2018-09-13

Subordinates' Use of Upward Influence Tactics as a Predictor of Abusive Supervision: A Victim Precipitation Perspective

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by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PSYCHOLOGY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 2018

Abstract

Victim precipitation theory postulates that to fully understand why abusive supervision occurs, it is imperative to consider how subordinates can participate in the sequence of events that lead to their becoming targets of supervisors' aggressive actions. Yet, only a handful of studies have explored whether subordinates' own behaviours might evoke this type of response. To this end, this dissertation explored if, and under what conditions, subordinates' behaviours elicited abusive responses from their supervisors. Drawing on the taxonomy of upward influence tactics, I tested the role of assertiveness and ingratiation as two behavioural predictors of abuse across two independent studies. In Study 1, I collected self-report data from a sample of full-time supervisors using Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform ($N = 204$). Relying solely on their subjective interpretations, supervisors who perceived their subordinates to be assertive reported being more abusive because this behaviour threatened their role in the organization. On the other hand, supervisors who believed their subordinates ingratiated towards them were less likely to be abusive because they viewed these individuals as less threatening. Because abusive supervision is frequently observed from the subordinates' perspective, and because there is evidence to suggest that abuse should be examined from a relational perspective, Study 2 collected responses from supervisor-subordinate dyads ($N = 146$). In this study, subordinates' self-ratings of assertiveness were the only behaviour that was directly related to abusive supervision. Moreover, across both studies, there was no evidence to support the assertion that supervisor perceptions of power in the organization, or their social dominance orientation moderated the indirect relationship between assertiveness and abusive supervision through perceived threat. Theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Kibeom Lee for his ongoing guidance and support over the course of my graduate studies. I am especially grateful for the considerable amount of time and effort he has expended into helping me refine the topic of my dissertation, and editing this document. I also wish to express my thanks to Dr. Tunde Ogunfowora for his invaluable assistance. His insights were instrumental in ensuring that this manuscript was refined, and that I had 'covered my bases'. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Derek Chapman for the time he has dedicated to my dissertation, as well as for providing encouragement over the years. I also wish to thank Dr. Justin Weinhardt and Dr. Richard Perlow for taking the time out of their busy days to serve on my committee and review this document, which is no minor feat.

I am grateful for my colleagues, and friends in the psychology department. Thank you for all your support through all the ups and downs. I have gained a family in Calgary, and without your support, I would not have been able to reach the endpoint. Many of you have been there for me at all hours in the day, and in various stages of panic, and for that I am forever indebted to you.

Last, and most importantly, I would like to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to my incredible family. You have all been there every step of the way to encourage and support me as I endeavoured to reach my goals, and have never wavered in your conviction of me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the past decade, interest in the dark side of management has flourished (i.e., Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Tepper, 2007; Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017). One construct in particular, abusive supervision, has received considerable attention, with over 150 published articles appearing between the years of 2011 – 2015 (Tepper et al., 2017). Formally defined, abusive supervision refers to "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the *sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, excluding physical contact*" (Tepper, 2000; p.178). Despite being considered a low base-rate phenomenon, abusive supervision affects a substantial proportion of employees. In fact, Schat, Frone, and Kelloway (2006) estimate that more than 13.6 % of employees have observed or have been targeted by abusive supervisors.

In an attempt to understand why abusive supervision occurs, a limited, but growing body of research has begun to examine the *supervisor's* role in the continuation of abuse over time (Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013; Tepper et al., 2017). For example, scholars have investigated abuse as a retaliatory behaviour against personal injustices (Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Kiewitz et al., 2012; Restubog, Scott, & Zagenczyk, 2011), as a disinhibited reaction occurring from reduced self-control (Lin, Wang, & Chen, 2013; Mawritz, Folger, & Latham, 2014; Yam, Fehr, Keng-Highberger, Klotz, & Reynolds, 2015), and as a consequence of supervisors perceiving their subordinates as targetable victims (Henle & Gross, 2014; Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006; Wang, Harms, & Mackey, 2015). While these studies have significantly enhanced our understanding of why supervisors abuse their followers, the broader literature would suggest that there are other contributing factors. In particular, the *subordinate's* actions represent one half of the dynamics in the dyadic interactions between supervisors and

subordinates (Khan, Moss, Quratulain, & Hameed, 2016). Therefore, it stands to reason that subordinates might prompt abusive responses from their supervisors.

However, there is a paucity of research that has been dedicated to examining the role of subordinate behaviours in triggering abusive supervision. Moreover, studies that have sought to explore the role of subordinate behaviours have narrowly focused on subordinates' job performance (e.g., Khan et al., 2016; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). Broadly, they have found that poor performers become targets because this behaviour signals to the perpetrator that the subordinate is not useful, and potentially injurious to the reputation of the supervisor (Tepper et al., 2011). While these earlier studies provide some preliminary insight into the consequences of engaging in provocative behaviours, it is not clear whether poor performance is a behaviour that is within the control of the subordinate, nor whether the behaviour is intentional, or actively meant to harm the supervisor. As a result, there is little that is known about the wilful or purposeful employee behaviours that facilitate abusive behaviours. The purpose of this research was to begin to address this gap in the literature.

Specifically, it is my contention that some subordinates may habitually use aggressive, or cunning behaviours towards their supervisors in a bid to gain favour, and to get ahead. However, attempts by subordinates to use these types of negative behaviours can be an egregious and vexing experience for people in positions of power. Indeed, prior research has found that not all deceptions work out favourably, and there are risks associated with using tactics to influence supervisors (Carlson, Carlson, & Ferguson, 2011; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). It is possible that these behaviours have the potential to backfire when the supervisor perceives that such behaviours pose a disadvantage, especially if they are used to achieve self-interested goals that reflect poorly on the supervisor. To test these assumptions, I propose that upward influence

tactics may represent an important source of purposeful subordinate behaviours that engender abuse. To date, the use of upward influence tactics as an antecedent of abusive supervision is poorly understood.

By exploring how subordinates' use of upward influence tactics leads to abusive supervision, the present study investigates this question in greater depth. Specifically, I anticipate that subordinates who are assertive towards their supervisor will become targets of abusive supervision because this behaviour threatens the supervisor's status and position in the organization. To test the inverse relationship, I propose that subordinates who ingratiate towards their supervisor (i.e., uses flattery, conforms to their opinion) minimize their chances of becoming targets of abusive supervision since this behaviour minimizes a supervisor's feelings of threat. Moreover, several supervisor characteristics are proposed to serve as moderators of the relationship between these upward influence tactics and perceptions of threat. The theoretical framework is depicted in Figure 1.

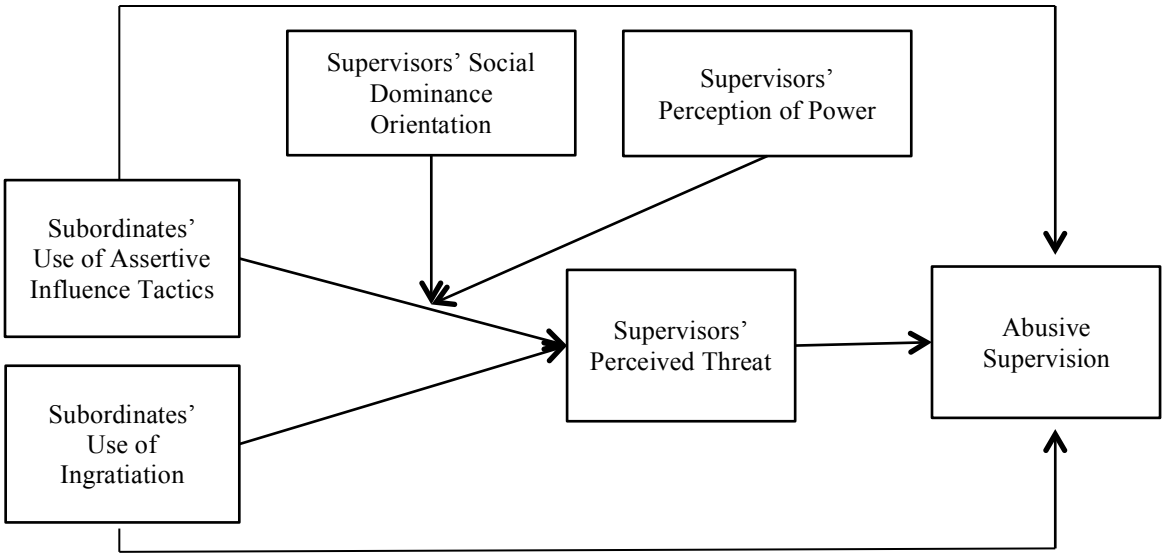

Figure 1. Graphical depiction of the conceptual model.

