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Negative Creativity in Leader-Follower Relations: a Daily Investigation of Leaders' Creative Mindset, Moral Disengagement, and Abusive Supervision

Xin Qin¹ · Scott B. Dust² · Marco S. DiRenzo³ · Song Wang⁴

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Abstract

Contributing to abusive supervision, creative leadership, and negative creativity research, we examine how and when leaders' creative mindset relates to interpersonal aggression toward followers in the form of abusive supervision. Drawing upon moral disengagement theory, we theorize that leaders' daily creative mindset positively relates to daily episodes of abusive supervision via state-based moral disengagement. Furthermore, we propose that trait-based moral disengagement moderates this indirect process such that low trait-based moral disengagement diminishes this effect. We found support for our hypotheses using a longitudinal study with a daily data collection over a 2-week period (Study 1) and an experimental study (Study 2). Our findings reveal the potential perils of leader creativity in leader-follower contexts and the importance of considering the moral disengagement process.

Keywords Negative creativity · Creative leadership · Abusive supervision · Creative mindset · Moral disengagement

Innovation entails introducing new, profitable products and services to create or maintain a competitive advantage (West, 2002). Being creative—generating ideas that are novel and potentially useful (Amabile, 1988)—is commonly considered beneficial because it acts as a precursor to innovation, whereby creative ideas are successfully implemented (Amabile, 1996). The leadership literature suggests that organizations should encourage leaders to think creatively because doing so can trickle down to follower creativity and innovation (e.g., Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002), paving the way for innovative breakthroughs and organizational adaptation (Puccio, Mance, & Murdock, 2010).

Interestingly, outside of the leadership literature, scholars have long suggested that there is a potential dark side to

creativity (e.g., Amabile, 1989; James, Clark, & Cropanzano, 1999; McLaren, 1993). This dark side is typically conceptualized in one of two ways. The first is *malevolent creativity*, which entails “creativity that deliberately leads to harmful or immoral results” (Harris, Reiter-Palmon, & Kaufman, 2013, p. 237). The second, and the focus of this study, is *negative creativity*, which denotes any instance whereby creativity unintentionally leads to a harmful outcome (James et al., 1999). Following the negative creativity conceptualization, experimental research (albeit in controlled, non-work settings) suggests that creativity entails cognitive flexibility, which allows individuals to frame issues in ways that justify unethical behaviors (e.g., Gino & Ariely, 2012; Walczyk, Runco, Tripp, & Smith, 2008).

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In this research, we seek to understand the dark side of creativity as it relates to leader-follower relationships. More specifically, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate how a leader's creative mindset¹ relates to interpersonal aggression in the form of abusive supervision (i.e., the display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact, toward subordinates; Tepper, 2000). A mindset describes cognitive operations with distinct features that facilitate a given task. When a specific mindset (e.g., creative) is active, there is an increased likelihood that cognitive operations specific to that mindset will be used in upcoming tasks (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000). As explained by Gollwitzer, Heckhausen, and Steller (1990, p. 1119), a mindset "tailor[s] a person's cognitive apparatus" to encode, retrieve, and interpret information based on the cognitive operations of that mindset. Thus, leaders experiencing a creative mindset are more likely to accomplish tasks (such as influencing followers) with creativity-infused cognitive operations such as cognitive flexibility. Specific to the leader-follower dyad, we expect that the cognitive flexibility stemming from a creative mindset is associated with interpersonal aggression.

For several reasons, the potential association between a leader's creative mindset and interpersonal aggression is particularly concerning. Leadership positions inherently have some degree of power and control over followers (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Given this authority, followers may fear that contesting leader aggression may negatively impact performance evaluations or advancement opportunities (Tepper & Lockhart, 2005). Thus, organizations may unknowingly incite harmful interactions by encouraging leaders to think creatively. Additionally, if leader creative mindset prompts interpersonal aggression, the benefits of a leader's creative mindset (e.g., leader and/or follower innovation) may be mitigated by the costs resulting from aggressive behaviors. Indeed, prior research illustrates a host of detrimental outcomes stemming from abusive supervision, including withdrawal (Tepper, 2000), deviance (Ju, Xu, Qin, & Spector, 2019), and retaliation (Dupré, Inness, Connelly, Barling, & Hopton, 2006).

In this study, we evaluate daily fluctuations in creative mindset and its relationship with daily episodes of abusive supervision. A within-person approach is particularly important for investigating abusive supervision because prior research illustrates that variance in abusive supervision stems more from *within-person* daily fluctuations than *between-person* differences (Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, & Chang,

2012). A focus on investigating within-person leadership also aligns with prior research illustrating that leadership behaviors vary from day-to-day (e.g., abusive supervision: Johnson et al., 2012; Qin, Huang, Johnson, Hu, & Ju, 2018a; ethical leadership: Bormann, 2017; consideration: Venus, Stam, & Van Knippenberg, 2013).

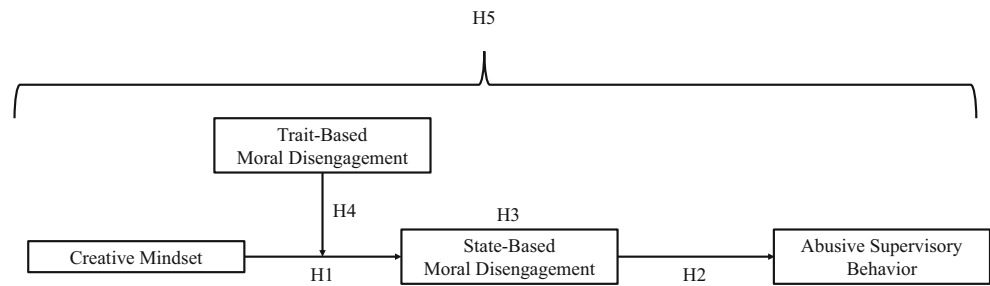
We draw upon moral disengagement theory (Bandura, 1991a, 1999) to investigate our model. The theoretical rationale is that the cognitive flexibility inherent in a creative mindset facilitates moral disengagement—the rationalization and justification for behaving immorally (Bandura, 1991a, 1999)—which in turn instigates unethical behavior (Mai, Ellis, & Welsh, 2015; Shalvi, Dana, Handgraaf, & De Dreu, 2011). We suggest that the flexible thinking accompanying creative mindsets can prompt state-based moral disengagement, allowing leaders to psychologically validate episodes of abusive supervision. Indeed, prior studies have discussed justification and rationalization processes as likely precursors to harmful behaviors (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Evaluating this process illustrates how well-intentioned leaders may enact abusive supervision, even when they are not particularly prone to aggressive behaviors.

Our theorizing is further enriched by exploring how individual differences in moral disengagement processes moderate the impact of leader creative mindset on state-based moral disengagement and abusive supervisory behavior. The likelihood that moral disengagement occurs depends upon the psychological filter of the actor in which the moral episode is interpreted (Bandura, 1990). Thus, trait-based psychological tendencies dictate whether individuals succumb to or resist such moments of immoral self-interest (Moore, Detert, Klebe Treviño, Baker, & Mayer, 2012). Therefore, we evaluate *trait*-based moral disengagement as a boundary condition of the creative mindset to abusive supervision relationship via *state*-based moral disengagement. We suggest that leaders low in trait-based moral disengagement are less likely to allow daily fluctuations in creative mindset to manifest in episodes of abusive supervision via state-based moral disengagement. In summary, as reflected in Fig. 1, we propose that leaders' daily creative mindset is indirectly related to daily episodes of abusive supervision via state-based moral disengagement and that trait-based moral disengagement conditionally moderates this indirect effect.

