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Organizational supports and organizational deviance: The mediating role of organization-based self-esteem

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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon belongingness theory, we tested organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) as a mediator of the relation between organizational supports and organizational deviance. Data from 237 employees were collected at three points in time over one year. Using structural equation modeling, we found that OBSE fully mediated the relation between organizational supports and organizational deviance. Controlling for preexisting predictors of deviance, including personality traits (agreeableness, neuroticism and conscientiousness) and role stressors (role conflict, ambiguity, and overload), did not eliminate the relation between OBSE and organizational deviance. The implications for the OBSE and deviance literatures are discussed.

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In the past decade, the topic of deviant employee behavior has become increasingly popular with organizational researchers. Deviant behaviors, or behaviors initiated by employees which contravene organizational norms, such as theft, staying home from work without cause, and taking unauthorized or extended breaks (Bennett & Robinson, 2003), can have a profound impact on employees and organizations. For employees, 24% of women experience sexual harassment at work (Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003); 71% of employees report experiencing workplace incivility at least once in a 5-year time span (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). *Organizational deviance*, a specific form of deviant behavior targeting the organization itself, can have a significant impact on an organization's bottom line, with virtually all organizations being the target of some form of employee theft (Case, 2000). Estimates of lost productivity due to web surfing in the UK indicate that this form of organizational deviance can cost the equivalent of $600 million dollars per year (Taylor, 2007).

Prior research has tentatively established that supportive aspects of the environment (e.g., supportive relationships with leaders or the organization as a whole; termed here *organizational supports*) may reduce the occurrence of organizational deviance (Liao, Joshi, & Chuang, 2004). However, we know little about the psychological mechanism through which organizational supports influence organizational deviance. In order to shed light on these issues, the present article frames the organizational support-organizational deviance relation within a belongingness theory framework (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Such a framework not only addresses why organizational support matters to employees, but also suggests an underlying process of identity threat, which lowers organization-based self-esteem (OBSE; Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, & Dunham, 1989). Although lowered self-esteem has been argued to underlie deviant behavior Leary, Twenge, and Quinlivan (2006), surprisingly, within the organizational realm OBSE has not been examined as a mediator of the relation between organizational supports and organizational deviance, nor has its direct relation with organizational deviance been examined. Thus, the present study addresses an important theoretical and empirical gap in the literature. Below, we review the literature on organizational deviance and its relation to organizational supports; we subsequently outline belongingness theory and present our rationale for why OBSE should mediate the relation between organizational supports and organizational deviance.

Organizational deviance and organizational supports

Deviant behaviors can take many forms; indeed, the early stages of the literature on deviant behaviors examined behaviors such as theft, absenteeism, and drug use as separate entities.

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More recently it has been noted that these behaviors tend to co-occur, serving similar goals, and should be examined in conjunction with, not separate from, each other (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). As such, researchers have begun to focus on the broader category of *organizational deviance* (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Organizational deviance represents intentional behaviors engaged in by organizational members that are contrary to the norms of the organization, and which carry the potential to harm the organization (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). Organizational deviance represents a form of job performance (together with task performance and citizenship behaviors; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002), but remains a distinct construct. For example, individuals engage in both deviant and citizenship behaviors', suggesting they are not simply opposite ends of the same continuum (Sackett & DeVore, 2002).

Given the prevalence and substantial costs of organizational deviance, most research has focused on identifying its antecedents. Contemporary research has focused on two main categories of antecedent variables: individual differences and reactions to organizational experiences (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). Individual difference research has conceptualized organizational deviance as a reflection of different personality traits (e.g., low conscientiousness) or examined how personality traits moderate the relations of other variables with deviance (Cullen & Sackett, 2003). In contrast, the literature on reactions to workplace experiences have cast organizational deviance as motivated by the need to express one's displeasure with organizational experiences and/or to reconcile perceived disparities between how one behaves and how one is treated by the organization and its members (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). Consistent with this, research has shown that situational variables such as role stressors can relate to deviance (Spector & Fox, 2005).