The present research contributes to the abusive supervision literature in two ways. First, this study responds to calls for research on the antecedents of abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007). By drawing on victim precipitation theory (Curtis, 1974; Elias, 1986), I present a novel set of behaviours that can be used to shed light on the assertion that subordinates may become targets based partly on their own misbehaviour. Since abusive supervision negatively impacts the organization's success (Tepper et al., 2006), and the victim's well-being (see Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2017 for a comprehensive review), it is important to conduct research that aims to answer the primary question: why do supervisors abuse their subordinates. By exploring this viewpoint, I hope it will encourage other researchers to take the understudied perspective of the subordinate when investigating abusive supervision. Note, however that the purpose of focusing on the victims' behaviours is not to blame subordinates for their supervisors' abusive behaviours, but it is an attempt to detect risk factors that can contribute to its occurrence.

Second, this study advances the literature by testing a potential explanation for why subordinates' behaviours may lead to abuse. Specifically, this research examines whether supervisors' perceptions of threat mediates the relationship between subordinate behaviour and abusive supervision. In several published papers, there is an organizing theme that supervisors are more likely to abuse subordinates when they experience threats to their identity (e.g., Mawritz et al., 2014; Simon, Hurst, Kelley, & Judge, 2015; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Yet, very few studies have formally investigated this relationship (for an exception see Khan et al., 2016). Because there is a lack of empirical research, it remains to be seen whether threat plays a significant role in predicting the occurrence of abusive supervision.

In sum, the present research represents an initial attempt to develop and test a conceptual model of subordinates' wilful behaviours as antecedents of abusive supervision. In the

proceeding sections, I will provide a brief review of victim precipitation theory, which is the primary theoretical framework that will be used to support this model. Moreover, I will present a brief overview of the past research that has investigated the subordinate characteristics and behaviours that lead to abusive supervision. From this review, I emphasize that while subordinate behaviours seem to be an important predictor of abuse, researchers have not yet examined behaviours beyond job performance. To examine novel behaviours that form the foundation of this theoretical framework, I draw upon the taxonomy of upward influence tactics. I also acknowledge that the supervisor's interpretation of subordinate behaviours as threatening is one mechanism that can drive abusive supervision. Specifically, I suggest that certain behaviours can elicit feelings of threat, and these feelings of threat can be used to explain why a supervisor chooses to engage in abuse.

Theoretical Background

Victim precipitation theory. Victim precipitation theory postulates that to fully explain why some people become the targets (i.e., the victims) of others' aggressive actions, factors other than the perpetrators' characteristics must be considered (Curtis, 1974; Elias, 1986). In particular, proponents of victim precipitation theory suggest that to some extent, the culpability of abuse can be attributed to the victim's characteristics or behaviours (Curtis, 1974). Using this logic, victims can either knowingly or unknowingly participate in a sequence of events that lead to their becoming a target of others' aggressive actions. This suggests that victimization is not a random process.

A review of the literature suggests that there are two different characters that are most likely to be chosen as the target of harmful actions. The first is the submissive victim, and they are perceived by aggressors as unable to defend themselves or retaliate because they have

weaknesses in their personality such as low self-esteem, or they are passive, nonaggressive, nervous, insecure, socially withdrawn, unassertive, and anxious (Olweus, 1978). These individuals become victims because they present themselves as an easy or vulnerable target. In contrast, provocative individuals exhibiting personality traits, attitudes, emotions, or behaviours that are highly aggressive, hostile, or irritating may also become the targets of aggression because they elicit retaliatory responses from others (Olweus, 1978). Therefore, while some people become targets of aggression because they behave submissively, others are chosen because they violate the rules of social interaction and threaten social identities.

The use of this theoretical framework in studies of abusive supervision has been gaining popularity in recent years. For example, researchers have sought to examine whether subordinates displaying provocative personality traits could become more susceptible to victimization. Specifically, researchers hypothesized that subordinates would make themselves more vulnerable when they conveyed to their supervisor that they are annoying, irritable, and incompetent (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). The growing body of research supports this claim, and several studies have demonstrated that abusive supervision is related to subordinates' personality traits (e.g., Henle & Gross, 2014; Wang et al., 2015).

In the same way that subordinates may display certain *traits* that may elicit abuse, two studies (Khan et al., 2016; Tepper et al., 2011) have proposed that subordinates could display *behaviours* that generate hostility from their supervisors. Specifically, these scholars conjectured that poor job performance was a provocative behaviour, and argued that a supervisor would abuse a low performing subordinate because the subordinate displays aggravating and annoying characteristics that exude incompetence (Khan et al., 2016; Tepper et al., 2011). In other words, since low performers provide no utility for the supervisor, and have the potential to harm the

supervisor's reputation, they are perceived to be undeserving of fair treatment, and deserving of hostile mistreatment (Tepper et al., 2011). In support of this claim, both studies demonstrated that poor job performance led to an increase in abusive supervision (Khan et al., 2016; Tepper et al., 2011).

Interestingly, Khan and colleagues (2016) also discovered that supervisors could abuse their *high* performing subordinates under certain circumstances. When leaders had a preference for hierarchy and dominance (as measured by the Social Dominance Orientation scale), they feared that their high performing subordinates had the potential to dominate or take their position, and responded with abusive supervision (Khan et al., 2016). This study was the first to suggest that subordinates could be considered provocative when they display weak employee behaviours (i.e., low performance), but also when they display strong employee behaviours (i.e., high performance). However, focusing exclusively on job performance is problematic because it offers a narrow view of the role of subordinate behaviour in abusive supervision. Moreover, by restricting our research efforts on one behavioural antecedent, we limit the ability to make advances in victim precipitation theory. It is of great significance to gain a more nuanced understanding of the willful subordinate behaviours that can influence abusive supervision.

In an effort to identify a broader range of behaviours, it is helpful to consider the social exchange process that occurs between supervisors and their subordinates. Social exchange theory postulates that through a series of interpersonal exchanges, people create and develop relationships (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). In general, positive, beneficial actions, which are directed towards the supervisor, should contribute to high quality relationships, while relationships can deteriorate when harmful actions are directed toward the supervisor (Settoon et al., 1996). In other words, different behaviours can build up or break down social relationships

and influence a supervisor's chances of being abusive. I suggest that behaviours that break down, or derail social relationships will result in an increase in abusive supervision. In contrast, behaviours that build up social relationships will minimize abusive supervision. To test these assumptions, and to introduce additional subordinate behaviours that can be used to predict the occurrence of abusive supervision, the following section will describe the concept of upward influence tactics.

Upward influence tactics. Upward influence tactics are defined as strategic manoeuvres that an individual employs to exert power or gain compliance from individuals at higher organizational levels (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983; 1988; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Schilit & Locke, 1982; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). According to Hinkin and Schriesheim (1990), there are six main influence tactics, which include rational persuasion, ingratiation, exchange, assertiveness, coalitions, and upward appeals (see Table 1). These tactics are organized into three distinct categories, which include hard tactics, soft tactics, and rational persuasion (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Jonason, Slomski, & Partyka, 2012). Hard tactics are tactics where the user forces their will on another person through pushy and forceful behaviours (i.e., assertiveness, upward appeal, coalitions). Soft tactics are tactics designed to subtly convince the target through a series of positive interactions that it is in their best interest to engage in an advocated behaviour (i.e., ingratiation, exchange). Rational persuasion is the use of logic to influence others. This classification system will be used to inform the subordinate behaviours that will be examined in the present study.

In particular, it is anticipated that the use of hard influence tactics will derail the supervisor-subordinate relationship, while soft tactics will build this social relationship. This study will focus on one hard tactic (assertiveness) and one soft tactic (ingratiation) to examine

these relationships. Focusing exclusively on two behaviours provides a platform to thoroughly investigate the unique attributes and functions of each behaviour on abusive supervision. Furthermore, exploring only the most relevant variables is a method that has been successfully used in the past (see Thacker & Wayne, 1995). The following paragraphs will be used to justify the investigation of assertiveness and ingratiation as the focal behaviours in the present study.

Table 1

The six main upward influence tactics, adapted from Hinkin and Schriesheim (1990)

Tactic	Definition	Classification
Rational Persuasion	Using logical argument and factual evidence to gain compliance	Rational Persuasion
Ingratiation	Influencing the target through flattery to so they think favourably of them	Soft Tactic
Exchange	Explicit or implicit offers by an agent to provide favour or benefit	
Assertiveness	Demands, threats, frequent check ins or persistent reminders to target	Hard Tactic
Coalitions	Enlists the aid or endorsement of other people to influence target	
Upward Appeal	Bringing additional pressure for conformity on a target by invoking the influence of higher levels in the organization	

First, because the current study is interested in identifying the behaviours that predict supervisors' mistreatment of subordinates, it is important to concentrate on behaviours that unambiguously offend the supervisor. Assertiveness is the only hard influence tactic that requires a subordinate to display overt acts of insubordination towards their supervisor. Though the hard tactics of coalition building and upward appeals can also be considered relationship-hindering behaviours, supervisors may be less sensitive to these behaviours. Specifically, the behaviours

associated with coalition building and upward appeals pertain to the employee's propensity to involve third parties in order to get their way. Supervisors may not be able to observe a subordinate's attempts to recruit organizational members if a subordinate carefully executes their strategy. Further, if a supervisor is capable of detecting these behaviours, they may not view these behaviours as insubordination because it is an indirect form of coercion. For example, supervisors may view their subordinates as capable of forming relationships with others, and may not be aware that the intent of building these relationships is to challenge the supervisor. For these reasons, assertiveness is the most appropriate hard influence tactic to examine in the conceptual framework.

