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Christian Tröster
Kühne Logistics University
Großer Grasbrook 17
20457 Hamburg, Germany
christian.troester@the-klu.org

Niels Van Quaquebeke
Kühne Logistics University
Großer Grasbrook 17
20457 Hamburg, Germany
niels.quaquebeke@the-klu.org
&
University of Exeter
Rennes Dr, Exeter EX4 4PU, United Kingdom

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WHEN VICTIMS HELP THEIR ABUSIVE SUPERVISORS: THE ROLE OF LMX, SELF-BLAME, AND GUILT

ABSTRACT

Studies on abusive supervision typically posit that targets of abuse will either directly blame the perpetrating supervisor or indirectly blame the organization for allowing the abuse, and as a result reduce their cooperativeness at work. We pivot from this predominant logic and argue that, under certain circumstances, targets of abusive supervision may blame themselves, feel guilty, and then try to make it up to their abusive supervisors by helping them more. Drawing on the emotional process theory of abusive supervision and the more general socio-functional perspective of emotions, we specify that such a dynamic is more likely to ensue when subordinates otherwise experience the relationship with their supervisors as good (high LMX). Two studies—an experiment and a two-weeks bi-daily experience sampling study—provide support for our reasoning. As such, our study extends theorizing on the consequences of abusive supervision, which has typically found that it reduces cooperative behaviors. Moreover, it contributes to previous speculations that leaders may engage in abusive supervision because it has beneficial consequences for them.

Research has repeatedly shown that abusive supervision reduces subordinates' willingness to engage in cooperative behaviors (e.g., OCB) (e.g., Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011; Shoss, Eisenberger, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). Previous studies on this topic have typically argued that this happens because targets of abuse assume the role of the victim, blaming the supervisor and/or the organization for the abuse and then withdrawing their support for both as a form of punishment or an attempt to even the scales (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Lian, Ferris, Morrison, & Brown, 2014; Shoss et al., 2013; for more general research on victimization: Aquino & Thau, 2009).

However, other scholars have speculated that abusive supervision may also evoke organizationally productive subordinate responses (Ferris, Zinko, Brouer, Buckley, & Harvey, 2007; cf. Kramer, 2006; Tepper, Duffy, & Breaux-Soignet, 2012). With the present study, we detail that perspective by arguing that more productive responses can come about when subordinates blame themselves for the experienced abuse (cf. Bowling & Michel, 2011; Burton, Taylor, & Barber, 2014). Doing so, we extend recent studies that have started to investigate the

role of attributions (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Burton et al., 2014; Liao, Lee, Johnson, Song, & Liu., in press; Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012) but so far have not explained what could lead victims of abusive supervision to blame themselves for their abuse. Moreover, we take it even further by suggesting that abusive supervision can paradoxically increase cooperation directed at the perpetrator, i.e. helping the abusive supervisor.

Specifically, drawing on the emotional process theory of abusive supervision (Oh & Farh, 2017), as well as the more general socio-functional view on emotions (Ekman, 1992; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), we present and test the novel argument that abusive supervision may lead to more, rather than less, supervisor-directed helping. In a nutshell, we argue that subordinates will sometimes take responsibility for the experienced abusive supervision and blame themselves. Motivated by their guilt for ostensibly having done something to deserve such abuse, they then help the perpetrating supervisor more. However, based on social-psychological research on guilt (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994) we argue that such dynamics are more likely to occur for subordinates who otherwise perceive a high-quality relationship with their leader (high-quality leader-member exchange relationship; LMX) (see Figure 1).

With our theorizing, we contribute to the literature on abusive supervision in several ways. First, by considering the general subordinates-supervisor relationship quality (LMX) as an important boundary condition, our study helps to explain previously surprising findings that subordinates may experience considerable self-blame for abusive supervision (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Burton, Taylor, & Barber, 2014). As such, our theoretical account provides an important piece of the puzzle to the questions of when self-blame attributions will arise as a result of abusive supervision. Second, by adding self-blame as the cognitive appraisal and guilt

as the emotional response to the possible consequences of abusive supervision, we extend the recently conceptualized emotional process theory of abusive supervision, which has mostly explained negative outcomes such as retaliation or withdrawal via distinct emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear (Oh & Farh, 2017). While researchers have recently started paying attention to the guilt that leaders may experience after engaging in abusive supervision (Liao, Yam, Johnson, Liu, & Song, 2018), subordinate guilt has, to our knowledge, received little or no attention in research on abusive supervision. However, as an emotion that motivates prosocial behaviors to fix thwarted relationships (Baumeister et al.,1994), guilt can provide important insights into cooperative behaviors when interpersonal relationships at work are challenged. Finally, by pivoting from the dominant narrative in the literature that employees blame their supervisor for their abuse, this study also speaks to an emerging discussion regarding the possible beneficial consequences of abusive supervision for organizations and supervisors (Ferris et al., 2007; Kramer, 2006; Tepper et al., 2017)[1]. This literature argues that positive consequences of abusive supervision would explain its persistence in organizations, but to date only scattered evidence of these possible beneficial consequences exist (e.g., task performance, Liao et al., in press; constructive resistance, Mitchell & Ambrose, 2012; reconciliation, Wee, Liao, Liu, & Liu, 2017). Thus, we also contribute to this emerging discussion by adding the previously uninvestigated outcome of supervisor-directed helping to this short but growing list.

/// Insert Figure 1 about here ///

[1] Please note that this article does not endorse abusive supervision even if it may result in some positive results. We neither suggest that it is morally justified, nor would our results suggest that the overall effect is positive in the long run and thus instrumentally justified.

THEORY

As stated before, research clearly indicates that abusive supervision reduces the recipient's cooperative behaviors, such as helping (Aryee et al., 2007; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011; Shoss et al., 2013; Zellars et al., 2002). While we are unaware of studies testing a direct link between abusive supervision and supervisor-directed helping, a recent meta-analysis showed that the correlation between abusive supervision and OCB directed at coworkers or the organization is significant, albeit only weakly (ρ = -.24) (Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2017). Despite the lack of a unifying framework (Tepper, 2007), the majority of studies have explained such findings through an (in)justice and social exchange lens (Mackey et al., 2017). These studies argue that subordinates who experience abusive supervision think that the supervisor does not treat them according to the norms of interpersonal conduct (i.e., interactional justice) or that their employer does not adequately develop or enforce procedures that discipline abusers or protect targets of abuse (i.e., low procedural justice). In consequence, subordinates reciprocate the unfair treatment and resolve the experienced exchange imbalance by reducing cooperative behaviors or engaging in deviant behaviors (Aryee et al., 2007; Zellars et al., 2002). The common thread in these studies is the (implicit) assumption that victims of abusive supervision blame the supervisor—or, by extension, the organization—for the misconduct. This is particularly evident in theorizing that the target of supervisor abuse would want to "pay back" the abuse, or in studies that assume that subordinates "blame the organization" or "blame the supervisor" for their abuse (Lian et al., 2014; Shoss et al., 2013). While this seems to be a straightforward assumption, we do not expect that victims will always blame the supervisor for his/her misconduct. For example, we know of two studies that found that abused subordinates expressed considerable self-blame, even though, on average, they were more likely to blame their supervisor for the abuse (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Burton et al., 2014; but also see studies

by Liao and colleagues (in press) and Liu and colleagues (2012) on injury initiation attribution tendency and performance promotion attribution tendency). Notably, the dominant theoretical lens—that targets of abusive supervision will consider themselves victims—cannot adequately explain this self-blame, which is why such findings are usually only commented on as an interesting side effect, but not explored much further. In contrast, we take this finding center-stage. Such exploration is needed to understand the why of the seemingly counterintuitive attribution of self-blame in the face of abusive supervision. Hence, we set out to fill this gap by specifically investigating when abusive supervision leads to self-blame, guilt, and ultimately supervisor-directed helping. To this end, we adopt a theoretical lens that is rooted in the management literature. Specifically, we build upon the emotional process theory of abusive supervision (Oh & Farh, 2017), which also draws on the more general socio-functional perspective on emotions (Ekman, 1992; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

In the face of the extant theoretical arguments and empirical findings that we reviewed here, this idea may seem counterintuitive and fly in the face of common-sense logic. However, note that self-blame and supervisor-directed blame may not be mutually exclusive; such attributions may vary across time or because people may hold paradoxical combinations of both (Galvin, Randel, Collins, & Johnson, 2018). Indeed, a recent study argued that people may hold beliefs that supervisors abuse them because they want them to perform better (i.e. performance promotion attribution tendency) and at the same time might believe that supervisors abuse them because they want to harm them (i.e. injury initiation attribution tendency) (Liao et al., in press).

Thus, our argumentation does not contradict previous studies. Instead, we merely propose an additional, previously unexplored path of attributional, emotional, and behavioral responses[2].

The Moderating Role of LMX on the Relationship Between Abusive Supervision, Self-Blame, and Guilt

Blame attributions are complex cognitive processes (e.g., Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001) and this also holds for the context of abusive supervision (Oh & Farh, 2017). There is a growing literature that deals with different attributions for abusive supervision (e.g., Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012), with some studies showing that employees may sometimes blame themselves (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Burton et al., 2014). However, these studies have typically not considered when and why people would engage in self-blame. Indeed, not every experience of abusive supervision should lead to the inference that maybe one has done something wrong. Attribution principles suggest that people, more often than not, ascribe negative events to external factors in an attempt to protect their self-esteem (i.e., self-serving bias; Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). This may explain why studies find that abused subordinates, on average, are more likely to blame their supervisor for the abuse than themselves (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Burton et al. 2014). So, when would people blame themselves and subsequently feel guilty?