While the literature strongly corroborates the relation between negative organizational experiences and deviance, this research largely ignores the role of positive ones, despite calls to examine positive aspects of organizational experiences (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). Accordingly, research on deviance and *organizational supports*, or positive relationships with the organization and its agents, has only recently begun to emerge. Organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986) suggests that employees develop beliefs regarding the extent to which the organization and its agents (e.g., leaders) care about the employee's well-being. These beliefs can be referenced towards the *organization* (perceived organizational support, or POS) or towards the employee's *supervisor* (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Antecedents of POS include the provision of developmental experiences by the organization and the cumulative experience of positive and negative interactions with powerful others in the organization (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). The positive consequences of POS are wide-ranging (see Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, for a meta-analytic review), but most relevant to the present study is that POS has been linked to deviant behaviors (Liao et al., 2004).

While *organizational* support represents an important operationalization of support within the organization, one can also receive support from *supervisors* as well (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). One dominant approach to assessing supervisory support has been to assess the leader-member exchange relationship (LMX). LMX represents the quality of the exchange relationship between a leader and his or her follower (Gerstner & Day, 1997). In contrast to other theories of leadership that focus primarily on the traits of leaders (e.g., the Ohio State leadership studies) or of follower characteristics (e.g., Kelley, 1988), LMX theory is concerned with dyadic relationships that develop between leaders and followers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). High-quality LMX relationships are usually characterized by trust, respect, and obligation, and involve being able to count on the leader for support (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).[1]

LMX has been linked to a multitude of consequences (see Gerstner & Day, 1997 for a meta-analytic review), but to our knowledge it has yet to be linked with broad measures of organizational deviance (though LMX has been linked to retaliatory and resistance behaviors; see Tepper, Uhl-Bien, Kohut, Rogelberg, Lockhart, & Ensley, 2006, and Townsend, Phillips, & Elkins, 2000). However, both POS and LMX index the quality of the relationship between the employee and the organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005); while most research has focused on the positive aspects of support, it is also true that low levels of support can be conceptualized as thwarting an employee's *need to belong*. We propose that belongingness theory provides a unifying framework which can explain not only the relation between organizational supports and deviance, but also suggests a psychological process, gauged by OBSE, through which organizational supports influence organizational deviance.

Belongingness theory

Belongingness theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) suggests that one of the primary human drives is the need to belong, or to form strong positive interpersonal relationships. The need to belong is a powerful, fundamental human need that individuals constantly strive to satisfy (Baumeister & Leary, 1995); when one's sense of belonging is thwarted (i.e., lower than desired), this can result in adverse reactions (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Thau, Aquino, & Poortvliet, 2007). The need to belong is posited to exist across cultures (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), owing to the evolutionary advantages membership in groups confer (Williams, 2007). It represents a pervasive concern for individuals, who are highly sensitive to indicators of acceptance within a group (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). In an organizational context, POS and LMX can be conceptualized as sources of acceptance and belonging within the organization; POS is indicative of the approval and respect of the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), while high levels of LMX has been conceptualized as being part of the "in-group" (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Within belongingness theory, self-esteem has been proposed to play a special role as an indicator of one's satisfaction of the need to belong (Leary & Downs, 1995). That is, self-esteem levels rise and fall in accordance with one's acceptance and rejection from a group (Williams, 2007); consistently low levels of acceptance result in low levels of self-esteem. In the workplace, self-esteem is assessed with measures of *organization-based self-esteem*, defined as the extent to which individuals believe they are capable, significant, and worthy at work (Pierce et al., 1989). Empirically, OBSE has been linked to POS and LMX in cross-sectional studies (Pierce & Gardner, 2004); consistent with belongingness theory, these results suggest POS and LMX signal to the employee the extent to which the organization values him or her, and whether the employee is included or excluded at work (Pierce & Gardner, 2004).

While individuals strive to maintain high self-esteem (Crocker & Park, 2004), the interpersonal environment can sometimes frustrate belonging and self-esteem goals by failing to provide support, which communicates to the individual that they are not valued

[1] Given supervisors are considered agents of the organization whose actions may be interpreted as representative of the organization's wishes and not those of the supervisor (Levinson, 1965), one might question whether individuals differentiate between supervisory and organizational support. Factor analyses have shown that supervisory and organizational supports are best modeled as separate factors (Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003); as well, both LMX and POS have been shown to have unique antecedents and outcomes and to incrementally predict outcomes over and above each other (Wayne et al., 1997), supporting their distinctiveness.