Whereas assertiveness is proposed to derail relationships, the successful use of ingratiation is known to foster a work environment that promotes favourable social interactions (Harvey, Stoner, Hochwarter, & Kacmar, 2007). In addition, ingratiation has been described as a problem-focused strategy directed at minimizing abusive supervision by creating a more positive attitude in the supervisor (Yagil, Ben-Zur, & Tamir, 2011). Therefore, ingratiation is predominately viewed as a behaviour that is used to develop supervisor-subordinate relationships. Although exchanges may also be viewed positively by supervisors, exchanges have been used most frequently in downward influence attempts (supervisor to subordinate; Yukl & Falbe, 1992). This is because supervisors who occupy higher organizational positions are equipped with the resources to engage in meaningful exchanges, whereas subordinates may be less equipped to do so. For these reasons, ingratiation is the most appropriate soft influence tactic to include in this theoretical framework. The proceeding section will focus on how assertiveness and ingratiation influences a supervisor's proclivity towards abusive supervision.

Subordinates' assertiveness and abusive supervision. As previously mentioned, I propose that the use of hard influence tactics such as assertiveness can derail a supervisor-subordinate relationship. Individuals who adopt hard tactics like assertiveness tend to embody personality traits akin to the 'toxic employee' (i.e., Machiavellianism, Narcissism, and Psychopathy), who get their way through the use of manipulation, force, or pushing individuals to change their behaviours, opinions, needs, and values (Ames, 2009; Jonason et al., 2012). Subordinates who display these behaviours are viewed by their supervisor as acting outside of their expected roles, which should be defined by compliance, passivity, and maintaining amiable relations with supervisors (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988). Supervisors become frustrated with, and retaliate against these employees who display deviant and defiant work behaviours (Hershcovis & Rafferty, 2012). In other words, when a subordinate displays assertive behaviours they target themselves as someone who is deserving of punishment.

To reprimand subordinates who use assertive influence tactics, supervisors can engage in various forms of retaliation. At the very minimum, the use of assertiveness results in negative supervisory perceptions towards the subordinate (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003; Maslyn, Farmer, & Fedor, 1996; Wayne, Liden, Graf, & Ferris, 1997). More specifically, several studies have suggested that supervisors view subordinates who capitalize on assertive influence tactics with contempt (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Higgins et al., 2003; Wayne et al., 1997). A more severe repercussion of these behaviours occurs when supervisors are openly resistant towards the assertive subordinate (Falbe & Yukl, 1992). This resistance can be demarcated by a variety of hostile supervisory behaviours that range in severity. For instance, Kipnis and Schmidt (1988) discovered that subordinates who adopted highly assertive tactics were evaluated less favourably by their superiors. Another study by Thacker and Wayne (1995)

discovered that the use of assertiveness was negatively related to a subordinate's likelihood for promotion. More seriously, supervisors are also motivated to publicly punish a subordinate who displays behaviours that signal a desire to undermine or hinder the supervisors' resources (Mooijman, van Dijk, Ellemers, & van Dijk, 2015). Therefore, this research would suggest that assertiveness could lead to a broad range of hostile behaviours that can include abusive supervision, and as such, I propose that:

H1: Subordinates' use of assertive influence tactics will be positively related to supervisors' abusive behaviours

Though hard influence tactics like assertiveness can devastate the supervisor-subordinate relationship, it stands to reason that there are behaviours that could also encourage the improvement of the relationship. Generally, using soft tactics are an effective means of obtaining favourable evaluations and organizational achievements (Falbe & Yukl, 1992). To examine the possibility that subordinate enacted behaviours can dissuade abusive supervision, I explore the soft influence tactic of ingratiation.

Subordinates' ingratiation and abusive supervision. Ingratiation refers to a set of behaviours that individuals use to elevate their attractiveness to others (Barry & Shapiro, 1992). The majority of research has supported the claim that subordinates' use of ingratiation results in favourable evaluations by their supervisors (see Thacker & Wayne, 1995; Yukl & Tracey, 1992 for exceptions to these findings). For instance, Higgins and colleagues (2003) found that a subordinate's use of ingratiation resulted in favourable performance assessments and extrinsic success factors such as promotions and raises. This is consistent with the findings of Wayne and colleagues (1997), who discovered that supervisor-focused ingratiation (i.e., rendering favours) resulted in increased ratings of interpersonal skill, liking, and perceived similarity. These

positive evaluations differ from the observed outcomes associated with a subordinate's use of assertiveness, and introduces the possibility that ingratiation may have the opposite effect on a supervisors' decision to be abusive.

Specifically, subordinates who effectively ingratiate could be viewed as deserving of fair treatment because they are capable of developing positive relationships with their supervisor. For example, Wayne and colleagues (1997) suggested that supervisor-focused ingratiation led to favourable evaluations because it served to maintain the balance in the supervisor-subordinate relationship. By engaging in behaviours that benefit the supervisor, subordinates are able to alleviate some of the tension inherent to the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Wayne et al., 1997). This is important since prior research has found that abusive supervision occurs when a supervisor experiences frustrations (Eissa & Lester, 2016), perceives dissimilarity and conflict with their subordinates (Tepper et al., 2011), and experiences negative emotions including anger and anxiety (Mawritz et al., 2014). Taken together, it appears that subordinates who successfully ingratiate receive positive evaluations from their supervisors and minimizes the risk of abuse because its use reveals that the subordinate is motivated to serve in the interests of their supervisor. In other words, I suggest that:

H2: Subordinates' use of ingratiation will be negatively related to supervisors' abusive behaviours

Notably, recent contributions in the abusive supervision literature also suggest that the role subordinate behaviours play in predicting abusive supervision may be less direct. Khan and colleagues (2016) suggested that it might be valuable to identify subordinate behaviours that can make a supervisor feel threatened, since perceived threat equips supervisors with an incentive to be abusive. In line with this postulation, victim precipitation theory states that provocative

stimuli will elicit retaliatory or aggressive responses from perpetrators when the action is considered threatening (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000). Therefore, I suggest that the relationship between subordinates' behaviours (i.e., assertiveness, ingratiation) and abusive supervision is also indirect, operating through supervisor perceptions of threat. Before elaborating on these proposed relationships, the proceeding section will provide a brief overview of supervisor perceived threat.

Supervisors' perceived threat. Integrated threat theory argues that as social beings, we have a fundamental need to make distinctions between our own group and other groups (Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2011). Individuating oneself from others creates meaning in our lives and serves to validate our self-worth (Stephan et al., 2011). However, a number of threats can emerge which places our identity at risk, and prevents us from distinguishing ourselves from others (Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Stephan et al., 2011). In the workplace, supervisors who occupy higher hierarchical positions may feel threatened when they sense that a subordinate jeopardizes their status and authority within the organization (see Stephan et al., 2011). Consequently, an increase in perceived threat may produce a range of hostile and aggressive responses from the supervisor in an attempt to mitigate these negative feelings.

Broadly, scholars have found that when a supervisor feels threatened, they are more likely to be abusive **(**i.e., Khan et al., 2016; Mawritz et al., 2014; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). For example, Mawritz and colleagues (2014) found that exceedingly difficult goals could make a supervisor feel incompetent and incapable of accomplishing tasks, thereby leading to feelings of threat. This threat made supervisors more aware of their negative emotions and consequently increased the likelihood for abusive behaviours (Mawritz et al., 2014). There has been less

extensive research that has focused on the subordinate as a potential source of threat for the supervisor, however, the limited research also points to a positive relationship with abusive supervision. Using Tedeschi and Felson's (1994) social interaction theory of aggression, Khan and colleagues (2016) reasoned that subordinates who threatened their supervisors' authority and status could become easier targets for abuse. They proposed that supervisors could act aggressively towards employees when they are strategically motivated to "a) force compliance of those who violate norms, b) manage impressions to fortify their image as a figure of authority and status, and c) restore justice by punishing employees who are perceived to have caused material or symbolic harm to the supervisor" (Khan et al., 2016, p.5). In other words, Khan and colleagues (2016) suggested that a supervisor's abusive behaviour could be a strategic response to being treated in a way that threatens their image. Consistent with their rationale, these scholars found support for a positive relationship between perceived threat to hierarchy and abusive supervision (Khan et al., 2016). Altogether, these findings suggest that supervisors' perceptions of threat are positively related to abusive supervision. Moreover, within a supervisor-subordinate relationship, feelings of threat may emerge when supervisors believe that subordinates threaten their image, and as such, I propose that:

H3: Supervisors who perceive that their subordinate poses a threat to their authority and status will be more likely to engage in abusive supervision

Researchers speculate that supervisors remain alert to subordinate behaviours that can elicit feelings of threat so that their role, position, or status is never in a weakened state (Stephan et al., 2011). As such, it is likely that supervisors' perceptions of threat play a mediating role, wherein subordinate behaviours lead to abusive supervision when a supervisor feels threatened

(see Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). This rationale will be discussed in relation to the two influence tactics discussed earlier, namely, assertiveness and ingratiation.

