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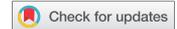
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Suspicion at Work: The Impact on Counterproductive and Citizenship Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of state suspicion in the workplace, specifically, employee suspicion of managers, on counterproductive work behavior (CWB) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Data were obtained from a cross-sectional survey of 251 working adults (Study 1) and a vignette randomized experiment of 219 working adults (Study 2). Findings indicate that employees suspicious of their managers are more likely to engage in CWB and less likely to engage in OCB. These findings may help to focus practitioners' attention on reducing workplace suspicion through open communication. Additionally, this research integrates the stressor–emotion model and the model of attributional suspicion to explain the relationships among suspicion, CWB, and OCB.

KEYWORDS

Suspicion;
counterproductive work
behavior; organizational
citizenship behavior

The moment there is suspicion about a person's motives, everything he does becomes tainted.

(Mahatma Gandhi)

Strong empirical evidence demonstrates that in the workplace, trust leads to positive behaviors (Deluga, 1994, 1995; Mayer & Gavin, 2005) and distrust leads to negative behaviors (Chory & Hubbell, 2008; Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013; Thau, Crossley, Bennett, & Sczesny, 2007). But what happens in the case of suspicion, when an individual is in a state of suspended judgment between trust and distrust (Hilton, Fein, & Miller, 1993)? Because workplace suspicion is a relatively new construct in the organizational behavior literature (Bobko, Barelka, Hirshfield, & Lyons, 2014), there is little research on the consequences of suspicion and even less examining employees suspicious of their managers.

State suspicion is “a person's simultaneous state of cognitive activity, uncertainty, and perceived malintent about underlying information” (Bobko et al., 2014, p. 336). As opposed to trait suspicion, which refers to the general disposition to be suspicious of others, state suspicion refers to a particular target (i.e., person, organization) in a particular situation. Thus, even individuals with low trait suspicion will experience state suspicion in certain situations. Our research focuses on state suspicion in the workplace, namely, an employee's suspicion of his or her manager.

Suspicion in the U.S. workplace is pervasive. Companies are hiring private investigators to track employees suspected of calling in sick with fake illnesses (Sick-day bounty hunters, 2010), and particularly in regulated industries, using software to monitor employee e-mail and social media has become common practice (Hill, 2011). However, suspicion in the workplace is not limited to managers suspecting employees of wrongdoing; employees may also suspect their managers of misconduct or deception, and this latter form of suspicion has recently gained the attention of organizational scholars (Luu, 2017; Zhou, Liao, Liu, & Liao, 2017).

We examine the relationship of state suspicion and two key organizational outcomes, counterproductive work behavior (CWB) (Spector & Fox, 2002) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Organ, 1997), in two studies. The first is an observational study examining whether suspicion of one's manager is associated with CWB and OCB. The second is a randomized experiment in which we manipulate suspicion of a manager to examine whether aroused suspicion (Stiff, Kim, & Ramesh, 1992) is related to employee CWB and OCB.

We integrate two theoretical frameworks to examine the consequences of suspicion. First, we discuss the stressor–emotion model of CWB (Spector & Fox, 2002), which posits that negative workplace behavior can be a response to job stressors that induce negative emotions. We suggest that state suspicion of one's

manager is a job stressor that contributes to negative emotions, and ultimately to increased CWB. Second, we discuss the model of attributional suspicion (Fein, 1996), which suggests that an individual (e.g., employee) becomes resistant to being influenced by a suspected target (e.g., manager). We argue that when employees become suspicious of their managers, they resist engaging in the citizenship behaviors.

Our study makes two contributions to the literature. First, we extend the nomological net of state suspicion and add to its construct validity by examining two criterion variables: CWB and OCB. Second, we incorporate the theoretical frameworks of the stressor–emotion model (Spector & Fox, 2005) and the model of attributional suspicion (Fein, 1996) with the conceptual definition of state suspicion (Bobko, Barelka, & Hirshfield, 2014) to help explain why state suspicion in the workplace promotes negative behavior and detracts from positive behavior.

State suspicion

Scholarly interest in state suspicion has increased since Bobko and colleagues published their 2014 paper on suspicion in automated and information technology contexts. Soon after, the authors updated their definition to apply to the general workforce. Although trait suspicion has been studied for decades in the fields of psychology and social psychology, state suspicion (Bobko, Barelka, & Hirshfield, 2014; Bobko, Barelka, Hirshfield, & Lyons, 2014) is a relatively new construct in the management field. Research on trait suspicion has found that people with suspicious personalities are more cynical (Levine & McCornack, 1991), more likely to report more symptoms on a general health questionnaire (Miller & Surtees, 1991), and better able to detect phishing scams (Harrison, Vishwanath, & Rao, 2016, January). Recent research has found that state suspicion mediates the relationship between impression management and employee voice behavior (Zhou et al., 2017) and that employees are more likely to suspect a manager with low (versus high) cultural intelligence (Luu, 2017).

