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# MY FAMILY MADE ME DO IT: A CROSS-DOMAIN, SELF-REGULATORY PERSPECTIVE ON ANTECEDENTS TO ABUSIVE SUPERVISION

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Drawing on resource drain theory, we introduce self-regulatory resource (ego) depletion stemming from family–work conflict (FWC) as an alternative theoretical perspective on why supervisors behave abusively toward subordinates. Our two-study examination of a cross-domain antecedent of abusive supervision stands in contrast to prior research, which has focused primarily on work-related factors that influence abusive supervision. Further, our investigation shows how ego depletion is proximally related to abusive supervision. In the first study, conducted at a Fortune 500 company and designed as a lagged survey study, we found that, after controlling for alternative theoretical mechanisms, supervisors who experienced FWC displayed more abusive behaviors toward subordinates, and that this relationship was stronger for female supervisors and for supervisors who operated in environments with greater situation control. These results were then replicated and expanded in an experience sampling study using a multi-organization sample of supervisors. This allowed us to study the FWC–abusive supervision relationship as it emerged on a day-to-day basis and to examine ego depletion as an explanatory mechanism. Consistent with our hypotheses, we found that FWC was associated with abusive supervision, ego depletion acted as a mediator of the FWC–abusive supervision relationship, and that gender and situation control served as moderators.

Approximately 14% of U.S. employees are victims of abusive supervision (Schat, Frone, & Kelloway, 2006), defined as nonphysical aggression exhibited by supervisors toward subordinates (Tepper, 2000). Despite being a low base-rate phenomenon, abusive supervision is costly to victims, families, and organizations. For example, abusive supervision is associated

with outcomes ranging from poor performance (Peng, Schaubroeck, & Li, 2014) and deviant work behavior (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007), to alcoholism (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006) and family undermining (Hoobler & Brass, 2006). Furthermore, corporations lose approximately \$23.8 billion annually from lost productivity, grievance procedures, and health care costs stemming from abusive supervision and related behaviors (Tepper, 2007). For these reasons, as noted by Tepper (2007: 262), “abusive supervisory behavior is a significant social problem that warrants continued scholarly inquiry.”

With research having already identified negative organizational and societal consequences of abusive

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supervision, perhaps a more critical question at this point is why supervisors behave abusively toward subordinates. Indeed, only by identifying the *antecedents* of abusive supervision can scholars and practitioners hope to understand its causes and thus curtail its occurrence. The few studies that have examined antecedents of abusive supervision have identified various work-related antecedents, such as organizational injustice, upper-level abusive supervision, and poor subordinate performance, based on displaced aggression, social learning, and moral exclusion theoretical perspectives (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Liu, Liao & Loi, 2012; Mawritz, Mayer, Hoobler, Wayne, & Marinova, 2012; Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). However, theorists dating back to Freud (1933) have suggested that, relative to other antecedents, self-regulatory resources are the most proximal predictors of interpersonal aggression because they serve as an inner set of psychological restraints that prevent aggressive impulses from translating into actual aggression. Self-regulatory resources are finite, and, when depleted, interpersonal aggression is likely to occur because the individual has lost the self-control necessary to combat aggressive impulses. Thus, a more complete understanding of the antecedents of abusive supervision should consider two things: (1) how self-regulatory resource depletion contributes to the occurrence of abusive supervision, and (2) which factors cause self-regulatory resources to become depleted.

In that regard, resource drain theory (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Rothbard, 2001; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003) emphasizes the theoretical relevance of negative family–work dynamics as a key driver of self-regulatory resource depletion. This is because the stress involved with facing competing family–work demands causes individuals to expend more energy “focusing attention on the self and exercising self-control, which consumes energy, a process that psychologists refer to as ego depletion” (Rothbard, 2001: 659). These theoretical arguments, though not empirically proven, do corroborate findings from a relatively recent survey (ComPsych Corporation, 2011) in which 66% of respondents reported sometimes feeling “out of control” at work because of stress, with 18% of these employees reporting that the single biggest cause of this stress was juggling work and family demands. Indeed, the stress of juggling work and family life was significant enough that 29% of respondents reported that stress from family issues made them ineffective at work five or more days per year. Nevertheless, most research

has drawn conclusions about how managers can help their employees to better manage family–work dynamics while failing to give consideration to how family–work dynamics impact managers and their behavior toward subordinates (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Yet, as stated by one executive in considering the impact of family life on leadership behavior, “I lose it sometimes. If . . . I was at something late and up early with the kids, then I am not a particularly good colleague at work” (Singh, 2012).

With an understanding that negative family–work dynamics could potentially influence abusive supervision through self-regulatory resource depletion, the purpose of our study is to provide a theoretically driven test of this phenomenon, and to extend understanding by investigating potential boundary conditions. In particular, across two different studies—a lagged survey study at a Fortune 500 company and an experience sampling study using a cross-organization sample of supervisors—we invoke resource drain theory to propose that supervisors who experience family–work conflict (FWC) are more likely to engage in abusive behaviors toward subordinates. This occurs because FWC, defined as demands and strain in the family domain that interfere with work responsibilities (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003), depletes finite self-regulatory resources that normally serve to inhibit abusive behavior. However, based on resource drain theory, we propose that this relationship is moderated by two variables: gender and situation-control. First, resource drain theory suggests that, when individuals face competing family–work demands, they make decisions about the allocation of personal resources across family and work roles, and, in turn, these decisions determine the extent to which self-regulatory resources are depleted in response to FWC. Gender is a particularly relevant indicator of how individuals make resource allocation decisions (Nolen-Hoeksema & Corte, 2004; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). Accordingly, we predict that the FWC–abusive supervision relationship is stronger for female supervisors because they tend to allocate more time and energy away from work and toward family when these roles conflict (Cinamon & Rich, 2002), causing greater expenditure of self-regulatory resources as they deal with the effects of FWC on their work performance. Second, the FWC–abusive supervision relationship is stronger for supervisors who operate in environments of high situation control—that is, where the threat of being punished for engaging in aggressive behavior is lower (Marcus & Schuler, 2004)—because a lack of

external restraints on aggressive behavior, coupled with a loss of inner restraints that normally inhibit aggressive impulses from finding expression, exacerbates the effects of self-regulatory resource depletion on abusive supervision.

Our study is intended to make a number of contributions to theory and research. Among these are that, first, in response to the critique that the abusive supervision literature is “more phenomenon driven than theory driven” (Tepper, 2007: 285), and the fact that most of the literature focuses on consequences rather than on antecedents of abusive supervision, we draw on resource drain theory to introduce an overlooked theoretical process whereby the occurrence of abusive supervision can be explained—namely, self-regulatory resource depletion resulting from competing family–work demands. This theoretical perspective differs from most others in the literature because it proposes abusive supervision to be the result of self-regulatory failure rather than intentional or mimicked behavior (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave, & Christian, 2015). Second, our theoretical perspective suggests antecedents of abusive supervision that include factors outside of the work domain, a perspective severely lacking not only in the abusive supervision literature but also lacking in broader leadership theories as well. Third, by drawing on resource drain theory, we uncover unique individual and situational boundary conditions of the abusive supervision phenomenon that, up to this point, have not received attention. Finally, from a practical perspective, our research introduces family–work dynamics and ego depletion as areas of focus for interventions designed to reduce abusive supervision. Furthermore, it allows organizations to target these interventions to the individuals and situations for which they will be most efficacious.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

### Prior Theoretical Perspectives

The small number of studies that exist on antecedents to abusive supervision have used theories of social learning, displaced aggression, and moral exclusion to shed light on why supervisors act abusively toward subordinates. For example, Liu et al. (2012) and Mawritz et al. (2012) framed abusive supervision as a socially learned behavior and demonstrated that supervisors who were abused by their managers emulated similar behavior toward their subordinates. Conversely, Aryee et al. (2007) and

Tepper et al. (2006) took a displaced aggression perspective and found that supervisors who experienced injustices, workplace constraints, or psychological contract violations were more likely to abuse their subordinates. This was argued to be because supervisors sought to transfer the negative emotions associated with these events to lower-power subordinates in the form of abusive supervision as a means of mood repair. Hence, the displaced aggression perspective frames abusive supervision as a purposeful negative emotion-focused coping strategy stemming from workplace stressors and constraints. Finally, from a moral exclusion perspective, Tepper, Moss, and Duffy (2011) found that abusive supervisors purposefully targeted low-performing subordinates who were perceived as psychologically dissimilar and with whom they had relational conflicts because such individuals were excluded from supervisors’ scope of justice.

Although these theoretical perspectives elucidate some of the antecedents and causal mechanisms that explain abusive supervision, they are limited in at least two ways. First, they assume that abusive supervision is primarily affected by factors in the work domain. However, research on family–work dynamics argues that employees are significantly impacted by nonwork factors as well, particularly those in the family domain (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). Indeed, family and work roles are seen as the most salient roles held in society, and, as such, researchers have argued that home and family experiences “should be considered alongside more proximate work events in shaping understanding of how employees feel and perform at work” (Rothbard & Wilk, 2011: 976). However, while practitioners are increasingly becoming more aware of the linkages between the nonwork domain and leader effectiveness (Friedman, 2008), leadership research has largely neglected this perspective in seeking to explain why leaders behave the way they do.