The mediating role of supervisor perceived threat. First, it is possible that assertive influence tactics lead to increases in abusive supervision because this behaviour is threatening to a supervisor. Indeed, several studies have examined how harmful, injurious, and destructive behaviours threaten employees and elicit hostile retaliatory behaviours. For instance, Aquino and Douglas (2003) reasoned that people strive to maintain a positive self-identity, and so they are motivated to defend themselves against acts that threaten their identity. They discovered that employees who were frequent recipients of actions that challenged or diminished their sense of competence, dignity, or self-worth experienced identity threat and responded to this threat by engaging in more antisocial behaviours in the workplace (Aquino & Douglas, 2003). Specifically, employees who felt threatened retaliated by engaging in behaviours like saying or doing something to purposely hurt other coworkers, and criticizing coworkers at work (Aquino & Douglas, 2003). A separate investigation of 90 employees revealed a similar relationship (Fast & Chen, 2009). Fast and Chen (2009) discovered that power holders who felt incompetent became aggressive when their ego was threatened (see also Georgesen & Harris, 2006; Mooijman & van Dijk, 2015; Morrison, Fast, & Ybarra, 2009). In two experimentally manipulated follow-up studies, this relationship persisted, and threat that arose from feelings of incompetence led to aggressive behaviours (Fast & Chen, 2009). Although past studies have not directly examined the role of assertive influence tactics, these findings can be used to build the current conceptual framework. Specifically, these studies have determined that the perceived use of hostile behaviours by a subordinate will lead to abusive supervision through perceptions of threat. Extending upon these findings, I propose the following hypotheses:

H4a: Subordinates' use of assertive influence tactics will be positively related to supervisors' perceptions of threat

H4b: The relationship between assertiveness and abusive supervision will be mediated by perceptions of threat, such that assertive employees will increase supervisors' perception of threat, which will subsequently result in an increase of abusive supervision

On the other hand, positive interactions may provide the impetus for supervisors to recognize that their subordinate does not pose a threat. Indeed, prior contact seems to be a useful predictor in helping an individual identify whether another individual poses a threat (see Stephan, Stephan, & Gudykunst, 1999; Stephan et al., 2011). For instance, Stephan, Diaz-Loving, and Duran (2000) explored the mediating role of intergroup anxiety (a form of threat) in the relationship between quality of contact and attitudes towards racial groups. They discovered that positive contact with different racial groups (i.e., extent to which there was cooperative, affirmative, individualized, one-on-one interactions) minimized the anxiety related to interacting with these groups. Consequently, lowered anxiety was related to more favourably held attitudes towards racial groups (Stephan et al., 2000). Therefore, a supervisor who believes that their subordinate is favourably disposed towards them will tend to view them as non-threatening, and as a helpful and friendly person. In the same way that Stephan and colleagues (2000) claim that positive interactions will minimize threat, I propose that the use of ingratiation will minimize treat.

Theories of aggression have suggested that diminishing threat will minimize subsequent abusive behaviours. For instance, Tedeschi and Feldman (1994) claim that hostile behaviours are used to achieve compliance from subordinates when there is perceived social conflict. However, if the cost associated with engaging in harmful behaviour outweighs the benefits, the individual

is less likely to engage in this behaviour (Tedeschi & Feldman, 1994). If a supervisor desires to reduce feelings of threat, they will not risk the stability of a non-threatening relationship by abusing their subordinate. In other words, threat will mediate the relationship between ingratiation and abusive supervision, such that subordinates who ingratiate will lower a supervisor's feelings of threat, which will, in turn, help to minimize abuse. As such, I propose the following hypotheses:

H5a: Subordinates' use of ingratiation will be negatively related to supervisors' perceptions of threat

H5b: The relationship between ingratiation and abusive supervision will be mediated by perceptions of threat, such that the use of ingratiation will decrease supervisors' perception of threat, which will subsequently result in a decrease in abusive supervision

Individual Differences as Moderators

Several researchers have declared that supervisors might also possess characteristics that play a role in the strategic use of abuse (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Tepper et al., 2011). Therefore, it is unlikely that all supervisors will react to subordinate behaviours in the same way. In the proceeding sections, I will discuss how differences in supervisor characteristics (i.e., perceived power, social dominance orientation) moderate the relationship between subordinate behaviour and perceptions of threat. Exploring these boundary conditions builds on the existing literature, and speaks to the supervisor's role in the perpetuation of abuse.

Supervisors' perceptions of power. There is a prevailing belief that in the workplace, individuals in higher structural positions will be endowed with more power. However, it is misguided to view power as synonymous to role designations. While both constructs are related to the ability to influence others, authority is derived from institutionalized roles or arrangements

(Anderson & Brion, 2014; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Yukl & Falbe, 1991), and perceived power is defined as the asymmetric control over valuable resources and outcomes (Anderson, John, & Keltner, 2012; Keltner et al., 2003). Therefore, while a supervisor may hold a position of authority, it is also possible that their perceived sense of power can vary. Because a subordinate uses upward influence tactics in an attempt to assert their power over their supervisor, it is appropriate to reflect upon whether a supervisor's own sense of power can influence the interpretation of these behaviours. More specifically, supervisors' perceptions of power may affect the relationship between subordinates' use of upward influence tactics and their perceptions of threat.

Broadly, researchers have noted that perceptions of power significantly impact an individual's behaviours and attitudes. For instance, individuals with high perceived power act on their own desires regardless of its associated consequences (Keltner et al., 2003), and are more likely to act corruptly by depleting shared resources (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). According to Keltner and colleagues (2003), high-perceived power allows an individual to approach their environment in a disinhibited manner, and is less perturbed by the actions of others. In the supervisor-subordinate dyad, these findings imply that regardless of their subordinates' behaviours, supervisors with *high-perceived* power are less prone to feelings of threat. In contrast, research suggests that the absence of power should activate an alarm, or threat system, such that individuals with low power have a heightened vigilance towards their surrounding environment (Keltner et al., 2003). As such, powerlessness is an important consideration for supervisors.

Low power exposes a supervisor to several vulnerabilities. In fact, when people have low power they are generally subject to experiencing more social and material threats than those who

are high in power (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Stephan et al., 2011). Moreover, Keltner and colleagues (2003) proposed that individuals with low power might be more likely than high power individuals to scrutinize the behaviours of others and interpret ambiguous behaviours as threatening. For instance, in an experimentally manipulated study, Case and Maner (2014) demonstrated that superior subordinate job performance, in tandem with a supervisor's unstable power, exacerbated the withholding of valuable information when a supervisor desired to maintain their dominant position. These researchers noted that when a supervisor perceives that their power is reduced, they would be more sensitive to subordinate behaviours that may pose a threat (Case & Maner, 2014). In addition to being more sensitive to the behaviours of others, supervisors who perceive diminished power may feel less equipped to control assertive subordinates because they are lacking the appropriate resources to minimize the source of threat. As mentioned, power is described as the amount of resources a supervisor holds in being able to control different situations (Anderson et al., 2012; Keltner et al., 2003). Importantly, subordinates who display behaviours with the potential for increased status and power can be especially threatening to a supervisor if the supervisor does not believe they have any power or resources to stay atop the hierarchy (see Case & Maner, 2014). Together, these findings suggest that a supervisor's perception of power moderates the relationship between subordinate behaviour and perceived threat. Specifically, supervisors who feel powerless will experience elevated levels of threat when faced with a subordinate who uses assertive influence tactics to get their way.

> *H6: The indirect relationship between assertiveness on abusive supervision through supervisors' perception of threat will be moderated by supervisors' perceptions of power. Specifically, the indirect effect of assertive influence tactics on abusive supervision*

through perceived threat is stronger for supervisors with low perceived power, and weaker for those with high perceived power

Beyond perceived power, a supervisor's dispositions can also influence the relationship between subordinate behaviour and perceptions of threat. Notably, some individuals favour hierarchical structure and inequalities between groups, and this preference will increase perceptions of threat among supervisors who believe their subordinates are engaging in assertive, hostile behaviours.