State suspicion is similar to, but distinct from, distrust (Bobko, Barelka, Hirshfield, & Lyons, 2014). Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies (1998, p. 439) define trust as the “confident positive expectations regarding another’s conduct” and distrust as the “confident negative expectations regarding another’s conduct.” Therefore, suspicion is distinct from distrust, largely because suspicion involves uncertainty, whereas distrust does not. Bobko, Barelka, and Hirshfield (2014) propose that trust and distrust are decisions, whereas suspicion is a state of suspended judgment. It is the

certainty of distrust versus the uncertainty of suspicion that clearly distinguishes the two concepts.

State suspicion is also distinct from paranoid cognitions (Kramer, 1994), which refer to self-centered thought, assumptions of hostility, and feelings of being talked about. These feelings are milder forms of paranoia, experienced at times by most people, and that “engender an exaggerated or ‘irrational’ distrust and suspicion of others” (Kramer, 1994, p. 202). Thus, state suspicion is the simultaneous experience of cognitive activity, uncertainty, and perceived malintent, whereas paranoid cognitions are one of many potential antecedents of state suspicion.

Another related construct is conspiracy beliefs (van Prooijen & de Vries, 2016), which are suspicions about secret behaviors by groups of powerful actors. Thus, conspiracy beliefs are a specific form of suspicion, with the target being a powerful group of people or organizations. Conspiracy beliefs are associated with important employee outcomes, including decreased organizational commitment and increased turnover intentions (van Prooijen & de Vries, 2016). Because conspiracy beliefs are one form of suspicion, it is plausible that more general state suspicion may also influence employee behaviors and intentions.

State suspicion and CWB

CWB is action intended to have a detrimental impact on an organization and its members (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001). These behaviors are targeted either at the organization (i.e., affecting the organization’s functioning or property), at employees (i.e., harming employees in such a way as to reduce their effectiveness), or both (Fox et al., 2001). Studies show that negative perceptions of work situations contribute to CWB (Lee & Allen, 2002; Yang & Diefendorff, 2009).

In the stressor–emotion model, Spector and Fox (2005) posit CWB is a response to stressors in organizations. They argue that work-related events are stimuli that are perceived and appraised by employees. Such appraisals, when negative, induce negative emotions, which in turn contribute to CWB (Spector & Fox, 2005). Scholars have linked perceived stressors—including role ambiguity, role conflict, perceived injustice, and receiving negative feedback from supervisors—with various forms of CWB (Belschak & DenHartog, 2009; Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Chen & Spector, 1992). Fitness (2000) found that the most frequently mentioned anger-eliciting event at work is being unjustly treated. This research suggests that when employees feel they are being unjustly treated, as in a situation in which their managers are “getting away

with something,” they may experience the negative emotional reaction that ultimately manifests in CWB.

We propose that state suspicion of one’s manager represents a perceived stressor because of the inherent uncertainty and sensed malintent (Bobko, Barelka, Hirshfield, & Lyons, 2014). For example, employees may notice that a manager has abruptly started conducting quality checks and keeping all defective products in his office for “proper disposal.” Employees may be uncertain whether the manager is actually disposing of truly defective products or is selling them on the black market for personal profit. This uncertainty and the perceived malintent are accompanied by increased cognitive activity as employees attempt to make sense of the situation. Thoughts of injustice created by an unscrupulous manager may lead to feelings of frustration and resentment, which in turn may lead to CWB (Fox & Spector, 1999). Thus, we suggest that suspicion of one’s manager is a perceived stressor for employees, increasing the likelihood of employees engaging in CWB.

Hypothesis 1: Suspicion of one’s manager is positively related to counterproductive work behavior (Study 1) and intended counterproductive work behavior (Study 2).

The stressor–emotion model helps explain why state suspicion increases CWB. However, we also propose that suspicion of a manager decreases OCB. To explain this proposition, we draw on the attributional model of suspicion (Fein, 1996).

State suspicion and OCB

OCB is “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1997, p. 866). Leadership research provides rich evidence that managers, through their own behaviors and relationships with subordinates, can promote employee OCB (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005). Indeed, scholars have demonstrated that managers encourage OCB among their employees by promoting creative problem solving and by making the organizational mission salient (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006) through aligning individual motivation with specific helpful behaviors (Finkelstein & Penner, 2004) and by demonstrating consideration (Schnake, Cochran, & Dumlar, 1995). Together, this research suggests that managers actively encourage employee OCB.

In addition, there is empirical evidence pointing to the mediating effect of trust in the relationship between

manager behaviors and employee OCB (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). This evidence suggests that when trust in a manager is high, encouragement of OCB will translate into actual employee OCB. However, when trust in a manager is low, encouragement of OCB will not be realized.

