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THE FALLOUT FROM ABUSIVE SUPERVISION: AN EXAMINATION OF SUBORDINATES AND THEIR PARTNERS

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Using spillover and crossover theory, we examined how subordinate's experience of abusive supervision impacts both subordinate's and partner's family domains. Specifically, a model was proposed and tested that examined the fallout from abusive supervision through 2 types of strain, work-to-family conflict and relationship tension, on family satisfaction of the subordinate and on family functioning of the partner. Using a matched set of 280 subordinates and partners, this study found that abusive supervision contributes to the experience of work-to-family conflict and relationship tension. Further, family satisfaction for the subordinate and family functioning for the partner were diminished through the experience of relationship tension. Interestingly, although the experience of work-to-family conflict contributed to relationship tension, it did not directly impact the family outcomes. We discuss the study's implications for theory, research, and practice while suggesting new research directions.

Abusive supervision (i.e., a form of nonphysical aggression) has been shown to result in a variety of stress-related outcomes for victims (Keashly, Hunter, & Harvey, 1997; Tepper, 2000) including negative attitudes and psychological distress (Tepper, 2007). Specifically, abusive supervision has been defined as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which

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supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). Examples of abusive supervision events include tantrums, rudeness, public criticism, and inconsiderate action. Research has demonstrated that there is direct fallout from abusive supervision on the work domain, such as reduced job satisfaction (Tepper, 2000, 2007) and increased workplace deviance (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone, & Duffy, 2008; Thau, Bennett, Mitchell, & Marrs, 2009). Further, research has demonstrated the dysfunctional consequences from abusive supervision to subordinate behaviors outside of the work domain such as increased alcohol consumption (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006).

The harmful consequences of abusive supervision highlight both the theoretical and practical importance of understanding how this phenomenon affects not only subordinates but their families as well. Thus far, only two studies have investigated abusive supervision's effects on the target's family. In the first, Tepper (2000) found that abusive supervision relates to work–family conflict. In the second, Hoobler and Brass (2006) found that after abused subordinates leave the workplace they return home to displace their aggression by engaging in family undermining behaviors as perceived by their partner. They theorized that subordinates are "put down" by their supervisors and then are motivated to "put down" others in the family domain. Furthermore, changes in family interactions relate to depression, physical health, and well-being (Matthews, Del Priore, Acitelli, & Barnes-Farrell, 2006; Sagrestano, Paikoff, Holmbeck, & Fendrich, 2003) so the understanding of abusive supervision and its influence on family outcomes is both important and urgent. Thus, it is important to understand the process of abusive supervision so that researchers and organizations can better develop tactics to prevent abusive supervision and its fallout.

Research has yet to conceptualize and examine the process through which a subordinate's experience of abusive supervision spills over and crosses over into the family domain in a meaningful way. Thus, the goal of our research is to theorize and test a process through which a subordinate's experience of abusive supervision affects the family domain through two forms of strain: work-to-family conflict and relationship tension. First, we use spillover theory to examine the impact of abuse on work–family conflict and subsequently on the subordinate's family domain. Specifically, spillover is the extent to which an individual's participation in one domain (e.g., work) impacts the participation and attitudes in another domain for that same individual (e.g., family; Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Pleck & Staines, 1985). Based on the foundation of spillover theory, we contend that the subordinate's experience of abusive supervision leads to increased perceptions of

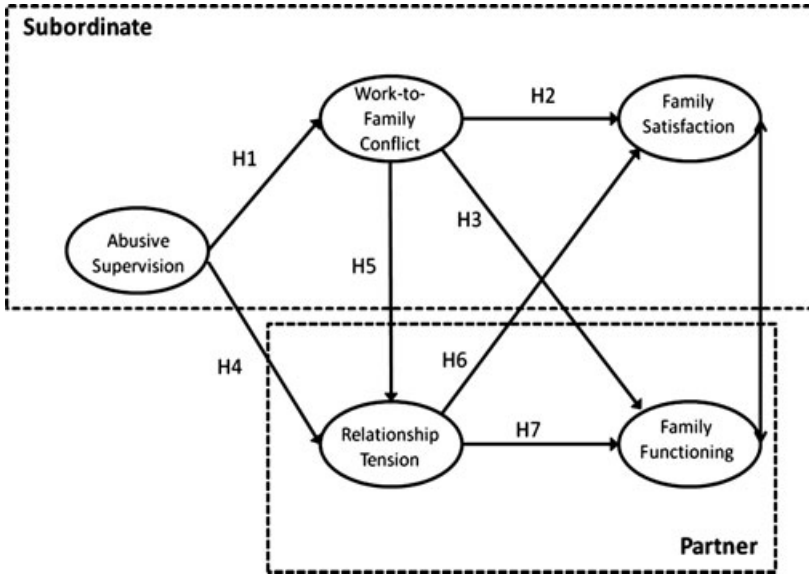

Figure 1: **Proposed Theoretical Model of Abusive Supervision and Family Outcomes**.

work-to-family conflict, which subsequently leads to diminished family satisfaction.

