

## Relationships between counterproductive work behavior, perceived justice and climate, occupational status, and leader-member exchange

Lily Chernyak-Hai\* and Aharon Tziner

Netanya Academic College, Israel

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### ABSTRACT

The present work used Social Exchange Theory as a framework for understanding Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB). We sought to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining psychologically experienced organizational distributive justice and climate as predictors of counterproductive workplace behavior, while exploring whether immediate job and exchange characteristics – employee occupational level and leader-member exchange – can clarify these associations. Two studies were conducted in different organizations respectively: (1) a governmental electricity company and (2) a private company specializing in electronic device commerce. The results supported the hypotheses and indicated negative relationships between perceived organizational distributive justice, overall and ethical climates, and CWB. Importantly, the quality of perceived leader-member exchange and employee's occupational level were found to moderate the relationship between perceived distributive justice and organizational ethical climate (respectively) and counterproductive work behavior.

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### Relaciones entre comportamiento laboral contraproducente, justicia percibida y clima, estatus ocupacional e intercambio líder-subordinado

#### RESUMEN

Este estudio ha utilizado la Teoría del Intercambio Social como marco explicativo del comportamiento laboral contraproducente. Pretendíamos contribuir al cuerpo existente de conocimientos analizando la justicia distributiva organizativa experimentada psicológicamente y el clima como predictores del comportamiento contraproducente en el trabajo, a la vez que explorar si las características inmediatas del puesto de trabajo y del intercambio (nivel ocupacional del empleado e intercambio líder-subordinado) pueden clarificar estas asociaciones. Se realizaron dos estudios en diferentes organizaciones, una empresa de electricidad pública y una empresa privada especializada en la venta de dispositivos electrónicos respectivamente. Los resultados han refrendado las hipótesis, indicando relaciones negativas entre justicia distributiva organizativa percibida, climas general y ético y comportamiento laboral contraproducente. Es importante que se encontrara que la calidad del intercambio percibido líder-subordinado y el nivel ocupacional del empleado moderaban la relación entre justicia distributiva percibida y clima organizativo ético, respectivamente, y comportamiento laboral contraproducente.

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#### Palabras clave:

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Intercambio líder-subordinado  
Nivel ocupacional

### Counterproductive Work Behavior

In recent years, workplace deviance (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Bodankin & Tziner, 2009; Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Dilchert, Ones, Davis, & Rostow, 2007; Levy & Tziner, 2011) or counterproductive work/organizational behavior (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Ho,

2012; Levine, 2010) has gained much research attention, since this manifestation has been shown to have important economical, sociological, and psychological implications (Aubé, Rousseau, Mama, & Morin, 2009; Bodankin & Tziner, 2009). Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) was defined as “any intentional behavior on the part of an organizational member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests” (Sackett & De Vore, 2001, p.145). Examples of such counterproductive behavior include theft, sabotage, withdrawal, harassment, and drug use (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Gruys & Sackett, 2003; Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Sackett & DeVore,

\*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Lily Chernyak-Hai. School of Behavioral Sciences, Netanya Academic College, 1. University St. Kiryat Yitzhak Rabin, Netanya 42365, Israel. E-mail: [lilycher@netanya.ac.il](mailto:lilycher@netanya.ac.il)

2001; Spector et al., 2006). Counterproductive work behaviors are costly to both individuals and organizations (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). Such behaviors are defined as “dysfunctional” because they almost invariably (but not necessarily, see below) violate important organizational norms and harm organizations in several ways relevant to their goals, employees, procedures, productivity, and profitability (Aubé, Rousseau, Mama, & Morin, 2009; Dalal, 2005; Lanyon & Goodstein, 2004; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2005; Robinson, 2008; Spector & Fox, 2005; Spector et al., 2006; Vardi & Weitz, 2004). Employees who display counterproductive workplace behaviors are more likely to develop stress related problems and to resign (O’Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996), and to experience low self-esteem, increased lack of confidence at work and physical and psychological pains (Griffin, O’Leary, & Collins, 1998). Therefore, by accessing the psychological antecedents of CWB, we may be better equipped to expose the motivational roots of such behavior.

Past research indicated various factors that may predict counterproductive workplace behavior. These include individual differences such as employees’ personal traits and abilities (e.g., Berry et al., 2007; Dalal, 2005; Dilchert et al., 2007; Salgado, 2002; Salgado, Moscoso, & Anderson, 2013), job experiences (e.g., Hollinger & Clark, 1982; Kulas, McInerney, DeMuth, & Jadwinski, 2007), and work stressors such as difficult work conditions, harsh supervision, role ambiguity, role and interpersonal conflicts (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2006; Chen & Spector, 1992; Diefendorff & Mehta, 2007; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Spector & Fox, 2005). By way of illustration, dissatisfied employees are more likely to engage in theft behaviors (Kulas et al., 2007); abusive supervision is prone to influence employees’ propensity to engage in negative employee behavior intended not only to harm the abuser but also to cause damage to the organization (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007); and workplace stressors are likely related to sabotage, interpersonal aggression, hostility, and complaints (Chen & Spector, 1992). Studies have also unearthed the interaction between personal factors and organizational stressors (e.g., Bowling & Eschleman, 2010; Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Penny & Spector, 2002, 2005) and CWB. For example, employees’ emotions, reflected in high levels of negative mood, were found to be at least partial mediators between job stressors and counterproductive work behavior (Fox et al., 2001). Negative affectivity was also addressed as a moderator of the relationship between factors such as workplace incivility, interpersonal conflict, and organizational constraints, and employees’ misbehavior (Penny & Spector, 2005).

Though most of the aforementioned research work stressed employees’ intentions to harm the organizational environment in one way or another, and despite our concentration in the present work on behavior which is counterproductive, it should be mentioned that there are also studies indicating that, paradoxically, in some circumstances, counterproductive work behavior may stem from good intentions and as a part of the pursuit of organizational goals (Umpress & Bingham, 2011; Vardi & Wiener, 1996; Warren, 2003). For instance, Salgado (2002) found that those employees who rate highly on the personality factor “conscientiousness” are also likely to display deviant behaviors and frequent employee turnover. Moreover, it has also been claimed that deviant behaviors in the workplace can have *positive* consequences. This type of counterproductive behavior has been termed “constructive deviance” (Galperin, 2002; Galperin & Burke, 2006; Tziner, Fein, Sharoni, Bar-Hen, & Nord, 2010; Tziner, Goldberg, & Or, 2006). The constructive deviance can be divided into two broader categories, namely, “interpersonal constructive deviance”, directed at individuals such as managers whose demands are being followed in order to improve organizational processes, and “organizational constructive deviance”, directed at the organization and aimed at helping the organization to find creative ways to solve organizational problems (see Bodankin & Tziner, 2009). Thus, in these situations, violating organizational norms may actually serve as a source of innovation and creativity and even contribute to the

organization’s competitive advantage (Howell & Higgins, 1990; Howell, Shea, & Higgins, 1998; Krau, 2008). Further, the relationship between constructive and disruptive workplace behaviors may be complicated, for instance when the same individual exhibits the two kinds of behavior. For example, Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad (2007) argued that some leaders may display both constructive and destructive behavior. Specifically, leaders may act destructively on one dimension but constructively on the other. Therefore, it could be that like the leaders, the organizational members may be at the same time “constructive” and “disruptive”.