Guilt is a self-conscious emotion centered one condemning a specific behavior and assuming responsibility for it. It is tied to remorse, tension, and regret (Lewis, 1971; Tangney & Dearing, 2003). People who experience guilt often report that they ruminate over their wrongdoing and wish that they had behaved differently or could somehow undo the bad deed that was done (Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996). Thus, the experience of guilt is

[2] However, to show that our findings can be reconciled with previous theorizing and findings, we provide supplemental analysis to test alternative pathways of abusive supervision through supervisor-directed blame and anger on supervisor-directed deviance, which is an established outcome of abusive supervision (Mackey et al., 2017).

necessarily preceded by an attribution of self-blame. Importantly, self-blame and guilt appear to be more common in the context of communal relationships, which are characterized by expectations of mutual concern (Baumeister et al., 1994). These observations can be explained through the interpersonal nature of guilt. From a socio-functional perspective, guilt is important because it serves to maintain important social relationships (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). Guilt helps enforce norms that prescribe mutual concern, respect, and positive treatment, as well as prevent inequitable exchanges (Baumeister et al., 1994). It is particularly relevant in high-quality exchange relationships where the basis of the exchange is mutual concern rather than contractual agreements or the like. It is less relevant in low-quality exchange relationships, where partners can settle issues of fairness and equity through appeals to contractual agreements or other direct or immediate appeals because both parties understand equitable exchange as the basis for their interactions (Baumeister et al., 1994). Thus, it has been concluded that the intensity of guilt is proportional to the significance of the harmed relationship and related to the thought that one may have done something that would threaten an otherwise beneficial relationship (Baumeister et al., 1994). Accordingly, we also define cognitive self-blame attributions in the context of the present study as the degree to which people think they might have done something that could have jeopardized the relationship with their supervisor.

In the work context, perceived LMX represents the experienced quality of the relationship developed over time between a supervisor and a subordinate (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), with high LMX representing high levels of felt supervisory support and guidance (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Consequently, in high LMX relationships, subordinates feel as though they are usually liked, respected, and trusted by their supervisor (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Put differently, LMX pertains to the long-term quality of the mutual

relationship. In contrast, abusive supervision represents specific supervisor behaviors that can fluctuate over time and need not reflect the general relationship (Barnes, Lucanetti, Bhave, Christian, 2015; Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, & Chang, 2012; Lian et al., 2012; Tepper & Henle, 2011; Qin et al., 2019). Indeed, even when employees by and large might have good relationships with their leaders, their leaders may engage in abusive supervisor behaviors at times (cf. Lian et al., 2012). For example, a follower may think that a leader generally "understands their problems" (item taken from the LMX scale by Scandura and Graen (1984)), even though the leader may sometimes ridicule them (item taken from the abusive supervision scale; Tepper, 2000)[3].

Our argument that self-blame and guilt are more likely responses to abusive supervision in high LMX dyads is also backed up by attribution principles. Theoretically, novel events (or a lack of predictable events), such as an act of abusive supervision in an otherwise high-quality relationship, warrant an individual's attention because they can signal danger to a valued resource (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). Attribution principles suggest that people are less likely to attribute behaviors to an actor (i.e., engage in supervisor-directed blame) when the behavior performed by that person is inconsistent with how the person typically behaves (Kelley, 1973). From this perspective, in a high LMX relationship, people have a higher likelihood of blaming themselves in an attempt to make sense of their experienced abusive supervision because it is inconsistent with the baseline behavior.

[3] Note that our own data (Study 2) supports this claim. Daily levels of abusive supervision had only a weak correlation with ratings of LMX (r = -0.15, p < .001) (Table 2). Similarly, even with general assessments, LMX and abusive supervision only seem to share about 10% of the variance (Xu, Loi, & Lam, 2015).

Importantly, and based on the instrumental perspective spelled out in the socio-functional view of emotions, we assume that abusive supervision prompts subordinates to feel responsible for having done something to threaten their relationship with the supervisor and thus feel guilty even when the event is clearly externally caused (Wong & Sproule, 1984). Therefore, one can feel responsible (i.e., self-blame), and thus guilty, for abusive supervision, even though the supervisor evidently performed the abuse. Our point here is not whether actual wrongdoing per se causes self-blame and guilt; it is that abusive supervision in a high LMX dyad increases the likelihood that employees look within themselves for the cause of the abuse, blame themselves, and then feel guilty. That said, it may also be that there are factual reasons to self-blame and feel guilty, such as performing poorly on the assigned job (e.g., missing an important deadline or botching a presentation), which may also prompt the episodes of abusive supervision (Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). Nonetheless, we expect that abusive supervision will still increase subordinate self-blame and guilt above and beyond subordinates' perceived own job performance.

Hypothesis 1: *The positive effect of abusive supervision on self-blame is stronger when LMX is high (vs. low).*

Hypothesis 2: *The positive relationship between abusive supervision and guilt is mediated by self-blame. This indirect relationship is stronger when LMX is high (vs. low).*

Guilt and Supervisor-Directed Helping

As stated above, the socio-functional perspective argues that emotions and their related appraisals facilitate "effective and successful social living" (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005: 770). Correspondingly, a large body of research has shown that guilt serves various relationship-enhancing functions, including motivating people to treat others well (for a review see Baumeister et al., 1994). Insofar as people feel guilty about some wrongdoing, they alter their behavior in ways that seem promising for maintaining and strengthening the relationship and

ultimately avoiding experiences of guilt (Baumeister et al., 1994). Indeed, even when looking at nuances at the dispositional level, guilt-prone individuals score higher in self-efficacy beliefs and perceive themselves as more capable of managing interpersonal relationships (Baldwin, Baldwin, & Ewald, 2006; Passanisi, Sapienza, Budello, & Giaimo, 2015). Other studies show that when people feel guilty about something they have done, they are more likely to perform prosocial actions to wipe away the guilt (Xu, Begue, & Shankland, 2011). For example, in one study (McMillen & Austin, 1971), half of the participants were induced to tell a lie to the experimenter. After the study was over, participants who had not been induced to lie only volunteered to help fill in bubble sheets for two minutes on average, whereas participants who had been induced to lie volunteered to help fill in bubble sheets for 63 minutes. The lying participants were apparently attempting to reduce their guilt by being more helpful. In another study, Carlsmith and Gross (1969) found that subjects who were instructed to give electric shocks to a confederate increased their help for the confederate later on. In sum, it seems that people are motivated by guilt to help those who they feel they have (potentially) wronged with their behavior. Correspondingly, we posit that abused subordinates in high LMX dyads, who blame themselves for potentially having done something to threaten their relationship with their supervisor and thus feel guilty, will respond with more supervisor-directed helping.

Hypothesis 3: The positive relationship between abusive supervision and supervisor-directed helping is serially mediated by self-blame (first mediator) and guilt (second mediator). This indirect relationship is stronger when LMX is high (vs. low).

OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

To test our hypotheses, we conducted two studies with complementary methods. Study 1 is an online vignette experiment (cf. Aguinis & Bradley, 2014) in which we manipulate abusive supervision and LMX and then assessed self-blame, guilt, and supervisor-directed helping. Study 2 is a two-week bi-daily experience sampling study, in which we surveyed participants' daily

perceptions of abusive supervision and their felt self-blame after the first half of the working day and their guilt and supervisor-directed helping at the end of their working day. Both datasets were collected using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online marketplace where requesters (e.g., researchers) can post tasks (e.g., surveys) for registered workers to complete in exchange for compensation (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Mason & Suri, 2012). In both studies, we followed recommendations to improve data quality by only recruiting high reputation participants from the U.S. with at least 50 completed tasks and a high ratio (95%) of approved-versus-submitted tasks (Hauser & Schwarz, 2015; Litman, Robinson, & Rosenzweig, 2014; Peer, Vosgerau, & Acquisti, 2014) because they have been found to be more attentive in online tasks (Goodman et al., 2012; Peer et al., 2014).

STUDY 1

Method

We used a scenario experiment methodology in which participants received carefully constructed and realistic scenarios to assess the dependent variables, including their attributions, emotions, and behaviors (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Using scenario experiments has several advantages when conducting research on abusive leadership. First, scenario studies have higher ecological validity because they do not rely on the artificial setting typical of lab studies. Second, scenario experimental methodology is an appropriate method when experimental research presents ethical dilemmas. Abusive supervision is such an area: It would be ethically problematic to treat participants in an abusive manner (e.g., with ridicule or worse), especially because debriefs have been found to have limited effect on such ego-threatening manipulations (Miketta & Friese, 2019). Finally, scenario experiments have already been used to explore the consequences of abusive supervision (e.g., Farh & Chen, 2014) and their findings have been replicated in field studies, which speaks to the high psychological fidelity of this method.

Despite the many advantages of using a scenario experiment methodology, it can only show that a certain effect can happen, but not necessarily that it will happen outside of the experimental situation (Thau, Pitesa, & Pillutla, 2014). In this regard, the method suffers from the same shortcomings as other experimental designs. Therefore, we complemented Study 1 with a two weeks bi-daily longitudinal field study in order to test whether the effect does indeed occur in a work setting (Study 2).

Sample

We recruited $N = 200$ participants from MTurk who were randomly assigned to a 2 (Abusive supervision: low vs. high) by 2 (LMX: high vs. low) between-subjects factorial design. On average, participants were 34 years old ($SD = 15.74$) and 39% of them were female.

Manipulation

We used a vignette to manipulate LMX and abusive supervision, asking participants to imagine the situation as vividly as possible. In the beginning, all participants provided us with their demographics. All participants then read the following general introduction:

"Imagine you started working on a new product for a company. You have been working for the company quite a while but this is a new project. You have a lot of work and the work is quite challenging. You regularly report to your supervisor Chris. You have known Chris already for quite a while. Chris has been your supervisor ever since you have been working at the company."

This was followed by the LMX scenario. We derived the wording for this scenario from the LMX scale by Scandura and Graen (1984). In the high LMX scenario, participants read the following:

"You have a very good relationship with Chris. For example, if you encounter problems at work, Chris always helps you solve them. And if you make a mistake, the chance that Chris will 'bail you out' at his/her expense is very high. Also, Chris understands your job problems and needs very well. You have a very trusting relationship with Chris. If you had to characterize your relationship with Chris, you would probably say that it is extremely effective."