Next, we aim to understand how abuse crosses over to affect the subordinate's partner's relationship tension and experience of family life. Crossover theory describes the process by which experiences of one individual can impact the experiences of another individual in a dyadic relationship such as a partner (Westman, 2006). Thus, we examine how abusive supervision crosses over between the subordinate and a partner affecting relationship tension and family functioning (Bolger et al., 1989; Westman, 2006). Further, we examine the crossover of strain of one individual to the family domain of the other when we examine the abusive supervision to work-to-family conflict to family functioning relationship as well as the abusive supervision to relationship tension to family satisfaction relationship.

Based on these theoretical foundations, we develop a model of the spillover and crossover of abusive supervision on the family domain (see Figure 1). Spillover is an *intraindividual* contagion process that occurs across roles and contexts, whereas crossover is a dyadic, *interindividual* contagion that occurs within or across contexts but generates similar emotional or behavioral reactions in another individual (Westman, 2001). This research goes beyond prior research that has considered the impact

of abusive supervision on the subordinate's work life by examining the relationship between abusive supervision and the family life of the subordinate and the partner.

Theoretical Foundations

Spillover of Abusive Supervision

Spillover theory describes a process by which feelings, attitudes, and behaviors spill over from one role to another for the same individual (Piotrkowski, 1979) and has been used to describe the transference of moods, skills, values, and behaviors from one role to another (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006). Stress spillover, a form of stress contagion, occurs when stress experienced in one domain of life results in stress in another domain for the same individual (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Further, spillover theory has been used to explain the impact of a variety of job demands on work–family conflict (Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). We propose that abusive supervision creates stress, which the subordinate takes home in the form of strain-based work-to-family conflict, which subsequently reduces his or her family satisfaction.

Abusive Supervision and Work-to-Family Conflict

The literature has defined work–family conflict as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). The experience of work–family conflict can occur in two directions, from work-to-family as well as from family-to-work, and because these factors are distinct constructs (Frone, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), researchers have distinguished between the two directions of work–family conflict. Specifically, we examine the direction of work-to-family conflict because our focus is on a stressor in the work domain. Further, we expect that abusive supervision will most directly affect the strain-based form of work-to-family conflict, a type of conflict that leaves the individual feeling stressed, frazzled, and unable to contribute to the family or even enjoy family activities. This is consistent with previous work that examined the effect of job demands through strain-based work-to-family conflict on outcomes (Bakker, Demerouti, & Dollard, 2008).

Research has demonstrated the positive direct effects of supportive supervisors on lower perceptions of work–family conflict (e.g., Thomas & Ganster, 1995). However, only one study has linked abusive supervision

with higher work–family conflict (Tepper, 2000). Extensive research has demonstrated that leaders have an effect on the stressors subordinates' experience (for a review, see Britt, Davison, Bliese, & Castro, 2004). Further, abusive supervision has resulted in numerous dysfunctional personal outcomes such as depression (Tepper, 2007), lowered self-efficacy and increased somatic complaints (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), and diminished life satisfaction (Tepper, 2000). Thus, work-to-family conflict likely captures the stress the subordinate is likely to experience from the abusive supervisor as it embodies the transfer of that stress from the work to the family domain (Westman, 2001). Thus, we expect that abusive supervision will be related to work-to-family conflict as perceived by the subordinate.

Hypothesis 1: Abusive supervision will positively relate work-to-family conflict.

Work-to-Family Conflict and Family Satisfaction

Family satisfaction is an attitudinal factor that captures an individual's well-being regarding the domain of family (Camman, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979). The literature defines it as the "degree to which one is generally satisfied with one's family of origin and the constituent relationships imbedded therein" (Carver & Jones, 1992, p. 72) and also conceptualizes family satisfaction as the outcome of stress on the family (Olson & McCubbin, 1983). When subordinates experience strain in the form of work–family conflict at work, that experience is likely to impede their well-being at home. We argue that the stress and strain that characterize strain-based conflict will leave incumbents with little energy to put forth in the family domain. As incumbents experience this lack of interaction and enjoyment of family festivities, they are likely to feel less satisfaction with their family life (Carlson, Grzywacz, & Zivnuska, 2009; Michel, Mitchelson, Kotrba, LeBreton, & Baltes, 2009). This is consistent with recent research that found that work-to-family conflict was positively associated with guilt and hostility at home and subsequently negatively impacted marital satisfaction (Judge, Ilies, & Scott, 2006). Furthermore, research has supported the negative relationship between work-to-family conflict and family satisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007). Therefore, we expect strain-based work-to-family conflict will contribute to decreased family satisfaction for the subordinate.

Hypothesis 2a: Work-to-family conflict will negatively relate to family satisfaction.