Supervisors' social dominance orientation. Social dominance orientation (SDO) refers to the extent to which an individual accepts group-based inequalities. Individuals who are high in SDO believe that some groups deserve to be on top, while individuals who are low in SDO believe that all groups should be treated equally (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). In the abusive supervision literature, most research has focused on *subordinates'* perceptions towards hierarchy and power (see Kernan, Watson, Chen, & Kim, 2011; Lee, Pilutla, & Law, 2000; Lian, Ferris, & Brown, 2012; Lin et al., 2013; Shao, Resick, & Hargis, 2011). Broadly, these studies have discovered that a subordinate who is accepting of group-based inequalities is less troubled by their supervisor's abusive supervision, justifying it as appropriate and normative behaviour. Recently, scholars have also suggested that it may be important to reflect on how a supervisor's level of SDO can influence abuse (Khan et al., 2016).

Khan and colleagues (2016) proposed that high SDO supervisors pay close attention to the behaviours of their subordinates. Given their competitive worldview (Duckitt, 2006; Pratto et al., 1994), and desire to maintain positions of high authority at all costs (c.f., Levin et al., 2012; Son-Hing, Bobocel, Zanna, & McBride, 2007), it is likely that high SDO supervisors are acutely aware of behaviours that can deter their ability to maintain their status and authority. In support

of their claim, these authors found that high SDO supervisors who perceived their subordinates as high performers were more likely to view their subordinate as a threat, which in turn, increased abusive supervision. They suggested that high performance is threatening to a high SDO supervisor since a good performer has the capacity to supersede the supervisor's position in the hierarchy. However, these authors conclude "it is important to ask if there are other subordinate behaviours or characteristics that would blur hierarchal boundaries and create threat perceptions in high-SDO supervisors" (Khan et al., 2016; p.18). Subordinate behaviours that challenge the high SDO supervisor's ability to maintain the gap with low power, low status groups may be viewed as a threat. A behaviour that is capable of achieving these goals is the subordinates' use of assertive influence tactics. The use of assertive behaviours informs the high SDO supervisor that the subordinate does not value the hierarchical superiority of their supervisor, and may be attempting to override their authority. In turn, these behaviours will heighten the supervisor's feelings of threat.

> *H7: The indirect relationship between assertiveness on abusive supervision through supervisors' perception of threat will be moderated by supervisors' SDO. Specifically, the indirect effect of assertive influence tactics on abusive supervision through perceived threat is stronger for supervisors who are high in SDO, and weaker for those who are low in SDO*

Chapter 2: Study 1 – Supervisor Sample

Sample and Procedure

220 participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) for the present study. MTurk was considered to be an acceptable method of data collection for two reasons. Specifically, self-report data obtained from MTurk yields similar psychometric properties to data obtained using more traditional convenience sampling methods (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004; Shapiro, Chandler, & Mueller, 2013). Furthermore, the use of crowdsourcing websites such as MTurk has frequently been used to test predictions in the abusive supervision literature (c.f., Lin et al., 2016; Yam et al., 2015; Yam, Fehr, & Barnes, 2014).

To meet the inclusion criteria for this study, participants must have been proficient in English, must have held a supervisory role, and must have been working full-time (minimum 30 hours/week). Participants who reported meeting these criteria were directed to an online survey powered by Qualtrics. As an added measure of data quality, participants were asked a series of questions at the beginning of the survey to confirm that they met the requirements set forth by the researcher. Of the 220 participants who registered for the survey, 13 were removed because they responded 'no' when they were asked whether they held a supervisory role. Moreover, two attention check questions were randomly embedded into the survey to identify careless responders. Two respondents provided an incorrect answer to one or more of these questions and were removed from further analysis. These removals resulted in a final sample size of 204 full-time supervisors ($N = 204$). All participants were remunerated $2 USD for completing one survey, which took approximately 20-minutes of their time.

Each survey instrument contained a cover letter highlighting the research objectives. The supervisors were also reassured that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous. At every stage of the survey, participants were provided with clear instructions to think about their own beliefs, feelings, and attitudes, or the behaviours of one specific subordinate. Furthermore, precautionary measures were taken to ensure that they reported the behaviours of only one of their subordinates throughout the survey. Specifically, supervisors were asked at the beginning of the survey to provide the name of one subordinate whom they have worked closely with over the past six months. This name became embedded into all questions pertaining to subordinate behaviour. For example, the stem of each question would read, "To what extent do you feel that [subordinate's name] engages in the following behaviours".

The sample was 57.8% male, with a mean age of 38.8 years (*SD* = 10.58). The majority of participants held some form of postsecondary degree (57.4% College/University, 14.7% Master's Degree, 3.4% Doctorate Degree). On average, supervisors worked 43.81 hours per week (*SD* = 8.64), and had been employed with their organization for 7.59 years (*SD* = 6.65). These supervisors came from a wide range of industries (e.g., Construction, Education, Financial Services, Retail), and held a variety of roles (e.g., Director of Operations, Engineer, Office Manager, Sales Manager).

Measures

Descriptive statistics, internal consistency reliabilities, and correlations among focal variables are reported in Table 2. A full list of items can be viewed in the Appendices.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Focal Variables in Study 1

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Abusive Supervision	1.25	.52	(.95)									
2. Perceived Threat	2.18	1.45	.44**	(.90)								
3. Assertiveness	1.61	.83	.49**	.68**	(.87)							
4. Ingratiation	3.42	.81	-.11	-.44**	-.26**	(.77)						
5. SDO	2.90	1.07	.32**	.07	.07	-.01	(.86)					
6. Power	5.65	.87	-.33**	-.40**	-.47**	.18**	-.08	(.90)				
7. Negative Affect	1.48	.61	.39**	.31**	.46**	-.12	.09	-.46**	(.82)			
8. Supervisor Age	38.8	10.58	-.06	-.02	-.05	-.16*	-.14	.14	-.16*	(-)		
9. Supervisor Gender[1]	-	-	-.08	.02	-.06	-.04	-.24**	.04	-.03	.06	(-)	
10. Organizational Tenure[2]	7.59	6.65	.05	-.08	-.02	.03	.01	.11	-.07	.49**	-.04	(-)

Note. $N = 204$. Coefficient alphas are reported along the diagonal in parentheses.
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level
[1]Dummy variable (1= Male, 2 = Female)
[2]Organizational tenure was measured in years

Influence tactics. Supervisors were instructed to reflect upon the extent to which their subordinates used ingratiation and assertiveness towards them using six items from Schrieshiem and Hinkin's (1990) scale (see Appendix A). Because supervisors were asked to rate their subordinates' behaviours, items from the original scale were modified slightly to reflect this referent shift. Items included: "This employee is forceful with me; Trying such things as making demands, setting deadlines, and expressing strong emotions towards me" (Assertiveness), and "This employee acts very humbly towards me when making a request" (Ingratiation). All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

Perceived threat. There are two existing scales that measure perceived threat in the workplace (see Appendix B), however, these two scales are not adequate in addressing the hypotheses outlined in the current paper. Specifically, the scale developed by Kraimer and colleagues' (2005) measures the extent to which *temporary workers* threaten the well-being of other workers (i.e., "I fear that a temporary employee may someday take my job"). This scale does not focus on the supervisor-subordinate relationship, and does not reference a threat to authority or status. Another scale developed by Khan and colleagues' (2016) consists of three-items with two items identifying high performance as the primary source of threat (i.e., "The existing hierarchy will no longer be maintained if this subordinate performs very high"). While this scale makes reference to the supervisor-subordinate relationship, it targets performance as the primary source of threat. Taken together, these scales do not capture how supervisors can feel threatened when a subordinate questions their status or authority.

Because of these shortcomings, I created a measure of perceived threat for the present research. An initial pool of 10 items (see Appendix C) was developed to measure supervisor perceived threat. In scale development, it is common that only about half of the initial items will

be retained following statistical item analyses (Hinkin, 1998), and therefore, I generated a larger number of items than what I anticipated for the final scale. To reduce the initial item pool, various considerations were made. First, I examined item-total correlations, however, no items were removed because the correlations all exceeded the recommended cut-off criteria of .50 (Kline, 2005). With a focus on content validity, I then sought to evaluate items that best captured the construct of supervisor perceived threat. If items had substantial overlap in content, only one item was chosen. This was done to avoid redundant items in the scale. Another important consideration was the inclusion of reverse-keyed items. As such, if two items had redundant content and one was reverse-keyed, then the reverse-keyed item was selected.