For the low LMX scenario, we cover the same aspects but on the low end:

"You do not have a good relationship with Chris. For example, if you encounter problems at work, Chris rarely helps you solve them. And if you make a mistake, the chance that Chris will 'bail you out' at his/her expense is not very high. Also, Chris does not understand your job problems and needs very well. You do not have a very trusting relationship with Chris. If you had to characterize your relationship with Chris, you would probably say that it is not very effective."

Next, participants were randomly assigned to the abusive supervision condition. We based our wording on the behaviors measured in Tepper's (2000) abusive supervision scale. In the low abusive supervision condition, they read the following:

"Recently, Chris acted normally towards you. For example, last time when you met Chris on the hallway s/he did greet you after s/he had noticed you and after you saying 'Hello'. Another time when you mentioned that you had a lot of work to do, Chris P. told you that it was important "... to stay focused and committed to your work". Chris P. also never puts you down in front of others. You also found out that s/he does not talk badly about you behind your back."

Participants in the high abusive supervision condition read the following:

"Recently, Chris acted hostile towards you. For example, last time when you met Chris on the hallway s/he did not greet you though s/he had clearly noticed you and despite you saying 'Hello'. Another time when you mentioned that you had a lot of work to do, Chris told you that it was time "... to stop screwing around and get your shit together". Sometimes Chris even puts you down in front of others. You also found out that s/he talks badly about you behind your back.``

After the scenarios, participants were asked to rate whether they thought that they had done something to threaten their relationship with Chris (self-blame), if they would feel guilty in such a situation, and whether they would help Chris. Finally, we rewarded participants with $1 on MTurk upon completion of the study.

Measures

Self-blame. We developed three items to measure self-blame, which we defined as the degree to which employees blame themselves for having done something that could have jeopardized their relationship with their supervisor, because previous (Burton et al., 2014; Bowling and Michel, 2011) measures did not cover relationship threat as the specific cause for the blame. Items are "I think that I did something that jeopardized my relationship with my

supervisor", "I think that I am responsible for damaging my relationship with my supervisor", and "I think that I am to be blamed for risking my relationship with my supervisor". Employees used a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), to indicate their agreement with each item (Cronbach's Alpha was .92).

To establish content, convergent, and discriminant validity, we ran several tests. First, we conducted the test recommended by Hinkin and Tracey (1999) to establish content validity. To this end, we presented 100 MTURK respondents (who had not participated in Study 1 or 2) the three items of our self-blame and three items that we used to measure supervisor-directed blame in Study 2. We measured supervisor-directed blame, which we correspondingly to self-blame defined as the perception that the supervisor did something that would jeopardize the relationship with the subordinate, with three items that we had developed for the purpose of this study: "I accuse my supervisor for jeopardizing our relationship", "I think that my supervisor is responsible for damaging our relationship", "I think that my supervisor is to be blamed for risking our relationship". Employees used a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), to indicate their agreement with each item.. Against the definition of self-blame and supervisor-directed blame, we then asked them to rate how indicative these items were for each of the two concepts. Response choices ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*completely*). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that respondents rated the items for self-blame to be more indicative with the definition of self-blame compared to supervisor-directed blame. Likewise, respondents rated the items for supervisor-directed blame to be more indicative with the definition of supervisor-directed blame compared to self-blame

(all *p*-levels were below *p*=.001)[4]. These results provide support for the content validity of our constructs.

In addition, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to establish discriminant and convergent validity. As a comparison construct to establish discriminant validity we chose the established attribution measures described by Bowling and Michel (2011) and Burton and colleagues (2014) because like us they were interested in self-blame and supervisor-directed blame. Bowling and Michel (2011) measured self-directed attributions (e.g., "I am at least partially at fault when my supervisor is rude to me"), supervisor-directed attributions (e.g., "My supervisor is generally at fault when he or she is rude to me"), and organization-directed attributions (e.g., "My organization is generally at fault when he or she is rude to me"). They used five items per scale. Similarly, Burton and colleagues (2014) included scales to measure internal attribution (e.g., "The source of my supervisor's behavior reflects something about me"), external attribution (e.g., "My supervisor's behavior is due to something about him or her (e.g., the type of person he or she is)"), and relational attribution (e.g., "My supervisor's behavior toward me is due, in part, to the relationship we have."). Their scales included four items to measure internal attributions, four items to measure external attributions, and three items to measure relational attribution three items. Note that while close, all these scales capture more general attributions for the causes of abusive supervision, whereas our measures focused on the specific relationship threat as a cause. Thus, Bowling and Michel's (2011) and Burton and colleagues' (2014) measures provide a good basis to conservatively establish discriminant validity of our newly developed scales.

[4] Results are available upon request from the first author.

To this end, we collected new survey data from 303 MTurkers. In this survey we presented respondents these eight scales to measure their attributions about abusive supervision in their current job. We then conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with each of these eight scales as a distinct latent factor (i.e. two latent factors for our newly developed scales and three for each of the two established measures of abusive supervision attribution). Fit indices were good: $\chi^2(406) = 820.89$, *RMSEA* = .06, *CFI* = .96, *SRMR* = .04. Following Fornell and Larker (1981), we then calculated the average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor, as well as the share variance (SV; i.e. the squared correlations) across the factors. An AVE greater than .50 provides evidence for convergent validity. The AVE values for self-blame and supervisor-directed blame were .88 and 84, respectively. Thus, these results provide support for the convergent validity of our measures. AVE values that are greater than SV values between two constructs provide evidence of discriminant validity. The SV values for self-blame vis-à-vis the other comparison scales ranged from .01 to .74. Further, the SV values for supervisor-directed blame vis-à-vis the other comparison scales ranged from .03 to .16. Thus, these results were all greater than the AVEs for self-blame and supervisor-directed blame (.88 and 84, respectively) and, thus, provide support for the discriminant validity of our measures. Finally, a comparison of multiple CFA models showed that the eight-factor solution (reported above) had a significantly better fit with the data than a four-factor model in which the items measuring self-blame, self-directed attributions, and internal attributions loaded onto one latent factor and supervisor-directed blame, supervisor directed attributions, and external attributions onto another latent factor while the items for relational attributions and organizational attributions loaded onto two separate latent factors ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1873.79$, $\Delta df = 22$, $p < .001$) (Three-factors: $\chi^2(428) = 2694.68$, *RMSEA* = .13, *CFI* = .76, *SRMR* = .13), or a one-factor solution where all items loaded onto one

latent factor, $\Delta\chi^2 = 4336.17$, $\Delta df = 28$, $p < .001$ (One-factor: $\chi^2(434) = 5157.07$, *RMSEA* = .19, *CFI* = .49, *SRMR* = .19). These results thus support the convergent and discriminant validity of our construct and they underscore that our measures provide a unique focus, in particular, vis-à-vis Bowling and Michel (2011) and Burton and colleagues (2014).

Guilt. We used the five guilt items from the State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS) to measure participants' level of guilt at the present moment (e.g., "I feel like apologizing, confessing") (Marschall, Sanftner, & Tangney, 1994). We asked participants to rate the items on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 5 (extremely likely) (Cronbach's Alpha = .94).

Supervisor-directed helping. We asked participants to rate how likely they would be to help Chris. We used the six items developed by Dalal and colleagues (2009). Sample items included "I would speak highly about Chris to others" and "I would go out of my way to be nice to Chris". Participants rated the items on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 5 (extremely likely) (Cronbach's Alpha = .91).

Manipulation Checks

We followed recommendations (Fayant, Sigall, Lemonnier, Retsin, & Alexopoulos, 2017; Lonati, Quiroga, Zehnder, & Antonakis, 2018) and conducted manipulation checks in an independent sample (n=51) on MTurk so that the manipulation checks themselves would not exert an additional manipulation or even demand effect that is otherwise not controlled for. Respondents were randomly assigned to an abusive supervision condition (low vs. high) and a LMX condition (low vs. high). After reading the scenarios, they were asked to rate the level of abusive supervision and LMX. We used the scales here that we also used in our field study (Study 2). With abusive supervision as the outcome, analysis of variance tests (ANOVA) indicated a main effect for the abusive supervision condition, $F(1,49) = 27.62$; $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .36$.

The abusive supervision ratings were indeed higher in the high abusive supervision condition (M = 4.49, SD = 1.40) compared to the low abusive supervision condition (M = 2.29, SD = 1.58). With LMX as the outcome, analysis of variance tests indicated a main effect for the LMX condition, $F(1,49) = 25.91$; $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .35$. The LMX ratings were indeed higher in the high LMX condition (M = 3.79, SD = 0.99) compared to the low LMX condition (M = 2.28, SD = 1.12). There were also no interaction effects between the abusive supervision condition and the LMX condition on abusive supervision ratings ($F(1,47) = .01$; *ns.*) or LMX ratings ($F(1,47) = 2.51$; *ns.*). These results provide evidence for the efficacy and validity of the two manipulations.