Abusive Supervision to Family Satisfaction Through Work-to-Family Conflict

Although it is well established in the literature that abusive supervision has a variety of consequences in the work organization (Aryee, Sun, Chen, & Debrah, 2007; Tepper, 2007), what is less clear is the process through which abusive supervision relates to the employee's attitudes about nonwork factors such as the family. An employee who is the target of an abusive supervisor often experiences emotional damage (Hoobler & Brass, 2006), negative mood states (Jones & Fletcher, 1993), emotional exhaustion (Wu & Hu, 2009), and anxiety (Hobman, Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2009) as a result of the hostile provocateur. These experiences are likely to translate into decreased satisfaction in many areas of life, even those outside of the workplace where the abuse occurs. Being publicly berated or even privately belittled would leave the subordinate emotionally drained and make pleasure and satisfaction in other areas of life more difficult to achieve. Although abusive supervision is positively related to family perceptions of undermining in the home (Hoobler & Brass, 2006) and negatively related to life satisfaction (Tepper, 2000), there is no existing research that links abusive supervision to the subordinate's family satisfaction. Thus, consistent with spillover theory and similar to the studies above, we believe that the emotional damage that occurs from abusive supervision will spill over to impact family satisfaction through the experience of work-to-family conflict.

Hypothesis 2b: Abusive supervision will negatively relate to family satisfaction through work-to-family conflict.

Crossover of Abusive Supervision

Crossover theory describes the process by which the workplace stress of one individual crosses over to his/her partner at home (Westman, 2006). This research goes beyond the subordinate by describing the interplay *between* individuals. Westman (2001, 2006) developed a model of the crossover process that informs how crossover occurs. Crossover is rooted in a role theoretic framework where roles are negotiated socially between multiple environments (Westman, 2001). Specifically, individual roles are expectations negotiated between an individual and others in his or her environment. Thus, individuals in one domain exert an influence in defining roles for others in another domain (Westman, 2001). The core assumption of the crossover process is "one's stress has an impact on others in different settings, indicating a complex causal relationship between stress and strain in the individual arena and between stress and strain of the

dyads" (Westman, 2006, p. 166). In other words, one partner's experienced stress influences the other partner's experienced stress through the contagion of creating more demands (Dikkers, Geurts, Kinnunen, Kompier, & Taris, 2007; Westman, 2001). Experienced stress may initiate or exacerbate a negative interaction between partners (Haines, Marchand, & Harvey, 2006) or illicit emotional reactions that create empathy and cross over from one person to another in recognition of the partner's feelings (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2005; Westman & Vinokur, 1998). Therefore, we examine if the fallout from abusive supervision crosses over to the partner's perception of family through the subordinate's work-to-family conflict. Further, we examine the impact of abusive supervision on relationship tension and family functioning as perceived by the subordinate's partner as well as subordinate family satisfaction.

Work-to-Family Conflict and Family Functioning

Family functioning captures the family's effectiveness in relating to one another, the closeness of family members, and is an overarching concept that includes a variety of family processes (Miller, Ryan, Keitner, Bishop, & Epstein, 2000). Family functioning is consistent with other family outcomes that previous research has linked with work–family conflict in a dyadic relationship. Previous research on work–family conflict has demonstrated a crossover effect on family outcomes, such as family cohesion and family adjustment (Matthews et al., 2006; Staines & Pleck, 1984; Stevens, Kiger, & Riley, 2006). The experience of work-to-family conflict may result in individuals not being able to contribute to family activities, and the family members are likely to experience a reduction in the quality of the family experience. Therefore, experienced conflict relates to the partner's perception of family functioning.

Hypothesis 3a: Work-to-family conflict will negatively relate to family functioning.

Abusive Supervision to Family Functioning Through Work-to-Family Conflict

Representing more than a single strain outcome, family functioning captures the emotional well-being and closeness of family members, including how the family members negotiate demands, and thus it may be shaped by the family member's experience at work (Stevens et al., 2006). In other words, when subordinates experience abusive supervision at work, they likely take these negative feelings home resulting in work–family conflict for the abused, which crosses over to the partner

and family. A study by Hoobler and Brass (2006) provided evidence of abusive supervision's crossover effects in that the experience of abuse led to unpleasant and negative interactions between the incumbent and other family members at home as perceived by the family members. We argue that abusive supervision has negative consequences for the family domain through the experience of strain-based work-to-family conflict. The negative experience of the subordinate crosses over to the family through work–family conflict, which we argue makes interactions with family members more difficult and less effective.

Hypothesis 3b: Abusive supervision will negatively relate to family functioning through work-to-family conflict.

Abusive Supervision and Relationship Tension

Relationship tension is the degree to which partners are irritated or annoyed by one another (Matthews et al., 2006). Essentially, relationship tension captures the tension between subordinates and their partner due to the subordinates' behavior towards the partner. We believe relationship tension also plays an essential role in the fallout of abusive supervision in that the subordinate often experiences the abuse as frustrating and unjust and will look for a mechanism through which to restore equity or relieve their frustration. Prior research suggests that abusive supervision frustrates the subordinate, who transmits the displaced aggression by arguing with a partner or interacting with a partner in a negative manner (Hoobler & Brass, 2006). Subordinates are unlikely to strike back to the abusive supervisor for fear of punishment (Miller, 1941), so instead they exert aggression in a domain under their control—the family domain. Instead of retaliating against the aggressing supervisor, subordinates displace their aggression and retaliate through tense and irritable interactions with their partner.