Although there is plentiful research illustrating that creativity has a dark side (Cropley, 2010; Gino & Ariely, 2012; Harris & Reiter-Palmon, 2015; Harris, Reiter-Palmon, & Ligon, 2014), this insight is yet to be directly applied to leadership contexts. By studying the link between daily episodes of leader creative mindset and abusive supervision, we illustrate a new context—the leader-follower dyad—where negative creativity may apply. We integrate theory and research from the abusive supervision, creative leadership, and negative creativity literatures to make theoretical contributions to each of these literatures.

¹ There is an alternative conceptualization of creative mindset that draws from Dweck's (2008) work on self-beliefs regarding the malleability of ability. Individuals high in creative mindset have a *growth* mindset and believe that creativity can be learned and changed (item example: "Rome wasn't built in a day—each creativity requires effort and work, and these two are more important than talent") and individuals low in creative mindset have a *fixed* mindset and believe that creativity is fixed and innate (item example: "You have to be born a creator—without innate talent you can only be a scribbler") (Karwowski, 2014, p. 64).

Fig. 1 Theoretical model displaying the conditional effect of trait-based moral disengagement on the indirect effect of leader creative mindset on abusive supervisory behavior via state-based moral disengagement



This work contributes to the abusive supervision literature by highlighting a supervisor-focused antecedent with moral underpinnings. Antecedents of abusive supervision are typically categorized as organization-, subordinate-, or supervisor-focused (Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013). There are relatively less supervisor-focused investigations (Zhang & Bednall, 2016), and for studies that do, the abuser is typically framed as a conduit through which aggression flows from their circumstances to their treatment of subordinates (e.g., victimization perspective: Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Mawritz, Dust, & Resick, 2014; trickle-down perspective: Mawritz, Mayer, Hoobler, Wayne, & Marinova, 2012). We propose that supervisors are moral agents, engaging in abusive behaviors because of internal, morally related, cognitive processes stemming from their individual characteristics. This “actor-focused” perspective is widely acknowledged in research outside of the workplace that investigates interpersonal aggression in the form of hostility (Berkowitz, 1993), abuse (Bandura, 1986), and harassment (O’Leary-Kelly, Paetzold, & Griffin, 2000). Thus, adopting this perspective is theoretically important in determining whether leaders, as actors and perpetrators of abuse, have moral agency when engaging in interpersonal aggression toward subordinates. Moreover, understanding how to prevent or mitigate abusive supervision is predicated on clarifying the actor-focused psychological mechanisms preceding such behaviors (Whetten, 1989).

This work also contributes to abusive supervision research by investigating a daily, within-person model focused on work-domain antecedents. Prior research illustrates that within-person effects account for a substantial amount of variance in episodes of abusive supervision (Johnson et al., 2012). However, to our knowledge, prior work has only evaluated state-based factors initiated outside of the workplace, such as lack of sleep (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhawe, & Christian, 2015) and home-to-work conflict (Courtright, Gardner, Smith, McCormick, & Colbert, 2016). We suggest that leaders engage in subordinate abuse due to creative mindsets, a state commonly considered commendable in organizational settings.

We also offer an empirical investigation of a psychological mechanism that connects creativity to immoral behaviors.

While prior work draws from moral disengagement theory to suggest that creativity-induced cognitive flexibility leads to rationalizations and justifications for immoral behaviors (Beaussart, Andrews, & Kaufman, 2013; Gino & Ariely, 2012; Walczyk et al., 2008), this suggestion has yet to be empirically investigated. We also extend this body of work by investigating trait-based moral disengagement as a boundary condition of negative creativity processes. Such an evaluation clarifies how the self-regulatory capacities inherent in trait-based moral disengagement mitigate the detrimental state-based rationalization and justification processes stemming from creativity.

We test these hypotheses across two studies. In Study 1, we test the daily fluctuations of creative mindset, state-based moral disengagement, and abusive supervision using an experience-sampling methodology. Specifically, we employ a longitudinal field study with a daily data collection over a 2-week period. In Study 2, we use an experimental approach to further test the positive association between creative mindset and state-based moral disengagement.

Theoretical Grounding and Hypothesis Development

Moral Disengagement Theory

Social cognitive theory suggests that individuals engage in self-regulatory processes to control thoughts and behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Moral disengagement theory is an extension of social cognitive theory, specifically addressing ethics-based self-regulation processes (Bandura, 1999). According to moral disengagement theory, individuals use internal moral standards to predict how they will feel after engaging in behaviors (Bandura, 1991b). When potential behaviors conflict with internal standards, individuals self-regulate away from those actions (Bandura et al., 1996). More specifically, “[t]he anticipatory self-pride and self-censure for actions that correspond to or violate personal standards serve as the regulatory influences...Anticipatory self-sanctions thus keep conduct in line with internal standards” (Bandura, 1991b, p. 277). Moral

disengagement, however, deactivates this process, enabling individuals to be free from the self-sanctions accompanying the immoral behavior (Bandura, 1999). Supervisors that morally disengage find suitable rationale and justification for their actions, allowing them to behave unethically without feeling distress.

Bandura (1991b) describes three primary forms of moral disengagement: cognitive restructuring, suppression of moral agency, and downgrading of victim distress. Individuals may cognitively restructure unethical acts so that they feel less destructive through moral justification (e.g., breaking the law for the greater good), euphemistic labeling (e.g., it's borrowing, not stealing), or advantageous comparison (e.g., others have done much worse than me). Additionally, individuals may suppress their moral agency by displacing (e.g., my boss told me to do it) or diffusing (e.g., everyone is doing it) responsibility. Individuals may also downgrade the perceived distress they are causing victims through distortion of consequences (e.g., no one got hurt), dehumanization (e.g., they do not deserve to be treated ethically), or attribution of blame (e.g., they brought it on themselves). Thus, state-based moral disengagement involves the momentary mindset whereby individuals engage in these moral disengagement mechanisms.

Leader Creative Mindset and State-Based Moral Disengagement

Individuals with high levels of creative mindset are more likely to approach and accomplish tasks using a cognitive framework that focuses on divergent thinking and cognitive flexibility (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Sassenberg & Moskowitz, 2005). More specifically, a creative mindset should increase the likelihood that individuals apply creativity-focused cognitive operations, such as thinking outside pre-existing boundaries (Guilford, 1982), applying unique perspectives when making decisions (Ashby, Isen, & Turken, 1999), and enacting perspectives that run counter to the norm (Eysenck, 1993). Interestingly, there is a dark side to a creative mindset. Research suggests that a creative mindset increases one's likelihood of making rationalizations and justifications for ethically questionable behaviors (Beaussart et al., 2013; Gino & Ariely, 2012). We suggest that this creative mindset to moral disengagement process is also likely to unfold in leader-follower relationships. Specifically, we suggest that a creative mindset should facilitate leaders' justifications for interpersonal aggression toward followers as being acceptable or necessary.

Previous research has shown that a creative mindset is positively associated with "moral flexibility" (Gino & Ariely, 2012) and the propensity to make self-serving rationalizations. In support, research suggests that individuals engage in self-serving justifications to help maintain their moral self-image (Aquino, Reed, Thau, & Freeman,

2007; Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2009; Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008). But, "their ability to do so is constrained by their ability to construct seemingly reasonable justifications" (Kunda, 1990, p. 480). Thus, any situation or condition that allows one to justify self-interested or aggressive behavior enhances the likelihood that such behaviors will be enacted (Shalvi et al., 2011).