Based on this evidence, it is plausible that when trust in a manager is in question, as in the case of state suspicion, employee OCB may decrease. We propose that suspicion of one’s manager should decrease the likelihood of engaging in OCB, based on the model of attributional suspicion (Fein, 1996). The model is grounded in a series of experiments designed to manipulate suspicion and suggests that once suspicious, individuals are highly motivated to avoid being persuaded by the target of suspicion. Individuals may become resistant to believing the statements of the suspicious target without strong evidence (Fein, 1996). This suggests that when an employee is suspicious of his or her manager, the employee is more likely to be on guard and less likely to be influenced by what the manager is attempting to encourage.

There is also evidence that suspicion shapes intentions and behaviors. For example, when customers are suspicious of a salesperson’s motives, their intentions to buy the salesperson’s product decrease (DeCarlo, 2005). Additionally, Williams, Fitzsimons, and Block (2004) found that when customers suspected profit-motivated communication (e.g., from a dental supply organization), they resisted engaging in healthy habits for a week (flossing). In fact, participants in the profit-motivated condition group flossed less than those in the control group, who received no communication. Williams and colleagues labeled this strong resistance to the wishes of a suspected target the “backlash effect.” The backlash effect may explain why employees would reduce OCB—resisting compliance with a suspected manager’s wishes.

Taken together, this stream of research suggests that when employees are suspicious of their managers, it is likely that they will resist engaging in positive work behaviors that their managers encourage. Thus, it is likely that employees who normally engage in OCB may decrease that behavior if they become suspicious of their managers. Therefore, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 2: Suspicion of one’s manager is negatively related to organizational citizenship behavior (Study 1) and intended organizational citizenship behavior (Study 2).

Study 1

Study 1 explores the effects of an employee’s suspicion of his or her manager on the employee’s positive and

negative workplace behaviors, operationalized as OCB and CWB.

Sample

We recruited adults who worked at least 20 hours per week as survey participants, using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (mTurk). Although evidence demonstrating that mTurk data samples are equivalent to lab-based and other online samples is growing (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2013; Peer, Vosgerau, & Acquisti, 2014), some have called into question the motivations and attention of respondents (e.g., Downs, Holbrook, Sheng, & Cranor, 2010). For example, mTurk participants may be motivated to "rush through" surveys in order to receive payment and move onto another task. In order to improve the overall data quality, participants had to be high-reputation workers with a 90% or greater approval rating from previous mTurk assignments. To increase the likelihood that participants speak fluent English, we requested workers in the United States. We also eliminated respondents who did not complete the survey, failed our attention checks, or spent inadequate time on the survey (i.e., based on our pretests of the survey, any surveys that were completed in less than 90 seconds). Initially, 25 surveys were eliminated because they were incomplete and another 18 surveys were eliminated based on our remaining criteria just described (i.e., failed attention check or inadequate time). The final sample of 251 was 61% male, approximately 76% white, with a mean age of 33 years. Approximately 90% of the sample had either attended college or completed a 4-year degree. (Additional details on the breakdown of the demographics can be found in Table 1.)

Procedure and measures

We collected data via online surveys. Participants were prompted to reflect on the last 3 months and answer a series of survey items related to their personal experience of suspicion toward their managers and engagement in CWB and OCB. They were also asked to complete demographic items.

Suspicion of manager

We adapted items from the state suspicion scale (Bobko, Barelka, Hirshfield, & Lyons, 2014) that could be modified to specify the target of suspicion as the manager. For example, we changed "I wasn't sure if the people I was dealing with were completely truthful with me" to "I am not sure if my manager is completely truthful with me." Items in the original scale that

referred to processes or events were omitted. For example, we did not use the following item: "During the event, I was uncertain as to what would eventually happen." The resulting scale of eight items ($\alpha = .96$) includes three items from the general suspicion subscale, one item from the uncertainty subscale, two items from the malintent subscale, and two items from the cognitive activity subscale. Participants read the following instructions and responded to the items on a 5-point agreement scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*: "Please think about the person to whom you report at work (e.g., your manager). Thinking back to the interactions with your manager over the last three months, indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements." A sample item is "I keep thinking that some of my manager's behaviors are unusual."

Organizational citizenship behavior

Participants read the following instructions and responded to 16 items (Lee & Allen, 2002) on a 7-point frequency scale ($\alpha = .94$) from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*: "Think about your current organization and the people at work. In the past three months, how often have you done each of the following." A sample item is "Go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group."

Counterproductive behavior

Participants read the following instructions and responded to the nine items of the Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly (1998) measure on a 7-point frequency scale ($\alpha = .91$) from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*: "Continue thinking about your current organization and the people at work. In the past three months, how often have you done each of the following? Please remember, all responses are completely confidential." A sample item is "Damaged property belonging to your employer."