Hypothesis 4: Abusive supervision will positively relate to relationship tension.

Work-to-Family Conflict and Relationship Tension

Matthews et al. (2006) argued that when individuals experience conflict in the work–family interface, this conflict is likely to affect the perceptions of relationship tension by the partner. Specifically, work-to-family conflict is the notion that stress that occurs in the workplace is experienced similarly in the family domain and negatively impacts the individual's ability to engage effectively as a family member. Research suggests that

work-to-family conflict positively relates to guilt and hostility at home (Judge et al., 2006), which may undermine interactions with family members. Thus, we expect that the subordinate's experience of work-to-family conflict will be associated with the relationship tension.

Hypothesis 5a: Work-to-family conflict will positively relate to relationship tension.

Abusive Supervision to Relationship Tension Through Work-to-Family Conflict

We further theorize that the stress of abusive supervision will lead to a subordinate's experience of work-to-family conflict and in turn impact their interactions with their partner. For instance, a subordinate who experiences abuse and subsequent stress related to the abuse may feel too exhausted or distracted from the abuse that day to have the energy and focus to carry on positive and meaningful conversations with a significant other. In other words, the stress from work results in a lack of effective engagement at home characterized by tense interactions with the partner and leaves that partner feeling frustrated and irritated.

Limited research has examined work–family conflict as a linking variable in the effects of work demands on an individual's spouse with the exception of one study reporting that the work–family interface mediated the effect of expatriate demands on spousal well-being (Van der Zee, Ali, & Salome, 2005). However, a number of studies have demonstrated how one partner's experienced psychological stress (e.g., work–family conflict) affects the experienced stress of the other partner (Bakker et al., 2008; Westman, Etzion, & Danon, 2001; Westman, Etzion, & Horovitz, 2004; Westman, Vinokor, Hamilton & Roziner, 2004). When individuals experience stress at work, they are more likely to engage in social undermining and aggression at home (Repetti, Wang & Saxbe, 2009), which likely upsets or distresses the partner (Westman, 2006). Thus, if subordinates experience work-to-family conflict such that they are unable to properly participate in family activities, it is more likely that their partner may experience irritation and tension with them. Therefore, we expect as supervisory abuse relates to subordinate experiences of greater strain-based work-to-family conflict that experienced conflict crosses over to influence the relationship tension.

Hypothesis 5b: Abusive supervision will negatively relate to the relationship tension through work-to-family conflict.

Relationship Tension and Family Satisfaction

When partners experience relationship tension or irritation with each other, this tension is likely to relate to the subordinate's own family satisfaction. We have argued that conflict in the work–family interface will have a negative association with family satisfaction; we further argue that relationship tension of the partner will have a negative association with family satisfaction as reported by the subordinate. Prior research provides evidence in support of this hypothesis in that relationship tension negatively related to relationship satisfaction among partners (Matthews et al., 2006). When there is tension and irritation between the subordinate and the partner, those interactions and perceptions are likely to not only associate with satisfaction related to the marital relationship but also to satisfaction with the broader family unit of which the subordinate and partner are both a part.

Hypothesis 6a: Relationship tension will negatively relate to family satisfaction.

Abusive Supervision to Family Satisfaction Through Relationship Tension

Subordinates' family satisfaction represents their attitudes and feelings toward their family. As previously noted, abusive supervision and work–family conflict are likely to shape the way the subordinate views the world such that they are less happy with family life and they experience more tension in the relationship with a partner (Matthews et al, 2006). As noted by Hoobler and Brass (2006), subordinates often feel frustrated by the experience of abusive supervision and transmit that frustration or displaced aggression to a family member such as a partner through arguing (Paykel, Meyers, Dienelt, Klerman, Lindenthal, & Pepper, 1969) and conflictual interactions (Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981). Thus, we argue that the tense interactions with and feelings of frustration and irritation toward the partner (a response of displaced aggression to supervisory abuse) likely affects subordinates' satisfaction toward their family.

Hypothesis 6b: Abusive supervision will relate to family satisfaction through relationship tension.

Relationship Tension and Family Functioning

Finally, it is important to examine the association between relationship tension and family functioning. As noted above, family functioning captures the emotional well-being and closeness of family members (Stevens

et al., 2006). Research has found that tension among partners can lead to parent–child tensions, sibling tensions, and family tensions, such as those that include both parents and one or more child (Margolin, Christensen, & John, 1996). The sense of closeness that characterizes family functioning is likely more difficult to experience in light of tense or irritable interactions with a spouse. In fact, evidence suggests that the level of hostility and detachment that may characterize relationship tension has harmful implications for family functioning (Katz & Woodin, 2002). Thus, we argue that the tension will be negatively associated with family functioning.

Hypothesis 7a: Relationship tension has a negative relationship with family functioning.