A leaders' creative mindset is one such condition that might promote self-interested rationalizations. Leaders wield some degree of power over followers (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), and therefore possess some degree of leeway in choosing the management behaviors they prefer and find suitable. The cognitive flexibility that accompanies a creative mindset enables leaders to develop more potential justifications, including justifications that are outside the norm and that may cross ethical boundaries. Further, a creative mindset enables leaders to generate various justifications for pursuing these potential actions (Harris et al., 2014; Harris & Reiter-Palmon, 2015). For example, leaders may cognitively restructure aggression toward followers as something that followers will eventually view as developmental and in their best interests. Leaders may also suppress moral agency by rationalizing that abusive behaviors will push followers to perform, which benefits the organization. Additionally, leaders may downgrade the perceived stress of their follower-victims by considering them as inanimate resources as opposed to human beings. Hence, a creative mindset facilitates the self-serving justification process by increasing capacities to develop credible rationalizations for engaging in negative behaviors.

Hypothesis 1. Leader creative mindset is positively related to state-based moral disengagement.

Leader Creative Mindset, State-Based Moral Disengagement, and Abusive Supervision

Moral disengagement is commonly identified as a likely precursor to selfish and immoral workplace behaviors (Bandura, Caprara, & Zsolnai, 2000; Moore, 2008; Qin, Ren, Zhang, & Johnson, 2018b). Moral disengagement acts as a form of self-deception (Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004), causing individuals to justify and then engage in unethical behaviors (Barsky, 2011). Prior abusive supervision theorists have explicitly suggested that supervisor moral disengagement relates to abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007). This aligns with evidence that the likelihood of abusive supervision increases when conditions encourage the suppression of moral behavior (Zhang, Huai, & Xie, 2015). For example, leaders who perceive their work climates as hostile (Mawritz et al., 2014) or unfair (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007) have convoluted views of morality and in

turn are more likely to act abusively toward followers. Similarly, Machiavellian leaders are abusive because they feel that the results justify the manner in which they are obtained (Kiazad, Restubog, Zagenczyk, Kiewitz, & Tang, 2010).

A state of moral disengagement is likely to similarly affect management episodes with followers. Leaders who are morally disengaged are more likely to rationalize abusing their managerial authority (Bandura, 1990, 1991a). This state of moral disengagement allows leaders to act in a psychologically hostile manner without any repercussions to their self-image (Bandura et al., 1996) because they have engaged in a cognitive self-justification process such that they perceive their abusive behaviors toward followers as reasonable and acceptable (Moore et al., 2012). In total, the flexibility inherent in the creative mindset of a leader should lead to state-based moral disengagement, making leaders more likely to utilize socially inept management approaches, such as abusive supervision (Bandura, 1991a, b; Bandura et al., 1996).

Hypothesis 2. Leader state-based moral disengagement is positively related to abusive supervisory behavior.

Hypothesis 3. Leader state-based moral disengagement mediates the effect of creative mindset on abusive supervisory behavior.

The Moderating Role of Leader Trait-Based Moral Disengagement

Thus far, we have discussed the creative mindset-abusive supervision connection through the lens of state-based moral disengagement. It is also common, however, to evaluate trait-based moral disengagement, defined as “an individual difference in the way that people cognitively process decisions and behavior with ethical import that allows those inclined to morally disengage to behave unethically without feeling distress” (Moore et al., 2012, p. 2). Central to the concept of trait-based moral disengagement is whether individuals have a consistent propensity to activate (low trait-based moral disengagement) or deactivate (high trait-based moral disengagement) morally based self-regulatory processes (Bandura, 1999; Moore et al., 2012).

As previously discussed, a creative mindset is likely to affect abusive behavior via state-based disengagement. The extent to which these additional, morally questionable pathways (and the application of these pathways) are utilized depends upon this self-regulatory process. Leaders low in trait-based moral disengagement are less susceptible to the positive relationship between creative mindset and state-based moral disengagement because they have an overriding tendency to self-regulate away from such immoral cognitive processing (Bandura, 1986). The increased self-

regulatory capacity of leaders low in trait-based moral disengagement leads to a more conscious, morally grounded screening of potential rationalizations for personally advantageous yet socially inappropriate behaviors (Bandura et al., 2000; Moore, 2008).

Alternatively, leaders high in trait-based moral disengagement are less likely to engage in such morally based self-regulatory mechanisms. For these leaders, the application of inappropriate justifications goes unnoticed and unhindered because ethics-based self-regulatory mechanisms are muted. More specifically, leaders high in trait-based moral disengagement fail to filter out and reconsider episodes where a creative mindset is used to justify socially inappropriate behavior (Bandura, 1991a, b, 1999). We therefore expect that the positive impact of a creative mindset on state-based moral disengagement will be enhanced for leaders with high levels of trait-based moral disengagement and neutralized for leaders with low levels.

Hypothesis 4. Leader trait-based moral disengagement moderates the effect of creative mindset on state-based moral disengagement, such that high trait-based moral disengagement enhances the positive relationship and low trait-based moral disengagement neutralizes the positive relationship.

Inherent in our indirect effect hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) is that leader creative mindset relates to state-based moral disengagement (stage 1), which in turn relates to abusive supervision (stage 2). Our moderation hypothesis (Hypothesis 4) suggests that high trait-based moral disengagement enhances the stage 1 relationship, and low trait-based moral disengagement neutralizes the relationship. Combining these arguments would suggest that trait-based moral disengagement should also act as a conditional moderator of the indirect effect. Leaders high in trait-based moral disengagement enhance the positive influence of creative mindset on state-based moral disengagement, which then positively influences abusive supervision. Alternatively, leaders low in moral disengagement have self-regulatory capacities that halt the creative mindset to state-based moral disengagement relationship, effectively deactivating the mechanism connecting creative mindset and abusive supervision (see Fig. 1 for a visual representation of this conditional indirect effect).

Hypothesis 5. Leader trait-based moral disengagement conditionally moderates the indirect effect of creative mindset on abusive supervisory behavior via state-based moral disengagement, such that high trait-based moral disengagement enhances the positive indirect effect and low trait-based moral disengagement neutralizes the positive indirect effect.

Study 1 Method

Participants and Procedures

A total of 99 part-time MBA students at a large university in Eastern China were invited to participate in the study. Part-time students were eligible to participate if they had managed at least one direct subordinate for a minimum of 12 months. A total of 84 participants agreed to participate in the anonymous and confidential study (a response rate of 84.8%). Compensation for participation included three management and social psychology books (equivalent to \$15), and an optional one-on-one consultation providing individual feedback compared to aggregated scores of all study participants. Furthermore, to encourage participation and improve data quality, we gave multiple presentations to explain the importance and procedures of the research, while avoiding mentioning anything directly related to our predictions (e.g., Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012). The job types of participants were wide-ranging, including a focus on technology (19.0%), administration (27.4%), marketing (22.6%), and other (31.0%). With respect to management level, 50.0% of participants were front-line managers and the other 50.0% were mid-level or higher. The firms of the participants were 26.2% state-owned, 39.3% privately owned, and 34.5% other. Participants represented numerous industries, including manufacturing (21.4%), service (41.7%), and other (36.9%). Of these participants, 41.7% were female, and the average age was 31.4 years. An average of 10 subordinates reported to each participant. Their average organizational and managerial tenures were 5.2 years and 3.6 years, respectively. We conducted *t* tests comparing the demographics (e.g., gender and age) of the final participants to invited non-participants, and results suggested no significant differences.