Based on these item analyses, four items were retained to be included in the final scale, one of which was reverse-keyed. The final scale includes the following four questions: "I feel that this employee's behaviours are meant to challenge my authority", "This employee never tries to threaten my image (reversed)", "I often wonder if this employee intends to tarnish my reputation", and "This employee's behaviours demonstrate a disregard for my position". All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree)* to 7 (*strongly agree)*. As shown in Table 3, item-total correlations re-calculated within the remaining items ranged from .60 to .86. Further, I conducted a common factor analysis using the principal axis method to assess the dimensionality of the four-item measure. Based on the resulting scree plot (see Figure 2), a single factor emerged, indicating the unidimensionality of the scale. As shown in Table 3, all of the items showed acceptable factor loadings on the first un-rotated factor, ranging from .62 to .94.

Table 3

Item analysis and factor analysis results for final four-item scale measuring supervisor perceived threat

Item	*M*	*SD*	Item-Total Correlation	Factor Loading
I feel that this employee's behaviours are meant to challenge my authority (Threat 3)	2.17	1.67	.86	.94
This employee never tries to threaten my image (Threat 6R)	2.51	1.86	.60	.62
I often wonder if this employee intends to tarnish my reputation (Threat 8)	1.94	1.48	.83	.90
This employee's behaviours demonstrate a disregard for my position (Threat 10)	2.08	1.59	.84	.91
Eigenvalue				3.13
Percentage of variance explained				78.35
Coefficient alpha reliability				.90

Note. "*R*" suffix in item labels denotes a reverse-keyed item.

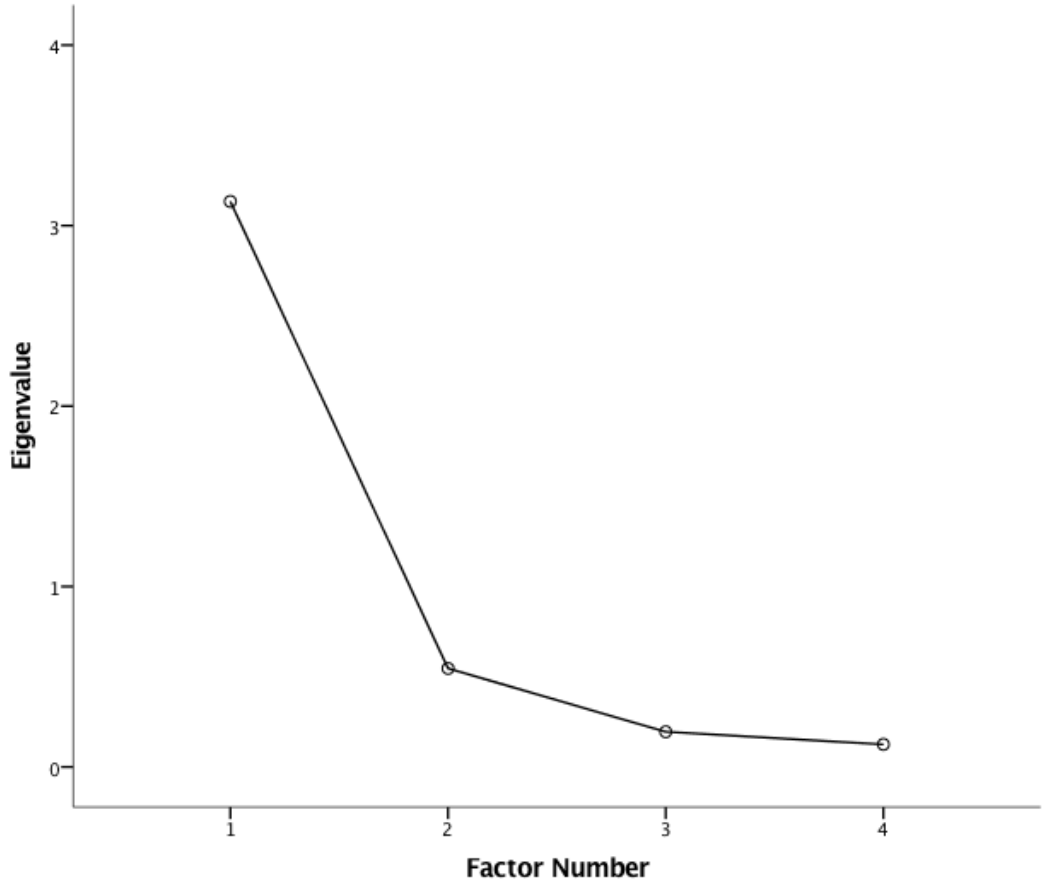

Figure 2. Scree plot derived from principal axis factoring analysis of the 4-item measure of perceived threat.

Abusive supervision. Abusive supervision was measured using an adapted version of Tepper's (2000) 15-item scale (see Appendix D for a full list of items). Specifically, the 15 items from this scale were modified to assess supervisor self-reports of abusive supervision. For example, 'My supervisor ridicules me' was changed to "I ridicule this employee". These items were measured on a 5-point scale (1 = *I cannot remember ever using this behaviour with this employee*, 2 = *I very seldom use this behaviour with this employee*, 3 = *I occasionally use this*

behaviour with this employee, 4 = *I use this behaviour moderately often with this employee*, 5 = *I use this behaviour very often with this employee*).

Perceived power. Supervisors' perceptions of power were measured using Anderson, and colleagues (2012) 'perceived sense of power' scale (see Appendix E for full list of items). This scale consists of 8 questions such as "In my interactions with my employees, I can get them to listen to what I say" and "In my interactions with my employees, my wishes do not carry much weight (Reversed)". Items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Participants were instructed to think about their relationship with all employees when responding to these items.

Social dominance orientation. Supervisors' SDO was measured using Ho and colleagues' (2015) shortened SDO7 scale (see Appendix F for a full list of items). There are 8 items in this scale, with both positive and negatively keyed items. Items from this scale were slightly modified to reflect the workplace and the supervisor-subordinate relationship when applicable. Example items included: "An ideal workplace requires supervisors to be on top and subordinates on the bottom", and "It is unjust to try to make groups equal in the workplace". All items were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Controls. Although perceptions of abuse tend to be weakly associated with demographic variables (see Mackey et al., 2017), many have been included as controls in a number of studies, and as such, information on the supervisor's gender, age, and organizational tenure was collected. See Appendix G for the full demographic questionnaire. However, none of these variables were significantly related to abusive supervision, and as a result, they were not included as controls.

Researchers have also identified a relationship between abusive supervision and negative affect (NA; Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013; Lian et al., 2012; Mackey et al., 2017; Zhang & Bednall, 2015). Specifically, past researchers have found that individuals who are higher in NA are more likely to distort perceptions of abuse (Tepper et al., 2006). Therefore, NA was measured using 5 adjectives from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988). See Appendix H for a full list of items. Results indicated that supervisor NA was significantly related to abusive supervision ($r = .39$, $p < .001$), and as a result, this variable was used as a control in my analyses.

Analytic Strategy

Prior to hypothesis testing, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using MPlus Version 8.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) to ensure that the focal predictors (subordinates' use of ingratiation and assertiveness), mediator (supervisors perceptions of threat), moderators (supervisors self-rated power, supervisor self-rated SDO), and outcome (supervisors self-ratings of abusive supervision) had satisfactory discriminant validity. I created parcels for each measure, with the exception of assertiveness, ingratiation, and perceived threat (which were relatively short scales). Little, Cunningham, Shahar, and Widaman (2002) suggest that parceling results in more reliable latent estimates because it reduces item-specific random errors, and decrease the sample size to parameter ratio. I used random distribution of items (Landis, Beal & Tesluk, 2000) to create three to four indicators for each latent construct. To assess model fit, I used chi-square (χ^2), comparative fit index (*CFI*), Tucker-Lewis Index (*TLI*), root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA),* and standardized root mean residual (*SRMR*).

To test my hypotheses, I conducted the following analyses. First, I ran zero-order correlations to examine Hypotheses 1 – 3, 4a, and 5a. Next, I conducted mediation analyses

following the recommendations of Preacher and Hayes (2008) by adopting bootstrapping methodology to evaluate the statistical significance of the indirect effects of assertiveness on abusive supervision through threat (Hypothesis 4b) and ingratiation on abusive supervision through threat (Hypothesis 5b). I bootstrapped 5,000 samples to obtain confidence intervals using the PROCESS macro in SPSS. The indirect effects were significant when the confidence intervals obtained from repeated samplings did not include zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Last, I employed 'first-stage' moderated mediation models to evaluate Hypothesis 6 (The indirect relationship between assertiveness on abusive supervision through supervisors' perception of threat will be moderated by supervisors' perceptions of power. Specifically, the indirect effect of assertive influence tactics on abusive supervision through perceived threat is stronger for supervisors with low perceived power, and weaker for those with high perceived power) and Hypothesis 7 (The indirect relationship between assertiveness on abusive supervision through supervisors' perception of threat will be moderated by supervisors' SDO. Specifically, the indirect effect of assertive influence tactics on abusive supervision through perceived threat is stronger for supervisors who are high in SDO, and weaker for those who are low in SDO). These models are considered first-stage moderated mediations because the moderating effect applies to the first stage of the indirect effect (i.e., X → M; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). To test the moderated mediations, I executed the following steps using the PROCESS macro in SPSS. First, I examined the significance of the interaction on perceived threat. Next, I tested the moderated mediation in an integrated fashion. Specifically, I examined the indirect relationship of assertiveness and abusive supervision through supervisor perceived threat at one standard deviation above, and one standard deviation below the moderator (i.e., supervisor perceived power, SDO). This yields an index of moderated mediation. If the index of moderated mediation

was significant, this suggested that the moderator significantly impacted the indirect effect. Note that all model fit tests and comparisons were based on the final sample of 204 supervisors, and the indirect effects and moderated mediations were tested using standardized variables.