Second, while prior theoretical perspectives assume that abusive supervision can be explained as a mimicked behavior, a conscious attempt to minimize negative emotions, or as a behavior purposely targeted toward certain individuals (Tepper, Duffy, & Breaux-Soignet, 2011), theorists have argued that the most proximal cause of interpersonal aggression is the depletion of self-regulatory resources that otherwise prevent aggressive impulses from translating into actual aggression (Hagger, Wood, Stiff, & Chatzisarantis, 2010; Stucke & Baumeister, 2006). Hence, inner self-regulatory resources should be accounted for in explaining why abusive supervision

occurs. However, this also begs the question of what antecedents of abusive supervision tend to evoke self-regulatory resource depletion. In that regard, theory and research suggest that self-regulatory resources are most likely to become depleted when individuals face stress from having to meet competing demands from unrelated domains with established boundaries (Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012; Rothbard, 2001). This is because individuals tend to construct mental boundaries around different task domains and thus expend more cognitive effort to span domains with more established boundaries (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). In other words, transitioning between tasks within a single social domain requires less cognitive effort than transitioning between tasks across two distinct domains. Thus, self-regulatory impairment, and, by extension, abusive supervision, is likely predicted by constructs that capture individuals facing competing demands across unrelated domains with clear boundaries.

In an effort to address and bridge these key limitations in abusive supervision theory and research, we provide a more complete explanation of the occurrence of abusive supervision. Across two studies, we develop, test, and refine a model of antecedents to abusive supervision based on resource drain theory. As we explain below, this theory assumes that self-regulatory resource depletion is a result of facing competing demands across distinct domains—specifically, across family and work domains—and that self-regulatory resource depletion, in turn, proximally predicts abusive supervision. In that sense, resource drain theory is instrumental to developing and testing a model that not only overcomes the limitations of the abusive supervision literature noted previously, but also introduces an understudied explanation for why abusive supervision occurs and broadens our understanding of the antecedents of this complex phenomenon.

### Resource Drain Theory

Resource drain theory—which originated in the family–work literature and was first articulated by Rothbard and colleagues (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Rothbard, 2001; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003)—is an integrative theory of family–work dynamics that seeks to explain the relationship between the family and work domains, as well as how and why conflict between these domains impacts various outcomes. The theory is based on three fundamental concepts that, prior to Rothbard and colleagues’ theoretical work,

largely existed as separate concepts in the literature: (1) resource scarcity (Goode, 1960), (2) interrole conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) and (3) ego depletion (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998).

Resource drain theory begins with the notion that family and work domains each have their own unique demands and expectations and are therefore distinct domains of life (Eby et al., 2005). This does not mean, however, that these domains do not impact one another. Instead, each domain acts as a so-called “greedy institution” (Coser, 1974) that demands and expects as much as possible from any given person. However, individuals have a finite reservoir of personal resources, such as time and energy, that they are able to devote to meeting the demands across the family and work domains. As such, individuals have a difficult time “juggling” work and family demands, since these demands are often competing instead of complementary. In that sense, family and work, despite being distinct life domains, are linked because individuals have a scarce amount of time and energy to allocate across the two domains.

Because individuals must make tradeoffs when allocating time and energy across family and work domains, resource drain theory suggests that there are often conflicts between these domains. This interrole conflict is conceptualized as *work–family conflict*, defined as an individual perceiving that demands in one domain are creating strain and inhibiting him or her from meeting expectations in the other domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). However, there are different forms of work–family conflict depending on the *source* and the *target* of the conflict. On one hand, work demands can serve as the primary source of strain and make it difficult to meet expectations in the family domain. On the other hand, family demands can create strain and make it difficult to meet expectations in the family domain. Research demonstrates that the target of the conflict, rather than the source, is where the effects of work–family conflict are primarily felt and exhibited (Judge, Ilies, & Scott, 2006). Hence, in our study, we focus on FWC conflict because we are seeking to predict an outcome (i.e., abusive supervision) that is exhibited at work.

In that vein, the final concept of resource drain theory—ego depletion—is the mechanism that we propose explains the relationship between FWC and abusive supervision. Specifically, according to resource drain theory, when people make disproportionate investments of time and energy in the family domain, they are inhibited from achieving optimal functioning in the work domain because time and

energy are, again, scarce resources. This lack of optimal functioning in the work domain as a result of FWC not only introduces a discrepancy between one's current state and an ideal state at work, but also induces strain as individuals dwell on the discrepancy and the family-related factors that created it. In turn, Rothbard (2001) argued that self-regulatory (self-control) processes are employed to deal with this strain and to manage competing family-work demands. However, as with other resources, Rothbard also contended, based on Baumeister and colleagues' work (Baumeister et al., 1998; Baumeister, Muraven, & Tice, 2000), that self-control is a limited psychological resource that, when expended, results in a cognitive state called *ego depletion*, defined as a reduced cognitive capacity for self-regulation due to the loss of self-regulatory resources. Ego depletion is characterized both by mental fatigue and a loss of personal control over one's behavioral responses to stressful situations.

Studies employing resource drain theory have typically examined engagement and involvement in the family or work domain as outcomes of ego depletion (e.g., Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). However, we extend this literature by proposing that ego depletion serves as the key explanatory mechanism linking FWC and abusive supervision. This is based on Rothbard's (2001) arguments regarding the relationship between FWC and ego depletion, as well as Baumeister and colleagues' (DeWall, Baumeister, Stillman, & Gailliot, 2007; Stucke & Baumeister, 2006) findings on how ego depletion influences aggressive behavior. Specifically, ego depletion, caused by expending self-regulatory resources on meeting the demands of other unrelated tasks, results in increased interpersonal aggression (Barnes et al., 2015). The reason why ego depletion is linked to aggressive behavior—and why, in fact, it has been shown to be the most proximal cause of aggressive behavior compared to other “root causes” of aggression such as negative emotion (DeWall et al., 2007)—is because ego depletion involves the breakdown of self-restraints that normally prevent aggressive impulses from surfacing. Indeed, the literature on ego depletion argues that humans have “aggressive impulses stimulated by various conflict and threat situations, but . . . [they] will have been socialized to know that they should refrain from acting on most of these impulses” (Stucke & Baumeister, 2006: 2). Resource drain theory suggests that FWC is associated with ego depletion because it involves having to deal with competing demands across different contexts (Hagger et al., 2010). Then, as supervisors experience ego depletion

because of FWC, they become less able to suppress aggressive impulses that are triggered by a range of demands and threat situations in the work domain. Hence, as FWC reduces supervisors' cognitive capacity for self-regulation, aggressive impulses are more likely to find expression in the form of abusive supervision.

*Hypothesis 1a. Supervisor FWC is positively associated with abusive supervision.*

*Hypothesis 1b. Ego depletion mediates the positive relationship between supervisor FWC and abusive supervision.*

### Moderating Effects

Although resource drain theory suggests a relationship between supervisor FWC and abusive supervision through a process of self-regulatory resource depletion, it also suggests that the impact of FWC on abusive supervision depends on resource allocation decisions made by individuals, as well as the presence of external restraints against aggressive behavior (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Lobel, 1991). Rarely, however, have these contingency factors been examined together in prior research, nor has their precise role in the resource drain process been well articulated in past studies. We integrate these contingency factors by examining gender and situation control as two moderators that impact the FWC-abusive supervision relationship. In particular, we describe, based on resource drain theory, how and where these moderators are proposed to function in the FWC-abusive supervision relationship.

**Gender.** As noted earlier, individuals have a finite supply of time and energy that they can allocate across family and work roles. This suggests that individuals must make decisions about how to invest and allocate time and energy across these roles (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Such allocation decisions are influenced in large part by societal expectations and identification processes (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). For example, a person or group of individuals who are expected by society to allocate more time and energy toward family (vs. work) will be more likely to do so because it conforms to normative standards. Similarly, those who construct their identities around being available to family (vs. work) will tend to devote greater time and energy toward family (vs. work).

In that regard, gender is posited within resource drain theory as a particularly relevant individual-difference

predictor of how individuals make resource allocation decisions across family and work roles (Nolen-Hoeksema & Corte, 2004; Rothbard, 2001; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). This is because men and women tend to differ in the amount of time and energy that they are expected to invest in work and family roles, and also because they tend to differ in the degree to which being available to family versus work is central to their identities. For example, from a traditional gender role perspective, women are generally expected by society to “bear greater responsibility for domestic tasks than do men” (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013: 9). In other words, women have traditionally shouldered more of the psychological and physical responsibilities related to family caretaking because it has generally been expected by society that they do so (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Westman, 2002). Although some have proposed that this trend may be changing in modern times, little evidence currently exists to support this assertion (Galinsky, 2005). Furthermore, research has shown that women “are likely to socially construct their family identity around being available to their family” (Greenhaus, Peng, & Allen, 2012: 34).

Building on these perspectives, we propose that, when demands between family and work are conflicting, female supervisors, relative to male supervisors, tend to transfer more time and energy away from work and toward family. This happens, as noted earlier, because female supervisors are more likely to be expected than male supervisors to address family demands, or because they have constructed their identities more around being available to family when demands in that domain arise. As this occurs, however, female supervisors have less time and energy that they can devote to their supervisory roles because these resources are instead being expended in the family domain. In turn, this produces a greater discrepancy between their current state and ideal state of leadership performance, and results in greater levels of strain on the part of female supervisors. This then necessitates the expenditure of self-regulatory resources as female supervisors seek to deal with the strain and competing family and work demands, all of which results in higher levels of ego depletion (relative to male supervisors), and thus more abusive supervisory behaviors.

