scale (1= Never and 7 = Daily) how frequently they had engaged in each of these behaviors in the past 5 months (see Appendix G).

Data Analysis

Hierarchical regression in SPSS 20 was used to test our hypotheses. In our analyses, we controlled for *tenure* with supervisor (in months) since past research has shown that it can have an impact on responses to abusive supervision (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Thau et al., 2009; Thau & Mitchell, 2010). First, we centered our lower order terms (abusive supervision and social class, tenure with supervisor) to reduce multicollinearity, and then calculated our interaction term (abusive supervision x social class). We ran two separate regressions using organizational deviance as the outcome variable in the first analysis and interpersonal deviance as the outcome variable in the second. In both cases, main effects (abusive supervision and social class) and control variable (tenure) were entered in the first step and the interaction term in the second step. The incremental contribution of the two-way interaction was assessed in the second step. This set of analyses was completed for all three samples.

Results

Tables 2, 3, and 4 present the means, standard deviations, alphas, and correlations of the measured variables for Sample A, Sample B, and Sample C respectively. In line with past research, an examination of the zero-order correlation revealed that abusive supervision was positively correlated with organizational deviance ($r = .21$, $p < .01$, in Sample A, $r = .56$, $p < .01$, in Sample B; $r = .38$, $p < .01$, in Sample C) and interpersonal deviance ($r = .22$, $p < .01$, in Sample A, $r = .59$, $p < .01$, in Sample B; $r = .36$, $p < .01$, in Sample C).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Zero Order Correlations, and Alphas (Study 2, Sample A)

	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. AS	1.33	.61	**.92**			
2. Social Class	4.63	.80	-.06	--		
3. ODev	1.94	.80	.21**	-.02	**.86**	
4. IDev	1.87	.84	.22**	-.16**	.57**	**.87**

Note. $N = 274$. AS = abusive supervision, ODev = organizational deviance, IDev = interpersonal deviance. Alphas for all measures are in bold. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics, Zero Order Correlations, and Alphas (Study 2, Sample B)

	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. AS	1.66	0.88	**.97**			
2. Social Class	4.08	0.66	.05	--		
3. ODev	1.98	1.98	.56**	.08	**.95**	
4. IDev	1.87	1.19	.59**	.04	.90**	**.94**

Note. N = 200. AS = abusive supervision, ODev = organizational deviance, IDev = interpersonal deviance. Alphas for all measures are in bold. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics, Zero Order Correlations, and Alphas (Study 2, Sample C)

	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. AS	1.69	0.75	**.95**			
2. Social Class	3.31	0.60	.17**	--		
3. ODev	2.01	0.98	.38**	.08	**.92**	
4. IDev	1.77	1.03	.36**	-.01	.80**	**.89**

Note. N ranges from 266 to 274. AS = abusive supervision, ODev = organizational deviance, IDev = interpersonal deviance. Alphas for all measures are in bold. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Bolstering our interpretation of Study 1 findings, Study 2 revealed that the abusive supervision x social class cross-product term significantly predicted organizational deviance in both Sample B and Sample C ($b = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$; $b = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$, respectively) and significantly increased the overall explained variance for organizational deviance ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .01$, in Sample B; $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .05$, in Sample C). In Sample A, this interaction effect

approached significance (b = 0.18, p = 0.10, ΔR^2 = .01, p = .10), and the direction of the effect was consistent with the other data sets. Regression results can be found in Tables 5, and 6.

Table 5

Abusive Supervision by Education in Predicting Organizational Deviance (Study 2)

Variable	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Step 1			
Intercept	1.94**(.05)	1.99**(.07)	2.01**(.06)
Tenure	-.001 (.001)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
AS	.29**(.08)	.75**(.08)	.49**(08)
Social Class	-.01 (.06)	.09 (.11)	.01 (.10)
R^2	.05**	.32**	.14**
Step 2			
Intercept	1.95**(.05)	1.99**(.07)	1.99**(.06)
Tenure	-.001 (.001)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
AS	.30**(.08)	.73**(.08)	.49**(08)
Social Class	-.01 (.06)	.10 (.10)	-.03 (.10)
AS x Social Class	.18 (.11)	.35**(.13)	.28*(13)
ΔR^2	.01	.02**	.02*

Note. N = 274 for Sample A, 200 for Sample B, and N ranges from 266 to 274 for Sample C. AS = abusive supervision. Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6

Abusive Supervision by Education in Predicting Interpersonal Deviance (Study 2)

Variable	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Step 1			
Intercept	1.57**(.05)	1.88**(.07)	1.77**(.06)
Tenure	.00 (.001)	.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
AS	.31**(.09)	.81**(.08)	.51**(08)
Social Class	-.15*(.06)	.03 (.11)	-.13 (.10)
R^2	.07**	.35**	.14**
Step 2			
Intercept	1.58**(.05)	1.87**(.07)	1.74**(.06)
Tenure	.00 (.001)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
AS	.33**(.09)	.80**(.08)	.50**(08)
Social Class	-.15*(.06)	.03 (.10)	-.17 (.10)
AS x Social Class	.28**(.12)	.33**(.13)	.36**(13)
ΔR^2	.02**	.02**	.03**