**The Social Exchange Theory (SET) framework.** Counterproductive work behavior may be understood within the framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET is an influential paradigm in examination of any exchange relationship, which posits that human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis. Its basic propositions are that people tend to repeat actions that were rewarded in the past, and the more often a particular behavior has resulted in a reward the more likely it is that a person will implement it (Homans, 1958). Importantly, SET claims that social relationships are based on trust that gestures of goodwill will be reciprocated (Blau, 1964). Social Exchange Theory was used to understand workplace behavior. In a recent meta-analysis, Colquitt et al. (2013) indicated that in the past decade many organizational researches have focused on social exchange as a type of interpersonal relationship, drawing mainly on Blau’s (1964) theorizing, and that SET was the dominant approach for examining reactions to justice perceptions. The results of the meta-analysis point to strong relationships between justice dimensions and indicators of social exchange. Specifically, social exchange variables such as trust, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, and leader-member exchange, were found to be important to relationships between justice, task performance, and citizenship behavior (Colquitt et al., 2013). In the past, social exchange in an organizational context was proposed to be conceptualized at two levels: (a) global exchanges between employees and the organization and (b) dyadic relationships between employees and their supervisors (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). Later, Cole, Schaninger, and Harris (2007) proposed the concept of “workplace social exchange network” which focuses on three elements in the workplace that have exchange relationships with employees: the organization, the leader, and the work team.

One example of SET implementation in organizational research is in explaining organizational loyalty (e.g., Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Scholl, 1981). Eisenberger et al. (1986) suggested that employees form a general belief regarding the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about them, i.e., “organizational support”. Accordingly, higher obligations to contribute to the organization are expected under high levels of perceived organizational support. Moreover, perceived organizational support was said to be associated with trust that the organization would reward the employees for fulfilling their exchange obligations. Conversely, employees who perceive that their organization does not meet the expected obligations would be less satisfied with their jobs and workplace experiences than those who perceive that obligations were fulfilled (Homans, 1961). A meta-analysis of factors predicting workplace aggression revealed that job dissatisfaction is related to organizational but not to interpersonal aggression (Hershcovis et al., 2007). In addition, past research suggested that a specific aspect of workplace social exchange – leader-member exchange (LMX) and perceived organizational support (POS) – may influence the association between individuals’ justice judgments and their work attitudes and behavior (Manogran, Stauffer, & Conlon, 1994; Moorman, Blakely, & Neihoff, 1998), and that psychological contract breach predicts employees’ performance and absenteeism (Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003).

In the present work, we have focused on destructive workplace behavior, i.e., organizational behavior that is counterproductive and constitutes harm to organizational functioning. The aforementioned research that sought to reveal determinants of counterproductive work behaviors has mainly focused on three general categories of antecedents: (a) individual traits, either personality traits (e.g., Berry et al., 2007; Lau, Au, & Ho, 2003) or cognitive abilities (e.g., Dilchert et al., 2007; Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely, 2011); (b) job/organizational conditions (e.g., Bechtold, Welk, Harting, & Zapf, 2007; Fine, Horowitz, Weigler, & Basis, 2010); and (c) interaction between personal factors and organizational conditions (e.g., Bowling & Eschleman, 2010; Penny & Spector, 2005). The present research intended to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and to extend it by implementing an interactional approach to understanding CWB by pointing to joint influences of two central workplace features as *psychologically experienced* by the employee (rather than personal traits or abilities) – perceived organizational distributive justice and organizational climate –, and two *basic/immediate job and exchange characteristics* (rather than more general organizational conditions) – employee occupational level and leader-member exchange. Based on the Social Exchange Theory, we postulate that as perceptions of organizational justice and organizational climate (either overall or ethical) reflect employees' experience of the organization as fulfilling its exchange obligations (i.e., appropriate reward and work environment), they should affect employees' counterproductive behavior toward it. Although recent meta-analyses revealed that procedural, distributive, and informational justice have negative associations with counterproductive work behaviors (for example, Bies & Tripp, 2005 argued that employees' workplace aggression can represent an attempt to restore justice to an unfair situation), the social exchange approach to CWB is said to be less clear relative to examination of positive workplace behaviors, such as those assessed in the framework of organizational citizenship behavior (Colquitt et al., 2013). Therefore, we sought to contribute to the implementation of the SET approach in understanding counterproductive work behaviors. Specifically, we hypothesized that perceiving organizational distributive justice and organizational climate as low/unsatisfying would be positively associated with CWB. However, we also sought to ascertain whether and to what extent employees' occupational levels and the perceived leader-employee relationships (LMX) serve as additional factors contributing to the associations between perceived organizational distributive justice and climate and subsequent counterproductive behavior.

We assumed that when leader-member exchange, as an important element of exchange relationships in the workplace, is perceived as high, such perception may attenuate the negative consequences of an experience of the organization as not fulfilling its exchange obligations on workplace behavior. In addition, we hypothesized that employees' occupational levels may further affect the negative influences on work behavior because of the different involvement with organizational goals in the first place. Below we incorporate and discuss the concepts of "organizational justice", "organizational climate", "leader-member exchange" and "employee occupational level", which lead us to specific hypotheses examined through two studies.