Hence, to summarize our arguments, female supervisors will be more likely to react to FWC with abusive supervision because, relative to male supervisors, they will experience greater levels of ego depletion when facing FWC. This assumes, however, that men and women have similar tendencies toward

engaging in abusive supervisory behavior in general, and also toward engaging in abusive supervision as a result of experiencing ego depletion. This assumption is justified both by prior abusive supervision studies (e.g., Aryee et al., 2007; Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Mawritz et al., 2012) and the fact that no significant sex differences have been found in studies linking ego depletion to aggressive behavior (e.g., Stucke & Baumeister, 2006). This suggests not only that gender moderates the FWC–abusive supervision relationship because females experience greater ego depletion in response to FWC, but also, as Spector (2012) argued, that abusive supervision is not just a male phenomenon.

*Hypothesis 2a. Gender moderates the positive relationship between supervisor FWC and abusive supervision such that the relationship is stronger for female supervisors.*

*Hypothesis 2b. Gender moderates the indirect positive effects of supervisor FWC on abusive supervision through ego depletion such that the FWC–ego depletion path is stronger for female supervisors.*

**Situation control.** Resource drain theory suggests that self-regulatory resources serve as internal control mechanisms that regulate aggressive behavior, and, when ego depletion occurs due to FWC, these internal control mechanisms are impaired (Rothbard, 2001). When this occurs, it is possible that external controls (restraints) against aggressive behavior are the next most-salient determinant of whether individuals will act on aggressive impulses (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Wan & Sternthal, 2008). The more external restraints against abusive behavior that exist, the more that the effects of ego depletion on abusive behavior may be weakened because external restraints against such behavior may serve as substitutes for internal restraints. However, when external restraints on abusive behavior are limited, supervisors are more likely to escalate abusive behaviors against subordinates when faced with ego depletion. This perspective, consistent with resource drain theory, is also consistent with the broader counterproductive work behavior literature, which suggests that deviant behavior is more likely to occur in a situation perceived by aggressors as involving fewer sanctions for engaging in such behavior (Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013; Tomlinson & Greenberg, 2005). Marcus and Schuler (2004) described this type of perception as high *situation control*—that is, a perception that the situation in which one operates allows a person to engage in

counterproductive behavior without fear of social or organizational retribution.

Marcus and Schuler (2004) provided multiple examples of contextual characteristics that are indicators of situation control. The broadest and most encompassing of these situational characteristics is “job autonomy,” defined as the extent to which individuals have control over work methods, goals, and decisions related to their job (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Having higher job autonomy not only gives leaders greater discretion over goals and actions at work, but it also frees them to engage in a broader set of behaviors. Higher job autonomy (situation control) thus creates a work situation in which there are fewer constraints over supervisor behavior and less likelihood of abusive behavior being observed, caught, and punished. Indeed, Morrison (2006: 16) argued that higher job autonomy gives individuals a feeling of control and discretion allowing them to “perceive that they can deviate from formal organizational rules when they feel this is warranted.” In contrast, as situation control decreases, supervisors tend to have positions that are more structured and monitored, yielding a work situation that constrains the behaviors that supervisors can choose to engage in (Barrick & Mount, 1993) and increasing the likelihood of abusive behaviors being observed and punished (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Robinson & Bennett, 1997). As such, lower situation control is indicated by lower job autonomy and acts as an external regulatory mechanism to mitigate the occurrence of aggressive and deviant behavior.

In sum, we posit that the relationship between FWC and abusive supervision is stronger as supervisor situation control (i.e., higher job autonomy) increases. This is because ego depletion—the proposed mechanism explaining the FWC–abusive supervision relationship—involves the impairment of internal control mechanisms that restrain aggressive behavior, and supervisors are therefore less likely to keep aggressive impulses in check when the external environment does not constrain the expression of such impulses. Conversely, in contexts of lower situation control (i.e., lower job autonomy), the chance of being observed and punished for abusive supervision increases, thereby inhibiting to some degree the effects of ego depletion (i.e., the impairment of internal restraints) on abusive supervision.

*Hypothesis 3a. Situation control moderates the positive relationship between supervisor FWC and abusive supervision such that the relationship is stronger for supervisors with higher situation control.*

*Hypothesis 3b. Situation control moderates the indirect positive effects of FWC on abusive supervision through ego depletion such that the ego depletion–abusive supervision path is stronger for supervisors with higher situation control.*

## Overview of Studies

We designed two studies to test our hypotheses, which collectively investigate whether, when, and how FWC is related to abusive supervision. Study 1 is a lagged survey study designed to provide a partial test of our theory by examining Hypotheses 1a, 2a, and 3a. The study was conducted in a single organization and included measurements of FWC, abusive supervision, and our moderators at different points in time over a four-month period. In collecting overarching ratings of FWC and abusive supervision, raters were required to conduct some mental calculus to arrive at a single rating of variables that likely exhibit some day-to-day variance (Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, & Chang, 2012; Livingston & Judge, 2008). In that sense, Study 1 provides an estimation of the overarching relationship between FWC and abusive supervision, as well as its boundary conditions, over a longer period of time. However, our design in Study 1 did not allow us to test the mediating effects of ego depletion, because ego depletion is a cognitive state that is heavily influenced by daily recovery experiences (Barnes, Schaubroeck, Huth, & Ghumman, 2011; Welsh, Ellis, Christian, & Mai, 2014). As such, it is more appropriate to measure ego depletion on a daily basis rather than through reflection over a longer period of time.

Hence, Study 2 is an experience sampling study that captures how the FWC–abusive supervision relationship unfolds on a day-to-day basis through its effects on ego depletion, thereby allowing us to test Hypotheses 1b, 2b, and 3b (as well as replicate the tests of the other hypotheses). This study was conducted in a multi-organization sample of supervisors and included measurements of FWC, ego depletion, and abusive supervision over a period of 10 consecutive workdays. As with Study 1, we also measured and tested for the moderating effects of gender and situation control—but, having measured ego depletion, we were able to more precisely test the stage of the process at which these moderators operate. In that sense, our second study takes a more precise view of the FWC–abusive supervision relationship relative to Study 1. Taken together, these two studies provide a comprehensive examination of the FWC–abusive



supervision relationship—specifically, its magnitude, moderators, and a key explanatory mechanism.

## STUDY 1: METHODS

### Sample and Procedure

For Study 1, we recruited a sample of supervisors and subordinates at a Fortune 500 financial services organization to participate in the study. Supervisors in our sample were mid-level managers in a variety of functions in the firm's North America offices. The CEO of the company encouraged participation in the study by sending e-mails to organizational members. We then collected data from supervisors and subordinates with electronic surveys that were distributed at three different times. On the first survey, supervisors responded to questions regarding our control variables and their gender. Three months later, supervisors responded to items on FWC and situation control (job autonomy). Finally, a week after the second survey was completed, subordinates provided ratings of their direct supervisor's abusive supervision. A total of 220 supervisors and 867 subordinates in the organization were originally invited to participate in the study. However, complete matched data were available for 134 supervisors and 580 subordinates (average group size: 4.33; range: 2–11) after accounting for missing data and after excluding supervisors with only one subordinate respondent (64% and 68% response rates, respectively). Of the supervisor participants, 44% were female, 77% had at least a bachelor's degree, and 67% were between 41 and 60 years old. Of the subordinate participants, 55% were female, 61% had at least a bachelor's degree, and 50% were between 41 and 60 years old. It should be noted that the findings of a previously published manuscript (Courtright, Colbert, & Choi, 2014) were derived from the same data set and sample as used in Study 1. However, the only shared variable is neuroticism, which was used as a control variable in both studies.

### Measures

Unless otherwise noted, we used a 5-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree" = 1 to "strongly agree" = 5) for all scales. Each scale's coefficient  $\alpha$  is noted in Table 1, below.

**FWC.** Supervisors rated the degree to which they experienced FWC using a 4-item scale by Grzywacz and Marks (2000). Sample items included "Personal or family worries and problems distract me when I am at work" and "Responsibilities at home reduce the effort I can devote to my job."

**Situation control (job autonomy).** Supervisors rated the level of job autonomy that they had in their jobs using a 3-item scale originally developed by Hackman & Oldham (1975) and modified by Spreitzer (1995). Sample items included "I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job" and "I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work."

**Gender.** Gender was self-reported by supervisors (male = 0; female = 1).

**Abusive supervision.** Subordinates rated their direct supervisor's abusive supervision using a shortened 5-item version of Tepper's (2000) scale, which captures verbal aggression exhibited by supervisors (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). We specifically chose to focus on the verbal aggression of abusive supervision specifically because the full version of the Tepper scale includes undermining, which is a more instrumental behavior and is tangential to our focus on self-regulatory failure as an explanation for abusive supervision, although undermining is related to verbal aggression (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002). The items were measured using a 5-point frequency scale ("not at all" = 1 to "frequently, if not always" = 5). Sample items were "Ridicules me" and "Tells me that I'm incompetent."