Note. N = 274 for Sample A, 200 for Sample B, and N ranges from 266 to 274 for Sample C. AS = abusive supervision. Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Following the procedure recommended by Aiken and West (1991), post-hoc simple effects analyses at high and low levels of social class (+/- 1 SD around the mean) indicated that simple slopes were for the most part significantly different from zero, the only exception was the slope at low levels of social class in Sample A (Sample A: t =3.58, $p < .001$; t = 1.43, *n.s.*; Sample B: t = 8.92, $p < .001$; t = 4.19, $p < .001$; Sample C: t = 6.25, $p < .001$; t = 2.96, $p < .001$) (see Table 7).

Table 7

Analysis of Simple Effects (Study 2) – Organizational Deviance

Dependent Variable	Social Class	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Organizational Deviance	High	.45**	.96**	.65**
	Low	.16	.50**	.31**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

These findings suggest that social class moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employee organizational deviance. Plotting the interaction reveals that as abusive supervision increases, higher social class is related to higher levels of organizational deviance (see Figures 1, 2, and 3).

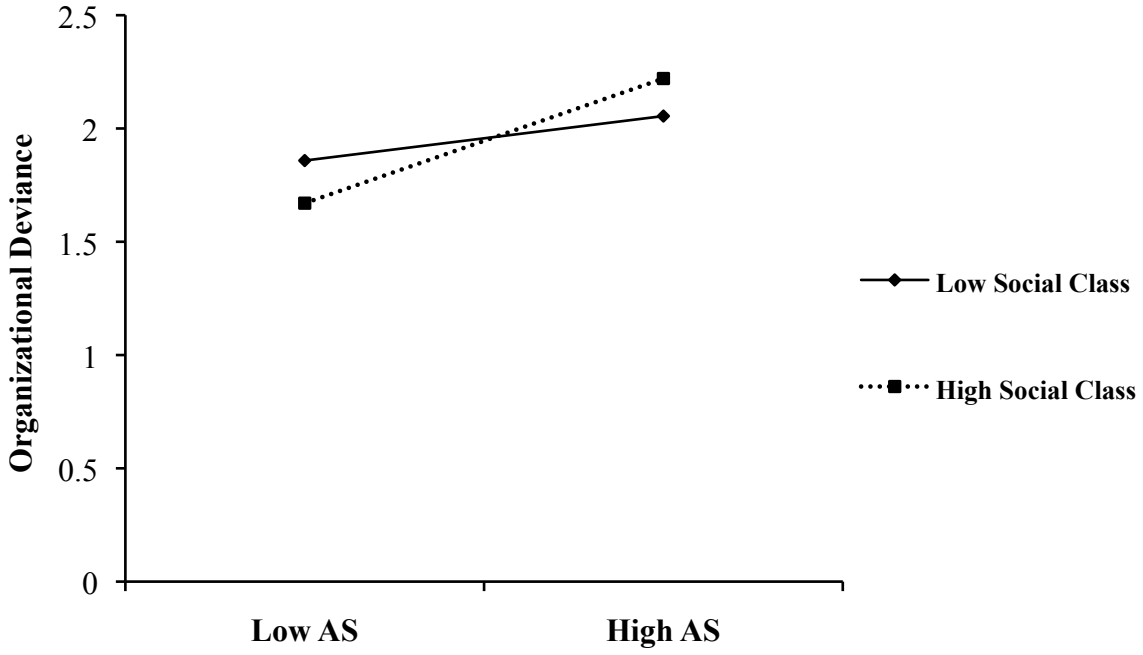

Figure 1. Interaction Between Abusive Supervision and Social Class on Organizational Deviance (Sample A)