**Perceptions of organizational justice.** Perceptions of the degree to which an organization provides its employees with appropriate, fair and respectful treatment, adequate and accurate information, resources and rewards are conceptualized as perceptions of organizational justice (see Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Bell, Wiechmann, & Ryan, 2006; Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2012; Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002; Tyler & Bies, 1990). Employees establish their perceptions of organizational justice through (1) overall impressions that are a consequence of random organizational occurrences and (2) personal evaluations based on specific "organizational

components," such as leaders and co-workers (Hollensbe, Khazanchi, & Masterson, 2008). Perceptions of organizational justice may be broken down into perceptions of distributive justice (fairness in resources and products allocation), procedural justice (fairness of organizational procedures and ways in which decisions are reached vis-à-vis the distribution of resources), and interactional justice (fairness of organizational inter-personal relations and accessibility of equal opportunities) (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 2002; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Kernan & Hanges, 2002; Miller & Lee, 2001; Moorman, 1991; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993; Robbins, 1993; Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). Previous research has pointed to positive associations between perceptions of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior (employees' actions defined as behaviors that benefit the organization by contributing to its environment and functioning beyond formal job requirements) (Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2012; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002), overall high job motivation and satisfaction (Hubbell & Chory-Assad, 2005; Latham & Pinder, 2005), trust, commitment, and productivity (Karriker & Williams, 2009), and loyalty and readiness to accept organizational consequences (Joy & Witt, 1992).

In the present work we chose to focus on perceptions relevant to distributive justice that may influence counterproductive behavior in organizations. The concept of distributive justice was said to deal with the inputs and outputs of two or more parties in a social and/or economic relationship (Hatfield, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978). According to Roch and Shanock (2006), addressing Blau's (1964) conceptualization of exchange relationships, distributive justice represents economic relationships where the exact obligations of both parties are clearly specified and simultaneously agreed. Therefore, they argue that among other facets of perceived organizational justice, distributive justice is directly associated with personal outcomes. Previous research has shown that distributive justice is more important than procedural justice for victims of organizational downsizing (Clay-Warner, Hegtvædt, & Roman, 2005); it relates to employees' attitudes associated with outcomes such as pay satisfaction and withdrawal (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Roch & Shanock, 2006); employees are more likely to be dissatisfied and to have higher turnover intentions in an organization that has a political environment where they perceive distributive justice as low, seeming to care more about the fairness of the actual distribution of outcomes than the fairness of organizational procedures (Harris, Andrews, & Kacmar, 2007); and in a context of tenure and promotion process, distributive justice was found to continue to affect organizational attitudes also after the allocation decision was made (Ambrose & Cropanzano, 2003). Furthermore, according to Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001), one method of restoring perceived fairness of outcomes (i.e., distributive justice) is to reduce inputs or to act in a counterproductive manner.

Accordingly, we postulated that employees are especially sensitive to the distributive justice dimension since it is directly associated with personal outcomes (Colquitt et al., 2001; Roch & Shanock, 2006; Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993). Specifically, we assumed that distributive justice has an immediate influence on the perceived balance between employee investment in the workplace and the received reward and, consequently, on employee organizational behavior.

Thus, we hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 1: Employees' perceptions of organizational distributive justice will be negatively associated with CWB – the higher the perceived justice, the lower the reported counterproductive work behaviors.*

**Perceptions of organizational climate.** Organizational climate is defined as the social climate or atmosphere in a workplace relevant to policies, practices, and procedures in organizations (see Schneider,

2000; Schulte, Ostroff, & Kinicki, 2006). Perceptions of organizational climate are part of an active psychological process that helps employees recognize what behaviors are expected and rewarded (Armstrong, 2003; Zohar & Luria, 2005). These perceptions not only reflect employees' impressions of the work environment, they also influence their levels of stress, job satisfaction, commitment, and performance which, in turn, have implications for overall organizational productivity (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003; Schulte et al., 2006). Measures used to investigate perceptions of organizational climate are similar, in many ways, to those used to investigate perceptions of "organizational culture", insofar as they are measures of what has been termed the "deep structure of organizations" (e.g., Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Payne, 2000). Although at face value, perceived organizational climate may be seen as a mainly cognitively acquired attitude, it should be noted that significant evaluative and affective components are reflected in employees' perceptions of organizational values and processes (Patterson, Warr, & West, 2004), such that both intellectual and emotional factors impinge on employee job behavior and social interactions at the workplace (Schneider, 2000). And with respect to social action, it has been proposed that employee attitudes and behaviors are not only influenced by perceptions of organizational climate but also by the perceptions of co-workers (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Mathieu & Kohler, 1990).

**Organizational ethical climate.** One specific perception within the broader concept of perceptions of organizational climate is the notion of "organizational ethical climate". This factor has been described as a contextual factor reflecting employees' awareness of moral obligation (Wang & Hsieh, 2012), their beliefs of what is ethically correct behavior and how the organization's ethical issues should be handled by the organization (Victor & Cullen, 1987). These items, in turn, are considered to be relevant *inter alia* to organizational identification (DeConinck, 2011), purchasing social responsibility (Blome & Paulraj, 2012), turnover intentions (Stewart, Volpone, Avery, & McKay, 2011), organizational citizenship behavior in general (Shin, 2012), and employees' willingness to address and report organizational problems (Rothwell & Baldwin, 2006, 2007). Five types of ethical climate have been proposed, namely: "instrumental", "caring", "independence", "rules", "law and code" (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Victor & Cullen, 1988). Instrumental climate is considered a negative type of climate as it focuses on self-interest, while the other types of ethical climate are considered to be positive, insofar as they promote the emergence of positive organizational attitudes following concern for the wellbeing of others, for laws or organizational policies and procedures to be followed, and adherence to one's personal ethical beliefs (Leung, 2008; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Wimbush, Shepard, & Markham, 1997). The ethical climate provides cues to employees as to the behavior that is appropriate in a certain work environment. Specifically, employees are supposed to be less likely to exhibit unethical behaviors if the ethical climate emphasizes ethical behaviors (see Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2010). Past research has shown support for the notion that an ethical work climate is associated with unethical organizational behaviors. Results of a meta-analysis (Martin & Cullen, 2006) indicated that positive ethical climates are negatively related to dysfunctional organizational behavior. It was found that an ethical climate is negatively related to CWB and that organizational deviance is lower in ethical caring climates (Mayer et al., 2010; Peterson, 2002; Vardi, 2001).

Accordingly, in the present research we postulated that negative perceptions of organizational overall and ethical climate would have immediate implications for counterproductive work behavior, i.e., they reflect employees' impressions of the organizational environment as unpleasant or dissatisfactory. In terms of Social Exchange Theory, employees perceiving the organization as not

fulfilling its obligations to provide an appropriate workplace environment are supposed to feel permitted to react in a form of deviant behavior more than their counterparts who perceive a better organizational climate.