Similar to prior experience sampling studies, surveys were administered online (e.g., Koopman, Lanaj, & Scott, 2016). Survey items were translated into Chinese following Brislin's (1980) back-translation procedure. We collected the data over a period of 4 weeks, which included an opening survey during the first week, a series of daily surveys, and a closing survey during the last week. The opening survey assessed demographics (e.g., gender, age) and trait-based moral disengagement. One week later, we began administering daily questionnaires assessing creative mindset, state-based moral disengagement, and abusive supervisory behavior. In line with prior daily studies (e.g., Barnes et al., 2015; Johnson, Lanaj, & Barnes, 2014; Qin et al., 2018a, b), participants completed the survey from Monday to Friday for 2 weeks (i.e., 10 consecutive workdays) because "the 2-week record-keeping period is assumed to represent a stable and generalizable estimate of social life" (Reis & Wheeler, 1991, p. 289). One week after the daily surveys were completed, the closing survey was sent to participants collecting additional job relevant information,

including number of subordinates, managerial tenure, and industry.

For the daily surveys, the morning survey was sent at 10:30 a.m. to assess creative mindset, state-based moral disengagement, and the control variables of the previous night's sleep quantity and quality, and ego depletion. Sending the survey at 10:30 a.m. ensured that surveys were completed after working approximately 1.5 to 2 h (participants start working between 8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.). Additionally, this gave participants enough time to finish the morning surveys before their lunch break (at approximately 12:00 p.m.). The afternoon survey was sent at 4:30 p.m. to assess abusive supervisory behavior displayed since their morning survey. We sent the survey at this time because abusive supervisory behavior would likely be underestimated if collected earlier in the day (Courtright et al., 2016) and it is methodologically advantageous when hypothesizing a direct effect to measure predictors in the morning and the dependent variable in the afternoon (Brewer, 2000).

We obtained a total of 550 matched morning and afternoon surveys out of a possible 840, representing a 65.5% daily response rate. On average, participants completed seven pairs of morning and afternoon surveys. Following the approach of similar studies (e.g., Johnson et al., 2014; Lanaj, Johnson, & Lee, 2016), timestamps of the morning and afternoon surveys were calculated to ensure that participants completed each survey at the appropriate time. As expected, the results indicated that the average lapsed time between the morning and afternoon surveys was 5.9 h.

Daily (Within-Individual) Measures

Creative Mindset Following similar studies measuring creative mindset (e.g., Gino & Ariely, 2012), participants indicated the extent to which four adjectives captured how they currently felt at that moment using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "very slightly or not at all" to 5 = "very much") ($\alpha = .94$). We selected four representative adjectives, "unconventional," "original," "creative," and "imaginative" from creativity studies (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Gough, 1979). Next, two scholars and three doctoral candidates evaluated the degree to which each adjective matched the definition of creative mindset. They were asked to indicate the extent to which the word corresponded to the definition on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "very slightly or not at all" to 5 = "very much") (Anderson & Gerbing, 1991). All four adjectives were considered indicative of creative mindset for all five judges, with an average rating of 4.8 across the four adjectives. These procedures provided initial evidence of the measure's substantive validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1991).

In order to further examine the psychometric properties of the four-item creative mindset scale, we conducted a validation study using 202 participants recruited from the authors'

personal and professional networks (e.g., Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015). The participants represented a variety of industries and were 50.5% female, with an average age of 34.0 years old. Additionally, 52.5% of participants had a bachelor's degree or higher, and the average organizational tenure was 8.7 years. In addition to our four-item creative mindset scale, we administered a 30-item creative personality scale (i.e., scoring includes 1 point for each of 18 positive adjectives and -1 point for each of 12 negative adjectives) and the five-item creative cognitive style scale ($\alpha = .77$). The findings illustrated that the creative mindset was correlated with creative personality ($r = .75, p < .001$) and creative cognitive style ($r = .85, p < .001$), supporting the validity of the measure.

State-Based Moral Disengagement Three items from Moore et al.'s (2012) moral disengagement scale were used to measure state-based moral disengagement. As moral disengagement has three primary forms of moral disengagement we chose one item for each form: "It is okay to spread rumors to defend those you care about" (cognitive restructuring); "People can't be blamed for doing things that are technically wrong when all their friends are doing it too" (suppression of moral agency); and "People who get mistreated have usually done something to bring it on themselves" (downgrading of victim distress). Participants were instructed to reflect on how they currently felt at the moment and then indicate the extent to which they agreed with each item using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"). The average coefficient α across days was .89.

Shortened scales are sometimes necessary to avoid survey fatigue (Fisher & To, 2012). This is particularly important in experience-sampling research given that participants complete multiple surveys over a continuous timeframe (Johnson et al., 2014). Thus, we conducted an independent pilot study to evaluate the validity of the shortened state-based moral disengagement scale. Similar to previous studies (Liang et al., 2016), we used a panel service to recruit 92 demographically diverse employees from a variety of jobs and industries. The participants were 47.8% female and were an average of 35.1 years old. Additionally, 55.4% of participants had a bachelor's degree or higher, and their average organizational tenure was 9.3 years. The results revealed that scores on the shortened moral disengagement measure ($\alpha = .80$) correlated highly ($r = .93, p < .001$) with the full eight-item measure (Moore et al., 2012; $\alpha = .92$), providing evidence that our measure is a suitable substitute.

Abusive Supervisory Behavior We measured daily abusive supervisory behavior using Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) five-item scale. In line with prior daily research (e.g., Courtright et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2012; Qin et al., 2018a, b), participants were asked to rate the frequency with which they had participated in each of the five behaviors since completing the

morning survey using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "never" to 5 = "frequently"). A self-report measure of abusive supervision is typical when evaluating leadership within an experience-sampling research design (e.g., Courtright et al., 2016; Scott, Garza, Conlon, & You, 2014). Concerns regarding self-report bias are minimal when the measure is behavior-oriented rather than performance-oriented (Heidemeier & Moser, 2009). A meta-analysis conducted by Berry, Carpenter, and Barratt (2012) also showed that self- and other-reports of counterproductive work behavior were moderately-to-highly correlated. Thus, it is logical to assume that self- and other-reports of abusive supervision may overlap, particularly at the daily level (see Lin, Ma, & Johnson, 2016). Moreover, self-report may be considered superior to subordinate-report in experience sampling research because leaders may not interact with all of their followers on a regular basis, and aggregating multiple followers' daily perceptions is likely to underestimate the occurrence of abusive supervision (Courtright et al., 2016). Furthermore, to address concerns that leaders may underestimate abusive supervisory behavior due to social desirability, abusive supervision was group-mean centered; thus, our results represent within-person variation (e.g., Butts et al., 2015). Example items include "Told the subordinates their thoughts or feelings were stupid," and "Made negative comments about the subordinates to others." The average coefficient α across days was .98.

Between-Individual Moderator

Trait-Based Moral Disengagement We measured trait-based moral disengagement using Moore et al.'s (2012) eight-item scale. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"). The coefficient α for this scale was .86.