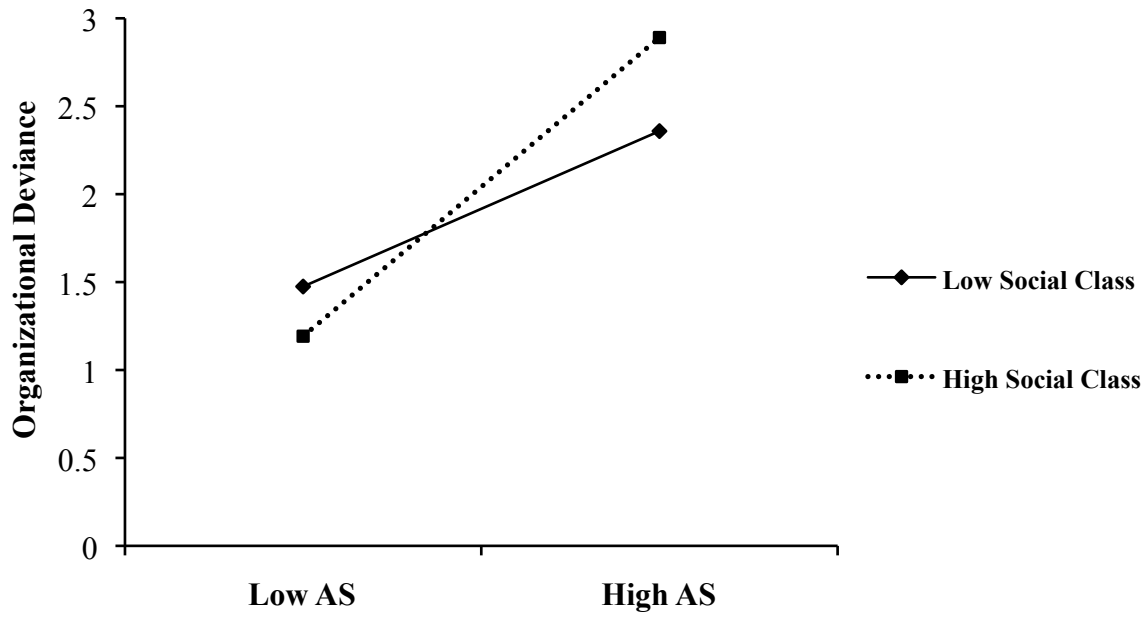

Figure 2. Interaction Between Abusive Supervision and Social Class on Organizational Deviance (Sample B)

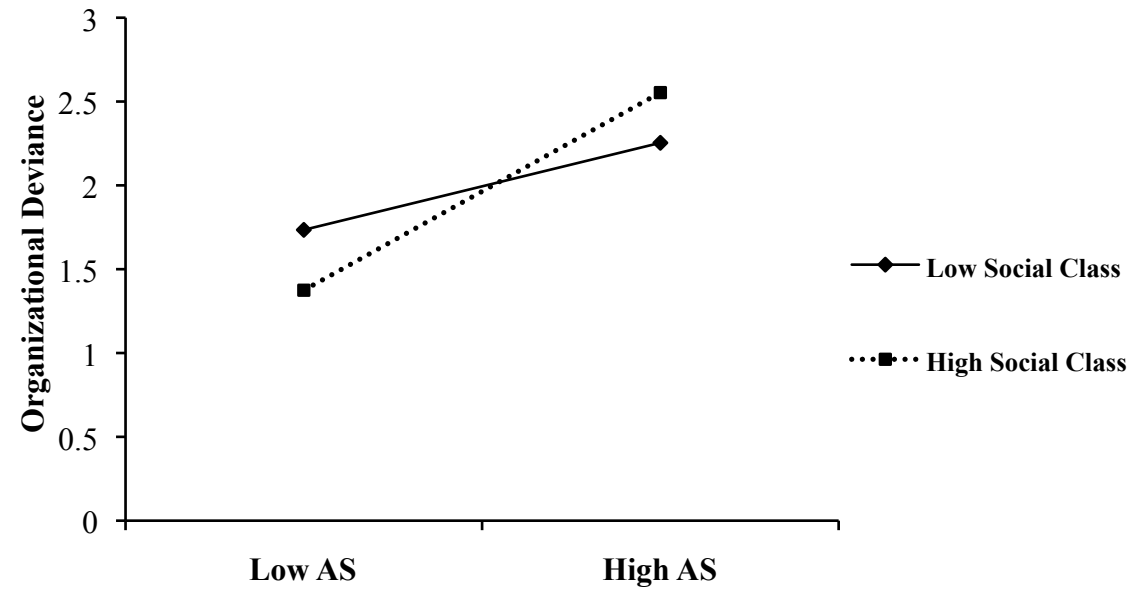

Figure 3. Interaction Between Abusive Supervision and Social Class on Organizational Deviance (Sample C)

In the same manner as above, we assessed the interaction on our other outcome variable; interpersonal deviance. As predicted, a significant positive relationship between the abusive supervision x social class cross product term and interpersonal deviance emerged across all three samples ($b = 0.28$, $p = 0.01$, in Sample A; $b = 0.33$, $p = 0.01$, in Sample B; $b = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$, in Sample C). The overall explained variance for interpersonal deviance significantly increased ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, .02, and .03 for Samples A, B and C, respectively, all three $p \leq .01$). The simple slopes at high and low levels of social class (+/- 1 *SD* around the mean) were significantly different from zero for samples B and C (Sample B: $t = 9.22$, $p < .001$; $t = 4.77$, $p < .001$; Sample C: $t = 6.60$, $p < .001$; $t = 2.65$, $p < .001$). The simple slopes in Sample A however, were not significantly different from zero (see Table 8).

Table 8

Analysis of Simple Effects (Study 2) – Interpersonal Deviance

Dependent Variable	Social Class	Sample A	Sample B	Sample C
Interpersonal Deviance	High	.55	1.01^{**}	$.72^{**}$
	Low	.10	$.58^{**}$	$.29^{**}$

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Plotting the interactions reveals that as abusive supervision increases, higher social class is related to higher levels of interpersonal deviance (see Figures 4, 5, and 6). Thus, across all three samples, there is evidence that social class strengthens the relationship between abusive supervision and workplace deviance.