Results

To test our three hypotheses, we estimated all hypothesized relationships (Figure 1) simultaneously using structural equation modelling (SEM). This allowed us to bootstrap the confidence interval for the indirect effects specified in Hypotheses 2 and 3 (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) and for the index of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2015) (Table 1). Bootstrapped and bias-corrected results provide more accurate estimates than, for example, the Sobel test because indirect effects and their standard errors are not normally distributed (Hayes, 2015; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that abusive supervision would positively affect self-blame and that this relationship would be stronger for high levels of LMX compared to low levels of LMX. To test this hypothesis, we had to predict self-blame as a function of the independent variable (abusive supervision), the moderator (LMX), and their interaction term (Model 1, Table 1). As expected, the first model showed a significant interaction effect between abusive supervision and LMX on self-blame, $\beta = 1.07$, $p < .01$ (Model 1, Table 1). Figure 2 depicts the interaction on self-blame. As expected, when LMX was high, the difference in self-blame between low levels of abuse (M = 2.62, SD = 0.17) and high levels of abuse (M = 3.44, SD = 0.16) was significant (z

= 3.60, $p < .001$). However, when LMX was low, the difference in guilt between low levels of abuse (M = 2.91, SD = 0.17) and high levels of abuse (M = 2.69, SD = 0.16) was not significant, z = -0.97, ns. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that abusive supervision would indirectly affect guilt via self-blame, and that this indirect effect would be more positive when LMX was high (vs. low). Thus, we had to test a mediation effect that was conditional on a first-stage moderator using the index of moderated mediation as outlined by Hayes (2015). To test this hypothesis, we needed the estimates of Model 1 (Table 1) and, in addition, the estimates of a model in which we specified that the dependent variable (guilt) was predicted by the mediator (self-blame) while controlling for the independent variable (abusive supervision), the moderator (LMX), and their interaction term (Model 2, Table 1). The estimates of these models can then be used to calculate the index of moderated mediation, which is the product of two coefficients (IV X Mod → M1 and M1→DV) (Hayes, 2015). If the index of moderated mediation is significantly different from zero, this shows support for Hypothesis 2 that the indirect effect of abusive supervision on guilt via self-blame differs for different levels of LMX (Hayes, 2015). Researchers can then examine the specific form of the moderated indirect effect by calculating the indirect effects and their confidence intervals at different levels of the LMX (Hayes, 2015).

As explained above, the results of Model 1 were in line with our theoretical model. The second model showed a significant effect of self-blame on guilt ($\beta = .78$, $p < .001$) (Model 2, Table 1), which was also in line with our expectations. We then used bootstrapping with 10,000 samples to derive bias-corrected confidence intervals for the index of moderated mediation and the indirect effects at high (+1 SD) and low (-1 SD) levels of LMX (Hayes, 2015). The index of moderated mediation was significant (coefficient = .83, CI95%= [31.; 1.39]), showing that the

indirect effect of abusive supervision on guilt was mediated by self-blame and that this indirect effect varied for different levels of LMX. More specifically, when LMX was high (+1 SD), the indirect effect of abusive supervision on guilt was positive (indirect effect = .66, CI95%= [.27, 1.04]), but not when LMX was low (-1 SD), indirect effect = -.19, CI95%= [.31, 1.39]. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was fully supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that abusive supervision would indirectly affect supervisor-directed helping via self-blame and guilt, and that this indirect effect would be more positive when LMX was high (vs. low). Thus, we tested a serial mediation effect that was conditional on a first-stage moderator using the index of moderated serial mediation as outlined by Hayes (2015). The index of moderated serial mediation is calculated as the product of three coefficients (IV X Mod → M1, M1→M2, and M2 → DV) (Hayes, 2015). To test this hypothesis we needed the estimates of Model 1 and Model 2 (Table 1) and, in addition, the estimates of a model in which we specified that the dependent variable (supervisor-directed helping) was predicted by the first mediator (self-blame) and the second mediator (guilt) while controlling for the independent variable (abusive supervision), the moderator (LMX), and their interaction term (Model 3, Table 1) As reported above, the results of Model 1 and Model 2 were in line with our expectation. In addition, Model 3 showed a significant relationship of guilt on supervisor-directed helping, $\beta = .19$, $p < .01$, which was also in line with our expectation. We then used bootstrapping with 10,000 samples to derive bias-corrected confidence intervals for the index of moderated serial mediation and the indirect effects at high (+1 SD) and low (-1 SD) levels of LMX (Hayes, 2015). The index of moderated mediation was significant (coefficient = .16, CI95%= [.06; .38]), showing that the indirect effect of abusive supervision on supervisor-directed helping was sequentially mediated by self-blame and guilt and that this indirect effect

varied for different levels of LMX. More specifically, when LMX was high (+1 SD), the indirect effect of abusive supervision on supervisor-directed helping was positive (indirect effect = .12, CI95%= [.03, .28]), but not when LMX was low (-1 SD), indirect effect = -.03, CI95%= [-.15, .02]. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was also fully supported.

/// Insert Table 1 and Figure 2 about here ///

Robustness tests. We followed recommendations and conducted two post-hoc analyses to test whether our findings could be artifacts of careless responding (Meade & Craig, 2012). First, we repeated our analysis, but this time excluded one respondent who took on average less than two seconds to answer an item (Huang, Curran, Keeney, Poposki, & DeShon, 2012). Excluding this respondent did not affect our findings. We therefore report all results including this respondent. Finally, we calculated Mahalanobis distances to identify outliers based on a chi-square test with an α-level of 0.05 (Goldammer, Annen, Stöckli, & Jonas, 2020). However, this test did not identify any outliers. We are thus confident that our findings were not affected by careless responding.

Discussion

Study 1 indicates that abusive supervision increased self-blame but only if LMX was high and that self-blame and the resulting guilt increased supervisor-directed helping. Therefore, the findings support our theoretical model (Figure 1). While our experimental design allows us to draw causal inferences with a high degree of internal validity, our manipulation was a hypothetical scenario and did not allow us to test whether people would actually blame themselves, feel guilty, and help their abusive supervisor more at their real jobs (external validity). For this purpose, we designed Study 2 as a two-week bi-daily survey. We chose a longitudinal design because models that include variables at several time points and that study indirect effects over a longer time frame provide more accurate and unbiased measures of the

indirect effect than, for example, cross-sectional data (Cole & Maxwell, 2003; Selig & Preacher, 2009). Moreover, we chose a bi-daily design to time-separate some of our study variables and measure how the commonly short-lived changes in emotions (Barsade & Gibson, 2007) can affect changes in emotions and behavior within the same day. Because it is a field study, we also explicitly opted to include self-perceived job performance to ascertain that our effects hold above and beyond such evident wrongdoing. Finally, we opted to measure supervisor-directed blame, anger, and supervisor-directed deviance to show that our findings can be reconciled with previous studies.

STUDY 2

Sample

This study was designed as a bi-daily longitudinal survey that covered two work weeks (i.e., ten working days and no weekends). We chose this length because of suggestions that two weeks represent a generalizable sample of employees' lives (Wheeler & Reis, 1991). Additionally, previous studies have used the same time period when exploring the daily consequences of abusive supervision (Barnes et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2012; Qin et al., 2018). Again, we recruited high-reputation participants via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). On a Friday, we recruited 300 participants to take part in an online study in exchange for $2.50. We used this initial survey to measure LMX and several demographics. We started our daily surveys on a Monday, a week after the intake survey. We measured abusive supervision, self-blame, guilt, and supervisor-directed helping when respondents were halfway through their work (T) (e.g., during lunch time). We measured guilt and supervisor-directed helping at the end of their work (e.g., on the way back home) (T+1). We also measured additional covariates that were not of direct interest for the test of our hypotheses, but were motivated by situating our findings within the established literature on abusive supervision and its effects on subordinates:

supervisor-directed blame (T), anger (T, T+1), performance (T, T+1), and supervisor-directed deviance (T, T+1). Respondents were paid $2 for each survey that they completed. To further incentivize participants, we paid $4 to each one who filled in every survey. To increase the participation rate, we sent daily email reminders.

Twenty-five of the initial 300 respondents did not complete any daily assignment. Thus, we were left with 275 respondents (retention rate of 92%). To test our hypotheses, we could only use data from respondents who completed both surveys on a given day because we wanted to test how abusive supervision and self-blame affected changes in guilt and supervisor-directed within the same day. On average, respondents filled in both surveys on 8.1 days out of the ten days (*SD* = 2.44). Therefore, we ended up with a usable final sample of 2,215 daily observations from 275 individuals. Of our final sample, close to half of our respondents were female (49%). Participants were between 20 and 69 years old (*M* = 40.41 years, *SD* = 11.21). Eighty-four percent of participants were White, 9% Black, 2% Hispanic, 3% Asian or Pacific Islanders, 1% Native American or American Indian, and 1% were of another ethnicity. Most participants worked in education (13%) followed by manufacturing (11%), retail (11%) and service (10%). Most participants indicated having a university bachelor degree (38%), followed by a vocational college degree (20%), and a university master degree (16%).

Measures

Below we present our measures. With the exception of LMX all variables were person-mean centered. LMX was grand-mean centered. Geldhof and colleagues (2014) recommend using McDonald's (1999) Omega (ω) statistics instead of Chronbach's alpha as an estimate of within-person reliability. Thus, we report McDonald's (1999) Omega (ω) for all measures except for LMX. For LMX we report Cronbach's alpha. Sometimes, the recommended cut-off score for

McDonald's (1999) Omega (ω) statistic is normatively set to .70 simply because a similar level is used for Cronbach's alpha (Hu et la., 2019; Viladrich, Angulo-Brunet, & Doval, 2017).

Abusive supervision. We measured abusive supervision halfway through respondents' work using the 15-item scale from Tepper (2000). A sample item is "My boss ridicules me". Respondents indicated the frequency with which their supervisors engaged in each of the 15 behaviors on that day, using a six-point Likert scale adapted from Johnson and colleagues (2012). Answer categories ranged from 1 (never) to 6 (five or more times). The within-person ω_T for abusive supervision was .76.

Self-blame. We used the same measures as in Study 1 to measure self-blame halfway through their work (ω_T =.87).

Guilt. As in Study 1, we used the same guilt items from the State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS) to measure participants' current level of guilt halfway through their work and after work (Marschall et al., 1994). We asked participants to rate their current feelings using a six-point Likert scale (1 = "Not feeling this way at all"; 6 = "Feeling this way very strongly") (ω_T = .91; ω_{T+1}= .89).

Supervisor-directed helping. As in Study 1, we used the six items developed by Dalal and colleagues (2009) to measure supervisor-directed helping when respondents were halfway through their work and after their work. To measure within-day variation, we used answer categories ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (five or more times) (Johnson et al., 2012) (ω_T= .86; ω_{T+1}= .88).

Leader-member exchange relationship quality. To assess the generally perceived quality of the relationship with the supervisor, we used the seven items of the LMX scale developed by Scandura and Graen (1984) in the week before we started our daily surveys. The scale consists of

seven items that capture the supervisor-subordinate relationship. An example item is "How well does your supervisor understand your job problems and needs?". The scale uses five-point Likert scales with different anchors (Cronbach's alpha = .92).