To eliminate respondents who rushed through the survey without paying attention to the survey items, we also included an attention check item, "For this item, please select 'Always.'"

Results

Prior to testing the hypothesized relationships in both studies, we first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using MPlus to test the expected factor structure of the main study variables. The expected three-factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2(492) = 1534.39, p < .01$, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.09, comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.84, standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = .08) and offered a significant improvement in chi-squared over a two-factor model

Table 1. Demographic breakdown of Study 1.

Characteristic	Total responses
All	249
Sex	
Female	95
Male	154
Age group (years)	
18–19	4
20–29	111
30–39	85
40–49	27
50–59	18
60–69	4
Race	
White	190
Nonwhite	59
Manager sex	
Female employee with female manager	57
Female employee with male manager	38
Male employee with female manager	26
Male employee with male manager	126

combining CWB and OCB ($\chi^2(494) = 2798.18, p < .01$, RMSEA = 0.14, CFI = 0.64, SRMR = .17, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 1263.79, p < .01$) or a one-factor model combining CWB, OCB, and state suspicion ($\chi^2(495) = 4665.13, p < .01$, RMSEA = 0.18, CFI = 0.36, SRMR = .25, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 1866.95, p < .01$).

We tested our hypotheses for both studies using SPSS version 24. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among the variables for Study 1. As shown in Table 3, our results revealed that suspicion was positively related to CWB ($b = .33, SE = .05, p < .01$), while controlling for gender and age of the participants (employees) and managers. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was

supported. Additionally, suspicion was negatively related to OCB ($b = -.21, SE = .07, p < .01$), while controlling for the same demographic items, thus supporting Hypothesis 2.

Study 2

The first study showed that an employee's suspicion of his or her manager is associated with important behavioral outcomes: CWB and OCB. We designed Study 2 to replicate those findings in a more controlled environment, using a randomized experimental vignette study. Our goal was to test whether the relationships supported in Study 1 would replicate if we manipulated the employee–manager relationship by arousing suspicion. In order to arouse suspicion in an experimental setting, we chose to create scenarios in which participants might question the work hours and effort of the manager described in the vignette. These scenarios created the conditions for perceived injustice, a common trigger in the stressor–emotion model (Fox et al., 2001).

According to Gabarro (1990), a trusting relationship between a manager and employee may be disrupted by a destabilizing event. One type of destabilizing event is a change in working environment, such as the example we include in our vignettes—the sudden change in a manager's work hours and location. Research demonstrates that employees beginning to telecommute constitutes an environmental change and leads to a decline in trust (Reinsch, 1997; Whiteman & Dick, 2006). In line with recommendations to enhance realism when

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and scale reliabilities for Study 1.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Employee age	32.86	9.74							
2. Employee sex	.38	.49	.112						
3. Manager age	45.09	9.67	.304**	-.021					
4. Manager sex	1.34	.47	.158*	.442**	-.043				
5. Suspicion	2.45	1.05	-.082	-.040	-.093	.026	.956		
6. Organizational citizenship behavior	4.41	1.11	.130*	.215**	.079	.139*	-.197**	.942	
7. Counterproductive work behavior	1.82	.93	-.191**	-.126*	-.054	-.042	.384**	-.071	.913

Note. *N* = 251. Cronbach's alphas are in boldface.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 3. Summary regression results in Study 1.

Variable	Counterproductive work behaviors						Organizational citizenship behaviors					
	Step 1			Step 2			Step 1			Step 2		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Constant	2.40**	.34	7.00	1.42**	.35	4.02	3.53**	.40	8.74	4.13**	.44	9.38
Employee age	-.02**	.01	-2.76	-.02	.01	-2.49	.01	.01	1.20	.01	.01	.98
Employee sex	-.23	.13	-1.70	-.18	.12	-1.47	.43**	.16	2.71	.40	.16	2.58
Manager age	.00	.01	-.06	.00	.01	.41	.01	.01	.75	.00	.01	.53
Manager sex	.08	.14	.57	.03	.13	.22	.12	.16	.72	.15	.16	.92
Suspicion				.33**	.05	6.34				-.21**	.07	-3.16
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.03*			.17**			.05**			.08**		
<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)	3.08 (4, 242)			10.91 (5, 241)			3.97 (4, 242)			5.29 (5, 241)		
Adjusted ΔR^2				.14**						.04**		
Incremental <i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)				40.23 (1, 241)						9.96 (1, 241)		

Note. *N* = 251. *b* = unstandardized coefficient. *SE* = standard error. *t* = *t*-value.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

writing vignettes (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014), we selected a change in a manager's work hours and location because of the dramatic increase in workplace flexibility (Matos & Galinsky, 2011). Therefore, in developing our vignettes, we chose a change in telecommuting work habits as our destabilizing event. In addition, to avoid confounding attitudes toward telecommuting and "traditional" office work with suspicion of the manager, we included scenarios both for a recent change in which the manager begins telecommuting and for a recent change in which the manager begins working only in the office. In both scenarios, the manager is making a change in work hours and location.