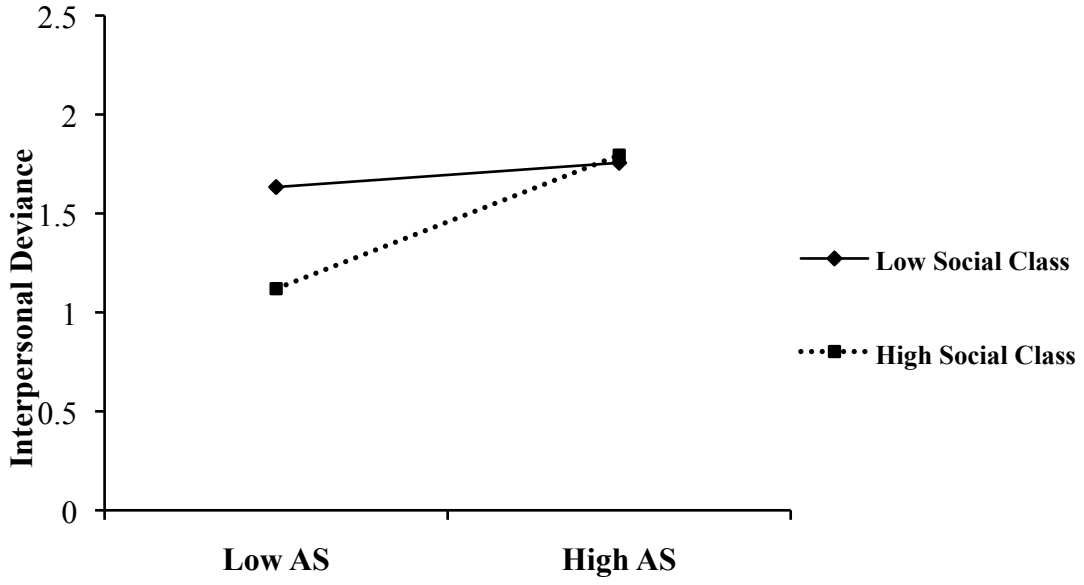

Figure 4. Interaction Between Abusive Supervision and Social Class on Interpersonal Deviance (Sample A)

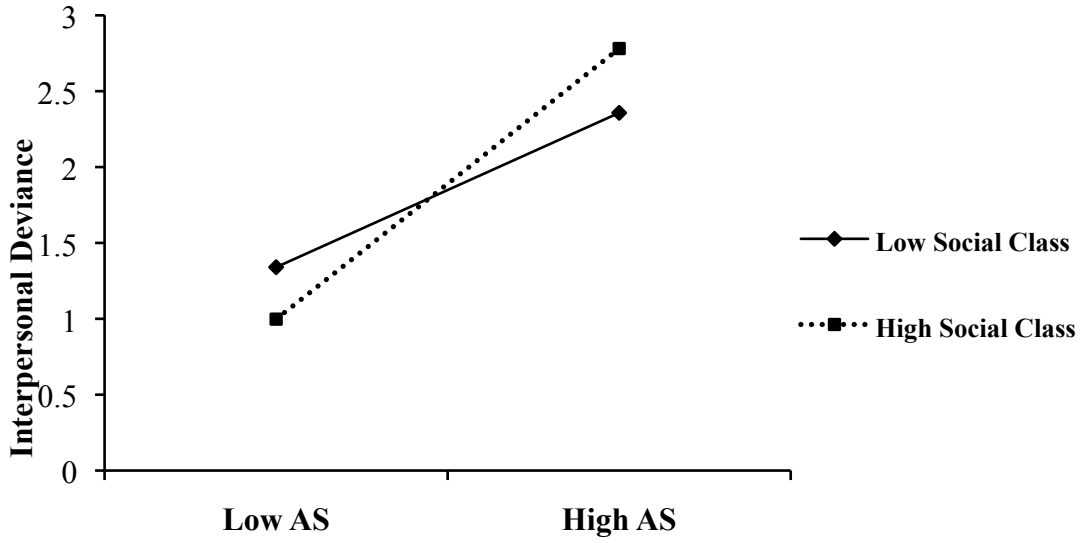

Figure 5. Interaction Between Abusive Supervision and Social Class on Interpersonal Deviance (Sample B)