Abusive Supervision to Family Functioning Through Relationship Tension

We argue that relationship tension helps to explain how the experience of abuse affects the partner's perceptions of family functioning. The frustration of abuse experienced by subordinates (Hoobler & Brass, 2006) may foster the subordinate's desire to strike back and in doing so displace their aggression (away from the abusive supervisor) toward their partner through negative interactions (i.e., relationship tension), which subsequently relates to their relationship with their family as a whole (i.e., family functioning). Therefore, we propose that the relationship tension due to abusive supervision will contribute to diminished family functioning.

Hypothesis 7b: Abusive supervision will negatively relate to family functioning through relationship tension.

Method

Sample

The sample included 280 individuals employed full time and their partners. We recruited participants with the assistance of Zoomerang, a company that specializes in Internet-based services and surveys to gather information from willing and interested participants. Collecting data in this manner is not new, as this approach has been successfully used in the management literature (Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko, & Roberts, 2008; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). One advantage of using a research services company to collect data is that the company can prescreen potential respondents on a variety of characteristics to ensure the sample is

representative of the population of interest. For our purposes, we required that participants work full time as well as have a spouse or partner who would also be willing to complete a survey. Respondents were supplied with a URL (Web link) that took them to the online survey, where they completed their portion of the survey. When their portion of the survey was complete, they were asked to have their partner complete a separate survey instrument that was linked back to the subordinate. The partner entered a coordinating identification number to complete their portion of the instrument. Thus, the combined responses from the initial contact and the partner constituted one complete response in our database.

The subordinate sample was 57% male employees, averaged 5.0 years in their current job, and 75% had children living with them. Thirty-six was the average age for both the subordinate and the partner. The average length of relationship was 10 years. Of these respondents, 46% supervised other employees in the workplace. In regard to occupation, 47% worked in a public organization, 40% worked in a private organization, 9% worked for a nonprofit organization, and 5% were self-employed. Of the partner sample, 43% were male with 78% of these individuals being employed. With respect to subordinate education, 17% had a high school diploma, 24% some college, 10% an associate's degree, 31% a bachelor's degree, 15% a master's degree, and 3% a doctorate.

Measures From Subordinate

Abusive Supervision

We used the 15-item abusive supervision scale developed by Tepper (2000). Respondents used a 5-point response scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *very seldom*, 3 = *occasionally*, 4 = *moderately often*, and 5 = *very often*) with the stem asking "How often does your supervisor use the following behaviors with you?" with example items being "Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid," "Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason," "Puts me down in front of others," and "Tells me I'm incompetent." The Cronbach α for this scale was .97.

Work-to-Family Conflict

We employed the strain-based form of work–family conflict scale developed by Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000). This scale consists of three items that measure the work-to-family direction of conflict. An example item is "When I get home from work I am often too frazzled to participate in family activities/responsibilities." Respondents used a 5-point scale which asked them to indicate the extent to which they agreed

with each statement (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach α for this scale was .90.

Family Satisfaction

We utilized the 3-item job satisfaction measure designed by Camman et al. (1979) and adapted it to deal with family. This adaptation has been successfully used by other work–family researchers (e.g., Brough, O'Driscoll, & Kalliath, 2005). An example item is "Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my family life." Respondents used a 5-point scale to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each item (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach α for this scale was .93.

Measures From Partner

Relationship Tension

A 5-item measure developed by Matthews et al. (2006) measured relationship tension. Participants were given the prompt "During the past month, how often did you" and then were asked to respond to a series of statements (1 = *never*, 5 = *often*). Sample items included "feel irritated or resentful about things your (husband/wife/partner) did or didn't do" and "feel tense from fighting, arguing or disagreeing with your (husband/wife/partner)." The Cronbach α for this scale was .90.

Family Functioning

We used a 6-item family assessment device designed to assess the overall level of family functioning (Epstein, Bishop, Ryan, Miller, & Keitner, 1993). This scale captures the general well-being of the family as it manifests itself in family structures, organizational and transactional patterns associated with families. This measure has demonstrated high levels of internal consistency (Epstein et al., 1993), acceptable levels of test–retest reliability (Miller, Epstein, Bishop, & Keitner, 1985), and a consistent factor structure (Kabacoff, Miller, Bishop, Epstein, & Keitner, 1990). Example items from the scale are "Our family can express feelings to each other," "Our family is able to make decisions about how to solve problems," and "Our family confides in each other." Respondents used a 5-point scale to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each item (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach α for this scale was .93.