In line with other experimental research examining intentions (Bachrach & Jex, 2000; Scott & Colquitt, 2007), we wrote the vignettes so that they would arouse/not arouse suspicion (Fein, 1996; Stiff et al., 1992). Following the guidance of Greenberg and Eskew (1993), we asked participants to assume the role of themselves (rather than a fictitious other) and created scenarios that would be familiar to many working adults. The vignettes appear in the appendix.

Sample

We used snowball sampling to recruit working adults to our study via students at a Mid-Atlantic university who earned extra credit for recruiting the participants. In an effort to maintain the integrity of the data, we eliminated respondents who did not complete the survey, failed our attention checks, or spent inadequate time on the survey. Initially, 82 surveys were eliminated because they were incomplete and another 83 surveys were eliminated based on our remaining criteria described above (i.e., failed attention check or inadequate time). Those in the final sample of 219 participants were at least 18 years of age and worked at least 20 hours per week. The sample was 66% female, approximately 74% white, with a mean age of 34 years. Approximately 80% of the sample had either attended college or completed a 4-year degree. (Additional details on the breakdown of the demographics can be found in Table 4.)

Procedure and measures

Consistent with prior research on workplace behavioral intentions (Williams, Pitre, & Zainuba, 2002), we controlled for the likely influence of similar past behaviors. Therefore, participants first answered a series of questions regarding their recent (in the past year) CWB and OCB, which we labelled *historical CWB* and *historical OCB*. Participants were then randomly assigned to a

condition in a 2×2 between-subjects design. Half the participants read a high-suspicion vignette; the other half read a low-suspicion vignette. Within each of these two groups, half the participants read a scenario we called *telecommuting*. In this scenario, the manager begins telecommuting while employees all work traditional (i.e., 9 to 5) hours in the office. The other half read a scenario we called *office-only*. For this scenario, the manager begins working exclusively in the office and only between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., while employees all telecommute and work irregular hours. Thus, participants were given one of four possible condition vignettes to read: (a) telecommuting/high suspicion; (b) telecommuting/low suspicion; (c) office-only/high suspicion; (d) office-only/low suspicion. In keeping with methodological recommendations regarding vignette design, the manager described in each vignette had a gender-neutral name—Chris—and no gender-specific pronouns were used (Aviram, 2012). After reading the vignette, all participants answered a series of state suspicion items. Participants then answered survey questions about intentions regarding OCB and CWB, pretending that they were members of the organization and an employee of the manager, Chris, as described in the vignette. Finally, all participants answered demographic questions, including age and gender.

State suspicion

We adapted five items from the Bobko, Barelka, Hirshfield, & Lyons (2014) measure of state suspicion that would be relevant to the vignette. Two reverse-coded items were dropped due to low reliability. The remaining three items ($\alpha = .92$) formed our measure of state suspicion: "1) I wasn't sure if the manager, Chris, was being completely truthful with me. 2) I kept thinking that some behaviors were unusual. 3) I was suspicious of the manager, Chris, from the information given." In line with prior experimental studies of aroused suspicion, we used these items in a manipulation check of aroused state suspicion (Stiff et al., 1992), described in the Results section.

Organizational citizenship behavior and counterproductive work behavior

We assessed OCB and CWB using the same items as in Study 1. For historical OCB ($\alpha = .92$) and historical CWB ($\alpha = .81$), we prompted participants with "Think about your current organization and the people at work. In the past year, how often have you done each of the following?" For OCB intentions ($\alpha = .95$) and CWB intentions ($\alpha = .92$), we used the same items as for the historical measures and we prompted participants with the following: "Pretending that you are

Table 4. Demographic breakdown of Study 2.

Characteristic	Total responses
All	219
Sex	
Female	145
Male	74
Age group (years)	
18–19	14
20–29	106
30–39	29
40–49	21
50–59	32
60–69	11
70–79	5
Race	
White	163
Nonwhite	56

working in the department described in the vignette, how likely are you to do each of the following?”

To eliminate respondents who rushed through the survey without paying attention to the survey items, we also included the following two attention-check items: “For this item, please select ‘Always,’” and “For this item, please respond ‘Likely.’”

Results

We first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to test the expected factor structure of the main study variables—suspicion, intended CWB, and intended OCB. The expected three-factor model fit the data well (χ^2

(347) = 1402.72, $p < .01$, RMSEA = 0.12, CFI = 0.80, SRMR = .07) and offered a significant improvement in chi-squared over a two-factor model combining intended CWB and OCB ($\chi^2(349) = 2342.61$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = 0.16, CFI = 0.62, SRMR = .13, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 1139.89$, $p < .01$) or a one-factor model of all three model variables ($\chi^2(350) = 2784.84$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = 0.18, CFI = 0.53, SRMR = .14, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 442.23$, $p < .01$).