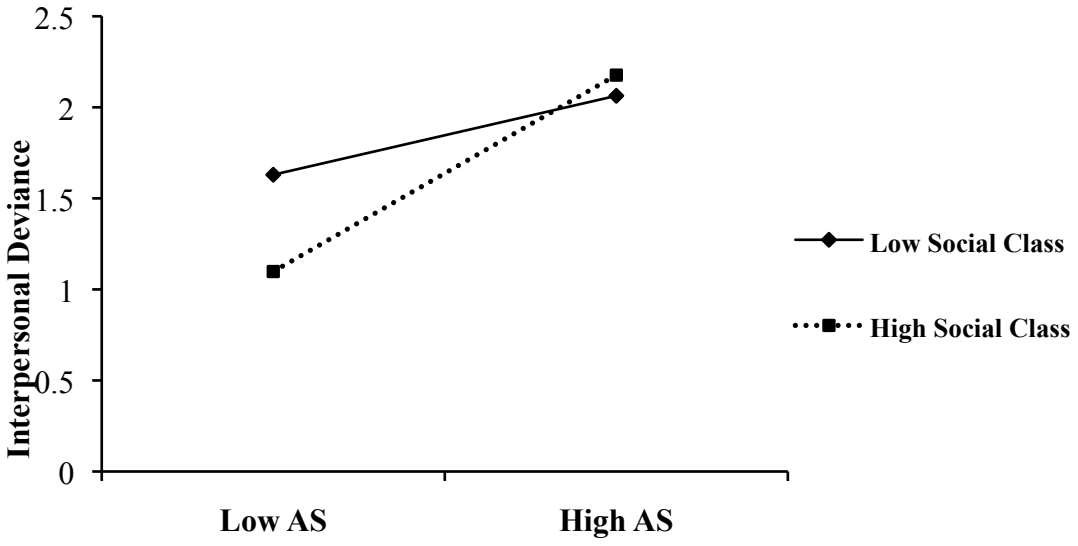

Figure 6. Interaction Between Abusive Supervision and Social Class on Interpersonal Deviance (Sample C)

DISCUSSION

A growing body of evidence affirms that social class influences responses in interpersonal settings (e.g. Côté, 2011; Kraus, et al., 2011). However, in organizational contexts, predicting whether social class will heighten or diminish deviant responses to abusive supervision quickly becomes contentious. Studies that underscore lower social classes' heightened vigilance and hostile reactivity to justice violations (e.g. Kraus et al., 2011) clearly suggests that lower classes would be more likely to react more antagonistically toward abusive supervision. Conversely, lower social classes' preference for conformity (Stephens, et al., 2007) and their learned tendencies toward obedience and respect for authority (Kusserow, 1999) suggest that lower classes would be *less* likely to respond to an abusive supervisor with retaliatory workplace deviance as compared with their higher class counterparts. Consistent with the latter perspective, we found that it was higher social classes who responded to abusive supervision with higher levels of interpersonal and organizational deviance. Across four samples, using experimental manipulation, field research, and two multi-wave archival data sets, our results attest to the robustness of this finding. More generally, these studies strongly reinforce the value of examining social class effects within organizational contexts and help to advance our understanding of who responds to abusive supervision with workplace deviance and why.

Theoretical Contributions

First, our findings refine our appreciation of the theoretical relationship between abusive supervision and workplace deviance by introducing social class as a moderator. The effect of abusive supervision on employee responses is not uniform. Instead, abusive supervision seems to induce stronger cognitive and behavioral reactions in higher classes. This revelation improves our understanding of employee responses to abusive supervision and challenges our

preconceptions regarding who is considered most likely to retaliate with workplace deviance. The replication of our findings across multiple samples and related outcomes variables attest to the robustness of this effect and suggests we may have barely scratched the surface of the explanatory power of social class within the organizational literature. This new line of inquiry generates further research questions concerning the underlying mechanism driving the moderation effect and whether our findings extend to other related outcome variables.

Our work contributes to both the organizational and the social class literatures by clarifying where research in organizational behavior and social class variance align and demonstrating how the integration of these theoretical frameworks can be applied. In attempting to utilize findings from social class research in an organizational setting, a discord within the social class literature emerged. The diminished predictability and security inherent to lower social class contexts is sometimes argued to predict increased reactivity and hostility in interpersonal interactions (e.g. Kraus, et al., 2011) and sometimes used to predict a preference for conformity and integration with others (Stephens, et al., 2007). These conflicting findings obscure the relevance of social class in predicting employee responses. Our results favoring the latter argument help elucidate the theoretical application of social class research in organizational contexts. An appreciation of how these processes converge to predict outcomes will assist others in inferring how social class might be applied in broader organizational contexts and thereby stimulate new research. We hope to provide a foundation for others to build off of our initial interpretations of how social class impacts employee responses.

The current study also makes clear the larger utility of integrating social class processes into the organizational literature. Initial social class contexts dramatically shape cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to others (Kraus et al., 2011; Roberts et al., 2007; Côté,

2011). These social class differences are then carried into the workplace affecting organizational behavior. Our study answers calls to action by researchers promoting the integrations of these literatures (e.g., Côté, 2011) and strongly reinforces the notion that examining the effect of social class processes within organizational research can add considerable value. Moreover, considering that the organizational literature is predominantly made up of higher class participants (Côté, 2011), our work reveals how this might bias the literature reducing the generalizability of organizational research to different contexts. Therefore by initiating this line of research we are not only advocating that the social class literature lends a more nuanced view of costly responses to abusive supervision but also that it can offer a new theoretical framework for understanding organizational phenomena more widely.