(Leary et al., 2006). Such a lack of support represents an *identity threat* or actions by others "that challenges, calls into question, or diminishes a person's sense of competence, dignity, or self-worth" (Aquino & Douglas, 2003, p. 196). By thwarting belonging and self-esteem goals, identity threats promote a sense of exclusion, and consequently, individuals experience lowered self-esteem (Leary & Downs, 1995). Individuals with low trait self-esteem feel as though they have been devalued by others and expect they will continue to experience rejection, with needs to belong and experience positive self-worth remaining unfulfilled (Anthony, Wood, & Holmes, 2007). Such feelings of exclusion as indicated by lowered self-esteem impair self-regulatory ability by impeding self-awareness (see Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; also Heimpel, Elliot, & Wood, 2006), or our ability to modify our behaviors to comply with social standards or achieve goals; impaired self-regulatory ability is also one of the main causes of deviant behaviors (Marcus & Schuler, 2004). In an organizational context, this suggests that low OBSE levels represent an ongoing thwarting of belonging and esteem needs which, in turn, can result in deviant behaviors (Thau et al., 2007). When the identity threat is organizationally based, such as low levels of organizational support, individuals may engage in organizational deviance as a result.

Belongingness theory thus provides a compelling framework for examining the relation between organizational supports and organizational deviance. Given the need to belong motivates individuals to monitor their environments for cues to their level of inclusion/exclusion (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), indices of organizational support such as POS and LMX take on a heightened relevance to individuals. When low levels of organizational support are detected, OBSE levels decrease, thwarting one's need to belong and goals for positive self-regard (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Brockner, 1988). The effects of identity threats are therefore transmitted through their impact on belonging and self-esteem levels, which impair self-regulatory ability (Baumeister et al., 2005; Heimpel et al., 2006), resulting in deviant behavior. While intuitive, no research to date examines OBSE's role as a mediator of the organizational support-organizational deviance relation, nor has OBSE been linked to organizational deviance.

Within this approach OBSE mediates the relation of organizational supports with organizational deviance; an alternative model is that self-esteem moderates the supports-deviance relation. That is, people with high levels of self-esteem may be less affected by low levels of support, given the availability of other socioemotional resources that high self-esteem represents (Baumeister et al., 1996; alternately, they may seek to zealously defend such resources; Kernis & Waschull, 1995). While plausible, we believe that OBSE is more appropriately conceptualized as a mediator, while its global counterpart, self-esteem, is more appropriately conceptualized as a moderator. A moderation approach treats self-esteem as representing the totality of an individual's socioemotional resources to be drawn upon (or defended) when confronted with low support; as such, *global* self-esteem (and not the *domain*-specific OBSE) is a better measure of the total resources available to an individual. Supporting this view, it has been shown that controlling for global self-esteem eliminates any moderating effect of OBSE (though the moderating effect of global self-esteem remains even when controlling for OBSE; Jex & Elacqua, 1999). Additionally, a mediation approach treats self-esteem as an outcome influenced by organizational variables; consistent with this view, OBSE is more malleable and more strongly related to organizational variables than global self-esteem (Pierce & Gardner, 2004).

Given the current study uses a belongingness framework to explicate the mediating psychological mechanisms underlying the support-deviance relation, it was therefore more theoretically appropriate to position OBSE as a mediating mechanism. In sum, based on the literature reviewed above, we hypothesize the following pattern of relations, consistent with formal requirements for tests of distal mediation (Shrout & Bolger, 2002):

Hypothesis 1. LMX is positively related to OBSE.

Hypothesis 2. POS is positively related to OBSE.

Hypothesis 3. OBSE is negatively related to organizational deviance.

Hypothesis 4. OBSE mediates the relation of LMX (H4a) and POS (H4b) with organizational deviance.

Method

Procedure

Data were collected via online surveys over a period of one year. We emailed links to the online surveys at three points in time; using a multi-wave design in which deviance was assessed in the final wave ensured the proper temporal ordering of our variables. The first survey included measures of organizational supports and participant demographics; the second survey, sent out approximately four weeks later, assessed OBSE. One year after the first survey, participants completed the third survey, assessing organizational deviance. Reminder emails were sent to those who had not completed a survey after one and three weeks (Dillman, 2000).

Participants

Participants were working university alumni recruited from a large northeastern university who graduated between 1970 and 1999. In return for completing each survey, participants were entered into a draw for gift certificates. We recruited 1721 participants for the first survey; 1366 participants completed the second survey (79% retention rate). One year later, we emailed participants who had completed the second survey again; 290 participants completed a short follow-up survey, representing a 21% retention rate. Participants were employed in a variety of industries/occupations, including managers, administrators, and software designers.