Variables for supplementary analysis. We measured a number of covariates that were not of direct interest but helped to test the robustness of our findings and reconcile our work with previous research. First, we measured respondents' self-perceived performance. We used a four items measure developed by Pearce and Porter (1986) to assess employees' self-perceived performance when respondents were halfway through their work and after their work. Using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very good)* to 7 (*very poor*), employees assessed their perceived overall performance, timely completion of tasks, quality of performance, and achievement of work goals (ω_T= .87; ω_{T+1}= .88). We also measured supervisor-directed blame, anger, and supervisor-directed deviance because we were interested in alternative pathways through which abusive supervision may affect an established supervisor-directed outcome of abusive supervision (i.e., supervisor-directed deviance; Mackey et al., 2017). We measured supervisor-directed blame, which we correspondingly to self-blame defined as the perception that the supervisor did something that would jeopardize the relationship with the subordinate, with three items that we had developed for the purpose of this study: "I accuse my supervisor for jeopardizing our relationship", "I think that my supervisor is responsible for damaging our relationship", "I think that my supervisor is to be blamed for risking our relationship". Employees used a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), to indicate their agreement with each item (ω_T= .87). We measured anger with a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "None"; 7 = "Always") (Diener, Smith, Fujita, 1995) (ω_T= .78; ω_{T+1}= .82) when respondents were halfway through their work and after their work by asking them to rate

the extent to which they felt anger, irritation, disgust, and rage during the morning or afternoon, respectively. Finally, we measured supervisor-directed deviance bi-daily using ten items developed by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007). A sample item is "I acted rudely towards my supervisor" (ω_T= .62; ω_{T+1}= .68). We used answer categories ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (five or more times). Note, that reliability scores for supervisor-directed deviance are below .70 . However, this cut-off value is neither based on empirical research nor on logical reasoning (Cho & Kim, 2015). Thus, we are careful to interpret these scores. However, it is empirically established that low reliability results in lower statistical power and increased Type II error when testing indirect effects using longitudinal data (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). Thus, while higher reliability is generally desirable, low reliability should work against finding significant effects but not artificially create them.

Results

Analytical Strategy. Before testing our hypotheses, we examined whether the measurements of self-blame (T), guilt (T, T+1), and supervisor-directed helping (T, T+1) differed within persons. The intraclass correlations ranged between .51 and .76. These analyses show that a substantial portion of the variance in our dependent variables can be attributed to within-person variation and that an approach like multilevel modeling is necessary (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). Therefore, we used Stata 15.0 software (StataCorp, 2017) to analyze our data, applying a random intercepts and random slopes, multilevel regression approach where daily observations were nested within subordinates and intercepts and slopes were allowed to vary between subordinates (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). Aside from the nestedness of our data (daily observations within individuals), serial autocorrelation is another source of dependency in daily diary data (Schwartz & Stone; 1998; West & Hepworth, 1991). That is, ratings made close in time are typically more highly correlated than ratings made apart in time. Thus, it is important

that researchers specify the structure of the residuals. Cumby-Huizinga tests (Baum & Schaffer, 2013; Cumby & Huizinga, 1992) for each of our models (Model 1: $\chi^2(10) = 81.45$; $p < .001$, Model 2: $\chi^2(10) = 40.49$; $p < .001$, Model 3: $\chi^2(10) = 51.18$; $p < .001$) showed that the residuals in our model followed a moving-average auto-regressive model. To account for this autocorrelation in the residual structure, we modelled residuals as moving-averages. Moreover, because Hypothesis 1 tested a cross-level moderation hypothesis, we included a random slope for abusive supervision and freely estimated variances and covariances (Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Culpepper, 2013). We did not add other random slopes because, unlike for the test of cross-level interaction effects, mediation tests do not strictly require simple slopes, which may unnecessarily complicate models and lead to non-convergence (Zhang, Zyphur, & Preacher, 2009). Also, while we used SEM in Study 1 to calculate coefficients and confidence intervals, estimations using multilevel structural equation modelling (MSEM) with random intercepts and random slope failed to converge in this study, which is often the case when testing multilevel indirect effects (Bauer, Preacher, & Gil, 2006). Therefore, we tested all hypotheses separately using random intercepts and random coefficients multilevel regression and then employed the Monte Carlo method to estimate the significance levels of our estimates, which is recommended as an alternative to bootstrapping when dealing with complex data such as ours (Preacher & Selig, 2012). Prior to the analysis, we centered all day-level variables (Level 1: abusive supervision, self-blame, guilt, and supervisor-directed helping) at the respective person mean, and the person-level variable LMX (Level 2) at the grand mean (Snijders & Bosker, 1999). Centering day-level variables at the person-mean implies the removal of all between-persons variance in these variables, which means that we can rule out interpretations of our results with regard to stable differences between persons (e.g., dispositions or demographics). Further, this centering allows

us to answer what happens if supervisors engage in more or less abusive supervision than usual and whether it leads to more or less self-blame, guilt, and supervisor-directed helping than what subordinates usually feel or perform. In addition, we used abusive supervision (T) and self-blame (T) to predict guilt (T+1) (controlling for guilt (T)). Then, we used guilt (T+1) (controlling for guilt (T)) to predict supervisor-directed helping (T+1) (controlling for supervisor-directed helping (T)). This way we could model changes in behavior as a result of changes in emotions within the same day to account for the fact that emotional experiences may have short-lived effects (Barsade & Gibson, 2007). In addition, we included subordinates' self-perceived performance in all our hypotheses because poor performance may trigger abusive supervision (Tepper et al., 2011) as well as employees' self-blame and guilt. Such inclusions also limit concerns for spurious correlations and provide a more robust test of our hypothesis.

Hypotheses tests. Table 2 reports the correlations and descriptives for Study 2. Table 3 reports the results of our multilevel (random intercept and random slope) analyses, which we used to test our hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that abusive supervision would positively affect self-blame and that this relationship would be stronger for high levels of LMX compared to low levels of LMX. To test this hypothesis, we estimated the same model as in Study 1 (Model 1, Table 3) but this time included performance as a covariate. The results showed a significant two-way interaction between abusive supervision and LMX on self-blame (T) ($\gamma = .46$; $p < .05$) (Model 1, Table 3). A simple slope analysis showed that the slope of abusive supervision on self-blame (T) was significant and positive when LMX was high (+ 1 SD) ($\gamma = 1.11$, $p < .001$), but less so when LMX was low (-1 SD) ($\gamma = .42$, $p < .05$) (Figure 3); further, these slopes were significantly different from each other, $z = 2.18$, $p < .05$. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was fully supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that abusive supervision would indirectly affect guilt via self-blame, and that this indirect effect would be more positive when LMX was high (vs. low). As in Study 1, we tested a mediation effect that was conditional on a first-stage moderator using the index of moderated serial mediation, as outlined by Hayes (2015). Again, we estimated the same two models as in Study 1, but this time included performance as covariates. This second model showed a significant effect of self-blame (T) on guilt (T+1) ($\gamma = .05$; $p < .001$) (Model 2, Table 3). These findings were in line with our expectations. Again, we calculated the index of moderated mediation as the product of three coefficients (IV X Mod → M1, M1→DV) (Hayes, 2015). This time we used a Monte Carlo simulation to calculate the significance of the index of moderated mediation with 50,000 samples. The index of moderated mediation was significant (coefficient = .02, CI95%= [.01; .05]), showing that the indirect effect of abusive supervision on guilt was mediated by self-blame, and that this indirect effect varied for different levels of LMX. More specifically, when LMX was high (+1 SD), the indirect effect of abusive supervision on guilt was positive and significant (indirect effect = .06, CI95%= [.02, .11]), but less positive when LMX was low (-1 SD), indirect effect = .02, CI95%= [.01, .05]. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was fully supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that abusive supervision would indirectly affect supervisor-directed helping via self-blame and guilt, and that this indirect effect would be more positive when LMX was high (vs. low). Again, we calculated the index of moderated serial mediation as the product of three coefficients (IV X Mod → M1, M1→M2, and M2 → DV) (Hayes, 2015). In addition to the two models that we had estimated for the test of Hypothesis 1 and 2 (Model 1 and Model 2, Table 3) we had to estimate a third model where we regressed supervisor-directed helping on guilt (Model 3, Table 3). As expected, the third model showed a significant effect of

guilt (T+1) on supervisor-directed helping (T+1), $\gamma = .08$; $p < .01$ (Model 2, Table 3). A Monte Carlo simulation with 50,000 samples showed that the index of moderated mediation was significant (coefficient = .0020, CI95%= [.0001; .0052]). These results suggest that the indirect effect of abusive supervision on supervisor-directed helping was sequentially mediated first by self-blame and then guilt, and that this indirect effect varied for different levels of LMX. More specifically, when LMX was high (+1 SD), the indirect effect of abusive supervision on supervisor-directed helping was positive and significant (indirect effect = .0049, CI95%= [.0001, .0147]), but less positive when LMX was low (-1 SD), indirect effect = .0019, CI95%= [.0001, .0049]. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was fully supported.

/// Insert Table 2 & 3 and Figure 3 about here ///

Robustness test. We tested whether our results were affected by temporal trends or attentiveness of our respondents. First, we followed Gabriel and colleagues (2019) and included fixed slopes for one linear and two cyclic time trends (i.e. increasing and decreasing cyclic growth) to control for the possibility of temporal trends in our three models (Models 1 -3; Table 3). Our results show that only the decreasing cyclic growth effect was significant when we regressed self-blame on it but none of the other effects were significant. Most importantly, inclusion of these time trends did not affect our findings. Therefore, we followed the advice of Gabriel and colleagues (2019) and present the more parsimonious model that does not include these effects in the main analysis[5].