In order to verify that our experimental manipulation worked, we ran an independent-samples t -test to compare the level of aroused suspicion in high- and low-suspicion conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for the high-suspicion ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .83$) and low-suspicion ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.00$) conditions: $t(217) = 6.48$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that our manipulation had a significant effect on participants’ aroused suspicion of the manager.

We also wanted to ensure that it was the suspicion manipulation, and not participants’ reaction to increasing or decreasing telecommuting, that determined the level of suspicion. Therefore, we ran an independent-samples t -test for the high-suspicion conditions (comparing telecommuting and office-only). There was no significant difference in the scores for the telecommuting ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .83$) and office-only ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .84$) conditions: $t(111) = .005$, $n.s.$ Finally, we ran an independent-samples t -test for the low-suspicion conditions (comparing telecommuting and

Table 5. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and scale reliabilities for Study 2.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Employee age	33.61	15.42							
2. Employee sex	.66	.47	-.001						
3. Aroused suspicion	3.21	1.00	-.154*	-.077	.916				
4. Historical CWB	1.69	.63	.001	-.088	-.009	.812			
5. Historical OCB	5.31	.91	.112	.050	-.024	-.154*	.916		
6. CWB intentions	1.79	.98	-.120	-.060	.269**	.465**	-.129	.917	
7. OCB intentions	5.02	1.15	.145*	.005	-.237**	-.085	.464**	-.476**	.951

Note. $N = 219$. Cronbach’s alphas are in boldface.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 6. Counterproductive work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior regression results in Study 2.

Variable	Counterproductive work behavior intentions						Organizational citizenship behavior intentions					
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Constant	.86**	.23	3.68	-.10	.31	-.33	1.76**	.43	4.09	2.70**	.49	5.53
Employee age	-.01*	.00	-2.01	-.01	.00	-1.37	.01	.01	1.55	.00	.00	1.01
Employee sex	-.04	.13	-.35	-.00	.12	-.00	-.04	.15	-.28	-.08	.14	-.57
Historical CWB	.72**	.09	7.62	.72**	.09	8.00						
Historical OCB							.57**	.08	7.49	.57**	.08	7.69
Aroused suspicion				.26**	.06	4.54				-.25**	.07	-3.72
Adjusted R^2		.22**			.28**			.21**			.26**	
$F(df)$		21.06 (3, 214)			22.39 (4, 213)			20.62 (3, 214)			19.85 (4, 213)	
Adjusted ΔR^2					.07**						.05**	
Incremental $F(df)$					20.60 (1, 213)						13.82 (1, 213)	

Note. $N = 219$. b = unstandardized estimates. SE = standard error. t = t -value. CWB = counterproductive work behaviors. OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

office-only). There was no significant difference in the scores for the telecommuting ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .94$) and office-only ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.06$) conditions: $t(104) = .45$, *n.s.* These results show that it was the suspicion language, and not whether the manager started or stopped telecommuting, that was creating suspicion in participants. Therefore, we proceeded with regression analysis to test the hypotheses.

Table 5 shows the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among the variables. The results of the regression analyses are shown in Table 6. Our results revealed that aroused suspicion was positively related to CWB ($b = .26$, $SE = .06$, $p < .01$), while controlling for historical CWB, age, and gender, thus supporting Hypothesis 3. Additionally, aroused suspicion was negatively related to OCB ($b = -.25$, $SE = .07$, $p < .01$), while controlling for historical OCB, age, and gender, thus supporting Hypothesis 4. Because we controlled for historical CWB and OCB, the findings supporting Hypotheses 3 and 4 indicate that state suspicion is related to CWB intentions and OCB intentions above and beyond the individual's prior pattern of CWB and OCB.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine whether employee suspicion of a manager contributes to negative workplace behavior and/or detracts from positive workplace behavior. Across two studies, we found that suspicion of one's manager is associated with recent CWB (Study 1) and intended CWB (Study 2). Moreover, we found that suspicion of one's manager is negatively associated with OCB (Study 1) and intended OCB (Study 2). Together, these findings indicate that employee suspicion of managers may have important and detrimental outcomes.

Implications for theory and future research

These findings are particularly important in light of the fact that suspicion is a state of suspended judgment (Bobko, Barelka, Hirshfield, & Lyons, 2014), meaning that there is still uncertainty regarding whether a party is actually engaging in wrongdoing. The implication is that even the possibility of manager wrongdoing is enough to have a significant impact on employee behavior. Our results are robust, given their consistent pattern across two study designs and samples, controlling for age and gender, and, in the second study, for historical levels of CWB and OCB.