The current study was conducted in a single organization where multiple subordinates report to the same manager. Thus, we averaged across raters to obtain an average abusive supervision score for each supervisor. To validate this approach, we computed  $F$  values,  $r_{WG(j)}$ , ICC(1) and ICC(2) statistics. The  $F(134, 439)$  statistic was 1.75 ( $p \leq .01$ );  $r_{WG(j)}$  was .95 with a uniform distribution and .93 with a skewed distribution; and ICC(1) was .11, which falls into the typical range of ICC(1) (Bliese, 2000). These statistics provide strong evidence of within-group agreement. ICC(2), however, was .33, indicating a fairly low reliability of the group mean. However, it should be noted that ICC(2) depends heavily on group size, and the average group size in our sample was only 4.33. Moreover, ICC(2) is determined in part by between-group variance, and variance of a given construct (particularly of a low base-rate construct such as abusive supervision) can be restricted in a single organization (Biemann, Cole, & Voelpel, 2012). Hence, we averaged individual ratings of abusive supervision because the evidence of substantial within-group agreement mitigated our concerns over low reliability of the group means.

**Control variables.** We included a number of theoretically relevant covariates in order to control for other theoretical mechanisms identified in the abusive supervision literature. These include displaced aggression, moral exclusion, and traits.

First, we controlled for two role stressors within the work domain identified by Fox and Spector

(1999) as triggering displaced aggression at work: role conflict and role ambiguity. These variables were assessed by supervisors with Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman's (1970) 14-item scale (8 items for role ambiguity, 6 items for role conflict), using a 5-point Likert response scale ("not at all descriptive" = 1 to "extremely descriptive" = 5). Example items were "I work under incompatible guidelines and policies" (role conflict) and "I know what my responsibilities are" (role ambiguity, reverse-scored).

Second, we controlled for supervisors' perceptions of subordinate performance problems, which Tepper, Moss, and Duffy (2011) found to be a critical factor that made subordinates fall out of a supervisor's scope of justice. Perceptions of subordinate performance problems were measured using McCauley, Ohlott, and Ruderman's (1999) 5-item scale using a 5-point Likert scale ("not at all descriptive" = 1 to "extremely descriptive" = 5). Example items included "Key members of your staff are incapable, demotivated, technically obsolete, or otherwise performing poorly" and "Your direct reports resist your initiatives."

Finally, we controlled for two relevant personality traits of supervisors—neuroticism and agreeableness—as they have been linked to deviant behavior and tendencies toward displaced aggression (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Fox & Spector, 1999). Neuroticism and agreeableness were measured using a short form of the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Goldberg, 1999) called the Mini-IPIP (Donnellan, Baird, Lucas, & Oswald, 2006). Example items included "I am not interested in people's problems" (agreeableness, reverse-scored) and "I have frequent mood swings" (neuroticism). Although their coefficient alphas were below the generally accepted cut-off of .70, we retained these variables as controls given their theoretical relevance.

## STUDY 1: RESULTS

We present the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations of the study variables in Table 1a. After centering our variables, we tested our hypotheses using moderated regression analyses. We adopted moderated regression as our analytic strategy because, after aggregating abusive supervision ratings, all of our variables were at the same level of analysis. Results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 1b.

To test Hypothesis 1a, we entered the control variables into the equation for Model 1. We then entered FWC as the independent variable in Model 2. As predicted, FWC was significantly and positively

related to abusive supervision ( $b = .07, p \leq .05$ ). Next, we tested Hypothesis 2a by entering gender into the regression equation in Model 3 and creating a two-way interaction term between FWC and gender in Model 4. The FWC  $\times$  gender interaction was significant ( $b = .16, p \leq .01$ ), and, when plotted in Figure 1a (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003) and probed with a simple slopes test (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006), we found that the relationship between FWC and abusive supervision was stronger (more positive) for female supervisors ( $b = .14, p \leq .01$ ) than for male supervisors ( $b = -.01, ns$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2a was supported. Finally, we entered situation control (job autonomy) in Model 5 and created a two-way interaction between FWC and situation control in Model 6.<sup>1</sup> The FWC  $\times$  situation control interaction term was significant ( $b = .12, p \leq .01$ ), and, when plotted in Figure 1b and probed with a simple slopes test, we found that the relationship between FWC and abusive supervision was stronger for supervisors with high situation control (+1 *SD*;  $b = .11, p \leq .05$ ) than for supervisors with low situation control (−1 *SD*;  $b = -.04, ns$ ). Hypothesis 3a was thus supported.<sup>2</sup>

## STUDY 1: DISCUSSION

Results from Study 1 supported our prediction that FWC experienced by supervisors was positively related to abusive supervision. Additionally, this

<sup>1</sup> Following convention in studies published in *Academy of Management Journal* (e.g., Bledow, Rosing, & Frese, 2013; Ding, Murray, & Stuart, 2013; McClean, Burris, & Detert, 2013), we entered job autonomy and gender (and their respective interactions with FWC) into separate models in order to avoid having multicollinearity impact the results. However, for the sake of transparency, we also report an omnibus regression model in Model 7. Both interactions remain significant in the omnibus model.

<sup>2</sup> Prior studies have consistently demonstrated that abusive supervision is a low base-rate phenomenon, and we recognize that this may actually attenuate the effects among the constructs of interest (e.g., Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone, & Duffy, 2008). Given the low mean level of abusive supervision in our sample, we conducted an analysis with a data transformation appropriate for skewed data by squaring the abusive supervision variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). In doing so, we found results that mirrored those of our original analysis, with support for tested hypotheses remaining statistically significant. Thus, for the sake of interpreting our results in a parsimonious fashion, we report the results of the standard linear regression analyses. This method of presenting our results is consistent with other abusive supervision research (e.g., Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007).

**TABLE 1a**  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study 1 Variables<sup>a</sup>

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Role conflict	2.00	0.64	<b>.82</b>								
2. Role ambiguity	2.35	0.64	.34**	<b>.79</b>							
3. Subordinate performance problems	1.63	0.53	.28**	.15*	<b>.72</b>						
4. Neuroticism	2.11	0.65	.25**	.32**	.04	<b>.59</b>					
5. Agreeableness	4.09	0.51	-.09	-.22**	-.11	-.09	<b>.67</b>				
6. FWC	2.07	0.63	.19*	.32**	.15	.39**	-.22**	<b>.79</b>			
7. Job autonomy	4.21	0.64	-.22**	-.29**	-.11	-.33**	.13	-.18*	<b>.85</b>		
8. Gender	0.44	0.50	-.07	-.06	-.06	.13	.17*	.08	-.05	-	
9. Abusive supervision	1.13	0.28	.07	.05	.06	-.05	-.03	.11	.09	.09	<b>.81</b>

<sup>a</sup> *n* = 134 supervisors. Coefficient alphas appear in boldface on the main diagonal. Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female.  
 \*\**p* ≤ .01  
 \**p* ≤ .05

relationship was stronger for female supervisors and supervisors who had greater situation control. Thus, our results provide evidence that FWC is related to abusive supervision, and that gender and situation control moderate this relationship.

Despite the contributions of Study 1, it also has some limitations. First, although our theoretical framework suggests that ego depletion serves as the linking mechanism between FWC and abusive supervision, we did not explicitly measure ego depletion nor test its mediating effects. This is because, as we noted earlier, ego depletion is a highly fluid cognitive state that is more difficult to capture through a single survey. Indeed, daily recovery experiences such as sleep and leisure activities influence the daily experience of ego

depletion (Barnes et al., 2015; Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2008). Thus, this study provided an overarching assessment of the effects of FWC on abusive supervision as moderated by gender and situation control, but did not test ego depletion as a mediator.

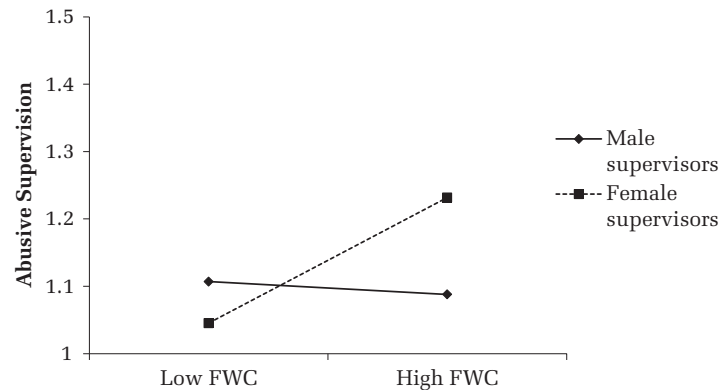
A second limitation of the lagged survey design is that research shows that family–work relationships can also vary on a day-to-day basis (e.g., Judge, Illies, & Scott, 2006; Livingston & Judge, 2008). Moreover, recent research by Johnson and colleagues (2012) has shown that leader behaviors, including abusive supervision, also vary over time, meaning that a leader who is abusive one day may not be on another day. Thus, daily variation in FWC may be associated with daily variation in ego depletion and abusive