Results

Discriminant validity. Confirmatory factor analyses showed that the hypothesized six-factor model fit the data well, $\chi^2(155) = 338.31$; CFI = .94; TLI = .93, RMSEA = .08 and SRMR = .05 (see Table 4), and all factor loadings were significant. I compared the fit of this model to an alternative five-factor model using a chi-square difference test. Specifically, assertiveness and perceived threat were combined based on the strong correlation that was observed between these two variables ($r = .68$, $p < .001$). Results indicated that this five-factor model had a significantly poorer fit compared to the six-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 161.96$, $p < .001$. Last, I tested a one-factor model where all items loaded onto a single factor, and results indicated that this model also had a significantly poorer fit compared to the six-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(15) = 1682.05$, $p < .001$. Overall, these results provide support for the distinctiveness of the variables in this study.

Table 4

Discriminant Validity – Study 1

					Fit Indices			
Model	df	χ^2	Δ df	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Six-Factor Model	155	338.31	-	-	.94	.93	.08	.05
Five-Factor Model	160	500.27	5	161.96	.90	.88	.10	.06
One-Factor Model	170	2020.36	15	1682.05	.44	.37	.23	.15

Zero-order correlations. An inspection of Table 2 provided support for Hypotheses 1, 3, 4a and 5a. Specifically, there was a moderate correlation between subordinates' use of assertive influence tactics and abusive supervision ($r = .49$, $p < .001$), thus supporting Hypothesis 1. There was a moderate positive correlation between perceptions of threat and abusive supervision ($r = .44$, $p < .001$), which supported Hypothesis 3. There was a strong positive correlation between subordinates' use of assertive influence tactics and perceptions of threat ($r = .68$, $p < .001$), providing support for Hypothesis 4a. There was also a moderate negative correlation between subordinates' use of ingratiation and perceptions of threat ($r = -.44$, $p < .001$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 5a. Hypothesis 2 was not supported because there was no significant correlation between subordinates' use of ingratiation and abusive supervision ($r = -.11$, $p = .116$).

Tests of indirect relationships. Figure 3 shows that after controlling for supervisors' NA (not shown in the figure), most of the paths were significant and the relationships occurred in the hypothesized directions. Specifically, there was a significant (and positive) direct effect of assertiveness on abusive supervision ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$), but a non-significant effect of ingratiation on abusive supervision ($\beta = .09$, $p = .196$). There was a positive effect of assertiveness on supervisor perceived threat ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$), and a negative effect of ingratiation on supervisor perceived threat ($\beta = -.28$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, there was a positive effect of supervisor perceived threat on abusive supervision ($\beta = .25$, $p < .01$). Overall, perceived threat significantly mediated the indirect relationship between assertiveness and abusive supervision ($\beta = .15$, 95% CI [.06, .27]), indicating support for Hypothesis 4b. Perceived threat also mediated the indirect relationship between ingratiation and abusive supervision ($\beta = -.07$, 95% CI [-.13, -.02]), providing supporting for Hypothesis 5b.

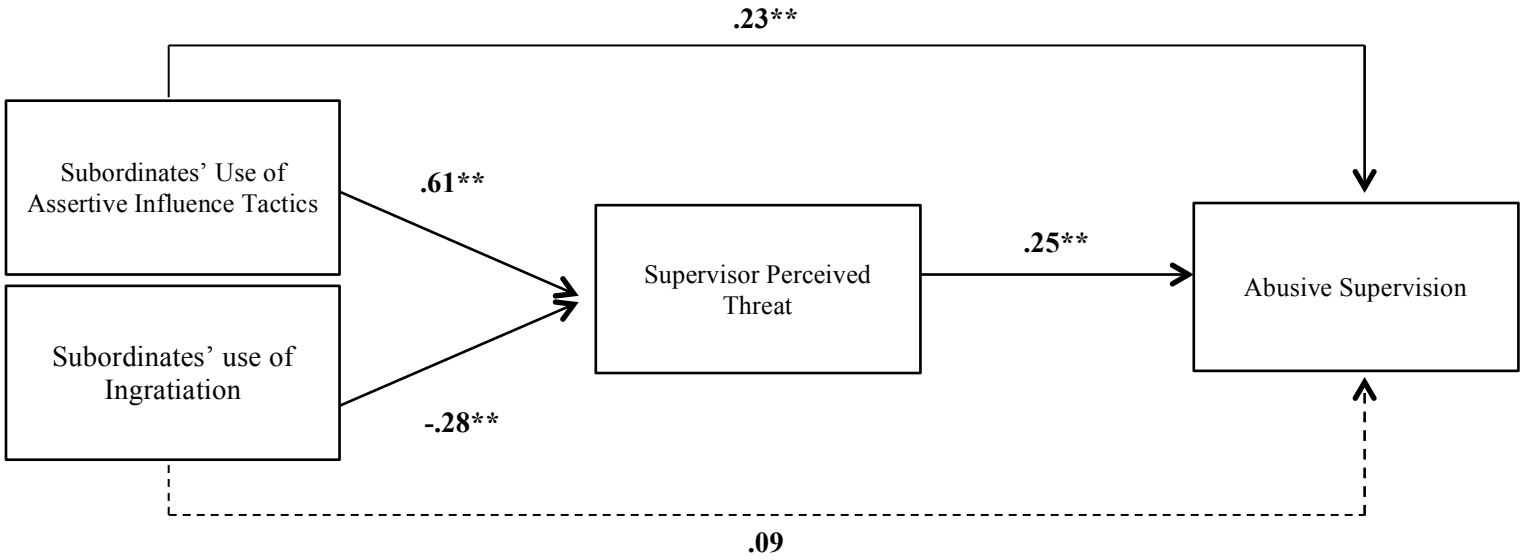

Figure 3. Mediation analysis of the relationships between assertiveness/ingratiation on abusive supervision via perceived threat (controlling for negative affect). *Note.* Standardized path estimates are reported in the figure. Dashed lines signify non-significant paths. *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Indirect effect assertiveness → perceived threat → abusive supervision = .15, 95% CI [.06, .27]

Indirect effect ingratiation → perceived threat → abusive supervision = -.07, 95% CI [-.13, -.02]

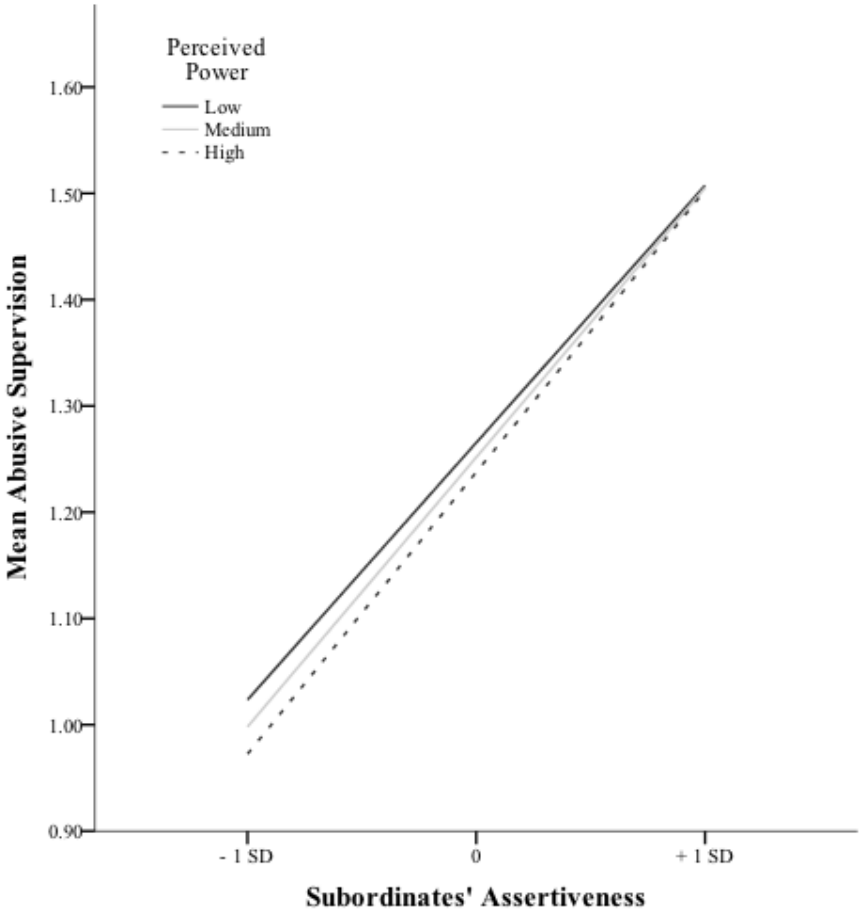

Figure 4. The indirect effect of assertiveness on abusive supervision (through supervisor perceived threat) at high and low levels of supervisor perceived power in Study 1.