Thus, we hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 2: Employees' perceptions of overall organizational climate are negatively associated with CWB - the better the perceived overall organizational climate, the lower the reported counterproductive work behaviors.*

*Hypothesis 3: Employees' perceptions of organizational ethical climate are negatively associated with CWB - the better the perceived organizational ethical climate, the lower the reported counterproductive work behaviors.*

Moreover, beyond direct influences of perceived organizational general and ethical climate on CWB, we sought to examine the hypothesis that employee occupational status may moderate such influences (we elaborate on this later).

**Leader-member exchange (LMX).** An important aspect of employees' workplace perceptions is what is known as "Perceived Leader-member Exchange" (LMX), which relates to the quality of the relations between leaders and group members or superiors and subordinates. High quality LMX indicates high levels of information exchange, interaction, trust, respect, support, mutual influence, and rewards, while low quality LMX points to a low level of interaction, trust, formal relations, one-directional influence (manager-employee), limited support, and few rewards (Bauer & Green, 1996). LMX is said to affect employees' motivation in different areas of organizational functioning, increasing or decreasing opportunities, sense of empowerment, emotional support, and cooperative interactions, as well as loyalty, respect and obligation (see Gomez & Rosen, 2001; Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrow, 2000; Tziner, Fein, & Oren, 2012; Weismal-Manor, Tziner, Berger, & Dikstein, 2010; Zaccaro, Ely, & Nelson, 2008). Previous research has indeed shown that high levels of LMX are related to positive citizenship behaviors (e.g., Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2012; Hackett, Farh, Song, & Lapierre, 2003; Ilies et al., 2007; Podsakoff et al., 2000).

According to the implementation of Social Exchange Theory in organizational research, LMX reflects exchange relationships between employees and their supervisors (Settoon et al., 1996) and one of the basic elements in the workplace social exchange network (Cole, Schaninger, & Harris, 2007). Past research has indicated that: procedural and interpersonal justice perceptions are significantly associated with an employee's felt obligation to the organization, though only when the employee reported high quality LMX relationships (Piccolo, Bardes, Mayer, & Judge, 2008); subordinates who experienced low-quality LMX perceived less distributive and procedural fairness than those who experienced high-quality LMX (Lee, 2001); and LMX was found to moderate the relationship between both distributive and procedural justice and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) (Burton, Sablynski, & Sekiguchi, 2008). Following the evidences of LMX moderation in perceptions of organizational justice and positive workplace behaviors, we postulate that it is reasonable to expect that perceived leader-member exchange is an additional factor impinging on counterproductive work behaviors. Specifically, we hypothesized that LMX would moderate the influences of perceived distributive organizational justice or climate on CWB by enhancing the negative influences of these perceptions in a case of low quality LMX.

*Hypothesis 4: Employees' perceptions of leader-member exchange will moderate the influences of perceived distributive organizational justice or climate on reported CWB - the negative associations between*

*perceived distributive justice or climate and counterproductive work behaviors will be amplified under perceived low quality LMX.*

**Employees' occupational level.** Employees' occupational level has been addressed in past research as relevant to different aspects of employees' performance and ability to cope. For example, a high occupational level, identified with a high level of organizational commitment, was said to be characterized by strong belief in organizational goals and values, high readiness to contribute to the organization, and a strong desire to maintain organizational membership (Morrow, 1983). In addition, research has indicated high negative correlations between role overload and performance among managers relative to non-managers (see Gilboa, Shirom, Fried, & Cooper, 2008), but also that manager assessments of most aspects of organizational climate are more positive than those of non-managers (Patterson et al., 2004).

In the present research, we postulated that employees' occupational level should also be relevant to exhibiting counterproductive workplace behaviors, especially as a moderator of the influences of perceived ethical climate on CWB. We predicted that because high occupational level employees exhibit greater involvement with the organization and its goals, such individuals would show *attenuated* negative association between perceived organizational ethical environment and counterproductive workplace behaviors.

*Hypothesis 5: Employees' occupational level will affect the influences of perceived organizational ethical climate on reported CWB – the negative association between perceived ethical climate and counterproductive work behaviors will be reduced among high occupational level employees.*

## The Present Research

In sum, the purpose of the present work was to explore the way employees' perceptions of organizational distributive justice and organizational climate (overall and ethical) influence their inclinations to counterproductive work behavior, and whether leader-member exchange and employee' occupational level affect the relations between these variables. We implemented our research in two diverse organizations. Specifically, Study 1 examined the relations between employees' perceptions of distributive justice, organizational climate and CWB, while also addressing employees' perceptions of leader-member exchange. Study 2 explored the relations between employees' occupational level, perceptions of organizational ethical climate, and CWB. Below is a detailed description of the two studies.

### Study 1

Participants in Study 1 were employees in a large governmental electric company. In this study, we aimed to explore two possible antecedents of counterproductive work behavior, namely, perceptions of organizational distributive justice and perceptions of organizational climate. In addition we examined whether LMX may have additional value in predicting CWB influencing its associations with perceived organizational justice or perceived organizational climate.

### Method

#### Participants

The participants, who volunteered to take part in the study, were 120 Israeli employees (66 men, 54 women; mean age = 42.20,  $SD = 7.82$ ). While asked to indicate personal information, 45% of the employees stated that they were married, 34% were divorced, and 21% indicated that they were unmarried but had stable relations.

## Procedure and Measures

The participants signed up for a study examining "issues regarding workplaces". An experimenter explained that the study would involve answering questionnaires and that the participants were expected to give honest answers representing their actual feelings and thoughts. After completing the measures, all participants were debriefed. As we intended to assess the independent variables indicative of employees' perceptions before addressing the dependent variable, we first measured employees' perceptions of distributive justice, organizational climate and LMX; then, the CWB measure was introduced.

**Perceptions of organizational distributive justice.** To assess perceptions of organizational justice the participants were asked to complete a 5-item instrument measuring distributive aspect of organizational justice (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). Responses were indicated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). For example: "The organization is fair in rewarding me, if I consider the amount of effort that I have put forth"; "The organization is fair in rewarding me, if I consider the stresses and strains of my job" (Cronbach's alpha = .96,  $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ).

**Perceptions of organizational climate.** The participants completed a 50-item questionnaire. Responses were given on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) employing the extensively cited measure, the Organizational Climate Questionnaire (OCQ), that was specially developed to assess nine dimensions of organizational climate (Litwin & Stringer, 1968), which were accordingly:

**Structure** (items 1-8) - Employees' feelings about the organizational constraints, amount of rules, regulations and procedures. For example: "The policies and organizational structure of the organization have been clearly explained" (Cronbach's alpha = .71,  $M = 3.03$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ).