We extend the Bobko, Barelka, & Hirshfield (2014) stages of state-level information technology (IT) suspicion

model, which posits that suspicion leads to a variety of emotional (e.g., anxiety), neurological (e.g., anterior cingulate cortex activation), and cognitive outcomes, but focuses less on behavioral outcomes. Our study demonstrates the association between suspicion and two workplace behavioral outcomes—CWB and OCB—highlighting the importance of understanding suspicion in organizations. Recognizing the impact of suspicion can allow managers and employees to be more aware of how their actions are interpreted and the potential consequences that come from ambiguous behavior.

We based our theoretical arguments for the connection between suspicion and CWB on the stressor–emotion model (Spector & Fox, 2005). The model proposes that perceived workplace stressors trigger negative emotional reactions, resulting in employee CWB. Prior studies have demonstrated links between perceived stressors (e.g., role ambiguity, role conflict, negative feedback from supervisors, and unjust treatment) and various forms of CWB (Belschak & DenHartog, 2009; Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Chen & Spector, 1992; Fitness, 2000).

Our findings add to this theoretical model by identifying another workplace stressor—suspicion of one's manager—and adding to the growing list of stressors that may trigger CWB. Now that the relationship has been demonstrated, future research may test the mediating role of negative emotions, such as anxiety, resentment, and frustration, suggested by Spector and Fox's model. Additionally, future studies may examine the relative strength of suspicion compared to other perceived stressors such as role ambiguity and workload (Spector & Fox, 2005). In this way, the relative impact of state suspicion at work can be better understood in the area of workplace stressors.

In order to explain why employees would restrict their OCB, we called on the model of attributional suspicion (Fein, 1996). This model, based on a series of experiments, posits that suspicion motivates individuals to devote greater cognitive resources to understand the true motivation of the target of suspicion, as well as to avoid being fooled or persuaded by the target of suspicion. Our findings suggest that suspicion of one's manager puts an employee "on guard" against being persuaded to engage in citizenship behaviors that managers often encourage. In Study 2 we also controlled for historical levels of OCB. This means that despite a given disposition to engage in OCB, participants in the aroused suspicion condition demonstrated a significantly lower level of intended OCB than their counterparts in the low-suspicion condition. Future research may examine this relationship in a more fine-grained manner by examining whether suspicion of a co-worker would promote a similar effect. Perhaps the impact of suspicion is similar to that of trust, in that the target

(manager compared to co-worker) produces differential outcomes (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007).

It would be illuminating to study the environmental circumstances in which state suspicion of a manager or co-worker is amplified. It is plausible that availability bias (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973), the tendency to judge the probability of events based on how easily relevant examples (of such events) come to mind, plays a role in state suspicion. For example, it is plausible that when news cycles are filled with stories of embezzlement, individuals may be more likely to suspect managers or co-workers of embezzlement. Similarly, when employees learn of a co-worker terminated for cause, such as sexual harassment, it is possible that their suspicion of other cases of sexual misconduct would increase. Future research could explore such factors in the environment that promote workplace suspicion. Such findings might be useful to organizations seeking to respond to scandals and terminations.

Practical implications

The results of the studies provide insights into the potential detrimental outcomes of workplace suspicion. To limit CWB and to promote OCB in organizations, managers and human resources (HR) practitioners should address workplace suspicion at its very early stages. Because it is less likely that employees would directly accuse a manager of suspected wrongdoing or malintent, organizations should offer multiple avenues for raising questions and concerns without fear of retribution. Our findings also suggest that organizations should promote open communication. Uncertainty is one dimension of state suspicion, and to the degree that uncertainty can be reduced through open communication, this should limit the occurrence of suspicion. Finally, managers should be aware that they are closely observed by their employees, and that a sudden change in behavior might raise suspicions regarding their intentions. Managers who are purposely changing behavioral patterns may wish to share their intentions and goals with employees in an effort to reduce uncertainty and the possibility of suspicion.

Study limitations

The implications we discussed should be considered in light of the study's limitations. First, the data in Study 1 are cross-sectional. While our research utilizes a multi-method approach by experimentally testing our theoretical model in Study 2, longitudinal field studies that further support the causality of suspicion and its behavioral consequences would be beneficial. Second, our study design used self-report measures, which may have contributed to

same source biases (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). However, prior research demonstrates the convergence of self-reporting and co-worker reports of CWB (Fox, Spector, Goh, & Bruursema, 2007), providing some evidence that self-reports of CWB should be appropriate. We also followed the recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003) to address the threat of social desirability—the tendency to respond to questions in a culturally acceptable way—by assuring participants that responses were completely anonymous and by not requesting personally identifiable information.