Practical Implications

In view of the prevalence of abusive supervision and its costs for organizations and employees alike, a better appreciation for whom it affects most has important practical implications. As previously mentioned, the literature unwittingly focuses on higher class employees (Côté, 2011). Because the proportion of high vs. low class worker can greatly vary between organizations, describing how social class might influence employee responses to abusive supervision affords practitioners a better understanding of how research findings might be applied in their particular situation. More generally, the current research is a nascent initiative to better understand organizational behavior using social class principles. This new line of inquiry unveils the untapped potential for researchers and practioners to capitalize on social class theories to deepen their understanding of management and organization.

The current research also has implications regarding the types of interventions and policies that practioners might consider adopting as a means to deter workplace deviance.

Considering that our findings suggest that abusive supervision elicits stronger cognitive and behavioral responses in higher social classes relative to lower social classes, one way to address workplace deviance might be to have interventions aimed toward higher social classes. Once we have identified the mediating mechanism accounting for the moderating effect of social class, organizations will be even better equipped to reduce deviant responses to abusive supervision. For example, if the moderating effect of social class is mediated by a sense of entitlement, which is characteristic of independent self-construals, creating an organizational culture that fosters interdependence may help to discourage self-focus and mitigate deviance. For instance, it has been suggested that enhancing the social characteristics of the workplace can have a strong impact on promoting job resilience and prosocial workplace behaviors (Grant, 2007; Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2001). This might be done by increasing employee feedback and social support, or bolstering interdependence directly by raising the extent to which a job is contingent on others' work (Humphrey, et al., 2007).

On-the-other-hand, self-gain is fundamental to both reciprocity and interactional justice frameworks for understanding the abusive supervision-workplace relationship. If reciprocity norms or interactional justice perceptions mediate the effect of social class, a potential approach would be to decrease the expectation that retaliation might procure gain or at least increase the perception of relative costs. Organizations might work towards this by establishing zero-tolerance policies towards interpersonal and organizational deviance and raising awareness regarding the consequences of these actions. Consistently, research has suggested that the perception of potential punishment can reduce subordinates' destructive vengeful behaviors (Lian, Brown, Ferris, Liang, Keeping, Morrison, in review). Or, organizations could focus on restoring interactional justice perceptions directly by teaching abusive supervisors to apologize.

This type of remedy should help to restore interactional justice perceptions by affirming the social standing and belongingness of the victimized employee (Reb, Goldman, Kray, & Cropanzano, 2006).

Strengths and Limitations

A major strength of our study is that we used a variety of research methods. In doing so the strengths of one method compensate for the weaknesses of another. Study 1 yielded experimental evidence for the effect of social class on responses to abusive supervision that helped to bolster the internal validity of our research. The primary concern with this study was that it might lack external validity. Also, since all of our participants received the abusive supervision scenario (i.e. no control group), we were unable to test the full moderation model in Study 1. However, testing social class as a moderator on the abusive supervision-workplace deviance link in three field samples in Study 2 helps to assuage these concerns. Conversely, one of the chief criticisms of Study 2 is that its reliance on correlational data does not allow for causal inferences. Yet this threat is somewhat minimized by Study 1 which experimentally manipulated social class to predict aggressive affect/cognition. The replication of our findings across four separate samples, three related outcome variables, using both experimental and field techniques demonstrates the robustness of the phenomenon under investigation.

These strengths however, must be evaluated within the context of our limitations. First, it should be noted that in Study 1 all participants were given the abusive supervision prime instead of assigning half of the participants to a control condition without abuse. Since we are missing this comparison group our ability to make causal inferences is limited. For example, someone might argue that the effect was driven by the social class manipulation alone. Therefore,

although the design of Study 1 lends itself to establishing internal validity much more so than Study 2, we will still need to include this control group before we can make causal inferences.

Another limitation is that the generalizability of our results may be called into question because random population sampling was not employed. However, it has been argued that the primary concern is the generalizability of theoretical inferences rather than the generalizability of effect, and that the latter is only important when looking to generalize results to a particular population (Highhouse & Gillespie, 2009). Given that our participants were employed adults, we argue that neither of these concerns apply to the current findings.

A third limitation stems from our use of data collected from a single source to test our hypotheses. Measuring important variables concurrently raises the possibility of common method variance bias. Nevertheless, it has been argued that using self-report data is the most appropriate way of measuring workplace deviance (Aquino & Douglas, 2003), and is often considered most valid means of assessing perceptual constructs (Chan, 2009), such as abusive supervision. Further, our use of multi-wave data and an implicit outcome variable help diminish this threat. In the archival data sets used, antecedent and outcomes variables were measured in separate waves. This practice avoids inflating the size of the relationship between variables and is a recommended strategy for reducing common method variance effects (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Additionally, the implicit nature of our outcome variable reduced participants' susceptibility to social desirability bias — a single source effect that can be especially problematic when participants are required to self-report on deviance. Not withstanding these points, we believe that future research also has the potential to benefit from examining social class effects in other settings, with different populations, and using multisource data.

Future Directions

The immediately apparent extension of our research is to investigate the underlying processes that explain the moderating effect social class has on the abusive supervision-workplace deviance link. Our research provides a solid foundation for guiding future research, lending theoretical support for a number of potential mediators.