Of the 290 participants who completed the third survey, 44 had changed jobs or supervisors in the intervening year, and 9 participants did not complete all scales, leaving 237 participants for our analyses. In order to ensure our final sample of 237 participants was representative of our original sample, we conducted *t*-tests to ascertain whether the individuals who responded to our third survey differed from participants who completed the first survey one year prior. No significant differences between the two groups were detected on our variables, including neuroticism ($t = 1.06$, $\eta^2 = .001$, $p > .10$), conscientiousness ($t = .71$, $\eta^2 < .001$, $p > .10$), job ambiguity ($t = -.77$, $\eta^2 = .002$, $p > .10$), role conflict ($t = -.37$, $\eta^2 = .001$, $p > .10$), role overload ($t = -1.30$, $\eta^2 < .001$, $p > .10$), POS ($t = .06$, $\eta^2 < .001$, $p > .10$), LMX ($t = 1.09$, $\eta^2 = .001$, $p > .10$), age ($t = .61$, $\eta^2 = .001$, $p > .10$), or gender ($t = -.42$, $\eta^2 = .001$, $p > .10$). Additionally, no significant differences were found in OBSE levels ($t = .16$, $\eta^2 = .001$, $p > .10$) between those who completed the second and third surveys. The mean participant age was 42.48 years (53% male), with an approximate average organizational tenure of 10 years.

Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all ratings were made using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree).

POS

The 9-item version of Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) Perceived Organizational Support scale was used. Participants responded to questions such as "Help is available from the organization when I have a problem" ($\alpha = .94$).

LMX

The 7-item LMX-7 scale (Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982) was used. Participants used a 4-point Likert scale to answer questions such as "How well do you feel that your immediate supervisor understands your problems and needs?" ($\alpha = .92$). LMX scale anchors vary, with higher values indicating better relations with one's leader (see Graen et al., 1982).

OBSE

Pierce et al.'s (1989) 10-item OBSE measure was used. Participants responded to questions such as "I am important around here" ($\alpha = .91$).

Organizational deviance

Aquino, Lewis, and Bradfield's (1999) 8-item organizational deviance scale was used.[2] Participants indicated the frequency with which they engaged in a variety of behaviors over the past 3 months (e.g., "Left work early without permission") on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never and 5 = more than 20 times ($\alpha = .68$)).

Control variables

Given we expect OBSE to relate to organizational deviance, yet this relation has not been demonstrated previously, we felt it prudent to control for two antecedent categories of deviance: personality (Cullen & Sackett, 2003) and role stressors (Spector & Fox, 2005). By controlling for these variables, we set a high standard for OBSE to predict deviance over and above existing constructs; additionally, it ensures that any observed relation of OBSE with deviance are not due to OBSE's shared variance with other constructs (e.g., neuroticism).

For personality, we controlled for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism, which meta-analyses suggest are the strongest personality correlates of deviance (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007). Participants completed nine-item agreeableness (e.g., "I see myself as someone who has a forgiving nature," $\alpha = .76$) and conscientiousness (e.g., "I see myself as someone who does a thorough job," $\alpha = .79$) scales and an eight-item neuroticism scale (e.g., "I see myself as someone who worries a lot," $\alpha = .83$), taken from the Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999). Participants indicated their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very uncharacteristic of myself and 5 = very characteristic of myself). For role stressors, we controlled for the three most studied role stressors: role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload (Jex & Beehr, 1991; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). A 3-item measure of role overload (e.g., "I don't have time to finish my job," $\alpha = .82$; Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1990), an 11-item measure of role ambiguity (e.g., "I don't know what is expected of me," $\alpha = .91$; House, Schuler, & Levanoni, 1983), and a 7-item measure of role conflict (e.g., "I often get myself involved in situations in which there are conflicting requirements," $\alpha = .83$; House et al., 1983) were administered. All control variables were assessed in the first set of questionnaires.

[2] Evidence regarding the measure's construct validity, including low correlations with social desirability, is presented in Aquino et al. (1999). While reluctance to admit to organizational deviance may influence responses, we consider it unlikely as participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their data throughout the data collection process. Additionally, by collecting the date via an online survey, respondents had no face-to-face contact with the researchers, which should have further enhanced their sense of anonymity. Finally, our means/standard deviations are consistent with past research (Aquino et al., 1999).