Next, we followed recommendations and conducted a combination of post-hoc analyses to test whether our findings could be artifacts of careless responding (Meade & Craig, 2012). First, we repeated all our analyses but excluded respondents who had missed one or both of the

[5] Results of these analyses are available upon request from the first author.

attention checker items that we had included in our intake survey (i.e., three respondents and 21 observations)[6]. Dropping these respondents did not affect our findings and we therefore report all results including these respondents. Second, we repeated our analysis but this time excluded all observations where respondents took on average less than two seconds to answer an item (Huang et al., 2012) (*n*=162). Excluding these observations did not affect our findings, either. We therefore report all results including all observations. Finally, we calculated Mahalanobis distances and identified outliers based on a chi-square test with an α-level of 0.05 (Goldammer et al, 2020). However, this test did not identify any outliers. In sum, we are thus confident that our findings were not affected by temporal trends or careless responding.

Supplemental analysis. As an aside, we gauged whether our findings can be reconciled with previous findings. Thus, we followed previous examples (cf. for a similar diverse take on transformational leadership: Lin, Scott, & Matta, 2019) and explored alternative pathways through which abusive supervision may elicit some of the well-documented negative effects. In particular, meta-analytic results suggest that abusive supervision has a positive correlation with supervisor-directed deviance (Mackey et al., 2017). We had reasoned that many previous studies explicitly or implicitly assume that such negative consequences were due to employees blaming the supervisor for the abuse. Following our theoretical arguments, we wanted to see whether supervisor-directed blame, which we defined as the perception that the supervisor did something that would jeopardize the relationship with the subordinate, would lead to supervisor-directed deviance. We tried applying multilevel structural equation modelling (MSEM) to test this alternative path simultaneously with our hypothesized theoretical model, but this model did not

[6] We did not include attention checker items in our daily surveys because we expected that MTURKers become annoyed if such items appeared in two relatively short surveys a day (Meade & Craig, 2012).

converge. Also, when we tried to estimate all model paths of the indirect effect via supervisor-directed blame and anger simultaneously, the estimates of a MSEM did not converge, either. Thus, the results that we report here are based on a series of random intercept and random slope models and Monte Carlo simulation with 50,000 samples to test the indirect effect of abusive supervision on supervisor-directed helping via supervisor-directed blame and anger. Indeed, we found that abusive supervision (T) affected supervisor-directed blame (T) ($\gamma = .58$; $p < .001$) and that supervisor-directed blame (T), in turn, affected supervisor-directed deviance (T+1) ($\gamma = .01$; $p < .05$) while controlling for supervisor-directed deviance (T) earlier the same day. Importantly, a Monte Carlo simulation showed that supervisor-directed blame (T) mediates between abusive supervision (T) and supervisor-directed deviance (T+1), indirect effect = .05, $CI_{95\%}$= [.02, .09]. We also wondered whether supervisor-directed blame triggers supervisor-directed deviance because employees feel angry. However, our analysis shows that supervisor-directed blame (T) does not affect anger (T+1) ($\gamma = .01$, *ns.*) while controlling for anger (T) earlier the same day. Instead, we found that abusive supervision affects anger (T+1) directly ($\gamma = .59$; $p < .01$), and that anger (T+1) then affects supervisor-directed deviance (T+1), $\gamma = .01$; $p < .05$. Moreover, anger (T) mediates the relationship between abusive supervision (T) and supervisor-directed deviance (T+1), indirect effect = .01, $CI_{95\%}$= [.00, .02]. When supervisor-directed deviance (T+1) is regressed on both anger (T+1) and supervisor-directed blame (T+1), the latter is positive and significant ($\gamma = .01$; $p < .01$), but not the former, $\gamma = .01$; $p = .057$. All the above results included performance as a covariate. In our discussion section, we will turn to these findings and discuss how they reconcile our novel findings with the previous literature on abusive supervision.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

One experimental study and a two-week bi-daily survey study provide converging evidence that people may blame themselves and feel guilty for the abusive supervision that they

experience and subsequently engage in supervisor-directed helping. As predicted, this was only the case when subordinates thought that they had a high-quality relationship with their leader (high LMX). Therefore, our findings support the general notion that abusive supervision in high LMX dyads motivates people to preserve these kinds of relationships by blaming themselves for having done something wrong that might have jeopardized this relationship, subsequently feeling guilty, and making up for it by being more helpful.

Our findings have important theoretical consequences. First, contrary to the common logic portrayed in the abusive supervision literature, our findings show that subordinates may not clearly construe themselves as victims, but instead also blame themselves. This represents a pivot from the literature's dominant narrative, which is that abused subordinates will blame their supervisor and, in an attempt to get even, engage in more supervisor-directed deviance. Maybe it was this narrative, which sought to mainly explain reductions in cooperative behaviors, that restricted the reported findings in previous studies. Instead, we allowed the notion that subordinates may also engage in relationship-promotive behaviors, such as supervisor-directed helping. By additionally including subordinate self-blame, guilt, and the boundary condition of LMX, we can now present a theoretical model that is firmly rooted in the socio-functional perspective on emotions (Ekman, 1992; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) to put supervisor-directed helping on the agenda of abusive supervision research. This further enabled us to conceptually integrate previous findings that subordinates may sometimes experience self-blame for their experiences of abusive supervision (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Burton et al., 2014), which could not have been explained through the common theoretical focus on supervisor-directed blame. As such, the newly uncovered guilt-driven response path extends the

emotional process theory of abusive supervision (Oh & Farh, 2017) that had so far only covered anger, fear, and sadness.

This is not to say that supervisor-directed blame does not matter in the context of our study. In line with the extant literature, we, too, find that subordinates blame their supervisor and experience anger, both of which subsequently feed into a retaliatory logic as expressed via supervisor-directed deviance. Yet, that does not contradict our results. Indeed, both processes of supervisor- and self-blame may co-occur because such attributions may vary across time or because people may hold paradoxical combinations of both (Galvin et al., 2018). In fact, even related emotional responses such as anger and guilt may exist in parallel as part of an experienced emotional ambivalence (Pratt & Doucet, 2000). In this regard, it is interesting that daily variations in self-blame and supervisor-directed blame ($r = .36$, $p < .001$) and between anger and guilt (between $r = .13$ and $r = .23$, $p < .001$) were weakly to moderately correlated in our sample (Table 3). Thus, it seems that employees may simultaneously experience these things. Interestingly, these ambivalent experiences may also form the basis of the resource perspective on abusive supervision (Zhang, Liu, Xu, Yang, & Bednall, 2019). According to this perspective, abusive supervision may challenge employees to process, interpret, and understand the causes of their treatment and potentially lead to cognitive dissonance and aversive emotional states (Thau & Mitchell, 2010). By showing that abusive supervision may elicit both kinds of blame attributions, we also contribute to a better understanding of what exactly may cause this dissonance and drain self-regulation capacity. Going further, it seems worthwhile for future studies to investigate when one response is elicited more than the other and how they reciprocally impact each other. On the one hand, there may be intra-individual dynamics where one attribution tends to dominate over time in an attempt to reduce cognitive dissonance. For

example, differences in locus of control (Rotter, 1966; Spector, 1988) or general attribution styles (Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, & Douglas, 2011) might render some subordinates more likely to blame themselves versus their supervisor, or vice-versa. On the other hand, there may be other situational factors beyond the presently investigated LMX that may prompt one versus the other blame process. Thus, while the co-occurrence of these attributions and emotions is in line with theoretical expectations, we call for more research on investigating their dispositional or situational dynamics, and how these feed into retaliatory, withdrawal, or relationship-promotive behaviors.

Continuing on the note of ambivalence, our study shows the benefits of considering ambivalent aspects in the same relationship, such as episodes of abusive supervision in an otherwise high LMX relationship. It is not uncommon to find such ambivalent experiences in close relationships, such as those with spouses, siblings, and parents. For example, in one study amongst women who were having an abortion, researchers found that said women experienced significant distress when mothers and friends were perceived to be both a source of conflict and support (Major, Zubek, Cooper, Cozzarelli, & Richards, 1997). Interestingly, the person being a source of conflict had no effect on distress when the same person's support was also low. Speaking to a similar dynamic, Lian and colleagues (2012) found that the negative effects of abusive supervision on need satisfaction and organizational deviance were stronger (weaker) when LMX was high (low). Likewise, Xu and colleagues (2015) found that the silencing effect of abusive supervision on subordinates due to emotional exhaustion is even more severe under high (compared to low) LMX. All in all, it seems that people respond more adversely to negative relational information when they believe they have an otherwise good relationship with the other person. While LMX may be a good predictor for follower performance (Gottfredson & Aguinis,

2017), good LMX may thus not be an unmitigated boon for organizations if the demands of such relationships motivate employees to behave in ways that may be personally or professionally harmful (Berneht, Walker, & Harris, 2016). Despite some caution that abusive supervision and LMX may tap into the same implicit leadership theory (Martinko et al., 2011), these results strongly suggest that future studies seem well advised not to equate (episodes of) abusive supervision with low LMX, but instead try to tease apart the complexity of interpersonal relationship experiences that people find themselves in.

We believe that the complex social circumstances in which abusive supervision occurs will also have to be considered more if we want to better understand the depths of when and why people feel guilty. For example, Farh and Chen (2014) found in a post-hoc analysis (Study 2) that people who were abused less than their coworkers felt more guilty than when no one was abused. And indeed, equity theory suggests that people will feel guilty when they experience positive inequity (Adams, 1965). Though they did not look at cooperative behaviors as an outcome, their results indicate that guilt may be an important outcome when people socially compare their experience of abuse to that received by their coworkers. In the future, it would be interesting to test how social comparisons related to abusive supervision may foster guilt and, subsequently, helping behaviors. Again, this speaks to the complexity of attribution processes and the related emotional responses. The prevalent conception that subordinates will blame their supervisor for their abuse may be too simplistic, as other interpretations of the received behavioral cues may be possible amidst the complexity of interpersonal dynamics.