It is important to consider the ways in which both the consistencies and the divergences between our findings and existing theory can offer insight into how social class processes manifest within an organization framework. Our results are consistent with social class research explaining that an upbringing in a context characterized by less stability, safety, and autonomy promotes adjustment to others and preference for conformity and obedience in lower classes (Stephens et al., 2007). This, however, diverges from social class research that emphasizes how these same conditions predispose lower classes to experience higher hostile reactivity to social threat (Kraus, et al., 2011). One way to explain this discrepancy is to consider how the abusive supervision-employee relationship is distinct from peer-to-peer relationships. It seems possible that the hierarchical nature of relationships within organizational settings shifts the psychological processes at play. Although lower classes may respond to social threat with more hostile reactivity in peer-to-peer interactions (Kraus, et al., 2011) these responses may be subverted in hierarchical contexts where the importance of deferring to authority and conformity to social norms are most salient. The difference between higher and lower class' values regarding respect for authority and maintenance of hierarchical structures can be nicely captured by a construct referred to as power distance orientation. Power distance orientation is defined as the extent to which individuals accept that power should be unequally distributed within organizations (Carl, Gupta, & Javidan, 2004; Hofstede, 1980). Here we offer a potential cohesive explanation as to

why some social class processes are emerging in our findings over others. Therefore, we encourage future research to examine whether power distance orientation may mediate the moderating effect of social class such that by controlling for the variance between classes in power distance, the effect of social class would be attenuated.

Future research could also examine the role that entitlement might play in our model. Higher social classes have a stronger sense of independence (as opposed to interdependence) which heightens self-interested patterns of cognition/behavior (Kraus, et al., 2011) and they are accustomed to a child-centered approach to parenting which fosters entitlement (Lareau, 2002; Kohn & Schooler 1983; Miller, et al., 2005). As such it's reasonable to expect that entitlement might be driving the effect of social class. Consistently, a recent article by Piff and colleagues (Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012) suggested that relative to lower classes, higher classes may be more likely to engage in unethical behaviors such as cheating in order to win a prize due to their inclination towards greed and reduced concern for others.

Another promising avenue of research will be to assess reciprocity norms and interactional justice perceptions as potential mediators of the abusive supervision-organizational deviance relationship. As mentioned, justice based perspectives argue that employees engage in deviance as retribution for perceived dignity and respect violations (e.g. Tedeschi & Felson, 1994), whereas social exchange theories use negative reciprocity principles to explain our inclination towards quid-pro-quo behavior. Considering evidence that high classes are more likely to adopt a morality that emphasizes fairness, justice, and reciprocity (Haidt, et al., 1993), we might expect that controlling for the variance between classes on either of these measures might attenuate the moderating effect of social class.

In sum, our research can be extended in numerous directions. Future research should first clarify which underlying processes can account for the moderating effect of social class on the abusive supervision-workplace deviance link. Subsequent efforts can focus on extending this research to other organizational outcomes, and capitalizing on the potential of this new theoretical framework for understanding organizational phenomena.

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APPENDIX A

Demographics Questionnaire

1. Age: years old.

2. Gender: Male Female

3. Considering all the full-time jobs you have ever held in your life, how many years overall have you been employed full-time? years.

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**? months.

6. How many months have you been working in your **current position**? months.

7. How many months have you been working with your **current supervisor**? months.

8. What gender is your supervisor? Male Female

9. What is your job title?

10. What best describes the industry do you work in?

- Click here: Please Select

11. Do you work in a team? Yes No

If so, how many people (excluding supervisors) are a part of your team?

12. Do you supervise other employees as part of your role at work? Yes No

If so, how many?

13. How often do you interact with other people in your organization (supervisor and work peers) during a typical work day?

Never	Rarely	Somewhat Regularly	Regularly	Often
○	○	○	○	○

14. On average, how many hours a week do you work at your current job? [ ] hours per week, on average.

15. What is your highest level of education?

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

Submit Reset

APPENDIX B

English Comprehension Task

In each of the following questions, a related pair of words is followed by five lettered pairs of words. Please select the pair that best expresses a relationship similar to that of the original pair.

1. Cub: bear

- ○ Piano: orchestra
- ○ Fork: utensil
- ○ Kitten: cat
- ○ Dalmatian: dog

2. Doctor: hospital

- ○ Lawyer: client
- ○ Dentist: teeth
- ○ Teacher: school
- ○ Criminal: jail

3. Sedative: drowsiness

- ○ Vaccine: virus
- ○ Doctor: hospital
- ○ Therapy: psychosis
- ○ Anesthetic: numb

APPENDIX C

Relative Social Class Manipulation

(Piff, Kraus, Côte, Cheng, & Keltner, 2010)

Think of the ladder above as representing where people stand in North America
Now, please compare yourself to the people at the very bottom (top) of the ladder. These are people who are the worst (best) off—those who have the least (most) money, least (most) education, and the least (most) respected jobs. In particular, we'd like you to think about how you are different from these people in terms of your own income, educational history, and job status.
Imagine yourself in a getting acquainted interaction with one of the people you just thought about from the ladder. Think about how the differences between you might impact what you would talk about, how the interaction is likely to go, and what you and the other person might say to each other.