Analytic strategy

We used AMOS 16.0 to test our hypotheses. Given the established relation between role stressors and OBSE (Pierce & Gardner, 2004), we modeled these variables as antecedents of OBSE in addition to LMX and POS. Consistent with James, Mulaik, and Brett's (2006) recommendations, we initially modeled OBSE as fully mediating the impact of its antecedents on organizational deviance (see Fig. 1). Subsequently, we tested for partial mediation by freeing individual paths from the antecedents to deviance and testing the change in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2$; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Using the covariance matrix as input, parameters were estimated using maximum likelihood estimation (Chou & Bentler, 1995). Item parcels were formed to create three indicators for all study constructs except role overload, where the three scale items were used as indicators. Item parcels reduce the sample-size-to-parameter ratio, which can adversely impact the standard errors and stability of the estimates. We randomly assigned items to parcels as this yields comparable fit to more complex methods (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000).

Our hypothesized model was tested using the two stage analytic procedure recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). First, a measurement model was fit to the data; second, the underlying structural model was tested. Following Hu and Bentler (1999), model fit was assessed using the following indices: (a) chi-square goodness-of-fit to degrees of freedom ratio, (b) Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), (c) root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), (d) standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR), (e) and the comparative fit index (CFI). Satisfactory model fit is indicated by TLI and CFI values close to .95, RMSEA values no higher than .08, SRMR values no higher than .10, and a chi-square goodness-of-fit to degrees of freedom ratio no greater than 2 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The significance of the indirect effects was assessed using bootstrapping procedures (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Bootstrapping is a nonparametric approach to hypothesis testing, estimating the standard errors empirically using the available data (Mooney & Duval, 1993). Multiple samples (with replacement) are drawn from the original data set and the model is re-estimated on each sample. We resampled 1000 times and used the bias corrected percentile method to create 95% confidence intervals (Mooney & Duval, 1993). Bootstrapping procedures were used because the indirect effects sampling distribution is non-normal (Bollen & Stine, 1990), which compromises the statistical power of traditional parametric tests (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Nonparametric bootstrapping procedures make no assumptions regarding the sampling distribution, thus avoiding this problem (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, alphas, and correlations of the measured variables. The zero-order correlations provide preliminary support for our hypotheses, with OBSE being significantly related to its hypothesized antecedents, LMX ($r = .56$, $p < .01$) and POS ($r = .55$, $p < .01$), and hypothesized outcome, organizational deviance ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$).

Prior to testing our structural model, we examined the measurement model. As seen in Table 2 the 10-factor measurement model provides a good fit to the data. Anderson and Gerbing (1988) also recommend comparing measurement models with (a) the independence model and (b) theoretical models of interest. On this latter point, it has been suggested that OBSE and POS are not distinct (McAllister & Bigley, 2002). In order to test the discriminant validity of OBSE and POS, we tested a model where their par-

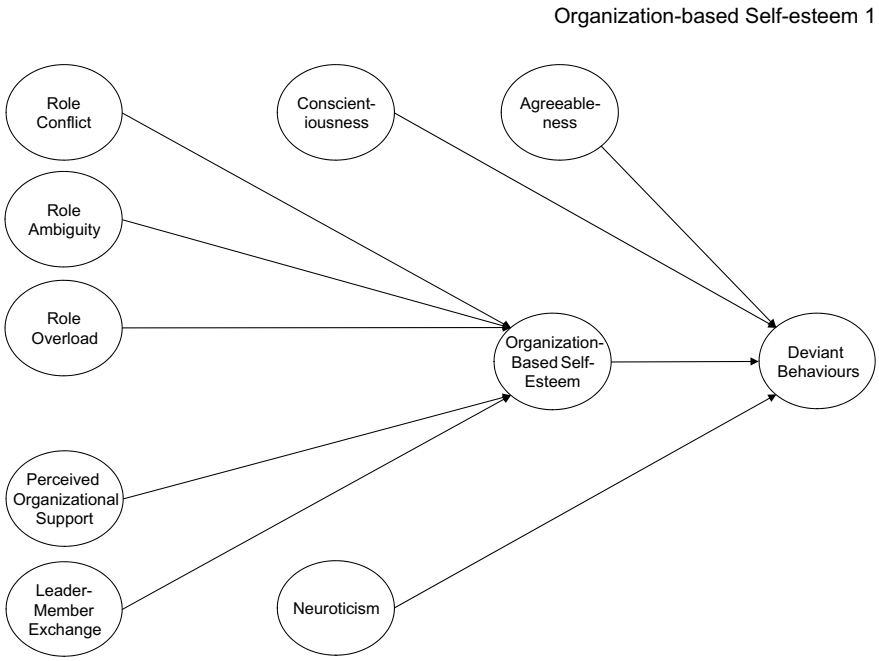

Fig. 1. Hypothesized model.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics, Zero Order Correlations, and Alphas