In this regard, it is important to note that we focused in this study on guilt because it is theoretically tied to preserving relationships and helping. Specifically, guilt is a self-conscious emotion that is triggered by blaming oneself for a specific wrongdoing. Note that, in that sense,

guilt is different from shame, which is the result of perceiving oneself as socially excluded and which implies a general negative self-evaluation (Gruenewald, Kemeny, Aziz, & Fahey, 2004; Leary, Haupt, Strausser, & Chokel, 1998). As such, the behavioral response associated with shame is to withdraw from the situation that elicited the shame and hide from other people (Lindsay-Hartz, De Rivera, & Mascolo, 1995; Tangney & Fischer, 1995). For example, shame mediates the negative effect of abusive supervision on voice, which accords with the argument that shame is associated with low self-worth--and thus potentially the belief that one will not be taken seriously when voicing one's opinion (Peng, Schaubroek, Chong, & Li, 2018). Despite this tendency to withdraw, some research also argues that shame may motivate prosocial behaviors when withdrawal may not be a realistic option (De Hooge, Breugelmans, & Zeelenberg, 2008). Thus, while there may be a case for linking abusive supervision to supervisor-directed helping via shame, we think that the related cognitions and situational constraints will likely be different from the ones laid out in this study. Thus, future research should investigate the circumstances under which shame may trigger supervisor-directed helping. More generally, this approach underscores the importance of looking at discrete emotions to understand the full range of responses to abusive supervision. More fine-grained emotions offer important extensions of previous studies that have looked at broader concepts such as negative affect (e.g., Hobbler & Hu, 2013).

On a similar note, future research could investigate the two supervisor-directed behaviors, helping and deviance. We found support for both in the present study. To our knowledge, we are the first to establish a link between abusive supervision and supervisor-directed helping; however, the link with supervisor-directed deviance is already widely established in the literature (e.g., ρ=.53 across 14 studies in the meta-analysis of Mackey et al.,

2017). Importantly, this duality is not at odds with previous studies: For example, irrespective of the abusive supervision theme, Dalal and colleagues (2009) showed that the same employees may engage in both supervisor-directed deviance and helping. While they explained this through intra-personal variations in positive and negative affect, our study hints at the specific emotions (i.e., guilt and anger) and related attributions (i.e., self-blame and supervisor-directed blame) that may cause variations in affect. Thus, our findings may also inspire those who are interested in the relationship between supervisor-directed deviance and supervisor-directed helping behaviors.

Having added supervisor-directed helping as a possible subordinate response to abusive supervision, we naturally pivot to the question about long-term consequences, and whether helping in this context can and should be considered an effective coping mechanism. On the one hand, it is possible that what we observed is part of a self-defeating pattern in organizations and possibly destructive leader-follower relationships (Schmidt, Pircher Verdorfer, & Peus, 2019). And indeed, there are some studies that argue that leaders may strategically engage in abusive supervision (e.g., Feris et al., 2009), especially when they believe in the instrumentality of abusive supervision in eliciting desirable work behaviors (Walter, Lam, van der Vegt, Huang, & Miao, 2015; Watkins, Fehr, & He, 2019). In fact, previous studies have found that abusive supervision can also elicit other organizationally productive consequences such as task performance (Liao et al., in press). Thus, it seems theoretically conceivable that leaders who learn that their abusive supervision leads to such productive consequences, including supervisor-directed helping, will engage in even more subsequent abuse. Unfortunately, that specific question was beyond the scope or design of our study. As such, it is up to future research to explore whether supervisors engage intentionally in abusive behaviors because they hope to elicit

more help from their subordinates or, more generally, because they think it will help them achieve their goal.

Another consideration should be that subordinates' guilt is likely to further curtail their already stymied voice behavior (cf., Xu, Loi, & Lam, 2015) when they as targets of abusive supervision will also blame themselves for their experienced abuse. In the aftermath, once subordinates learn that they cannot control or reduce their abusive supervision, Oh and Farh (2017) reason that they may become sad or even depressed, perhaps eventually turning to substance abuse, especially if they cannot escape the abusive supervisor (e.g., by leaving the organization). On the other hand, our theory assumes that targets of abusive supervision engage in supervisor-directed helping in order to fix their threatened good relationship with their supervisor and, by doing so, reduce future chances of abuse. Here, too, there is evidence suggesting that helping (Gross & Latane, 1974) and displays of guilt may appease the other party and elicit increased cooperation from it (cf., Vaish, 2018). In addition, it has been argued that self-blame may increase one's sense of control (e.g., Bulman & Wortman, 1977) by focusing the individual on personal behaviors that can be changed. Oddly enough then, people sometimes prefer thinking that "if I was treated bad, I must deserve it" than to accept the unpredictability of their life circumstances (Lerner, 1980). This suggests that employees who blame themselves will be better able to cope with abusive supervision because they believe they can control it. Ironically, this could also mean that those employees might refrain from asking for support for dealing with an abusive supervisor because they feel they are in control. Thus, both perspectives are theoretically plausible. It is hence an empirical question to see whether, over time, helping an abusive supervisor will unfold in self-defeating ways for the victim or can indeed be considered instrumental in coping with abuse. Unfortunately, our data are not well suited to test these

mechanisms because supervisors and employees sometimes disagree whether a behavior was performed as extra-role behavior (helping) or as a part of the formal job requirements (Morrison, 1994). Thus, we do not know whether and how the leader actually perceives the subordinates' helping efforts. Moreover, a two-week period may be too short to investigate long-term effects. We thus call for future studies that are designed to more conclusively address the long-term consequences of helping an abusive supervisor.

In closing, by showing that abusive supervision can trigger self-blame driven helping responses in high quality relationships, this study uncovered potentially dysfunctional relationship patterns in organizations. By uncovering these patterns, research may ultimately be able to not only understand better why they exist but also find ways to effectively fight them.

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TABLE 1. Structural Equation Estimates (SEM) of the interactive effects of abusive supervision and LMX on self-blame, guilt, and daily supervisor-directed helping (Study 1).

	Self-blame		Guilt		Supervisor-directed helping	
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Guilt					.19**	(.07)
Self-blame			.78***	(.05)	.15*	(.07)
Abusive supervision	-.23	(.23)	-.06	(.15)	-.63***	(.15)
LMX	-.29	(.24)	-.07	(.16)	.48*	(.16)
Abusive supervision x LMX	1.07**	(.33)	.08	(.22)	-.19	(.22)

Note. $N = 200$; Abusive supervision and LMX coded 0=low, 1=high. Significance levels are two-tailed: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 2 Descriptive statistics (Study 2).

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Supervisor-directed helping (T+1)	2.00	1.07	(.87)	.66	.01	-.02	.02	.04	.12	.10	-.01	.05	-.01	.09	.02	-.01
2. Supervisor-directed helping (T)	1.77	0.97	.81	(.86)	-.01	.01	.04	.07	.07	.10	-.01	.03	.04	-.01	.12	-.01
3. Guilt (T+1)	1.20	0.59	.30	.36	(.89)	.31	.11	-.01	-.24	-.17	.09	.23	.13	.01	.01	-.01
4. Guilt (T)	1.17	0.56	.27	.36	.71	(.91)	.07	.09	-.12	-.17	.08	.15	.18	.07	.06	-.01
6. Self-blame (T)	1.41	0.94	.12	.18	.52	.49	(.87)	.09	.01	-.01	.36	.04	.06	.02	.03	-.01
7. Abusive supervision (T)	1.11	0.47	.31	.42	.57	.61	.48	(.76)	-.07	-.02	.21	.12	.24	.12	.25	-.01
8. Performance (T+1)	6.03	0.92	.15	.14	-.22	-.13	-.18	-.03	(.88)	.42	-.09	-.19	-.12	-.01	.01	.01
9. Performance (T)	6.00	0.90	.13	.15	-.16	-.11	-.16	.03	.71	(.87)	-.06	-.16	-.19	.02	-.03	-.01
10. Supervisor-directed blame (T)	1.92	1.67	.09	.13	.31	.30	.47	.46	-.11	-.12	(.92)	.15	.23	.12	.09	-.01
11. Anger (T+1)	1.50	0.90	.21	.27	.51	.49	.33	.55	-.16	-.12	.45	(.78)	.49	.07	.12	-.01
12. Anger (T)	1.45	0.89	.21	.30	.50	.54	.35	.63	-.11	-.10	.47	.85	(.82)	.04	.11	.01
13. Supervisor-directed deviance (T+1)	1.10	0.44	.27	.32	.61	.61	.56	.74	-.11	-.05	.35	.47	.49	(.68)	.28	.01
14. Supervisor-directed deviance (T)	1.09	0.45	.24	.35	.60	.61	.57	.77	-.10	-.05	.32	.44	.49	.93	(.62)	-.01
15. LMX	3.69	0.77	.18	.12	-.03	-.03	-.12	-.15	.20	.18	-.48	-.22	-.20	-.01	.00	(.88)

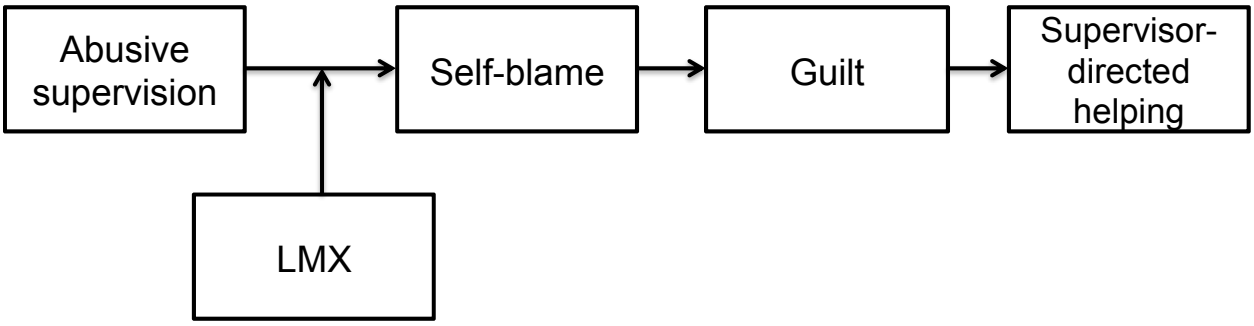
Note: Raw score means and standard deviations are shown in the left columns, raw score correlations are presented below the diagonal, and person-mean centered correlations above the diagonal. On the diagonal we report reliabilities. For all person-mean centered variables we report McDonald's (1999) Omega (ω) statistic. Only for LMX we report Cronbach's alpha (α). Note: the consistent null correlations in the last column with LMX are the result of the person-mean centering of the daily surveyed variables. $N = 2{,}215$. Below the diagonal all correlations > |.08| are significant at $p < .001$, all others are non-significant. Above the diagonal all correlations > |.04| are significant at $p < .05$, correlations > |.07| are significant at $p < .001$. All significance levels reported in this table are two-tailed.