**Responsibility** (items 9-15) - Employees' feelings such as "being your own boss" and not having to double-check personal decisions. For example: "Our organizational philosophy emphasizes that people should solve their problems by themselves" (Cronbach's alpha = .72,  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = .70$ ).

**Reward** (items 16-21) - Employees' feelings of the organization as emphasizing positive rewards rather than punishments, the perceived fairness of promotion policies. For example: "We have a promotion system here that helps the best man to rise to the top" (Cronbach's alpha = .69,  $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ).

**Risk** (items 22-26) - Employees' feelings about riskiness or challenge in the job/organization. For example: "The philosophy of our management is that in the long run we get ahead fastest by playing it slow, safe, and sure" (Cronbach's alpha = .70,  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ).

**Warmth** (items 27-31) - Feelings of general good fellowship at the workplace, the prevalence of friendly and informal social groups. For example: "A friendly atmosphere prevails among the people in this organization" (Cronbach's alpha = .69,  $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 0.17$ ).

**Support** (items 32-36) - The perceived helpfulness of the managers and other employees and emphasis on mutual support. For example: "When I am on a difficult assignment I can usually count on getting assistance from my boss and co-workers" (Cronbach's alpha = .76,  $M = 2.81$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ );

**Standards** (items 37-42) - The perceived importance of implicit and explicit goals and performance standards. For example: "In this organization we set very high standards for performance" (Cronbach's alpha = .67,  $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ).

**Conflict** (items 43-46) - The feeling that managers and other workers are open to different opinions, the emphasis placed on getting problems out in the open rather than ignoring them. For example: "Decisions in management meetings are made quickly and without any difficulty" (Cronbach's alpha = .71,  $M = 2.48$ ,  $SD = 0.33$ ).

**Identity** (items 47-50) - Employees' feelings that they belong to the organization and that they are valuable members of a working team. For example: "People are proud to belong to this organization" (Cronbach's alpha = .70,  $M = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ).

The nine dimensions were combined into an overall measure of perceived organizational climate (Cronbach's alpha = .88,  $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ).

**Perceptions of leader-member exchange (LMX).** To assess perceptions of leader-member exchange the participants were asked to complete the LMX7 scale, a 7-item instrument referring to employees' relationships with their supervisor, that employs a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (adapted<sup>1</sup> from Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). For example: "The leader understands my job problems and needs"; "The leader recognizes my potential". (Cronbach's alpha = .78,  $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ).

**Counterproductive Work Behavior.** The participants were asked to complete a 24-item measure of workplace deviance, WDB (Bennett & Robinson, 2000), using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very untypical) to 6 (very typical), reflecting participants' judgment of each behavior as typical for the employees in their organization. Bennett and Robinson addressed organizational deviance as consisting of two dimensions (interpersonal and organizational), but since the dimensions are very highly correlated ( $r = .86$  in Bennett & Robinson, 2000;  $r = .96$  in Lee & Allen, 2002), we followed the previously used approach that does not distinguish between these two dimensions (see Judge, Scott, & Ilies, 2006). We chose to formulate the questions as addressing other employees' behavior rather than asking the participants about their personal behavior in order to avoid social desirability bias that would cause the participants not to provide genuine responses when asked about their deviant behaviors. In other words, we preferred to introduce the employee with an implicit measure, in a sense that he or she would project personal behavioral choices while seemingly addressing the prevalence of their colleagues' workplace counterproductive behaviors, and therefore would be more ready to report CWB. Implicit measures are said to be ideally suited for assessing socially unpopular, sensitive, or controversial topics as well as unconscious goals (see Johnson & Steinman, 2009). Items for example: "Worked on a personal matter instead of work for the employer"; "Called in sick when she/he was not". (Cronbach's alpha = .94,  $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ).

## Results

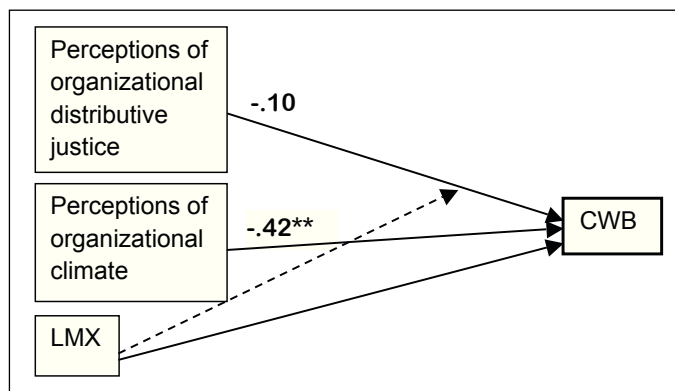
First, in order to access the associations between the two independent variables (perceived organizational climate and distributive justice) and the dependent variable (CWB), we performed a hierarchical regression of CWB on perceptions of organizational distributive justice and organizational climate. Age, gender, and marital status of participants were entered at step 1 as control variables, the perceptions of organizational distributive justice and climate were entered at step 2, and perceived organizational distributive justice x perceived organizational climate interaction

was entered at step 3. The analysis indicated that perceived organizational climate was a significant predictor of counterproductive work behavior,  $\beta = -.42$ ,  $t(116) = -3.51$ ,  $p < .001$ , perceived organizational distributive justice was a marginal predictor,  $\beta = -.10$ ,  $t(116) = -1.96$ ,  $p < .10$ , and there was no significant justice x climate interaction,  $\beta = .50$ ,  $t(116) = 0.63$ ,  $p = .53^2$ .