**TABLE 1b**  
Regression Results of Hypothesized Relationships (Study 1)<sup>a</sup>

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Intercept	1.12** (.02)	1.12** (.02)	1.12** (.02)	1.12** (.02)	1.12** (.02)	1.13** (.02)	1.13** (.02)
<i>Control variables:</i>							
Role conflict	.04 (.04)	.04 (.04)	.04 (.04)	.03 (.04)	.04 (.04)	.05 (.04)	.04 (.04)
Role ambiguity	-.02 (.04)	-.04 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	-.01 (.04)	-.01 (.04)	-.02 (.04)
Neuroticism	-.03 (.05)	-.05 (.05)	-.06 (.04)	-.06 (.04)	-.04 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	-.04 (.04)
Agreeableness	-.03 (.04)	-.02 (.04)	-.02 (.05)	-.03 (.05)	-.01 (.05)	-.02 (.05)	-.03 (.05)
Sub. perf. problems	-.02 (.05)	-.02 (.05)	-.02 (.05)	-.01 (.05)	-.01 (.05)	-.01 (.05)	-.01 (.05)
<i>Independent variable:</i>							
FWC (A)		.07* (.04)	.07 (.04)	.07 (.04)	.07 (.04)	.04 (.05)	.04 (.04)
<i>Moderator variables:</i>							
Gender (B)			.04 (.05)	.04 (.05)			.04 (.05)
Job autonomy (C)					.05 (.04)	.04 (.04)	.03 (.04)
<i>Two-way interactions:</i>							
A × B				.16** (.08)			.15* (.08)
A × C						.12* (.06)	.11* (.06)

<sup>a</sup> *n* = 134 supervisors. All regression coefficients are unstandardized. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Sub. perf. problems = subordinate performance problems. *p* ≤ .01  
 \**p* ≤ .05 (one tailed)

**FIGURE 1a**  
Interactive Effects of FWC and Gender on Abusive Supervision (Study 1)



supervision. This dynamic, within-individual (vs. between-individual) perspective stands in contrast to nearly all prior research on abusive supervision, which assumes that a supervisor is either abusive or not (Barnes et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2012). Thus, a within-individual study would afford not only testing ego depletion as a mediator, but also show how daily experiences of FWC influence daily occurrences of abusive supervision through daily experiences of ego depletion. Capturing these variables as they are experienced on a daily basis also prevents the need for the retrieval and integration that are required for retrospective measures (Kahneman & Riis, 2005).

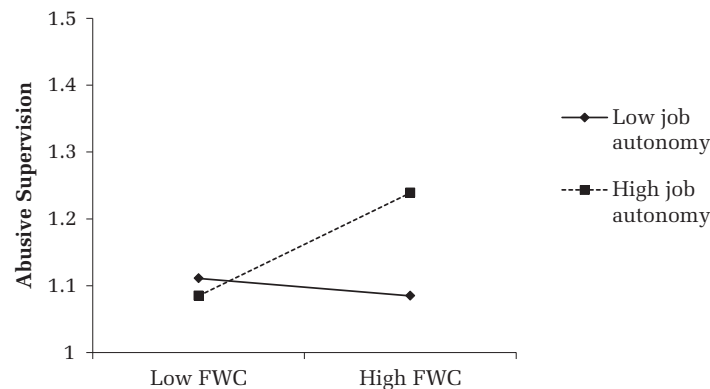
Third, the moderator of job autonomy is a relatively distal way of capturing a supervisor's situation control—that is, the opportunity to engage in aggressive behavior without organizational repercussions (Marcus & Schuler, 2004). Although we argue that job autonomy is appropriate for capturing situation

control for Study 1, given that our sample operated in the highly regulated financial services industry (where autonomy is more likely to be perceived as a chance to “get away” with deviant behavior), it is also a broad variable that can vary in its interpretation across different organizations and industries (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). In other words, we acknowledge that, across a variety of organizations and industries, there are more direct ways of capturing situation control than job autonomy.

In that regard, a final limitation of Study 1 is that it was conducted in a single organization within a single industry. Thus, the generalizability of our results to samples of supervisors in other organizations and industries could be called into question.

Given these limitations, we designed a second study using experience sampling methods (ESM) in order to address the limitations of Study 1 and to broaden our theoretical understanding of the

**FIGURE 1b**  
Interactive Effects of FWC and Situation Control (Job Autonomy) on Abusive Supervision (Study 1)



relationship between FWC and abusive supervision. This design has several benefits. First, it allowed us to not only fully replicate Hypotheses 1a, 2a, and 3a, but also to formally test ego depletion as an explanatory mechanism of the relationship between FWC and abusive supervision (Hypothesis 1b). Second, it allowed us to test Hypotheses 2b and 3b, which predict the stages at which the moderators are operating within the mediated relationship of FWC, ego depletion, and abusive supervision. Third, as noted above, research shows that FWC and abusive supervision can also vary on a day-to-day basis; thus, an experience sampling methodology can be used to capture the day-to-day unfolding of our proposed relationships. In Study 2, we also adopt *sanctions for aggressive behavior* as a more direct way of capturing the concept of situational control and test the generalizability of our theory by using a multi-organization and multi-industry sample.

## STUDY 2: METHODS

### Participants and Procedures

We enlisted the services of Qualtrics Panels to recruit a sample of supervisors from an online sampling pool. Recent research has used Qualtrics Panels as a reliable means of gathering data (e.g., DeCelles, DeRue, Margolis, & Ceranic, 2012; Long, Bendersky, & Morrill, 2011). All participants had random identifiers generated by Qualtrics Panels both to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and to permit the subjects to be more candid in their responses. Data were then collected in two waves. Initially, 156 subjects completed a survey about their demographics, our control variables, and our moderating variables. A week later, we administered the daily surveys.

Supervisors completed daily surveys during a two-week work period (Monday–Friday), resulting in a total of 10 consecutive daily surveys. Daily surveys were emailed to the supervisors at 4:00 p.m., and participants were asked to complete each survey by 1:00 a.m. that night/following morning. Responses were anchored specifically to that day, and electronic time stamps were used to confirm that each survey was completed by the deadline. Responses were collected at the end of the day primarily because FWC, ego depletion, and abusive supervision can occur at any point of the day; thus, these experiences and behaviors could have been underreported if we had collected them earlier in the day or at different points in the day. This is in keeping with other ESM research, both on FWC and interpersonal deviance (e.g., Rodell & Judge, 2009).

To maximize statistical power while limiting the amount of missing data, only those participants that completed 8 or more of the 10 daily surveys were retained for our analyses (Livingston & Judge, 2008). This yielded a final sample size of 92 supervisors, for a 59% retention rate. Within that sample, 50% of the participants were female, 53% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and their average age was 44 years old ( $SD = 11$ ). The supervisors represented 22 different industries (e.g., health care, financial services, construction, manufacturing) and most (73%) were classified as mid-level or senior-level managers with an average of 15 years ( $SD = 10.2$ ) of supervisory experience. Also, the majority of supervisors worked in organizations with 100 or more employees (73%) and supervised fewer than 25 employees (70%).

### Measures

Coefficient alphas for all variables in Study 2 are reported in Table 2a, below. For variables measured on a daily basis, we report the average coefficient  $\alpha$  across the 10 surveys.

**Daily FWC.** Supervisors rated the degree to which they experienced FWC each day using the same 4-item scale used in Study 1 (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

**Daily ego depletion.** Supervisors rated their daily ego depletion with a 4-item scale used by Welsh and Ordóñez (2014). Items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “never” (1) to “always” (7). Sample items included “I felt mentally exhausted” and “My mental energy was running low.”

**Daily abusive supervision.** Following past ESM research on abusive supervision (Johnson et al., 2012), supervisors rated their own daily abusive supervision. Our reasoning for collecting self-reports of abusive supervision for Study 2 was because, on a *daily* basis (vs. over a longer period of time, as was the case in Study 1), supervisors may not abuse all subordinates who report to them, but, rather, a particular subordinate with whom they have interacted on that day. Thus, if we had relied on subordinate perceptions of abusive supervision, its occurrence would probably have been underreported. Furthermore, because ratings of abusive supervision were used for developmental rather than administrative purposes, self-other agreement on abusive supervision should be higher, as shown in a meta-analysis by Heidemeier and Moser (2009). Finally, more recent meta-analytic evidence (Berry, Carpenter, & Barratt, 2012) has shown substantial correlations between self- and other reports of counterproductive work behaviors, as well as the similar relationships between counterproductive

work behaviors and common correlates regardless of the rating source.

We used the same 5-item scale that was used in Study 1 (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007) to measure abusive supervision in the current study.

**Gender.** Gender was self-reported by supervisors (male = 0; female = 1).

**Situation control (perceived sanctions for aggressive behavior).** On the initial survey administration (a week prior to the daily surveys), supervisors responded to a 4-item scale (Inness, LeBlanc, & Barling, 2008) that captured their perceptions of potential organizational sanctions for mistreating their subordinates. Items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “*strongly disagree*” (1) to “*strongly agree*” (7). Sample items included “You could get away with being aggressive towards your subordinates” and “You would be sanctioned or reprimanded for behaving aggressively towards your subordinates.”