TABLE 3 Interactive effects of daily abusive supervision and LMX on self-blame, guilt, and daily supervisor-directed helping (Study 2).

	Self-blame (T)		Guilt (T+1)		Supervisor-directed helping (T+1)	
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	γ	*SE*	*γ*	*SE*	*γ*	*SE*
Supervisor-directed helping (T)					.69***	(.02)
Guilt (T+1)					.08**	(.03)
Guilt (T)			.29***	(.02)	-.04	(.03)
Self-blame (T)			.05***	(.01)	-.02	(.02)
Abusive supervision (T)	.78***	(.22)	.05	(.11)	-.02	(.11)
LMX	-.01	(.01)	-.01	(.01)	.01	(.01)
Abusive supervision (T) x LMX	.46*	(.21)	.12	(.10)	-.02	(.08)
Performance (T+1)			-.13***	(.01)	.09***	(.02)
Performance (T)	-.01	(.02)	-.02	(.01)	.01	(.02)
R^2 (daily-level)	.01		.15		.44	

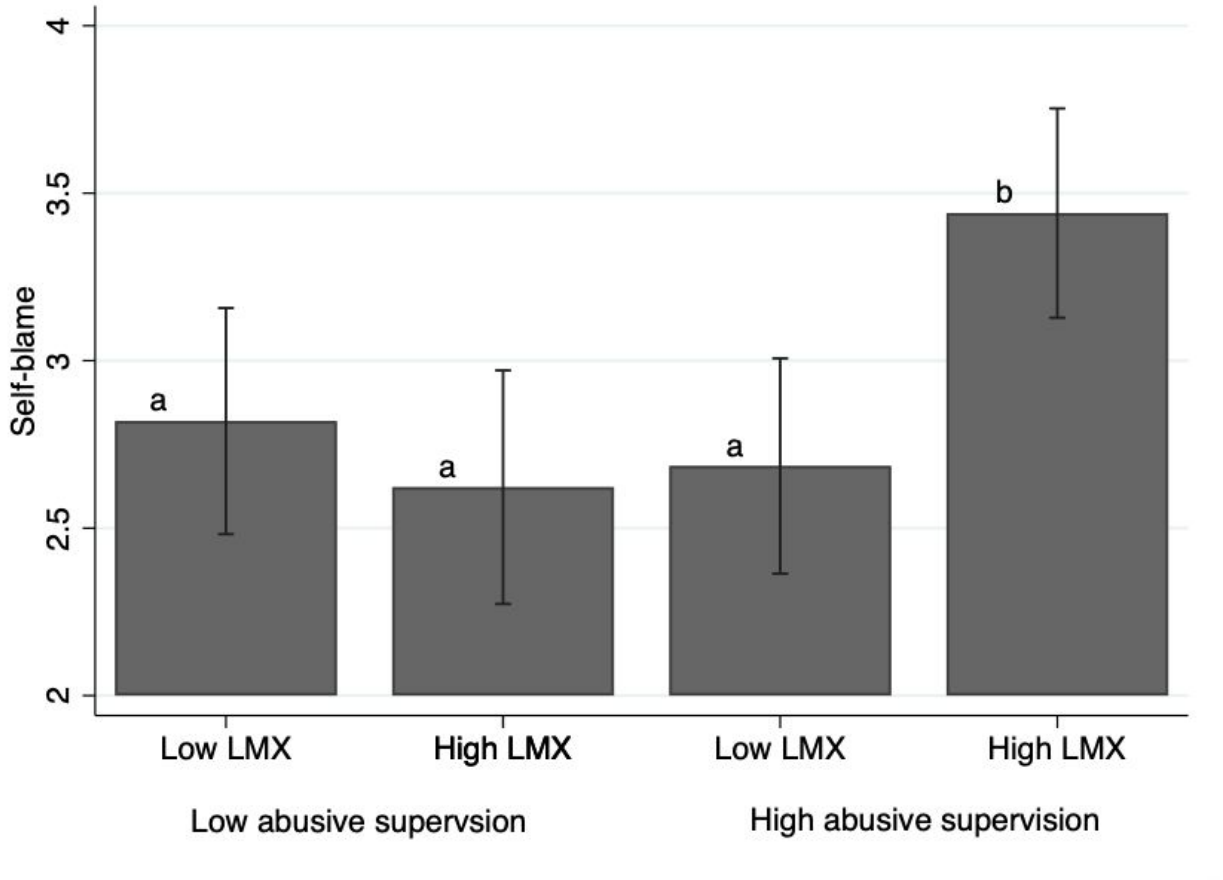
Note. N = 2,215; k = 275 (i.e., 2,215 daily observations nested within 275 subordinates). All variables within one working day. Significance levels are two-tailed: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

FIGURE 1 Theoretical model



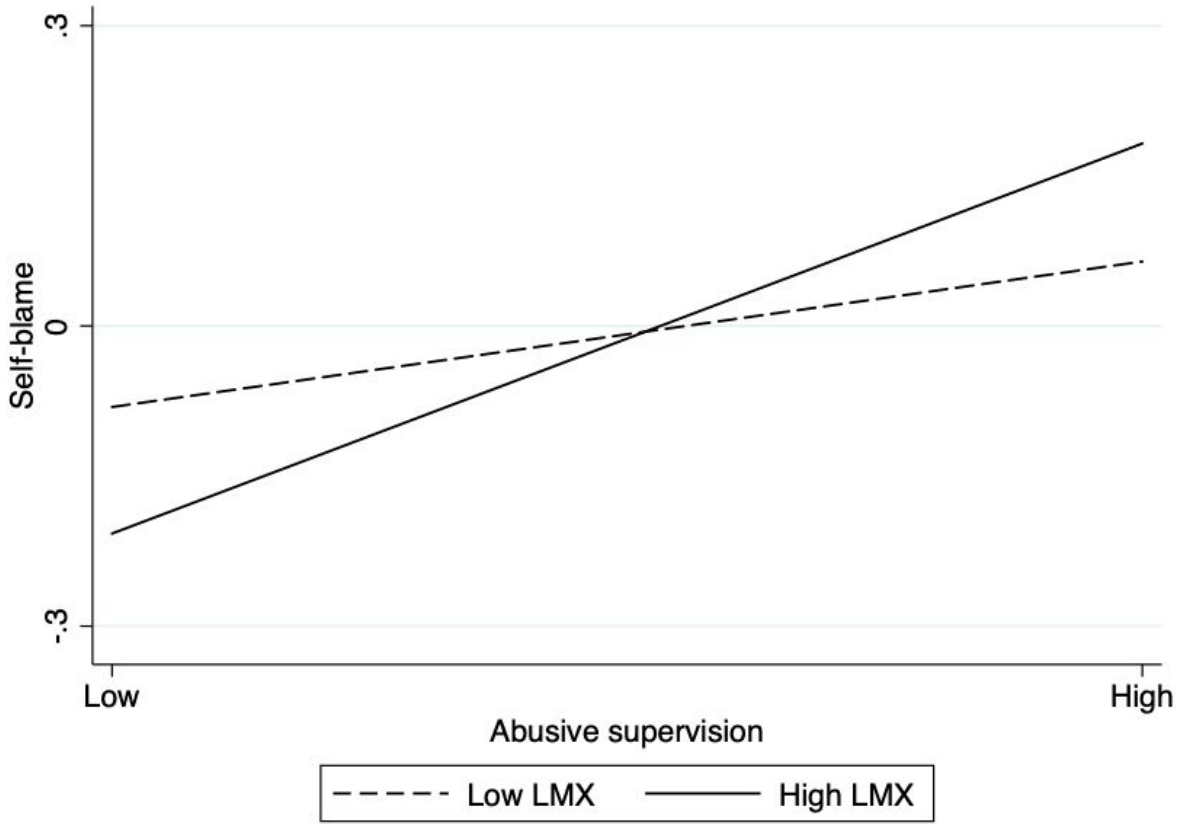
Note. All variables are conceptualized from the subordinate's point of view

FIGURE 2 Interactive effects of abusive supervision and LMX on self-blame (Study 1).



Note: Different letters indicate significant differences between conditions ($p < 0.05$). Whiskers are 95% confidence intervals.

FIGURE 3 Interactive effects of abusive supervision and LMX on self-blame (Study 2)



Note: Daily guilt was within-person centered. Negative (positive) values represent lower than (greater than) average level of self-blame for a focal person.

Christian Tröster (christian.troester@the-klu.org) is an associate professor of leadership and organizational behavior at the Kühne Logistics University, Hamburg, Germany. He received his PhD from Rotterdam School of Management (Erasmus University). His current research focuses on leadership, social comparisons, and social networks in organizations. Through his work with some co-authors he had experienced the surprisingly positive outcomes of abuse and couldn't wait to research it.

Niels Van Quaquebeke (niels.quaquebeke@the-kl.org) is professor of leadership and organizational behavior at the Kühne Logistics University (DE) and distinguished research professor at the University of Exeter Business School (UK). Throughout his various jobs (in kitchens, construction sites, media, strategy consulting, and universities), he experienced his fair share of abusive bosses (some actually chasing him with a baseball bat) and oddly enough sometimes he even felt guilty and worked harder to make it up to them. That had to be researched.