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	42.48	8.50	–												
2. Gender	.47	.50	−.19**	–											
3. Tenure (in months)	119.22	96.72	.50**	−.18**	–										
4. Role conflict	3.68	1.18	−.10	−.15*	.09	**.83**									
5. Role ambiguity	2.97	1.16	−.17**	−.06	−.04	.55**	**.91**								
6. Role overload	1.65	.48	−.07	.00	.03	.44**	.23**	**.82**							
7. Perceived organizational support	4.59	1.40	.01	.09	−.16*	−.45*	−.53**	−.09	**.94**						
8. Leader–member exchange	2.90	.70	.00	.02	−.07	−.42**	−.48**	−.09	.61**	**.92**					
9. Conscientiousness	3.92	.59	.13	.08	.03	−.09	−.20**	−.04	.04	.01	**.79**				
10. Neuroticism	2.55	.73	−.16*	.23**	−.19**	.16*	.24**	−.09	−.09	−.10	−.32**	**.83**			
11. Agreeableness	3.86	.58	.05	.24**	−.04	−.16*	−.17**	.05	.14*	−.03	.32**	−.29**	**.76**		
12.Organization-based self-esteem	4.08	.56	.12	.09	−.03	−.38**	−.40**	−.08	.55**	.56**	.17*	−.23**	.21**	**.91**	
13. Organizational deviance	1.38	.37	−.17*	−.25**	−.07	.15*	.19**	−.09	−.09	−.05	−.25**	.08	−.27**	−.16*	**.68**

Note. *N* ranges between 230 and 237; alphas are on the diagonal in bold. Gender: 0 = male and 1 = female.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

Table 2
Model fit statistics

	χ^2	*df*	$\Delta\chi^2$	χ^2/df	TLI	RMSEA	CFI	SRMR
Model								
hypothesized 10-factor model	616.78**	360	–	1.71	.93	.05	.94	.06
Independence model	4796.16**	435	4179.38**	11.03	–	.19	–	–
1 POS/OBSE factor model	980.91**	369	364.13**	2.66	.84	.08	.86	.08
Hypothesized structural model	636.61**	368	–	1.73	.93	.06	.94	.07
Final structural model	628..07**	367	8.54**	1.71	.93	.05	.94	.06

Note. TLI = Tucker–Lewis Index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; CFI = comparative fit index. In the 10-Factor model the relationships between the latent constructs were freely estimated. The $\Delta\chi^2$ was calculated by independently contrasting the alternate measurement models against the hypothesized 10-factor measurement model.
** $p < .01$.

cels were set to load on a single factor. As seen in Table 2, the 10-factor measurement model provided the best fit to the data. Fornell and Larcker's (1981) test of discriminant validity, which involves ensuring the variance accounted for by the constructs in their

Table 3
Standardized direct effects, indirect effects, and R^2

R^2	Organization-based self-esteem .48		Organizational deviance .21	
Predictor	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
Role conflict	−.16			.03
Role ambiguity	.01			−.00
Role overload	.08			−.01
Perceived organizational support	.29**			−.05*
Leader–member exchange	.34**			−.06*
Neuroticism	−.18**		−.19*	.03*
Conscientiousness			−.23*	
Agreeableness			−.31**	
Organization-based self-esteem			−.16*	

* $p \leqslant .05$.
** $p < .01$.

own indicators (65% for POS and 56% for OBSE) is higher than the variance shared between the two constructs (37%), also indicated that POS and OBSE are independent.[3]

Given the acceptable fit of our measurement model, we next assessed the hypothesized structural model. In addition to the paths depicted in Fig. 1, all exogenous variables were allowed to correlate. Although the hypothesized model approached or surpassed cutoffs for all fit indices (see Table 2), the modification indices indicated that a direct path from neuroticism to OBSE was warranted. Given this path is consistent with past research (Judge & Bono, 2001), we included it and re-ran our model. This model, labeled "Final Structural Model" in Table 2, fit significantly better than our hypothesized model, and was thus retained for hypothesis testing.