**Control variables.** We controlled for the same theoretically relevant variables that were incorporated in Study 1, including role ambiguity (Rizzo et al., 1970), role conflict (Rizzo et al., 1970), and subordinate performance problems (McCauley et al., 1999). These variables were measured using the same scales as used in Study 1. We also controlled for agreeableness and neuroticism, but, to overcome their low reliabilities in Study 1, these traits were measured using the full 10-item IPIP scales (Goldberg, 1999), which resulted in higher coefficient alphas.

In addition to re-incorporating the controls used in Study 1, we also controlled for daily emotional hostility in Study 2. We did this for two reasons. First, a potential alternative explanation for a daily FWC–abusive supervision relationship is a mood spillover process. Specifically, one could argue that family demands on a given day induce feelings of hostility at home, which then spill over into the work domain such that supervisors are “cranky” at work and lash out at subordinates as a form of negative emotion-focused coping (Judge et al., 2006; Rothbard & Wilk, 2011). However, spillover is a distinct process from ego depletion (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Wang, Liao, Zhan, & Shi, 2011), and, therefore, we sought to rule out mood spillover as an alternative explanation for our findings. Second, we also sought to better account for displaced aggression as an alternative theoretical explanation for our findings by measuring hostility, as hostility is a primary mechanism through which displaced aggression tends to occur (Fox & Spector, 1999). We used IZARD, LIBERO, PUTNAM, and HAYNES’ (1993) 3-item scale to measure daily (state)

hostility. We altered the anchor as follows to capture the subjects’ daily hostility: “Rate how frequently you felt this way *today* at work.” Sample items included “Felt angry, irritated, annoyed” and “Felt like screaming at somebody or banging on something.”

## STUDY 2: RESULTS

The ESM data included variables at two levels of analysis as daily responses were nested within supervisors. Between-person variables (Level 2) included gender, situational control, and the control variables (except daily hostility). Within-person variables (Level 1) included daily FWC, daily ego depletion, daily abusive supervision, and daily hostility. The means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations of the Study 2 variables are presented in Table 2a.

Due to the nested nature of our data, we used random coefficient modeling (RCM) by using the MIXED command in IBM’s statistical analysis software SPSS to analyze the hierarchical models in Study 2. We used a restricted maximum likelihood estimation technique for all RCM analyses. Based on past ESM research that has examined cross-level moderations, we partitioned out Level 1 and Level 2 effects and eliminated between-person variance by grand mean-centering the Level 2 predictors and group mean-centering the Level 1 predictors in order to properly analyze our within-person relationships (Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015; Hofman, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000). Moreover, we analyzed whether daily FWC, daily ego depletion, and daily abusive supervision displayed significant within-person variation to justify our use of an ESM research design. According to each variable’s unconditional model, the data revealed significant within-person variance of daily FWC ( $\sigma^2 = .75, p < .05$ ), daily ego depletion ( $\sigma^2 = .81, p < .05$ ), and daily abusive supervision ( $\sigma^2 = .10; p < .05$ ).

All RCM results are displayed in Table 2b. We first entered the Level 2 control variables and the single Level 1 control variable (see Model 5), and then regressed daily abusive supervision on daily FWC (Model 6). Once again, there was a positive relationship between FWC and abusive supervision ( $\gamma = .06, p < .01$ ), supporting and replicating Hypothesis 1a. Next, in order to test Hypothesis 1b, we computed the indirect effect of daily FWC on daily abusive supervision through daily ego depletion. After entering our covariates (Model 1), we added daily FWC in Model 2 and found a significant relationship between daily FWC and daily ego depletion ( $\gamma = .39, p \leq .01$ ). In Model 7, we regressed daily abusive supervision on

**TABLE 2a**  
**Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study 2 Variables<sup>a</sup>**

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<i>Level 1 (within-person)</i>													
1. Daily hostility	1.78	1.23	<b>.94</b>										
2. Daily FWC	2.27	1.59	.66**	<b>.94</b>									
3. Daily ego depletion	2.27	1.53	.61**	.70**	<b>.97</b>								
4. Daily abusive supervision	1.45	1.12	.77**	.62**	.44**	<b>.98</b>							
<i>Level 2 (between-person)</i>													
5. Role conflict	2.22	1.12	.48**	.55**	.46**	.46**	<b>.96</b>						
6. Role ambiguity	1.86	.73	.12	.27**	.19	.13	.36**	<b>.89</b>					
7. Sub. perf. problems	2.07	.94	.65**	.60**	.49**	.67**	.63**	.25*	<b>.88</b>				
8. Neuroticism	2.13	.78	.57**	.71**	.64**	.50**	.38**	.24*	.42**	<b>.84</b>			
9. Agreeableness	4.11	.61	-.40**	-.36**	-.16	-.46**	-.29**	-.31**	-.35**	-.26*	<b>.89</b>		
10. Gender	.05	.05	.19	.21*	.21*	.12	.11	-.06	.01	.20	.09	–	
11. Perceived sanctions	5.79	1.23	-.34**	-.27*	-.14	-.41**	-.22*	-.04	-.35**	-.23*	.29	.04	<b>.83</b>

<sup>a</sup> *n* (Level 1) = 857; *n* (Level 2) = 92. Coefficient alphas appear in boldface on the main diagonal. Gender: 0 = male, 1 = female. Sub. perf. problems = subordinate performance problems. Since the Level 1 (within-person) data are nested within the Level 2 (between-person) data, the between-person data for variables 5–11 were repeated across each subject’s within-person data to compute the correlations between Level 1 (within-person) and Level 2 (between-person) data.

\*\* *p* ≤ .01  
 \* *p* ≤ .05

daily ego depletion retaining daily FWC in the model and found a significant relationship between daily ego depletion and daily abusive supervision ( $\gamma = .06, p \leq .05$ ). Subsequently, we tested the significance of the multilevel indirect effect using Tofighi and MacKinnon’s (2011) RMediation application. In support of Hypothesis 1b, the indirect effect of daily FWC on daily abusive supervision (through daily ego depletion) was significant ( $ab = .02, 95\% \text{ CI } [.01, .04]$ ).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> To reduce the potential of common method variance impacting our analyses and to further examine the temporal chain of our mediational model (Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, & Koch, 2013), we tested our proposed model using a lagged research design. Specifically, we analyzed whether daily FWC in Day 1 spilled over to impact daily ego depletion in Day 2, which subsequently generated daily abusive supervision in Day 2 (while controlling for all prior control variables in addition to the amount of sleep obtained between Day 1 and Day 2). Our data indicated that daily FWC in Day 1 significantly influenced daily ego depletion in Day 2 ( $\gamma = .10, p \leq .01$ ), which subsequently influenced daily abusive supervision in Day 2 ( $\gamma = .08, p \leq .01$ ). Using Tofighi and MacKinnon’s (2011) RMediation analysis, we found the indirect effect of daily FWC in Day 1 on daily abusive supervision in Day 2 (through daily ego depletion in Day 2) was significant ( $ab = .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [.00, .02]$ ). We appreciate an anonymous reviewer for making this suggestion.

Next, we tested the interaction effects of gender (Hypothesis 2a) and situation control (Hypothesis 3a) on the daily FWC–daily abusive supervision relationship. To do this, we entered gender and a two-way interaction term between daily FWC and gender in Model 8. Furthermore, we inserted situation control (perceived sanctions) and a two-way interaction term between daily FWC and situation control in Model 9. The daily FWC  $\times$  gender interaction was not significant ( $\gamma = .03, ns$ ), but the daily FWC  $\times$  situation control interaction was significant ( $\gamma = -.07, p \leq .05$ ). Subsequently, we plotted the daily FWC  $\times$  situation control interaction effect and found that the results replicated the findings of Study 1 (low situation control:  $b = -.00, ns$ ; high situational control:  $b = .16, p < .05$ ). Thus, Study 2 did not support Hypothesis 2a, but it did support Hypothesis 3a.

However, with the formal inclusion of ego depletion as a mediator in Study 2, we were able to more precisely theorize and analyze the stage at which gender and situation control impact the FWC–abusive supervision relationship. Specifically, we predicted, based on resource drain theory, that gender would operate as a first-stage moderator (Hypothesis 2b) and situation control would operate as a second-stage moderator (Hypothesis 3b) of the mediation model. To test this, we first entered gender into the multilevel