TABLE 1
Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Number of children	1.49	1.22							
2. Number of hours spouse works	31.67	20.27	.01						
3. Length of relationship	10.19	6.25	.30**	.04					
4. Abusive supervision	1.83	.97	−.04	.08	−.20**				
5. Work-to-family conflict	3.04	.94	−.05	−.12*	−.20**	.43**			
6. Relationship tension	2.54	1.00	−.08	−.14*	−.16*	.40**	.38**		
7. Family satisfaction	4.35	.74	.26**	.02	.11	−.24**	−.16**	−.35**	
8. Family functioning	4.22	.74	.05	.08	.02	−.13*	−.06	−.37**	.57**

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

Control Variables

We controlled for the number of hours the spouse worked, length of the marital relationship, and number of children living at home. Each of these variables has been previously shown to play a role in an individual's experience of the family domain. For example, work hours relate to family functioning (Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom, & D'Souza, 2006) whereas relationship length (Wright & Busby, 1997) and number of children (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 1999) relate to satisfaction in the family domain. Further, relationship length has also been shown to relate to work–family conflict (Bourg & Segal, 1999). Thus, we include these as controls in our analyses to rule out the possibility that the observed relationships between abusive supervision and the two outcomes of interest, family satisfaction and family functioning, are to due the influence of these three control variables (Spector & Brannick, 2010).

Results

Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the study variables. We used LISREL (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993) to analyze the data by examining the measurement model, the theoretical model, the structural null model, and an alternative model in order to decompose

model fit as suggested by O'Boyle and Williams (2010) and Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and determine which model was the best representation of our data. Because of the sample size and number of parameters being estimated, parcels were formed by grouping items within each scale to serve as indicators of the latent variable when the number of items for the variable exceeded three (Hall, Snell, & Foust, 1999; Williams & O'Boyle, 2008). Thus, we created three parcels for abusive supervision and two parcels for relationship tension and family functioning. Work-to-family conflict and family satisfaction were each included as latent factors using three items as indicators. We included three control variables; partner's work hours, length of partner relationship, and number of children to relate to the endogenous variables in our model such that partner work hours relates to family functioning, length of relationship relates to family satisfaction and work-to-family conflict, and number of children relates to family satisfaction.

The measurement model fit the data well ($X^2(79) = 113.14$ ($p < .00$); RMSEA = .04; CFI = .99), which supports the measurement of the variables in the model and allows for subsequent examination of structural paths. Next we examined the theoretical model (Figure 1), which fit the data well ($X^2(89) = 131.52$ ($p < .00$); RMSEA = .042; CFI = .99) and was significantly different from the measurement model ($X^2_{\text{diff}}(9) = 18.38$, $p < .05$). In order to determine if the hypothesized model was the best fit of the data, we compared the theoretical model with the structural null model ($X^2(107) = 457.27$ ($p < .00$); RMSEA = .12; CFI = .90), and as expected, the theoretical model fit better than the null model ($X^2_{\text{diff}}(18) = 325.75$, $p < .00$). Finally, we compared the theoretical model to the partially mediated model, which included the paths from abusive supervision to family satisfaction and family functioning. This model fit well ($X^2(87) = 125.94$ ($p < .00$); RMSEA = .041; CFI = .99) but was not significantly different from the theoretical model ($X^2_{\text{diff}}(2) = 5.58$, *ns*). Thus, our analysis found support for the proposed theoretical model. In addition, the RMSEA–*p* value, a new fit index used to examine the fit of the path model, was .055, indicating reasonably approximate fit (O'Boyle & Williams, 2010).

Hypothesized Relationships

The standardized path coefficients can be found in Figure 2. All the significant paths from the theoretical model are significant at .01, and the two nonsignificant paths are indicated by a dotted line. Further, the process hypotheses can be examined by considering the indirect effects between the hypothesized independent and dependent variables. Support was found for Hypothesis 1 as the path from abusive supervision to work-to-family

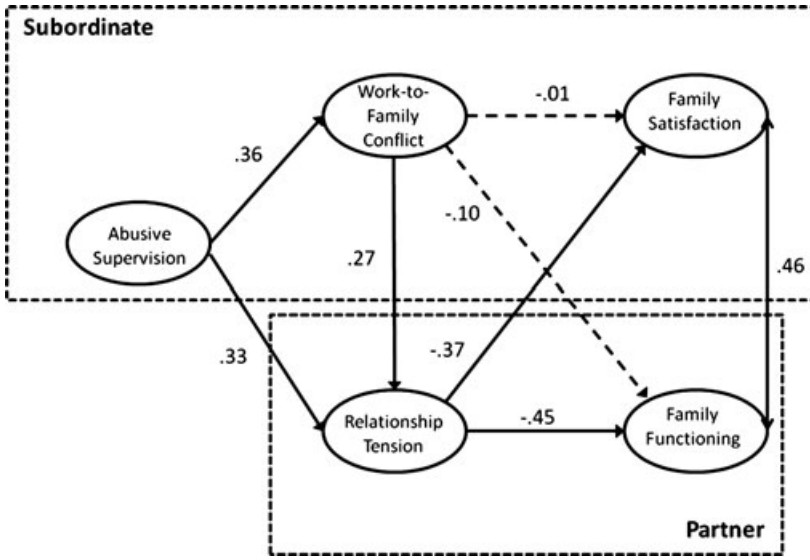

Figure 2: **Final Model of Abusive Supervision and Family Outcomes.**

Note. The dotted lines indicate paths that were not statistically significant; the measurement model and control variables are excluded from the figure for the sake of clarity.

conflict was significant (.36, $p < .01$) as predicted. This relationship explained 16% of the variance in work-to-family conflict. Support was also found for Hypothesis 4 as abusive supervision has a direct effect on relationship tension (.33, $p < .01$). In addition, support was found for the work-to-family conflict to relationship tension path as predicted in Hypothesis 5a (.27, $p < .01$). Further, an indirect effect of abusive supervision to relationship tension through work-to-family conflict was found as predicted in Hypothesis 5b (.11, $p < .01$). Finally, 26% of the variance in relationship tension was explained.