Control Variables

All control variables were measured during the daily morning survey. Specifically, we controlled for sleep quantity and sleep quality because they might influence leaders' daily abusive supervisory behaviors. For instance, leaders with low levels of sleep quantity or quality are more likely to display hostile or unethical behaviors due to reduced self-control resources (e.g., Barnes et al., 2015; Mullins, Cortina, Drake, & Dalal, 2014). In accordance with previous research (e.g., Lanaj, Johnson, & Barnes, 2014), sleep quantity was measured with one item, "How many hours of actual sleep did you get last night (This may be different than the number of hours you spent in bed)?" Sleep quality was measured using Scott and Judge's (2006) four-item scale. Sample items include "I had trouble falling asleep (reverse-coded)" and "I woke up several times during the night (reverse-coded)." Items were rated

using a five-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”). The average coefficient α across days was .87. We further controlled for ego depletion because prior work suggests that leaders with high ego depletion are more likely to exhibit abusive supervisory behavior (e.g., Barnes et al., 2015; Courtright et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2016). We measured ego depletion using Lanaj et al.’s (2014) five-item scale. Participants reported their level of ego depletion on a five-point Likert scale (1 = “very slightly or not at all” to 5 = “very much”). Sample items include “My mental energy is running low” and “I feel drained.” The average coefficient α across days was .97. Including these variables as control variables helps establish the incremental predictive validity of creative mindset (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). Additionally, in order to further eliminate time lag as a potential confound in the relationship between creative mindset and state-based moral disengagement, we re-ran analyses controlling for time lag. These results were comparable to those reported in this manuscript.²

Analytic Strategy

We tested our hypotheses using random coefficient hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to account for any dependencies stemming from multiple days being nested within participants. The within-individual variables were modeled at level 1, while the between-individual moderator, trait-based moral disengagement, was modeled at level 2. All level 1 predictors were group-mean (i.e., individual-mean) centered in order to control for between-individual confounds and limit examination to within-individual fluctuations (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Furthermore, the level 2 variable was grand-mean centered to improve interpretability (Raudenbush, 1989). We employed HLM to test the direct effects (i.e., Hypotheses 1 and 2), mediating effect (i.e., Hypothesis 3), and moderating effect (i.e., Hypothesis 4); and we used RMediation (Tofighi & MacKinnon, 2011) to test the indirect effect (i.e., Hypothesis 3). To test the conditional indirect effect hypothesis (i.e., Hypothesis 5), we employed a moderated path analysis approach, which integrates moderated regression and path analytic procedures for testing mediation. This approach overcomes limitations associated with the moderated causal steps approach and offers a more holistic interpretation of the relationships within the conditional indirect effect model (Edwards & Lambert, 2007).

Study 1 Results and Discussion

Table 1 represents the proportion of variances among level 1 variables. In order to examine whether level 1 variables

exhibited considerable variance within individuals, we employed null models of hierarchical linear modeling (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) to estimate the within- and between-individual variances. The results indicated that level 1 variables displayed significant within-individual variances, ranging from 33 to 70%, and confirmed the appropriateness of employing hierarchical linear modeling. Of particular note, substantial within-individual (daily) variance was explained via creative mindset (44%), state-based moral disengagement (33%), and abusive supervision (42%). These findings suggest that it is appropriate to investigate these constructs as state-based phenomena.

Table 1 also reports the descriptive statistics and correlations among the study variables. We conducted a within- and between-individual confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to verify the distinctiveness of the level 1 and the level 2 variables. The results indicated that the four-factor model ($\chi^2(164) = 274.77, p < .001$; SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .04, CFI = .95, TFI = .94) had better fit than a three-factor model combining state-based moral disengagement and abusive supervisory behavior ($\chi^2(167) = 505.30, p < .001$; SRMR = .11, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .83, TFI = .81); a two-factor model combining creative mindset, state-based moral disengagement, and abusive supervisory behavior ($\chi^2(169) = 1048.32, p < .001$; SRMR = .17, RMSEA = .10, CFI = .57, TFI = .51); and a single-factor model ($\chi^2(170) = 1253.28, p < .001$; SRMR = .21, RMSEA = .11, CFI = .47, TFI = .41). These results offered substantial evidence of the distinctiveness of our study variables.

Tests of Hypotheses

The HLM results in Table 2 revealed that creative mindset was positively related to state-based moral disengagement ($\gamma = .15, p < .01$) and explained an incremental 13% of the within-person variance. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. As illustrated in Model 5 of Table 3, state-based moral disengagement was significantly associated with abusive supervisory behavior ($\gamma = .15, p < .001$), and the effect of creative mindset on abusive supervisory behavior became weaker after controlling for state-based moral disengagement, from $\gamma = .18 (p < .001)$ to $\hat{\gamma} = -.12, p < .01$ $\gamma = .16 (p < .001)$. Furthermore, the results of RMediation procedures indicated that the indirect effect estimate was .02 and significant (95% CI = .003, .050). Leader creative mindset and state-based moral disengagement explained 12% of the within-individual variance in abusive supervisory behavior, after accounting for the controls. Thus, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were supported.

The results in Model 4 of Table 2 illustrated that the interaction of creative mindset and trait-based moral disengagement was significantly related to state-based moral disengagement ($\gamma = .25, p < .001$). Slope tests (see Fig. 2) illustrated that when trait-based moral disengagement was high (+1 SD),

² A detailed report is available from the authors upon request.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlations in Study 1

Variables	Mean	SD	Intercept (b_{00})	Within- individual variance (e^2)	Between- individual variance (r^2)	Percentage of within-individual variance (%)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Level 1 variables												
1. Sleep quantity previous night	6.80	1.21	6.75	1.06	0.46	70%						
2. Sleep quality previous night	3.65	0.75	3.61	0.27	0.30	47%	.14***					
3. Ego depletion	2.31	0.71	2.36	0.19	0.31	38%	-.15***	-.15***				
4. Creative mindset	3.27	0.64	3.28	0.18	0.23	44%	.01	-.01	-.13**			
5. State-based moral disengagement	2.21	0.72	2.22	0.17	0.35	33%	.05	-.12**	.10*	.12**		
6. Abusive supervisory behavior	1.80	0.59	1.83	0.15	0.21	42%	-.07	-.06	.13**	.09*	.18***	
Level 2 variable												
7. Trait-based moral disengagement	2.12	0.62					-.10*	-.20***	.26***	.04	.45***	.23***

$n = 550$ at the individual-day level, $n = 84$ at the individual level. Correlations for the level 1 variables represent group-mean centered relationships among the daily variables at the within-individual level of analysis. Level 1 variables were neither centered nor aggregated to provide estimates of between-individual relationships with the level 2 variable. b_{00} = average level of the variable across individuals. e^2 = within-individual variance. r^2 = between-individual variance in the variable. Percentage of within-individual variance was calculated as $e^2 / (e^2 + r^2)$

* $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$
 *** $p < .001$

creative mindset was significantly positively related to state-based moral disengagement ($\gamma = .29, p < .001$). In contrast, when trait-based moral disengagement was low (-1 SD), creative mindset was not significantly related to state-based moral disengagement ($\gamma = -.03, ns$). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.³

The results in Table 4 confirmed that the indirect effect of creative mindset on abusive supervisory behavior via state-based moral disengagement was significantly moderated by trait-based moral disengagement ($\Delta\gamma = .05, p < .05$). Specifically, the indirect effect was stronger at a high level ($+1$ SD: $\gamma = .05, p < .05$) than at a low level (-1 SD: $\gamma =$

$-.003, ns$) of trait-based moral disengagement, supporting Hypothesis 5.

Study 1 employed a field study and illustrated that creative mindset, state-based moral disengagement, and abusive supervision fluctuated daily through an experience-sampling methodology. However, creative mindset and state-based moral disengagement were both collected in the morning survey. Thus, to minimize concerns regarding common method variance, in Study 2, we sought to illustrate that creative mindset is positively associated with state-based moral disengagement using an experimental approach.

Study 2 Method

Participants

Participants were recruited using alumni lists from several large high schools and universities in China. This approach

³ For a supplemental analysis, we controlled for individual-mean creative mindset and the individual-mean creative mindset \times trait-based moral disengagement interaction, which avoids confounding cross-level and between-individual interactions (Enders & Tofghi, 2007). This method has been commonly used to estimate cross-level interaction in recent management research (e.g., Liu et al., 2012). The results using this approach mimic those reported in the text. These analyses are available from the authors upon request.