Table 3 presents the direct and indirect path estimates, as well as the explained variance (R^2) for our endogenous constructs. In line with our hypotheses both LMX (H1: $\beta = .34$, $p < .01$) and POS (H2: $\beta = .29$, $p < .01$) were positively related to OBSE. Consistent with H3, a negative relationship between OBSE and organizational deviance emerged ($\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$). Finally, consistent with our mediation hypotheses, significant indirect effects on organizational deviance emerged for both LMX (H4a: $\beta = -.06$, $p < .05$) and POS (H4b: $\beta = -.05$, $p < .05$). We also tested, using a $\Delta\chi^2$ test, whether OBSE fully or partially mediated the organizational support variables' relation with organizational deviance by freeing the direct paths between POS, LMX, and organizational deviance. Neither of these two paths improved model fit, suggesting that OBSE fully mediates the relation of LMX and POS with organizational deviance. Finally, adding paths from our role stressor variables to organizational deviance did not improve model fit. These results indicate that role stressors had no direct or indirect impact on either OBSE or deviance, once organizational supports and personality were controlled for.[4]

Discussion

Organizational deviance remains a costly problem for employers, and considerable work has focused on identifying its antecedents. Less common are studies examining *why* these antecedents are related to organizational deviance. Using a belongingness theory and identity threat perspective, our study represents the first attempt to directly test lowered self-esteem as the psychological mechanism through which organizational support can influence organizational deviance; in so doing, our study also represents the first attempt to empirically link organization-based self-esteem and deviance using a belongingness theory framework. The results of our study illustrate the importance of core motives such as the need to belong, and the benefit of conceptualizing organizational support within a belongingness theory framework: when the need to belong is thwarted by leaders and organizations which do not provide support, lowered OBSE and increased organizational deviance may result.

Consistent with research which has suggested that self motives play an important role in predicting deviance (Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Thau et al., 2007), we found that OBSE fully mediated the relation of organizational support (POS and LMX) with organizational deviance. To our knowledge, this study is the first to link LMX (indirectly) and OBSE (directly) to broad measures of organizational deviance. These results are consistent with a belongingness theory and an identity threat perspective: given self-esteem is tied to the satisfaction of the need to belong (Leary & Downs, 1995), actions or behaviors by others which communicate to the individual that they are not valued members of the group (such as low levels of organizational support) influence self-esteem levels and comprise potent identity threats. In response, individuals engage in deviant behavior.

One may wonder why individuals engage in organizational deviance, when such behaviors presumably would hinder the formation of more positive relations with leaders and the organization as a whole. While this would be the rational response, experimental research has shown that when one's identity is threatened, individuals do not necessarily react in rational ways (Baumeister et al., 1996). Such behaviors can be described as being ultimately self-defeating (Thau et al., 2007) in that they do not help to satisfy the need to belong and presumably alienate potential sources of future belongingness. An important direction for future research is to examine potential moderators of this relation; that is, to examine what causes individuals to engage in self-defeating or more positive behaviors. One such variable may include global self-esteem level. As alluded to in the introduction, high levels of global self-esteem represents general availability of socioemotional resources; this may buffer individuals against the identity-threatening implications of low OBSE levels and allow them to react in a more positive manner.

Theoretical and practical implications, strengths, and limitations

While our study used belongingness theory to examine the relation between organizational supports and organizational deviance, the model outlined here can be applied to other variables. For example, constructs which impact an individual's sense of belonging such as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) may also influence organizational deviance through their relation with self-esteem. As well, while we focused on organizational deviance (given our focus on organizational supports), our model can be modified to predict *interpersonal* deviance; in particular, interpersonal constructs such as co-worker undermining (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002) may also influence interpersonal deviance through their relation with self-esteem.

Taken together, our findings suggest that to reduce organizational deviance, it is in the best interests of organizations to have employees with high levels of OBSE which ensure that employee's needs to belong and to maintain positive self-worth are satisfied, and are associated with lower organizational deviance. The current results also suggest an important method for boosting OBSE: our

[3] We also recruited an independent sample of 161 employed adults from a variety of industries and organizations and had them complete a measure of POS and OBSE (measurement was separated by 1 month, as in the current study). Results from this new sample (available from the first author) also supported the distinction between OBSE and POS, both in terms of a two-factor CFA providing a significantly better fit than loading OBSE and POS items on a single factor, and in terms of Fornell and Larcker's test of discriminant validity.