Partial support was also found for the relationship of abusive supervision to the family domain of the subordinate (i.e., family satisfaction). Twenty-one percent of the variance was explained for the family satisfaction variable. The direct effect of work-to-family conflict on family satisfaction was not supported (−.01, *ns*) thus failing to support Hypothesis 2a. In addition, an indirect effect of abusive supervision on family satisfaction through work-to-family conflict was not supported (Hypothesis 2b). The direct effect of relationship tension on family satisfaction as predicted in Hypothesis 6a was supported (−.37, $p < .01$). Subsequently, the indirect effect of abusive supervision on family satisfaction through relationship tension was significant (−.17, $p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 6b.

Partial support was also found for the relationship of abusive supervision to the family domain of the partner (family functioning). Eighteen percent of the variance was explained in the family functioning variable. The direct effect of work-to-family conflict on family functioning was not supported (−.10, *ns*) thus failing to support Hypothesis 3a. In addition, the indirect effect of abusive supervision through work-to-conflict was not supported (Hypothesis 3b). However, the direct effect of relationship tension on family function was strongly supported as predicted in Hypothesis 7a (−.45, $p < .01$). Subsequently the indirect effect of abusive supervision on family functioning through relationship tension was significant (−.16, $p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 7b. Finally, the number of children living at home was positively related to family satisfaction (.22, $p < .01$) such that more children lead to greater family satisfaction. The length of relationship was negatively related to work–family conflict (−.16, $p < .01$) such that the longer the partner's relationship the less work-to-family conflict.

Treatment of Common Method Variance

Common method variance (CMV) is unlikely to be problematic in this study because the data come from two sources. However, because some of our data were collected from the same source, we took several precautions to minimize common method biases by following both the procedural and statistical remedies offered by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003). Using LISREL 8.80, we estimated a one-factor model on just the 21 items from the subordinate measures. Second, we estimated a full measurement model that included a factor for each of the three variables measured from the subordinate. Next, we estimated a model that included a fourth latent variable to represent a method factor and allowed all 21 items to load on this uncorrelated factor (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The X^2 difference test between the one-factor model and the measurement model was significant ($X^2_{\text{diff}}(3) = 978, p < .05$), as was the X^2 difference test between the measurement model and the method factor model ($X^2_{\text{diff}}(24) = 322, p < .05$). These results indicate that although the three-factor measurement model is a better depiction of the data than a one-factor model, adding a method factor improves the measurement model.

To determine the extent of the influence of CMV, the variance explained by the method factor can be calculated. In our case, CMV accounted for only 3.4% of the total variance, which is much less than the 25% observed by Williams, Cote, and Buckley (1989). Therefore, we submit that the procedural and statistical precautions we took to control common method variance in our study were effective. We believe that

CMV is not a pervasive problem in this study and that the relationships observed represent substantive rather than artifactual effects.

Discussion

This research suggests that the fallout from abusive supervision has implications for the family domain of both the subordinate and his or her partner. Moreover, abusive supervision contributes to two forms of strain as it positively related with work-to-family conflict, consistent with spillover theory, and positively related with relationship tension, consistent with crossover theory. Further, it was the impact of abusive supervision on relationship tension that played a role in the family domain of both the subordinate and their partner. More specifically, consistent with crossover theory, our findings indicate that abusive supervision crosses over to the partner's family functioning through relationship tension as well as spills over to the subordinate's family satisfaction. Interestingly, although work-to-family conflict played a significant role in the experience of relationship tension due to abusive supervision, it did not directly contribute to either of the family domain variables. This research suggests that although abusive supervision contributes to these two forms of strain, it is the experience of relationship tension that carries abusive supervision to the family domain.

Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice

This study expands our understanding of the effects between the work and family domains (Eby et al., 2005) by examining a powerful stressor found in organizations: abusive supervision. In addition, this study supports past research linking abusive supervision with work–family conflict (Tepper, 2000). Thus, our first theoretical contribution is that abusive supervision contributes to the experience of work-to-family conflict and relationship tension. Further, abusive supervision works through work-to-family conflict to contribute to relationship tension. Thus, our research contributes to abusive supervision research in demonstrating that these stressful events do not just affect subordinates while at work but also contribute to the experienced strain of the subordinate and his or her partner through spillover and crossover effects.