Next, in order to examine the influence of perceptions of organizational distributive justice and climate beyond LMX, we performed additional analysis whereby LMX was entered as step 1, perceptions of organizational distributive justice and climate were entered at step 2, and justice X climate interaction was entered at step 3. This time the perceptions of organizational distributive justice appeared as a significant predictor of CWB,  $\beta = -.23$ ,  $t(117) = -2.87$ ,  $p < .05$ , with no change in the significance of perceived organizational climate,  $\beta = -.45$ ,  $t(116) = -3.99$ ,  $p < .001$ , or the justice x climate interaction,  $\beta = .62$ ,  $t(116) = 0.76$ ,  $p = .45$ . Given these results (i.e., the change in the effect of perceived organizational distributive justice after entering LMX), and in order to test our hypothesis that LMX moderates the influence of perceived organizational distributive justice on counterproductive work behavior, the following steps were implemented: (1) The two variables, LMX and perceptions of organizational distributive justice, were centralized (Z-scores); (2) new variable was computed to reflect an interaction between the two variables - LMX and perceptions of organizational distributive (justice Z-scores were multiplied); and (3) regression analysis was performed with three variables - perceptions of organizational distributive justice and LMX (at step 1) and their multiplication as IV's (step 2), and CWB as DV. The analysis indicated significant perceived organizational distributive justice x LMX interaction effect,  $\Delta R^2 = 5\%$ ,  $\beta = -.55$ ,  $F_{change}(1, 116) = 5.33$ ,  $p = .02$ . To further assess the relationship between perceived organizational distributive justice and counterproductive work behavior at levels of LMX, LMX was effect coded (+1, -1) one standard deviation above the mean (high LMX) and one standard deviation below it (low LMX). A simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) was performed. The results indicated that for participants high in LMX, the relationship between perceived organizational distributive justice and CWB was not significant,  $\beta = -.11$ ,  $t(118) = -1.07$ ,  $p = .14$  ( $M = 2.03$ ,  $SD = 0.78$  for low perceived justice and  $M = 1.97$ ,  $SD = 0.76$  for high perceived justice). Conversely, when LMX was low, the two variables were significantly related,  $\beta = -.48$ ,  $t(118) = -4.5$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that the reported counterproductive behavior was high when perceived organizational distributive justice was low, in contrast to high levels of perceived distributive justice ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.68$  and  $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ , respectively). In sum, Study 1 supported hypotheses 1, 2, and 4, showing that perceptions of organizational distributive justice, organizational climate and LMX, are negatively associated with counterproductive work behavior. In other words, as employees perceive higher organizational distributive justice, positive organizational climate, and better leader-member exchange, they report less CWB. Moreover, the results indicated that the association between perceived organizational distributive justice and CWB was moderated by levels of perceived leader-member exchange, so that perceived organizational distributive justice negatively predicts counterproductive behavior only under perceptions of low-quality LMX. See Figures 1 and 2 summarizing the results of Study 1 and Table 1 for the intercorrelation matrix.

## Study 2

Participants in Study 2 were employees in a private company specializing in electronic device commerce. The aim of Study 2 was to expand the examined association between perceived organizational climate and CWB. In Study 2 we sought to explore the relation between perceptions of a specific aspect of organizational climate - organizational ethical climate and counterproductive work behavior.



**Figure 1.** Counterproductive work behavior predicted by perceptions of organizational distributive justice, perceptions of organizational climate, and LMX.  
 Note. The numbers above the arrows are standardized beta coefficients ( $\beta$ ).  
 $^*p < .05$ ,  $^{**}p < .001$ .



**Figure 2.** Interaction of organizational distributive justice and level of LMX predicting counterproductive work behavior (Note: Simple slopes computed with one standard deviation above and below the mean of LMX measure).

**Table 1**  
 Study 1: Inter-correlation matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Perceived distributive justice												
2. Perceived organizational climate	.56**											
3. LMX	.18	.39**										
4. Organizational misbehavior	-.19*	-.43**	-.26**									
5. Perceived organizational climate "structure"	.35**	.78**	.35**	-.32**								
6. Perceived organizational climate "responsibility"	.90**	.68**	.24**	-.29**	.45**							
7. Perceived organizational climate "reward"	.31**	.67**	.29**	-.37**	.47**	.38**						
8. Perceived organizational climate "risk"	.22*	.69**	.28**	-.29**	.51**	.33**	.44**					
9. Perceived organizational climate "warmth"	.13	.44**	.09	-.22*	.28**	.23**	.20*	.40**				
10. Perceived organizational climate "support"	.20*	.54**	.30**	-.19*	.43**	.27**	.43**	.39**	.18*			
11. Perceived organizational climate "standards"	.49**	.70**	.31**	-.38**	.52**	.52**	.45**	.35**	.13	.21*		
12. Perceived organizational climate "conflict"	.48**	.69**	.29**	-.26**	.50**	.55**	.39**	.38**	.28**	.20*	.59**	
13. Perceived organizational climate "identity"	.39**	.64**	.15	-.31**	.46**	.42**	.38**	.44**	.25**	.33**	.42**	.38**

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$

In addition, we examined whether a basic character of employment, i.e., employees' occupational level, may influence these relations.

**Method**

**Participants**

The participants were 114 Israeli employees (61 men, 39 women, mean age = 36.57,  $SD = 12.59$ ), who volunteered to participate in the study. Sixty-two percent of the employees were employed between 1 and 6 years, 29% were employed between 7 and 20 years, and 9% were employed between 21 and 40 years. Fifty-two percent of the employees stated that they had a low occupational level (manufacture laborers) 36% stated that they were employed in supervisory positions (inspectors), and 20% indicated managerial appointment (managers).

**Procedure and Measures**

The participants signed up for a study examining, "issues regarding workplaces". An experimenter explained that the study would involve answering questionnaires and that the participants were expected to give honest answers representing their actual feelings and thoughts. After completing the measures, all participants were debriefed.

Similarly to Study 1 we intended to assess the independent variables before addressing the dependent variable – we first assessed employees' occupational levels and perceptions of organizational ethical climate, and then we introduced the measure of counterproductive work behavior.

**Perceptions of organizational ethical climate.** To assess perceptions of organizational ethical climate participants were asked to complete a 26-item ethical climate questionnaire, ECQ (Cullen, Victor, & Bronson, 1993; Victor & Cullen, 1988), measuring employees' perceptions of their organization regarding ethical criteria, based on the five types of moral climates or dimensions identified empirically by Victor & Cullen (1988), as cited above. Accordingly, items 1-7 assessed Caring (Cronbach's alpha = .79,  $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ), items 8-11 assessed Law and Code (Cronbach's alpha = .73,  $M = 5.09$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), items 12-15 examined Rules (Cronbach's alpha = .82,  $M = 4.86$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ), items 16-22 estimated Instrumental climate (Cronbach's alpha = .63,  $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ), and items 23-26 assessed Independence (Cronbach's alpha = .75,  $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ). Responses were indicated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). For example: "What is best for everyone in the company is the major consideration here" (caring); "In this company, the first consideration is whether a decision violates any law" (law and code); "Everyone is expected to stick by company rules and procedures" (rules); "People are expected to do anything to further

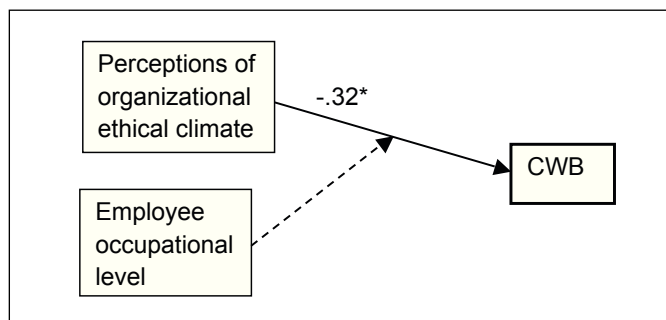
the company's interests, regardless of the consequences" (instrumental climate); "The most important concern in this company is each person's own sense of right and wrong" (independence). The five dimensions were combined into an overall measure of perceived organizational ethical climate (Cronbach's alpha = .71,  $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ).