TABLE 2b  
RCM Results of Hypothesized Relationships (Study 2)<sup>a</sup>

	Ego Depletion					Abusive Supervision						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Intercept	2.28** (.10)	2.28** (.10)	2.18** (.14)	2.15** (.14)	1.45** (.08)	1.45** (.08)	1.45** (.08)	1.51** (.11)	1.52** (.08)	1.45** (.08)	1.45** (.08)	1.45** (.08)
Role conflict	.21* (.12)	.18 (.12)	.17 (.12)	.17 (.12)	.03 (.09)	.02 (.08)	.00 (.08)	-.03 (.09)	-.02 (.08)	-.00 (.08)	-.00 (.08)	-.00 (.08)
Role ambiguity	-.03 (.15)	.01 (.15)	-.02 (.15)	-.03 (.15)	-.20* (.12)	-.14 (.11)	-.12 (.10)	-.17 (.11)	-.17 (.10)	-.13 (.10)	-.12 (.10)	-.12 (.10)
Neuroticism	.85** (.14)	.80** (.14)	.78** (.14)	.77** (.14)	.36** (.11)	.33** (.10)	.32** (.10)	.52** (.10)	.51** (.10)	.27** (.09)	.27** (.09)	.27** (.09)
Agreeableness	.18 (.18)	.10 (.18)	.09 (.18)	.08 (.18)	-.42** (.14)	-.23* (.13)	-.24* (.13)	-.29** (.13)	-.24* (.13)	-.23* (.12)	-.21* (.13)	-.21* (.13)
Sub. perf. problems	.25* (.14)	.28** (.14)	.29** (.14)	.30** (.14)	.54** (.11)	.44** (.10)	.46** (.10)	.50** (.10)	.47** (.10)	.39** (.09)	.38** (.10)	.38** (.10)
Daily hostility	.58** (.06)	.39** (.06)	.39** (.06)	.38** (.06)	.14** (.03)	.12** (.03)	.10** (.03)	.13** (.03)	.13** (.03)	.11** (.03)	.11** (.03)	.11** (.03)
FWC (A)		.39** (.05)	.39** (.05)	.29** (.06)	.14** (.03)	.06** (.02)	.05** (.02)	.06* (.04)	.08** (.02)	.11** (.03)	.11** (.03)	.11** (.03)
Ego depletion (B)			.19 (.20)	.26 (.21)			.06** (.02)	.01 (.16)		.06** (.03)	.06** (.03)	.06** (.03)
Gender (C)												
Perceived sanctions (D)				.17** (.08)				.03 (.05)	-.07** (.02)		-.05 (.06)	-.19** (.07)
A × C												
A × D												
B × D												-.07** (.02)

<sup>a</sup> *n* = 92 supervisors. All regression coefficients are unstandardized. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. Sub. perf. problems = subordinate performance problems.  
 \*\* *p* ≤ .01  
 \* *p* ≤ .05 (one tailed)

equation for Model 3 and then inserted daily FWC × gender on daily ego depletion in Model 4. Results showed that daily FWC × gender was significant ( $\gamma = .17, p \leq .05$ ), and Figure 2a reveals that the relationship between daily FWC and daily ego depletion was stronger for female supervisors (females:  $b = .47, p \leq .01$ ; males:  $b = .30, p \leq .01$ ). We next entered situation control into the multilevel equation for Model 11 and created a two-way interaction term between daily ego depletion and situation control on daily abusive supervision in Model 12. As expected, the interaction was significant ( $\gamma = -.07, p \leq .01$ ), and, as shown in Figure 2b, the relationship between daily ego depletion and daily abusive supervision was stronger for higher levels of situation control (low perceived sanctions [+1 *SD*];  $b = .15, p < .01$ ) than for lower levels of situation control (high perceived sanctions [-1 *SD*];  $b = -.02, ns$ ).

To fully test Hypotheses 2b and 3b, we used Bauer, Preacher, and Gil's (2006) approach for testing multilevel conditional indirect effects in order to analyze the indirect effect of daily FWC on daily abusive supervision through daily ego depletion for women and men at the first stage and at higher (+1 *SD*) and lower (-1 *SD*) levels of situation control at the second stage of our mediational model. This allowed for a comprehensive, omnibus test of our hypotheses. We found that, when situation control was lower (high perceived sanctions), the indirect effects were not significant for women (estimate = -.03,  $z = -1.09, ns$ ) or men (estimate = -.01,  $z = -.41, ns$ ). In contrast, when situation control was higher (low perceived sanctions), the indirect effects were significant for both women (estimate = .12,  $z = 3.44, p < .01$ ) and men (estimate = .04,  $z = 1.73, p < .05$ ). However, we found significant differences in the conditional indirect effects between women and men when situation control was higher ( $z = 1.94, p < .05$ ), with the indirect effect being stronger for women. Thus, we found support for Hypotheses 2b and 3b.<sup>4</sup>

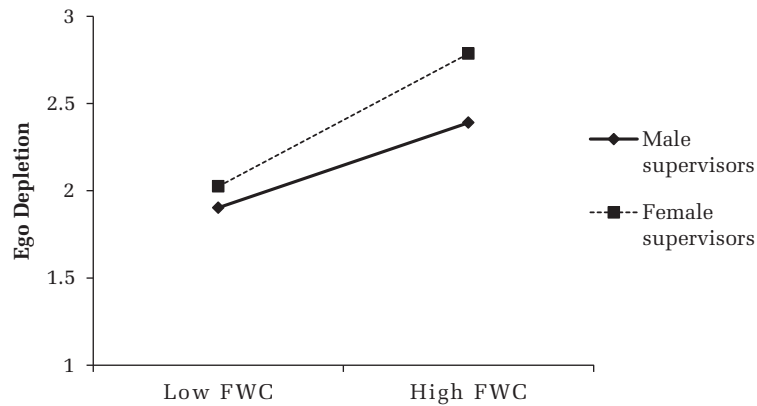
### STUDY 2: DISCUSSION

The findings in Study 2 both corroborated and extended the findings from Study 1. In particular, we

<sup>4</sup> As with Study 1 and consistent with past research, there was a relatively low base rate of abusive supervision in our sample. Thus, we recomputed all analyses in Study 2 using the same data transformation as in Study 1 to adjust for skewed data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Once again, the results mirrored those of our original analyses, supporting all proposed hypotheses.



**FIGURE 2a**  
**Interactive Effects of FWC and Gender on Ego Depletion (Study 2)**



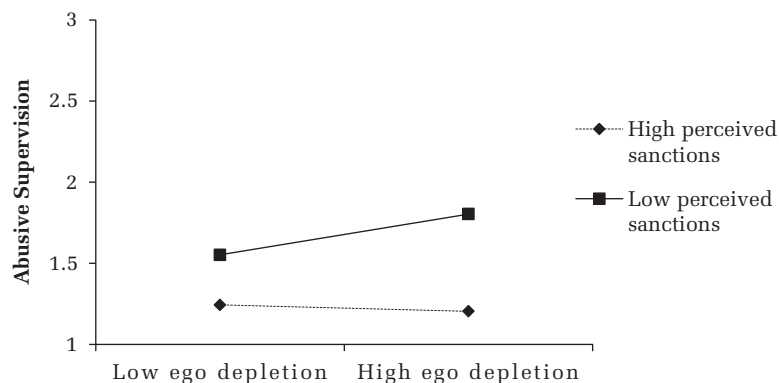
once again found evidence for a positive relationship between FWC and abusive supervision. However, we extended this finding by formally testing and finding support for ego depletion as the explanatory mechanism for the FWC–abusive supervision relationship. We also found that ego depletion further explained why gender and situation control act as moderators of this relationship. In particular, the FWC–abusive supervision relationship is stronger for female supervisors because they face higher levels of ego depletion when experiencing higher FWC, and thus engage in more abusive supervision. Moreover, the FWC–abusive supervision relationship is stronger for supervisors in environments with higher situation control because the effects of ego depletion on abusive supervision (as impacted by FWC) are exacerbated when there are fewer external restraints and sanctions against aggressive behavior in the workplace.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

### Implications for Theory and Research

Our study makes several contributions to the study of abusive supervision. First, by invoking resource drain theory, we found support for abusive supervision emerging through a process of self-regulatory resource depletion. This self-regulatory perspective on why abusive supervision occurs is different from prior theoretical perspectives. For example, in extant work, researchers have drawn on theories of displaced aggression, social learning, and moral exclusion to explain abusive supervision, suggesting, respectively, that abusive supervision is either an unwarranted emotion-laden response to frustrating events in the workplace, a learned behavior, or a result of supervisors excluding subordinates from their scope of justice based on subordinate characteristics and behavior (Aryee et al., 2007; Liu

**FIGURE 2b**  
**Interactive Effects of Ego Depletion and Situation Control (Perceived Sanctions for Aggressive Behavior) on Abusive Supervision (Study 2)**



et al., 2012; Mawritz et al., 2012; Tepper et al., 2006; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). Based on our findings, however, we take the position that abusive supervision can also be the result of diminished self-regulatory resources stemming from supervisors facing competing family–work demands. More specifically, we contend that supervisors who face competing demands from separate family and work roles are more likely to experience lapses in self-control, which, in turn, makes it more likely that they will engage in impulsive and destructive behavior such as abusive supervision.

Second, our use of resource drain theory allows us to extend theory on abusive supervision by broadening the domain of its antecedents. For example, Tepper (2007) developed a theoretical framework of antecedents to abusive supervision that included investigating supervisor-level (e.g., personality), organizational-level (e.g., norms), industry-level (e.g., military vs. non-military), and cultural (e.g., power-distance) characteristics as antecedents of abusive supervision. Although the Tepper model has a great deal of utility for guiding research on antecedents to abusive supervision, no constructs related to the non-work domain such as FWC are included in it. In other words, abusive supervision up until now has largely been examined as a within-domain phenomenon, meaning its antecedents exist primarily in the work domain. However, one contribution of invoking resource drain theory in studying antecedents of abusive supervision is finding that demands and strain that originate in one domain (e.g., family) may significantly impact experiences and behaviors in another domain (e.g., work). Thus, we argue, based on our findings, that abusive supervision is also a cross-domain phenomenon. Accounting for an antecedent of abusive supervision that relates to the family domain allows scholars to achieve a more holistic understanding of antecedents to abusive supervision. Indeed, it conceptualizes the abusive supervisor as a “total” leader whose behavior is affected by work and non-work factors alike (Friedman, 2008).