Table 2 Main and interactive effects of leader creative mindset and trait-based moral disengagement on state-based moral disengagement in Study 1

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sleep quantity previous night		0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Sleep quality previous night		-0.08* (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)	-0.08* (0.03)
Ego depletion		0.08* (0.04)	0.11** (0.04)	0.12** (0.04)
Creative mindset			0.15** (0.06)	0.13** (0.05)
Trait-based moral disengagement				0.47*** (0.10)
Creative mindset × trait-based moral disengagement				0.25*** (0.07)
Constant	2.29*** (0.07)	2.29*** (0.07)	2.29*** (0.07)	2.24*** (0.06)
Between-individual variance	.39	.39	.39	.30
Within-individual variance	.15	.15	.13	.13
Proportion within-individual variance explained			.13	.13
Deviance	751.12	739.14	724.98	694.32

$n = 550$ at the individual-day level, $n = 84$ at the individual level. Standard errors in parentheses. The proportion of variance explained was calculated based on the parameters in Model 1. Model deviance = $-2 \times \log$ -likelihood of the full maximum-likelihood estimate

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

ensured a broad, generalizable sample with a wide range of firms and industries (e.g., Butts et al., 2015; Qin, Ren, Zhang, & Johnson, 2015). Invitations were sent to 143 individuals who currently held managerial positions, and we received 128 responses (a response rate of 89.5%). Among the participants, 56.0% were female, with an average age of 33.1 years old, and they had an average organizational tenure of

7.55 years. Among the participants, 9.6% completed high school, 83.2% had a bachelor's degree, and 7.2% had a graduate degree. Participants primarily represented manufacturing and service industries (manufacturing 44.8%; service 36.8%; other 18.4%), and had a wide variety of job types within those industries (technology 34.4%; administration 38.4%; marketing 16.8%; and other 10.4%).

Table 3 Effects of leader creative mindset and state-based moral disengagement on abusive supervisory behavior in Study 1

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Sleep quantity previous night		-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Sleep quality previous night		-0.03 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)
Ego depletion		0.11** (0.04)	0.13** (0.04)	0.13*** (0.04)	0.12** (0.04)	0.12** (0.04)
Creative mindset			0.18*** (0.05)	0.18*** (0.05)	0.16*** (0.05)	0.16*** (0.05)
Trait-based moral disengagement				0.21** (0.08)		0.21** (0.08)
Creative mindset × trait-based moral disengagement				0.07 (0.07)		0.03 (0.08)
State-based moral disengagement					0.15*** (0.05)	0.15** (0.05)
Constant	1.83*** (0.05)	1.83*** (0.05)	1.83*** (0.05)	1.81*** (0.05)	1.83*** (0.05)	1.81*** (0.05)
Between-individual variance	.21	.21	.21	.19	.21	.19
Within-individual variance	.15	.14	.135	.135	.132	.132
Proportion within-individual variance explained			.10	.10	.12	.12
Deviance	693.48	683.36	666.00	658.48	654.98	648.10

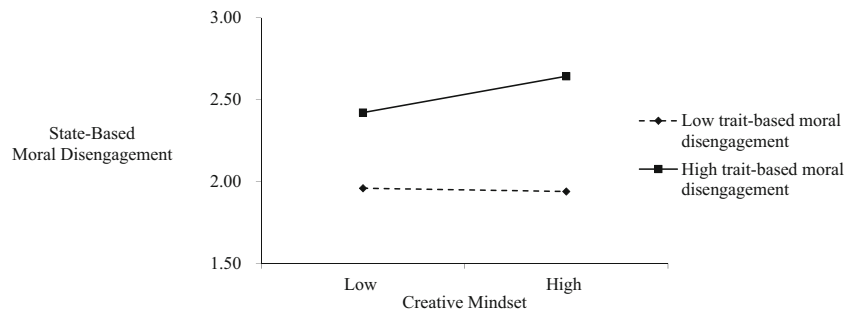
$n = 550$ at the individual-day level, $n = 84$ at the individual level. Standard errors in parentheses. The proportion of variance explained was calculated based on the parameters in Model 1. Model deviance = $-2 \times \log$ -likelihood of the full maximum-likelihood estimate

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Fig. 2 The moderating role of trait-based moral disengagement on the relationship between leader creative mindset and state-based moral disengagement in Study 1



Procedures and Experimental Design

Similar to previous creative mindset studies (e.g., Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2008; Gino & Ariely, 2012; Sassenberg & Moskowitz, 2005), we employed a priming approach whereby participants were randomly assigned to a creativity condition or a control condition. Following previous research, we used a scrambled sentence test to manipulate creative mindset (Chartrand & Bargh, 1996). In part 1 of the experiment, we explained to participants that they would engage in an exercise that assessed their language skills. Participants were instructed to construct grammatically correct, four-word sentences (e.g., “This script is original”) from a set of five randomly positioned words (e.g., original, is, this, script, hungry). In the creativity condition, eight of the 10 sentences consisted of creativity-related words (i.e., unconventional, original, innovative, imaginative, creativity, novel, ideas, and ingenious). Existing literature has demonstrated that this manipulation activates individuals’ creative mindset and relates to an increase in creative outcomes (Gino & Ariely, 2012). In the control condition, none of the 10 sentences consisted of words related to creativity. Following Brislin’s (1980) back-translation approach, all the experimental materials were translated into Chinese, the native language of the participants. Also, among the scrambled sentences we used,

the Chinese sentence structure was similar to the English sentence structure. In accordance with prior priming research (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Masicampo & Baumeister, 2011), immediately following the priming procedure, we administered a 2-min filler task (describing their demographics, job characteristics, and typical weekday) to ensure participants did not consciously contemplate the priming manipulation in part 1. Then, in the context of an ostensibly independent study, participants were invited to engage in part 2 of the study and report measures of creative mindset and state-based moral disengagement. Finally, we conducted a post-experiment debriefing, asking participants if they were aware of the manipulation or the study purpose (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000).

We measured state-based moral disengagement using Moore et al.’s (2012) eight-item scale. Similar to Study 1, participants were instructed to reflect on how they currently felt at that moment and then indicate the extent to which they agreed with each item using a five-point Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”) ($\alpha = .94$). Following similar studies measuring creative mindset (Gino & Ariely, 2012; Gough, 1979), for a manipulation check, participants indicated the extent to which the four adjectives used in Study 1 captured how they currently felt at that moment using a five-point Likert scale (1 = “very slightly or not at all” to 5 = “very much”) ($\alpha = .72$).

Table 4 Results of the moderated path analysis in Study 1

Moderating variable	First stage P_{MX}	Second stage P_{YM}	Direct effect P_{YX}	Indirect effect $P_{MX} \times P_{YM}$	Total effect $P_{YX} + P_{MX} \times P_{YM}$
Trait-based moral disengagement					
Low (-1 SD)	-.03	.10	.14*	-.003	.14*
High (+1 SD)	.29**	.18*	.16*	.05*	.21*
Differences between low and high	.31**	.07	.02	.05*	.08

$n = 550$ at the individual-day level, $n = 84$ at the individual level

SD standard deviation, X = creative mindset, M = state-based moral disengagement, Y = abusive supervisory behavior

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Study 2 Results and Discussion

Prior to testing the hypotheses, we conducted *t* tests to verify the utility of the creativity manipulation. Results indicated that participants in the creativity condition (mean = 3.76, SD = .51) rated creative mindset higher than those in the control condition (mean = 3.46, SD = .60); $t(123) = 2.96, p < .01$; Cohen's $d = .53$), indicating that the manipulation was successful. Further, the post-experiment debriefings revealed that three participants stated that the part 1 scrambled sentence test may have influenced their part 2 responses. Removing these three respondents resulted in a final sample size of 125 participants.