Although we attempted to recruit participants representative of employees working in organizations, we recognize that our samples are not perfectly representative of the employed U.S. workforce. While the Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that workforce is 78% white, 46.8% female, with a median age of 42 years, our mTurk sample (Study 1) was 76% white, 38% female, with a median age of 30.5 years. Our snowball sample (Study 2) is made up of working adults who are contacts of undergraduate students at an East Coast university, making it highly likely that the majority of those participants also live on the East Coast. This sample was 74% white, 76% female, with a median age of 26 years. Future researchers may want to examine whether these relationships hold in other contexts.

Another limitation was our adaptation and shortening of the original 20-item measure of state suspicion (Bobko, Barelka, Hirshfield, & Lyons, 2014) in order to assess suspicion of a manager. Although prior studies have also used shortened versions of the original scale (e.g., Luu [2017] used 12 of the 20 items), there are few empirical data on the psychometric properties of the scale yet, so all findings should be cautiously interpreted. In addition, our shortened versions of the original scale make it impossible to tease apart dimensions of cognitive activity, malintent, and uncertainty.

This study examined two important employee performance outcomes: CWB and OCB. However, we recognize that there are myriad other employee and organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, turnover intention, psychological safety, and employee voice, that could have been included. Our hope is that future studies will shed light on how suspicion influences these and other workplace outcomes.

Conclusion

Little is known about the outcomes of workplace suspicion. Across two studies, we demonstrate that employee suspicion of managers is positively associated with CWB and negatively associated with OCB. Given the relatively recent conceptualization of workplace state

suspicion, these findings highlight the importance of continued research in this growing area.

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Appendix

Telecommuting—High Suspicion

You work for a mid-sized organization in a department of about ten employees. Your department is known for its hard work and consistent performance, and most employees in the department (including you) are generally at the office every day from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in order to get the work done. Six months ago, your manager, Chris, began a new arrangement, working from home more, and using technology (cell phone and laptop) to connect to work at all times of the week. According to your manager (Chris), this work arrangement allows for fewer work–family conflicts because there is more flexibility in carrying out tasks when and where work and family activities take place.

You see your manager for a few hours during one or two days out of the week when Chris comes into the office and almost never hear from Chris otherwise. Nonetheless, you are not sure if your manager is being completely truthful with you. You have been thinking of alternative possibilities about what your manager is doing when not in the office. You have become increasingly suspicious of your manager during the past six months and feel that you are perhaps being taken advantage of.

Telecommuting—Low Suspicion

You work for a mid-sized organization in a department of about ten employees. Your department is known for its hard work and consistent performance, and most employees in the department (including you) are generally at the office every day from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in order to get the work done. Six months ago, your manager, Chris, began a new arrangement,

working from home more and using technology (cell phone and laptop) to connect to work at all times of the week. According to your manager (Chris), this work arrangement allows for fewer work–family conflicts because there is more flexibility in carrying out tasks when and where work and family activities take place.

You see your manager for a few hours during one or two days out of the week when you go into the office and almost never hear from your manager otherwise. Nonetheless, you are sure that your manager is being truthful with you. Nothing seems unusual about your manager’s work away from the office. You have not been suspicious of your manager during the past six months and feel that your manager has been up-front with you

Office Only—Low Suspicion

You work for a mid-sized organization in a department of about ten employees. Your department is known for its hard work and consistent performance, and most employees in the department (including you) work a very flexible schedule, telecommuting several days a week and working irregular hours in order to get the work done. Six months ago, your manager, Chris, began a new arrangement, working only in the office and strictly from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and avoiding technology (cell phone and laptop) to connect to work at other times. According to your manager (Chris), this work arrangement allows for fewer work–family conflicts because there is more clarity in carrying out tasks when and where work and family activities take place.

You see your manager for a few hours during one or two days out of the week when you go into the office and almost never hear from your manager otherwise. Nonetheless, you are sure that your manager is being truthful with you. Nothing seems unusual about your manager’s work in the office. You have not been suspicious of your manager during the past six months and feel that your manager has been up-front with you.

Office Only—High Suspicion

You work for a mid-sized organization in a department of about ten employees. Your department is known for its hard work and consistent performance, and most employees in the department (including you) work a very flexible schedule, telecommuting several days a week and working irregular hours in order to get the work done. Six months ago, your manager, Chris, began a new arrangement, working only in the office and strictly from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and avoiding technology (cell phone and laptop) to connect to work at other times. According to your manager (Chris), this work arrangement allows for fewer work–family conflicts because there is more clarity in carrying out tasks when and where work and family activities take place.

You see your manager for a few hours during one or two days out of the week when you go into the office and almost never hear from your manager otherwise. Nonetheless, you are not sure if your manager is being completely truthful with you. You have been thinking of alternative possibilities about what your manager is doing in the office. You have become increasingly suspicious of your manager during the past six months and feel that you are perhaps being taken advantage of.