Third, prior theoretical perspectives have assumed a relatively static model of abusive supervision (Johnson et al., 2012). However, our findings in Study 2 extend this perspective, suggesting that abusive supervision can vary on a daily basis depending on daily levels of FWC and ego depletion. While Study 1 took a broader, overarching view of the FWC–abusive supervision relationship and looked at how cumulative experiences of FWC relate to general abusive supervision, Study 2 took a “magnifying glass” to the FWC–abusive supervision relationship and looked at

how it unfolds on a day-to-day basis through its effects on ego depletion (as moderated by gender and situation control). These studies thus have unique benefits that, taken together, add richness and complexity to our understanding of why and how abusive supervision occurs.

As a final contribution to the abusive supervision literature, our finding that the relationship between FWC and abusive supervision was stronger for female supervisors (through self-regulatory resource depletion) extends prior studies that have been equivocal in terms of demonstrating whether men or women are more prone to engage in abusive supervision (Aryee et al., 2007; Mawritz et al., 2012). Mirroring these results, our data revealed a non-significant main effect of gender on abusive supervision in Study 1, while Study 2 yielded a small but significant correlation between females and abusive supervision. Nevertheless, our study suggests that rather than simply investigating gender differences in abusive supervision—as has generally been the case in the workplace aggression literature (Spector, 2012)—future research should examine how the antecedents of abusive supervision or other forms of workplace aggression may differ based on gender.

The contributions described above primarily serve to build and extend theory on why abusive supervision occurs, and under what conditions it is most likely to occur. However, our findings also extend our guiding theoretical framework, resource drain theory. Specifically, most family–work studies drawing on resource drain theory have assumed that individuals facing FWC tend to strategically limit investment in one role in order to meet demands in the other (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). This is considered a conscious, adaptive response aimed at restoring balance between family and work demands. However, we extend the literature invoking resource drain theory by highlighting a maladaptive outcome of FWC (i.e., abusive supervision) and showing *how* and *when* this maladaptive response is more likely to occur. In saying that abusive supervision is a *maladaptive* response to FWC, we mean that it is a response to FWC aimed not at restoring balance between family–work roles, but, rather, as a response to FWC that is impulsive and destructive. Abusive supervision is an impulsive response to FWC in the sense that it is proximally governed by self-regulatory resources, and, when these are depleted, individuals are more likely to unconsciously act on such impulses. Abusive supervision is a destructive response to FWC in that it has dire consequences for subordinates, their families, and for organizations collectively.

Another way in which we extend resource drain theory is by integrating and clarifying perspectives on individual difference and contextual factors that moderate the resource drain process. Most studies invoking resource drain theory tend to focus on one set of moderating factors or the other, but rarely do they examine both individual difference and contextual moderators in a single study (e.g., Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). However, examining gender and situation control as moderators (Eby et al., 2005) in both of our studies enriches resource drain theory by providing a more holistic, integrative perspective on variables that moderate the resource drain process. Moreover, our findings in Study 2 provide particularly precise conclusions about the role that individual differences and contextual factors play in the cross-domain ego depletion process. Specifically, gender impacts the relationship between FWC and ego depletion, whereas situation control impacts the relationship between ego depletion and abusive supervision.

### Practical Implications

Given the deleterious consequences of abusive supervision, organizations have a vested interest in preventing its occurrence. Our findings have significant practical implications for organizations desiring to prevent abusive supervision because they suggest another set of interventions that, until now, have not received attention, yet may serve to reduce abusive supervision. Our findings also identify the individuals for whom these interventions may be most beneficial and why they should be most useful for them.

In that vein, prior studies on antecedents to abusive supervision would suggest that organizations should focus solely on improving the work environment to mitigate the occurrence of abusive supervision, or selecting only certain leaders with traits that do not dispose them to such behavior (Tepper, 2007). However, our findings suggest that an important element of preventing abusive supervision may be helping supervisors to effectively manage family–work dynamics. One way to do this is to institute programs such as flexible work arrangements, which have been shown to reduce FWC (Byron, 2005). The results of our study suggest that these types of interventions could be particularly helpful for female supervisors.

Along with helping supervisors better manage family–work dynamics, organizations should also take deliberate steps to create a climate where there are consequences for engaging in abusive behavior. Indeed, our results show that, even when supervisors

experience ego depletion, the extent to which this translates into abusive behavior also depends on whether supervisors perceive that sanctions for such behavior exist. To the extent that sanctions for abusive behavior do exist and are salient, FWC (through its effects on ego depletion) may have a lesser impact on abusive supervision. Thus, organizations should consider ways to hold abusive supervisors accountable. Ultimately, this may come down to creating a culture of dignity, respect, and trust. It could also involve formulating specific policies against abusive supervisory behavior.

Finally, our findings suggest that another approach to mitigating abusive supervision would be to help managers strengthen their ability to override aggressive impulses when they do experience ego depletion. In other words, organizations can focus on ways to help supervisors and employees restore self-regulatory resources. For example, participating in leisure activities (Derrick, 2013) and sleep (Lanaj, Johnson, & Barnes, 2014) have both been shown to restore self-regulatory resources. Thus, organizations might consider leisure- and sleep-related interventions as a way to prevent abusive supervision. For example, organizations could encourage supervisors to take advantage of workday “breaks” (Througakos, Beal, Green, & Weiss, 2008) by engaging in leisure activities or sleeping.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Despite their strengths, our studies collectively have limitations as well. First, although the measures in Study 2 were collected across 10 different days, all daily variables were collected from the same source at the same time of day and in the same daily survey, which likely led to those measures being moderately to highly correlated (see Table 2a). Thus, even though we demonstrated that FWC is related to subordinate ratings of abusive supervision at different points in time in Study 1, it is possible that the mediational results in Study 2 were impacted by same-source bias. We attempted to address this concern by reporting lagged analysis examining the relationship between FWC and ego depletion collected on different days. Furthermore, other researchers (e.g., Butts et al., 2015; Foo, Uy, & Baron, 2009) have suggested that same-source problems are less of a concern for repeated-measure research using within-person analyses. In addition, one strength of Study 2 is our dual moderated mediational design, which simultaneously highlights cross-level, multistage moderators, indicating that individual

differences (e.g., gender) and situational characteristics (e.g., situation control) impact the within-person relationship with FWC on abusive supervision through ego depletion. Another strength is that the moderators and the daily mediational measures were collected at different points in time. Together, these features lessen the likelihood that Study 2's results were overly influenced by same-source bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). Finally, we saw utility in measuring leaders' own perceptions of their abusive supervision in Study 2 since abusive supervision may not be observed by all subordinates on a daily basis, and also because recent meta-analytic evidence (Berry et al., 2012) shows substantial correlations between self- and other reports of counterproductive work behaviors, as well as similar relationships between counterproductive work behaviors and common correlates regardless of the rating source.

Second, although Study 2 allowed us to generalize the relationship between FWC and abusive supervision by observing the phenomenon across industries, the wide variety of roles and industries of Study 2 participants did not allow us to adequately test for moderating effects of industry or other macro-level effects that, in all likelihood, could affect the relationships we tested. Thus, we echo the admonishment from Tepper (2007) that research should examine how abusive supervision and its relationships with both antecedents and consequences may vary across industries and other macro-level factors.

Third, although we make the distinction between the cognitive and emotional processes in explaining the FWC–abusive supervision relationship, we acknowledge that there is interplay between these two processes. For example, the emotional process of mood spillover may co-occur with ego depletion, in that supervisors may be expending mental resources in controlling their mood or perhaps in ruminating over a negative event. While we did control for daily state hostility in Study 2, we acknowledge that some of the ego depletion items may also have tapped into emotional reactions to FWC. Furthermore, we did not explicitly test for mood spillover across domains, as has been done by Rothbard and Wilk (2011). Thus, future research on ego depletion and aggressive behaviors could benefit from a more explicit investigation of the interplay of cognitive and emotional processes.

Finally, we did not model any antecedents to FWC such as life events (e.g., divorce, severe injustice to a loved one), in part because our research questions

focused on the effects of FWC rather than its antecedents on abusive supervision, and also because of the relatively narrow time frames in which our studies were conducted. However, as past research has already identified key antecedents of FWC (Byron, 2005; Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007), future research might consider developing more specific models that take into account certain life events that serve as antecedents to FWC and may impact abusive supervision through different causal mechanisms. In particular, we encourage more extensive panel and event studies that can probe for potential chronic effects of life events on abusive supervision. We say this because, while our studies collectively demonstrate that an episodic process underlies the relationships we examine, panel studies could probe for potential chronic effects of FWC on abusive supervision.

## CONCLUSION

This study represents an important step toward better understanding why supervisors behave abusively toward subordinates. Specifically, we found that FWC is related to abusive supervision and that this relationship operates through an ego depletion process. We also found that this process was moderated both by supervisor gender and situation control, such that FWC is more strongly associated with ego depletion for female supervisors, and ego depletion is more strongly associated with abusive supervision in environments where there are few sanctions for aggressive behavior. Therefore, organizations should be aware that preventing abusive supervision means more than just improving the immediate work environment or selecting the “right” leaders—it also means helping employees effectively manage the family–work interface.

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