This study also builds on previous research that identified the presence of crossover effects from work to home (e.g., Pleck & Staines, 1985; Westman & Etzion, 1995). Our second theoretical contribution is that the negative experiences from abuse cross over into the family domain of the partner as well as the family domain of the subordinate via the tension in the marital relationship. It may be that as abuse heightens relationship tension, the incumbent is less motivated or able to engage in positive

interactions with the partner and other family members. Our findings are consistent with the crossover model (Westman et al., 2001) and suggest there are implications of abusive supervision for the subordinate and the broader family unit.

These findings and the integrated spillover and crossover theory underlying them are important in that most extant research focuses on abusive supervision's effects on the subordinate, implying that its effects may not reach past those experienced by an abused employee. This research underlines the implications of abusive supervision and that this phenomenon has harmful associations not only for the workplace but also for the partners and families of those who experience abuse.

Surprisingly, work-to-family conflict did not have the main effects with the family outcomes as predicted and as found in previous research (Eby et al., 2005). Thus, the negative experience due to abusive supervision and manifested in work-to-family conflict did not play a direct role in the broader family relationship. Work-to-family conflict's association with relationship tension suggests that the work-to-family conflict stemming from abusive supervision affects the subordinate's partner, and it is this form of strain that plays the larger role in the family domain. To date, no research that we are aware of incorporates both work-to-family conflict and relationship tension in predicting family domain outcomes. Consistent with displaced aggression theory, the tension and strain manifested in the marital relationship and relating to abusive supervision may indicate a subordinate's need to take out the day's frustrations on someone besides the supervisor (Hoobler & Brass, 2006). In doing so, the subordinate engages in tense interactions with a partner, which affects the marital relationship and subsequently the subordinates' attitudes about and interactions with their family unit. On the other hand, the strain associated with work-to-family conflict emphasizes being stressed, frazzled, and drained. Thus, the strain of work-to-family conflict does not directly impact their attitude toward family but does so indirectly through the relationship with the partner.

This study also has important implications for organizations and their managers. The evidence that abusive supervision's effects extend not only to the targeted subordinates but also to their partner highlights the need for organizations to send an unequivocal message to those in supervisory positions that these hostile and harmful behaviors will not be tolerated. Some research indicates that supervisors who experience low procedural fairness perceptions are more likely to engage in abuse toward their subordinates (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006). Thus, it would behoove organizations to ensure that those in supervisory positions perceive organizational policies and procedures as fair and equitable. Another option would be for organizations to provide more support for and evaluation

of supervisors to try to minimize the occurrence of abusive supervision. Furthermore, organizations should also encourage subordinates to seek support through their organization's employee assistance program (EAP) or other resources (e.g., counseling, stress management) so that the subordinate can identify tactics or mechanisms for buffering the effect of abuse on the family.

Strengths and Limitations

There are several strengths of this study. First, we use matched subordinate/partner data to allow for the examination of abusive supervision's implications for other individuals in the social system. Although some research has examined abuse's effects on the subordinate, little research has investigated the implications of abuse beyond that subordinate. Our research joins with that of Tepper (2000) and Hoobler and Brass (2006) to demonstrate that abuse goes beyond the subordinate and answers the call by researchers to examine more than single source relationships (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007). Future research may benefit from building on this foundation and examining other members of the social network such as friends and coworkers. This study also extends the crossover literature to incorporate abusive supervision. Past crossover research did not address this particular source of stress and the process through which crossover occurs. The abusive supervision literature has yet to fully examine the implications of these sustained and hostile supervisory behaviors beyond direct consequences for the targeted individual.

Our research is not without limitations. One limitation is that the study used cross-sectional data, thus precluding causal conclusions. Future research could benefit from replicating this study and examining the stress contagion effects with longitudinal data. With a longitudinal approach researchers can investigate the impact of abusive supervision on the family and the impact of poorer family functioning or a strained marital relationship on employees and their workplace performance. Another limitation is that this study does not include personality variables, such as Emotional Stability (Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001) or negative affectivity, that might shed light on this process in that those low in Emotional Stability or high in negative affectivity (Tepper et al., 2006) may be more susceptible to the effects of abusive supervision or even more likely to perceive or be a target of abuse. Conscientiousness and Agreeableness moderate abusive supervision's effect on subordinate resistance (Tepper et al., 2001) and on subordinate problem drinking (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006), and thus, those personality traits may also moderate the crossover of abuse's stress into the home domain. Finally, it is important to note that in this sample the family functioning variable was generally high (i.e., mean of 4.22)

and thus somewhat restricted in range. Future research should consider other measures of family functioning and performance when studying the impact of abusive supervision on the family domain.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research extends the work of Tepper (2000, 2007) by identifying a link between the abusive supervision phenomenon and the familial and interpersonal implications that those targeted may experience outside the work environment. Our findings support the notion that abusive supervision's effects extend beyond the workplace to the subordinate's family (Hoobler & Brass, 2006) and the variety of consequences likely have broad organizational implications (Tepper et al. 2009). Organizations must take steps to prevent or stop the abuse and also to provide opportunities for subordinates to effectively manage the fallout of abuse and keep it from affecting their families. Abusive supervision is a workplace reality, and this research expands our understanding of how this stressor plays out in the subordinate's life beyond the workplace.

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