**Counterproductive Work Behavior.** Similar to Study 1, the participants were asked to complete a 24-item measure of workplace deviance, WDB (Bennett & Robinson, 2000) using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very untypical) to 6 (very typical), reflecting participants' judgment of each behavior as typical for the employees in their organization. We followed the previously used approach that does not distinguish between the two dimensions of WDB (see Procedure and Measures section in Study 1). Again, we chose to formulate the questions as addressing other employees' behavior rather than asking the participant about his or her personal behavior. For example: "Dragged out work in order to get overtime"; "Publicly embarrassed someone at work". (Cronbach's alpha = .94,  $M = 2.0$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ).

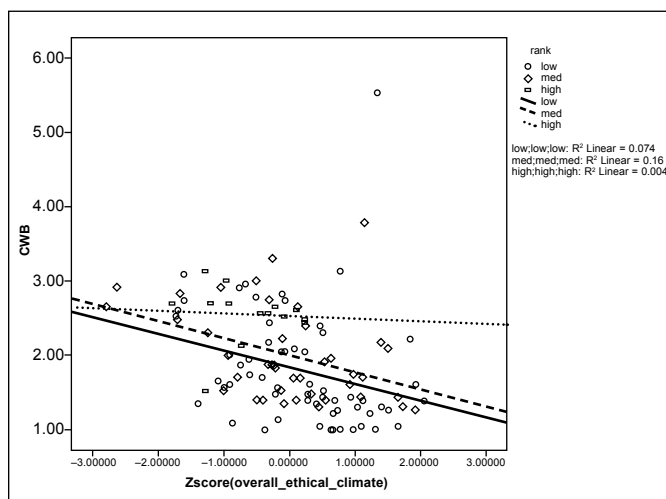
### Results

We performed hierarchical regression of counterproductive work behavior on perceptions of organizational ethical climate and employees' occupational level. To explore the influence of perceived overall organizational ethical climate (treated as a continuous variable) and employee occupational level (categorical variable), and of their interaction on CWB, employees' occupational level was dummy-coded<sup>3</sup> and organizational ethical climate scores were centered to test the occupational level x organizational ethical climate interaction. Age, gender, and employment time were entered at step 1 as control variables, perceptions of ethical climate and occupational level were entered at step 2, and the term for the two-way interaction (based on the product of the centered and dummy variables) was entered at step 3. The analysis indicated that perceived organizational ethical climate was a significant predictor of CWB,  $\beta = -.32$ ,  $t(104) = -3.45$ ,  $p < .05$ . Further, significant organizational ethical climate x employee occupational level interaction was found,  $\beta = -.21$ ,  $t(104) = -2.23$ ,  $p < .05$  and  $\beta = -.23$ ,  $t(104) = -2.41$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively<sup>4</sup>. The interpretation of this interaction is that for medium and low employees' occupational levels, where organizational ethical climate was perceived positively (i.e., higher scores were obtained), counterproductive work behavior was lower. In contrast, there was no significant relation between organizational ethical climate and CWB when employees' occupational level was high. See Figures 3 & 4 summarizing the results of Study 2 and Table 2 for the intercorrelation matrix.

In sum, Study 2 supported hypothesis 3 by indicating that perceptions of overall organizational ethical climate are negatively associated with counterproductive work behavior. Moreover, in support of hypothesis 5, the results indicated that perceived



**Figure 3.** Counterproductive work behavior predicted by perceptions of overall organizational ethical climate and employee occupational level. Note. The numbers above the arrows are standardized beta coefficients ( $\beta$ ). \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ .



**Figure 4.** Scatter/Dot plot: Regression of counterproductive work behavior on perceptions of overall organizational ethical climate, by three levels of employee occupational level. Note. As described in "Results" section, the "employee occupational level" variable was dummy-coded and the perceived organizational ethical climate variable was centered (Z-scores).

organizational ethical climate interacts with employees' occupational level in influencing CWB, so that perceived organizational ethical climate negatively predicts CWB among medium and low occupational levels, but does not have significant influence among participants having a high occupational level (see Figures 3 & 4).

### Discussion

The present work used Social Exchange Theory as an overarching framework for understanding counterproductive work behavior. Given that the social exchange approach to CWB is less implemented in examination of workplace misbehavior relative to positive workplace behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2013), we sought to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining psychologically experienced organizational distributive justice and climate and two immediate job and exchange characteristics –employee occupational level and leader-member exchange as predictors of counterproductive workplace behavior. We assumed that employees perceiving the organization as not fulfilling an appropriate reward and work environment would report CWB more than their counterparts who perceive high organizational distributive justice and climate. Moreover, in this work we have intended to advance an understanding of the relations between employees' perceptions of organizational justice, climate, and counterproductive workplace behavior by examining whether perceived leader-member exchange and employee occupational level might further clarify these relations.

**Table 2**  
Study 2: Intercorrelation matrix (excluding categorical variable "occupational level")

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Overall ethical climate						
2. Organizational misbehavior	-.47**					
3. Ethical climate "instrumental"	.37**	.01				
4. Ethical climate "caring"	.68**	-.46**	-.03			
5. Ethical climate "independence"	.65**	-.18*	.32**	.22*		
6. Ethical climate "rules"	.70**	-.43**	-.11	.61**	.20*	
7. Ethical climate "law and code"	.62**	-.41**	.06	.36**	.13	.58**

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$



As counterproductive work behavior is defined as behavior that violates organizational norms and goals and harms the organization and its components, exploring its antecedents, and therefore steps that may diminish its prevalence, are important goals in organizational psychology. From among various factors that were previously examined as predictors of CWB, employees' perceptions of appropriate workplace rewards and environment seem to play a principal role in the determination of the course of their behavior at their place of employment. In the present work, we chose to focus on employees' perceptions of organizational justice and both overall organizational climate and ethical climate as important antecedents of behavioral choices at the workplace, and to examine possible explanatory contributions of LMX and employees' occupational level. We explored the associations between the aforementioned variables in two different organizations – a government owned electric company and a private company specializing in electronic device commerce. Consonant with past research (Biron, 2010; Cohen-Charash, & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Harris et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 2010; Peterson, 2002; Roch & Shanock, 2006; Vardi, 2001), the results of the two studies pointed to negative relationships between perceived organizational justice and climate and counterproductive work behavior. Nonetheless, the present work provides a nuanced picture of the relations between employees' perceptions and occupational level and CWB.