Hypothesis 1 proposes that creative mindset is positively related to state-based moral disengagement. As expected, participants in the creativity condition (mean = 2.65, SD = 1.03) reported higher level of state-based moral disengagement than did the participants in the control condition (mean = 2.21, SD = 0.77; $t(123) = 2.75, p < .01$; Cohen's $d = .50$). Thus, building on the findings of Study 1, the findings of this priming experiment help rule out alternative explanations regarding the positive relationship between creative mindset and state-based moral disengagement.

Discussion

Drawing upon moral disengagement theory (Bandura, 1991a, 1999), we theorized and found that leader creative mindset is associated with state-based moral disengagement. The findings also suggest that state-based moral disengagement acts as a linking mechanism between leader creative mindset and abusive supervisory behavior. Finally, the results suggest that leaders high in trait-based moral disengagement have a limited capacity to self-regulate, enabling their creative mindset to relate to abuse via state-based moral disengagement. Alternatively, leaders low in trait-based moral disengagement are equipped with the self-regulatory capacities necessary to neutralize such an effect.

Theoretical Implications

This research makes several theoretical contributions. Specific to creative leadership research, our work highlights the importance of understanding the connection between creativity and interpersonal aggression. To date, what we know about negative creativity is specific to day-to-day, task-oriented decisions (De Dreu & Nijstad, 2008; Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011; Walczyk et al., 2008). However, the workplace is comprised of social hierarchies where priorities and interests will inevitably clash. We therefore offer a starting point for an understudied direction in research on the dark side of creativity: interpersonal interactions between leaders and followers.

Specific to abusive supervision research, our findings contribute to the growing body of work evaluating the effect of actor-focused variables (e.g., Machiavellianism: Kiazad et al., 2010; emotional intelligence: Ding, Tian, Yang, & Gong, 2012) on abusive supervision. To understand and potentially curtail abusive supervision, two primary theoretical perspectives prevail. The trickle-down perspective (Aryee et al., 2007) suggests that organizational factors such as abuse at higher levels of the organizational hierarchy (Liu et al., 2012) and unjust (Hoobler & Brass, 2006) or hostile organizational work environments (Mawritz et al., 2014) provoke abusive supervisory behavior. The victim precipitation perspective (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004) suggests that supervisors are motivated to engage in mistreatment due to subordinate characteristics, such as negative affect (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006) or sub-par performance (Liang et al., 2016; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). Both perspectives propose that the psychological mechanisms causing abusive supervisory behaviors are internal reactions to organization- or subordinate-focused external factors (Martinko et al., 2013; Tepper, 2007). Supervisors react with hostile behavior because their circumstances create opportunities for displaced aggression (Hoobler & Brass, 2006) or because they behave according to their environmental cues (Mawritz et al., 2014). The actor-focused perspective illustrates that interpersonal aggression toward subordinates manifests from perpetrators' internal characteristics and psychological processes, and not just from reactions to external stimuli. In particular, our findings highlight that supervisors have moral agency and that their personal characteristics dictate whether they will engage in episodes of abusive supervision due to moral disengagement.

Our daily investigation approach facilitates an additional contribution to abusive supervision literature. Prior research illustrates that leadership behaviors vary from day-to-day (e.g., Bormann, 2017; Venus et al., 2013). Specific to abusive supervision, evidence suggests that variance stems more from daily, within-person fluctuations, than from between-person differences (Johnson et al., 2012; Qin et al., 2018a, b). Interestingly, the only within-person investigations of abusive supervision to date evaluate the influence of factors stemming from outside the workplace, such as sub-par sleep quality (Barnes et al., 2015) and perceptions of family-to-work conflict (Courtright et al., 2016). Our findings therefore uncover a theoretically important antecedent to abusive supervision in that a creative mindset can fluctuate and be primed (Gino & Ariely, 2012), and it is considered a commendable mindset in organizational settings (Amabile, 1996), but it is associated with acts of interpersonal aggression.

We also contribute to abusive supervision and creative leadership literature by investigating state- and trait-based moral disengagement. While negative creativity research draws from moral disengagement theory to suggest that creativity relates to rationalizations and justifications for negative

behaviors (Beaussart et al., 2013; Gino & Ariely, 2012; Walczyk et al., 2008), this suggestion is yet to be empirically investigated in an organizational field study. Our findings also illustrate that trait-based moral disengagement acts as a conditional moderator of the negative creativity process. Leaders that are encouraged and reinforced to be creative thinkers may coincidentally feel justified in their mistreatment of subordinates. The effect that a creative mindset has on a leader's tendency to rationalize and justify inappropriate supervisor behavior can be neutralized through low trait-based moral disengagement. Thus, trait-based moral disengagement offers a critical boundary condition of the unfortunate relationship between leader creative mindset and interpersonal aggression. In total, this work highlights the necessity to consider both state- and trait-based conceptualizations of moral disengagement, which to date, is rarely done (see Moore et al., 2012 for an exception), particularly in workplace research. Furthermore, this work highlights that while both state- and trait-based conceptualizations stem from moral disengagement theory, each has its own set of assumptions and implications. State-based moral disengagement addresses the cognitive processes associated with rationalization and justification, while trait-based moral disengagement addresses the self-regulatory capacities associated with preventing such detrimental cognitive processes.

Practical Implications

This study illustrates another context—leader-follower dyads—where creativity can have unintended, negative consequences. The key question becomes how can organizations reap the benefits of leader creative mindset without perpetuating aggression toward subordinates? Organizations should first consider whether the ultimate goal is leader creativity or follower creativity. If it is the latter, organizations do not necessarily need to emphasize leaders being in a creative mindset. Instead, leaders can act as *facilitators* where they lead followers toward the attainment of creative outcomes (Mainemelis, Kark, & Epitropaki, 2015). This facilitation conceptualization of creative leadership does not require leaders to be creative, but instead provide followers with direction, support, and guidance at each stage of the creative process, and nurture a culture of idea generation and feedback (Mumford et al., 2002; Mumford, Connelly, & Gaddis, 2003).

Alternatively, there may be settings where leader creativity is the goal. For example, several case studies have documented the creative leadership of haute-cuisine chefs (e.g., Bouty & Gomez, 2010), orchestra conductors (e.g., Hunt, Stelluto, & Hooijberg, 2004), and executives pushing for top-down corporate innovation (e.g., Vaccaro, Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2012). These studies align with the *directing* conceptualization of creative leadership, whereby the goal is to materialize a leader's creative vision through the work of

others (Mainemelis et al., 2015). For such settings, the findings of our study would suggest that organizations institute supervisor-focused training initiatives that target moral disengagement.

The severity of interpersonally aggressive behavior is wide ranging (Barling, Dupré, & Kelloway, 2009), making it challenging for leaders to know where to draw the line. Additionally, some leaders may perceive that some degree of interpersonal aggression is productive because it reminds followers to be responsive to the authority of their superior (Neuman & Baron, 1998). To the degree that training initiatives can clearly specify what supervisory behaviors are unacceptable, it will help mitigate opportunities for supervisors to enact moral disengagement through rationalization and justification. The training could be positioned as either an ethics-focused training initiative (Delaney & Sockell, 1992) or as a culture-building exercise (Valentine & Fleischman, 2004). Either approach should strengthen supervisors' ability to enact moral self-regulation by increasing awareness of abusive supervision (Butterfield, Trevin, & Weaver, 2000). Organizations may also benefit from recruiting, selecting, and retaining leaders who exhibit strong tendencies for trait-based, moral self-regulation. Such leaders are less likely to cross moral thresholds because they are aware of their inappropriate and unnecessary leader rationalizations and proactively steer away from such flawed thinking.