I. In the space below please write a short paragraph (approx. 5 sentences) describing the interaction.

II. Please indicate where on the ladder where you would you place **yourself** relative to these people at the very bottom (top) by entering the number that corresponds to that rung (1= bottom rung, 10=top rung):

APPENDIX D
Abusive Supervision Scenario

Negative interaction with a supervisor

Please imagine and visualize a particular incident in which your supervisor treats you in a hostile manner. A supervisor is defined as the individual that you report directly to, or who is responsible for assessments of your work. In particular, in the incident, your supervisor treats you with hostile verbal and/or nonverbal behaviours, such as being rude to you, making negative comments about you, unacknowledging your hard work, and so on. Overall, you feel being mistreated by your supervisor.

Please describe this situation:

I. In the space below, please write a story elaborating the incident.
II. Based on the story you wrote,

What has happened in the incident?

What does the supervisor do in the incident?

How do you feel about your supervisor and his/her behaviours in the incident you described?

III. This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now. Use the following scale to record your answers.

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	Moderately	quite a bit	extremely

_____ distressed	_____ irritable
_____ upset	_____ ashamed
_____ guilty	_____ nervous
_____ scared	_____ afraid
_____ hostile	_____ jittery

APPENDIX E

Word Pair Similarity Task

(Anderson & Morrow, 1995)

In this part of the study, we are interested in how similar, associated, or related you perceive various words to be. For each word listed in bold ink, rate how similar, associated, or related it is to each of the words listed below it. Use the following rating scale as a guide to your ratings:

Not at all Similar, Associated, or Related		Moderately Similar, Associated, or Related			Extremely Similar, Associated, or Related	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Alley

animal blood bottle butcher choke drugs fight gun hatchet hurt kill knife movie night police

_____ ____ _____ _____ _____ ____ ____ ___ _____ ____ ___ ____ _____ ____ ____

red rock stick wound

___ ___ ____ _____

Animal

blood bottle butcher choke drugs fight gun hatchet hurt kill knife movie night police red rock

____ _____ _____ _____ ____ ____ ___ _____ ____ ___ ____ _____ ____ _____ ___ ___

stick wound

____ ____

Blood

bottle butcher choke drugs fight gun hatchet hurt kill knife movie night police red rock

____ _____ _____ ____ ___ ___ ____ ___ ___ ____ ____ ____ ____ ___ ___ ___ ____

stick wound

____ ____

Bottle

butcher choke drugs fight gun hatchet hurt kill knife movie night police red rock stick wound

_____ _____ _____ _____ ___ _____ ___ ___ _____ _____ _____ _____ ___ ___ ___ _____

Butcher

choke drugs fight gun hatchet hurt kill knife movie night police red rock stick wound

_____ _____ _____ ___ _____ ___ ___ _____ _____ _____ _____ ___ ___ _____ _____

Choke

drugs fight gun hatchet hurt kill knife movie night police red rock stick wound

___ ___ ___ _____ ___ ___ ___ _____ _____ _____ ___ ___ ___ _____

Drugs

fight gun hatchet hurt kill knife movie night police red rock stick wound

___ ___ _____ ___ ___ _____ _____ _____ _____ ___ ___ ___ _____

Fight

gun hatchet hurt kill knife movie night police red rock stick wound

___ _____ ___ ___ _____ _____ _____ _____ ___ ___ ___ _____

Gun

hatchet hurt kill knife movie night police red rock stick wound

_____ ___ ___ _____ _____ _____ _____ ___ _____ _____ _____

Hatchet

hurt kill knife movie night police red rock stick wound

___ ___ _____ _____ _____ _____ ___ ___ _____ _____

Hurt

kill knife movie night police red rock stick wound

___ _____ _____ _____ _____ ___ ___ ___ _____

Kill

knife movie night police red rock stick wound

____ _____ ____ ____ ___ ___ ___ _____

Knife

movie night police red rock stick wound

_____ ____ ____ ___ ___ ___ _____

Movie

night police red rock stick wound

____ ____ ___ ___ ___ _____

Night

police red rock stick wound

____ ___ ____ ____ _____

Police

red rock stick wound

___ ___ ___ _____

Red

rock stick wound

___ ____ ____

Rock

stick wound

____ _____

Stick

wound

____

APPENDIX F

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 interact with my coworkers
14. Tells me I'm incompetent.*
15. Lies to me

*Items with an asterisk are part of Ambrose and Mitchell's (2007) shortened version of Tepper's measure.

APPENDIX G

Organizational and Interpersonal 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 five months.

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

Organizational Deviance

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

Interpersonal Deviance

1. Made fun of someone at work.
2. Said something hurtful to someone at work.
3. Made an ethnic, religious, or racial remark or joke at work.
4. Cursed someone at work.
5. Lost your temper while at work.
6. Played a mean prank on someone at work.
7. Acted rudely toward someone at work.
8. Publicly embarrassed someone at work.