First, counterproductive work behavior was predicted to a lesser level when employees perceived their organization to be just in the sense of fairness in resources allocation and when they perceived its overall and ethical climate as positive or acceptable. Importantly, the quality of the relations between leaders and employees at the workplace seems to function as a *buffer* in the impact of perceived organizational distributive justice on counterproductive workplace behavior. Judgments of organizational distributive justice negatively predict CWB only when leader-member exchange is perceived to be a low-quality exchange. In other words, we may conclude that high LMX can actually prevent negative behavioral consequences of low organizational distributive justice perceived by the employee. It is possible that when employees experience fair and open interaction with their leaders – characterized by trust, respect and support – they will avoid occasions where counterproductive behavior is possible, even if there is an adequate psychological motive to implement that misadventure. Inasmuch as recent research has revealed significant positive relationships between ethical climate and LMX (see Fein, Tziner, Lusky, & Palachy, 2013) and that supervisors influence employees' perceptions of the policies and practices (see Grojean, Resick, Dickson, & Smith, 2004; Wimbush & Shepard, 1994), the implication of the present results is that high quality LMX may also directly affect the inferences the employees make from perceived distributive justice.

Second, in contrast to previous research on organizational climate that found CWB reported by both managers and employees (see Vardi, 2001), the present results indicate that perceived organizational ethical climate does not negatively associate with counterproductive work behavior at all employee occupational levels. While perceived ethical climate among individuals having high employee positions does not significantly influence CWB, employees reporting *medium and low occupational levels* record higher CWB when they judge the ethical climate in their organization to be of low quality. As predicted, it may be that these individuals, employed as manufacture laborers and inspectors, experience lesser involvement with the organization and its goals compared to managers, and therefore they are more likely to implement CWB when ethical climate is perceived to be loose. Another factor to consider is the possible relative unwillingness of high occupational level employees to report counterproductive behavior, in spite of assured anonymity in research participation. However, future research is required in order to test these and other possible explanations.

## Limitations and Future Directions

In the present study we implemented hierarchical regression analyses to examine the functions of perceived organizational distributive justice and organizational climate as antecedents of counterproductive work behavior. This approach also enabled us to access LMX and employee occupational levels as important moderators in the association between employees' perceptions and behavior. However, it is germane to recall that, in line with similar field research in organizational psychology, the correlative nature of the present studies does not allow causal inferences. Further, the findings regarding the role of employee occupational level in Study 2 may be limited to specific organizational context. It is possible that in a company that specializes in electronic device commerce there are significant differences between the responsibilities among the three occupational levels examined that are reflected in different psychological framing of the employee "job" by each sub-population, respectively. Thus, as indicated, we can expect those who are less invested in the organization to be more ready to report CWB. Future research should examine this proposition directly by accessing the psychological processes that may account for the associations between perceived organizational ethical climate and CWB, while distinguishing between different employee occupational levels.

We should also address the results obtained in the two studies regarding the mean levels of perceived distributive justice, organizational climate, and reported counterproductive workplace behavior. The overall mean of perceived distributive justice obtained in Study 1 was relatively low (scale range 1-6, mean = 2.95,  $SD = 0.50$ ), indicating that, in general, employees tended to perceive the organization as relatively unjust. Nevertheless, the overall perceptions of organizational climate were positive (scale range 1-5, mean = 3.00,  $SD = 0.37$ ) and the reported counterproductive work behavior was relatively low (scale range 1-6, mean = 2.64,  $SD = 0.74$ ). In addition, Study 2 indicated relatively high average values of perceived ethical dimensions (scale range 1-6, means between 3.31 and 5.09,  $SD$ 's between 1.09 and 0.75) and also a relatively low mean of reported CWB (scale range 1-6, mean = 2.00,  $SD = 0.73$ ). A possible explanation of these findings is the delicate nature of the assessed variables. Even though the participants were assured anonymity and answered the CWB measure as addressing *other employees'* behavior rather than their own, it may be that they preferred to describe organizational climate in a relatively favorable manner and underrate the prevalence of deviant behaviors. In contrast, when asked about organizational distributive justice, there was less of psychological barrier to report dissatisfaction.

Finally, a potential limitation of the two studies is the relatively small sample sizes ( $N = 120$  and  $N = 114$ ) and lack of data on employee's tenure in Study 1. Future research should use larger samples and collect all available information regarding job characteristics. However, it is important to stress that despite the aforementioned limitations, the findings obtained in both studies indicate substantial associations between the variables. Moreover, though criticism may be raised about using self-reports measures, specifically concern about the social desirability effect, self-reports are clearly appropriate for accessing employees' psychological variables since individuals are the ones who are aware of their perceptions. In addition, we used widely cited and thoroughly researched measures while deliberately assessing their reliability also in the present studies (see Conway & Lance, 2010 for discussion on self-report method).

In sum, among other findings, the moderated relation between perceived distributive justice and CWB has important practical implications for organizational functioning as it illuminates that employee counterproductive behavioral decisions following perceived unjust procedures may be diminished, or even prevented, if the workers experience positive leader-member exchange. In

terms of the Social Exchange Theory, positive exchange experiences with supervisors can attenuate the influence of negative exchange experiences, leading to lesser inclination to destructive workplace behavior as a form of reciprocation.

### Conflict of interest

The authors of this article declare no conflicts of interest.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> We formulated the questions in the first person so that the participant was asked concerning his or her perceptions of the leader.

<sup>2</sup> All of the control variables were found not to relate to counterproductive work behavior.

<sup>3</sup> According to the regression with dummy variables procedure (Hardy, 1993), three "occupational level" categories were defined: level 1, level 2, and level 3. Then, for level 1, low employment level was coded as "1" and medium level (supervisory position) was coded as "0". For level 2, low employment level was coded as "0" and medium level was coded "1". For level=3, both low and medium occupational levels were coded "0" (i.e., three levels variable was coded to two dummy variables).

<sup>4</sup> All of the control variables were found not to relate to counterproductive work behavior.

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