Limitations and Future Research

While our study possesses a number of strengths, there are also limitations that warrant attention in future research. First, this research focuses on the impact of leader creative mindset on episodes of abusive supervisory behavior. In Study 1, we therefore collected daily supervisor self-reports of creative mindset, state-based moral disengagement, and abusive supervisory behavior. Although this is consistent with prior daily research, including daily abusive supervision research (e.g., Courtright et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2014), this design may be susceptible to common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). We therefore followed Koopman et al.'s (2016) recommendations for minimizing common method variance effects in daily research. Specifically, we measured the predictors and the dependent variable at separate time points each day. This temporal separation is considered one of the most effective means for reducing common method variance (Johnson, Rosen, & Djurdjevic, 2011). Additionally, in the analyses, we removed between-individual variance by mean-centering all daily variables at the individual level, essentially controlling for between-individual confounds such as common method bias, recall bias, and social desirability. Furthermore, we proposed and found support for the cross-level interaction (note that the between-individual moderator was collected 1 week before the daily data collection), which is unlikely to

be susceptible to common method bias (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). Finally, our experimental approach in Study 2 suggests that a creative mindset acts as a precursor to state-based moral disengagement. Notwithstanding these points, future research should attempt to replicate our findings using multiple sources across time.

Second, we evaluate abusive supervision once a day, across 2 weeks. This approach mimics prior within-person investigations of abusive supervision, and makes sense given the need to balance theoretical interests with a practical research design. For within-person studies, collecting data across 2 weeks is the norm because that timeframe represents a stable and generalizable estimate of behavior (Reis & Wheeler, 1991). At the same time, collecting more than two surveys per day over 2 weeks raises concerns regarding missing data and survey fatigue, among others (Beal & Weiss, 2003). Prior research suggests that substantial amounts of abuse toward subordinates is relatively rare (Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2017). This made it particularly important to retain the 2-week time frame, instead of collecting surveys more than a few times a day. Nonetheless, future research could build upon our work by evaluating each of the study measures several times a day across a representative time frame. Prior work has illustrated within-day fluctuations in creativity (e.g., Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005). If creative mindset also fluctuates within-day, it may then initiate within-day fluctuations in state-based moral disengagement and abusive supervision.

Third, as noted above, abusive supervision is a low base rate phenomenon. Our low levels of abusive supervision (mean = 1.80 out of 5) align with prior research on the construct (e.g., Courtright et al., 2016: mean = 1.13; Foulk, Lanaj, Tu, Erez, & Archambeau, 2018: mean = 1.08; Mawritz, Greenbaum, Butts, & Graham, 2017: mean = 1.53; Tepper et al., 2011: mean = 1.27; Yam, Fehr, Keng-Highberger, Klotz, & Reynolds, 2016: mean = 1.61). Also, a recent meta-analysis of the abusive supervision literature, conducted by Mackey et al. (2017), reported an overall abusive supervision mean of 1.78. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to evaluate findings across a longer time frame. Along these lines, future research should evaluate the creativity-abuse relationship using alternative samples. Our sample consists of MBA students with a mean age of 31.4 years. MBA students might be more attuned to ethically appropriate management and older (and presumably more seasoned) managers may have obtained more power, which might influence their use of aggression.

Fourth, it is important to note the difference between leader creative mindset and trait-based creative leadership. Creative leadership is commonly studied as a trait whereby some leaders are consistently more capable of developing ideas about products, services, or procedures that are both novel and useful to the organization (Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004; Mainemelis et al., 2015). A creative mindset is different

in several respects. First, it is a malleable state that can fluctuate from day-to-day, and is not necessarily consistent over time. Second, a creative mindset is acontextual, and not necessarily specific to work-related concepts. Third, a creative mindset simply entails feeling creative and does not necessarily involve considerations regarding the utility or implementation of creative ideas within a workplace context. Thus, we caution readers to not overextend the implications of our findings to other conceptualizations of creative leadership. Instead, the implication of our work is specific; a leader's creative mindset is associated with engaging in episodes of subordinate abuse. Along these lines, future research should evaluate between-person differences in creativity, moral disengagement, and abusive supervision.

Relatedly, it is important to note the differences between creative mindset and alternative, creativity-oriented measures that use self-perception tactics (Reiter-Palmon, Robinson-Morrall, Kaufman, & Santo, 2012). For example, prior research investigates constructs such as creative self-efficacy (e.g., Tierney & Farmer, 2002), which entails the extent to which respondents perceive that they will be successful in their creative endeavors. Similarly, prior research prompts respondents to self-rate their creative behaviors (as a state or a trait), which entails self-perceptions of successfully generating novel and useful ideas (e.g., Furnham, Batey, Anand, & Manfield, 2008). Creative mindset is different in that it does not speak to self-perceptions of creative success, but simply feeling as if one is in a creative state of mind. Future research should simultaneously evaluate creative mindset and these alternative self-perception measures to evaluate their relationships among each other, and with creativity-oriented outcome variables.

Fifth, our study evaluates a relatively narrow portion of the creativity-innovation process. In particular, a creative mindset could be considered a starting point that eventually leads to the articulation of novel and potentially useful ideas to colleagues. Once these ideas are evaluated and debated, and depending upon an assortment of contextual circumstances, the creative ideas might be implemented, and if successful, deemed innovative (Amabile, 1996). It is possible in the latter stages of this process, when ideas are being debated and priorities and resources are being discussed, that there is a high likelihood of conflict (De Dreu, Nijstad, Bechtoldt, & Baas, 2011). This is important, because such conflict is a known antecedent to abusive supervision (Graham, Dust, & Ziegert, 2018). Future research should therefore evaluate the downstream mechanisms of the creative-innovative process in order to add clarity to the source of the abuse. Future research should also go beyond dyadic, leader-follower interactions and evaluate leader-group mechanisms, given that creativity (and innovation) are bounded by the preferences and interests of the group at large (Janssen, Van de Vliert, & West, 2004).

Sixth, future research should also evaluate whether different types of creativity, moral disengagement, and abusive

supervision entail different processes. For example, moral disengagement may be more strongly associated with radical creativity than incremental creativity because radical creativity entails a more aggressive mindset (Gilson & Madjar, 2011). It is also possible that one key dimension of moral disengagement is driving the effect on abusive supervision. For example, downgrading victim distress may be more applicable than cognitive restructuring or suppression of moral agency given that it is more directly tied to interpersonal interactions. Finally, Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) differentiate between active interpersonal abuse (e.g., “tells me my thoughts and feelings are stupid”) and passive abuse (e.g., “does not give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort”). We use the active interpersonal abuse scale because we hypothesize that a creative mindset entails cognitive flexibility which enables justification of inappropriate action as opposed to non-action. Nonetheless, future research should evaluate whether a creative mindset is also associated with more passive forms of abuse.

A seventh aspect that warrants additional consideration is the sample choice. Chinese employees typically have a high power distance orientation (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2001). If leaders perceive that power differences make it acceptable to overlook the psycho-social needs of followers, leaders’ self-reporting of moral disengagement or abusive supervision may be underestimated. Alternatively, in cultures with a low power distance orientation, the magnitude of the effects may be increased.

Conclusion

Plentiful research investigates how creativity relates to beneficial workplace outcomes such as higher performance and increased innovation (Shalley & Zhou, 2008). However, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that creativity also has a dark side (Anderson, Potocnik, & Zhou, 2014). Along these lines, we illustrate that leaders’ creative mindset is associated with detrimental justifications for subordinate abuse. We hope that the findings of this study stimulate future negative creativity research to evaluate the influence of creativity on negative interactions with others.

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