[4] An anonymous reviewer suggested re-running the model, excluding the control variables; doing so did not change our findings.

results found LMX had the strongest relation with OBSE of all the variables in our model (indeed, this relation was significant even controlling for previously established antecedents of OBSE, such as personality and role stressors; Pierce & Gardner, 2004). Thus, organizations may wish to train managers to provide supportive, high-quality relationships with their employees to raise their employee's OBSE.

The present study has a number of strengths. We employed a multi-wave design; much of the literature on OBSE is cross-sectional, which can artificially increase the magnitude of the relation between variables measured at the same point in time (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). By separating in time the measurement of OBSE from the measurement of role stressors, organizational supports, personality, and workplace deviance, such concerns are minimized. Our study also represents the first to link OBSE and LMX with the broad construct of organizational deviance, even when controlling for two of the main antecedent categories of deviant behaviors: personality variables and role stressors (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). By controlling for personality predictors and role stressors, the conclusions of our study are strengthened both by demonstrating the incremental predictive validity of OBSE and ruling out alternate interpretations (e.g., that it is neuroticism which predicts organizational deviance).

Despite these strengths, some limitations should be noted. It could be argued that, by completing three surveys over the period of a year, our participants represent "good citizens" and thus may be unlikely to engage in deviance. However, if that were the case, the sample represents a conservative test of our hypotheses; the mean level of deviant behavior was also consistent with other studies (e.g., Aquino et al., 1999). As well, with respect to time frames, our deviance measure assessed deviance over the past three months; optimally, the time frame would have assessed deviance over the 11 months since the second survey. Another limitation with our sample was that participants were recruited from different organizations, raising the possibility that organizational context effects may vary between organizations and therefore impact our results. On the other hand, recruiting from multiple organizations increases the generalizability of our results and ensures they are not specific to a single organization or occupation.

While our antecedents, mediators, and criterion variables were measured at different points in time, our data were collected from a single source, raising the possibility of a common-method variance bias. Yet self-reports are arguably the most appropriate method for assessing organizational deviance (Aquino & Douglas, 2003), and a recent meta-analysis examining the effect of using self- and other-reports of deviant behavior found that the inclusion or exclusion of non-self-report data did not significantly affect any of the estimates (Berry et al., 2007). Moreover, some theorists (e.g., Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978, p. 227) argue that the individual's perceptions are of primary importance, suggesting that "characteristics of the job or task, such as the style of supervision or conditions of the workplace, are not given but constructed." Thus, self-report seems the most appropriate method for assessing our variables. Nevertheless, in order to eliminate this concern, future studies may wish to procure data from alternate sources.

Another limitation of the study was that our design was correlational, limiting our ability to establish causality. This is a problem inherent with survey data, as only with randomized experiments is it possible to definitively state that changes in one variable are caused by changes in another variable (Judd, Smith, & Kidder, 1991). Unfortunately, the variables studied do not translate well to an experimental setting, limiting our ability to establish causality. With that being said, our research methodology does take steps to meet some of the requirements of causality (e.g., by separating out the measurement of antecedents, mediators, and dependent variables). However, future studies may wish to use alternative designs, such as cross-lagged panel designs, to provide further support for our temporal ordering of variables.

Finally, the current study uses a between-subjects design; a within-subject design, such as a daily diary study, would complement the current results by examining whether daily *changes* in support levels are associated with fluctuations in OBSE levels and deviant behaviors. Such a design would increase confidence in our results and also afford the opportunity to examine the cross-level moderating role of other individual difference variables such as self-esteem stability (Kernis & Waschull, 1995). It has been suggested that individuals with high, yet unstable self-esteem (i.e., high levels of day-to-day variability in self-esteem levels) are more prone to identity threats (Kernis & Waschull, 1995). Self-esteem stability is best assessed with a diary study, and we encourage researchers to examine these important questions via this type of design.

Conclusion

The present study provides evidence for a belongingness theory perspective on the organizational supports–organizational deviance relation. In so doing, our findings contribute to the literature on organizational support and deviance by modeling OBSE as a mediating mechanism. Our findings illustrate the important role that the need to belong and self-esteem can play in organizations, and the importance of a theory-based approach to understanding and linking diverse organizational phenomena.

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