Tests of moderated mediations. To test Hypothesis 6, I began by examining the moderating effect of supervisor perceived power on the link between *supervisor* ratings of subordinate assertiveness and perceptions of threat. Perceived power significantly moderated the link between assertiveness and threat ($\beta = .11$, $p < .05$). However, the full test of the moderated mediation showed that the indirect relationship of assertiveness and abusive supervision via supervisor perceptions of threat did not vary as a function of perceived power (*index of moderated mediation* = .02, 95% CI [-.01, .05], see Table 5). Moreover, I plotted the conditional

indirect effect to examine its form. Figure 4 and 5 revealed that this interaction effect was not trending in the hypothesized direction. Contrary to my hypothesis, Figure 4 shows that the indirect effect of assertive influence tactics on abusive supervision through perceived threat was slightly weaker for supervisors with low perceived power (-1 SD), and stronger for those with high perceived power (+1 SD). Figure 5 provides more detailed insight into the directionality of the indirect effect. Specifically, an examination of Figure 5 reveals that the indirect effect of assertiveness on abusive supervision through supervisor perceptions of power became non-significant when supervisors' ratings of power fell below 2.8. This suggests that when supervisors' score lower than 2.8 on perceptions of power, they are less likely to react to assertive employees compared to those who score higher than this cut-off on perceptions of power. All together, this hypothesis was not supported.

I then tested Hypothesis 7 by first examining the moderating effect of SDO on the link between assertiveness and threat. Contrary to my expectation, SDO did not significantly moderate the link between assertiveness and threat (β = .04, p = .511). Further, the full test of moderated mediation showed that the indirect relationship of assertiveness and abusive supervision via supervisor perceptions of threat does not vary as a function of the supervisor's level of SDO (*index of moderated mediation* = .01, 95% CI [-.02, .06], see Table 6). Taken together, there was no support for Hypothesis 7.

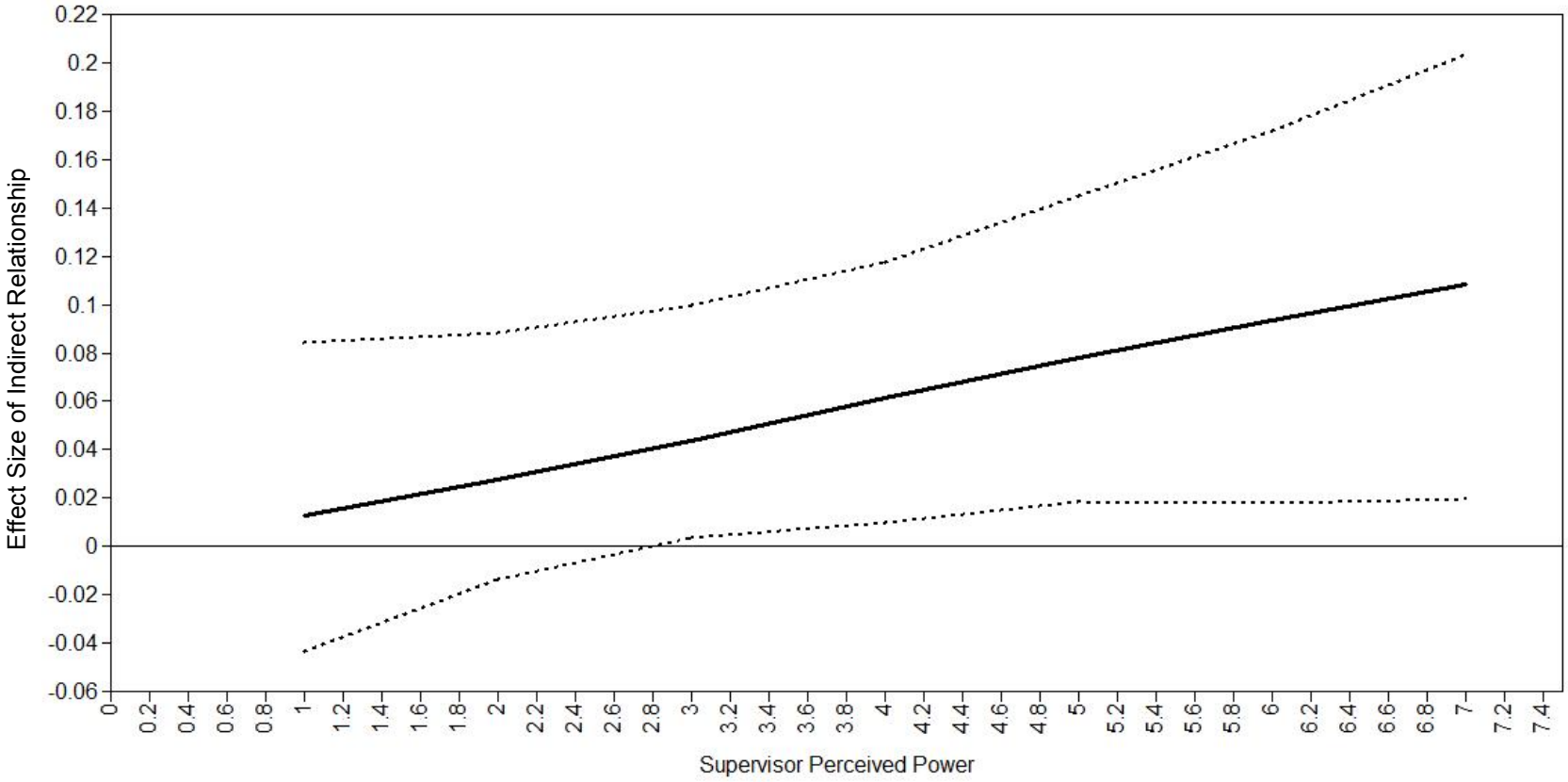

Figure 5. The indirect effect of assertiveness on abusive supervision (through supervisor perceived threat) at different levels of supervisor perceived power in Study 1. Upper and lower bound confidence intervals (95%) are shown using dotted lines.

Table 5

Study 1(Hypothesis 6) - Standardized Bootstrapped Estimates.

	Index of Moderated Mediation				Conditional Indirect Effect				
			95% CI					95% CI	
Path	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Power	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Assertiveness → Threat → AS	.02	.01	-.01	.05	- 1 SD	.13	.05	.04	.22
by Power					+ 1 SD	.17	.06	.05	.29

Note. N = 204, 5,000 bootstrap samples.
[b]AS, Abusive Supervision
[c]LLCI and ULCI indicate lower-level and upper-level confidence intervals, respectively

Table 6

Study 1 (Hypothesis 7) – Standardized Bootstrapped Estimates

	Index of Moderated Mediation				Conditional Indirect Effect				
			95% CI					95% CI	
Path	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	SDO	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Assertiveness → Threat → AS	.01	.02	-.02	.06	-1 SD	.14	.05	.04	.23
by SDO					+1 SD	.15	.07	.04	.30

Note. $N = 204$, 5,000 bootstrap samples.
[a]AS, Abusive Supervision; SDO, Social Dominance Orientation
[b]LLCI and ULCI indicate lower-level and upper-level confidence intervals, respectively

Chapter 3: Study 2 – Dyadic Sample

Although Study 1 results are encouraging with respect to several of my predictions, this study is limited in some regards. Specifically, all data were provided from a single source (i.e., the supervisor), which raises concerns about common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012), and precludes our ability to make substantive conclusions about the supervisor-subordinate relationship. While supervisors may be in the best position to report on their own psychological phenomena (e.g., perceived threat, SDO, and power), subordinates may be better equipped to report on their supervisors' behaviours (e.g., abusive supervision). Indeed, abusive supervision is described as a subordinate's subjective assessment of their supervisor's hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours. As a result, abusive supervision has been most frequently measured from the *subordinate's* perspective (Martinko et al., 2013). Because one of the main goals of this study is to advance our understanding of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, the second sample was used to test my predictions using multi-source dyadic data.

Prior to discussing this study's method and results, I will briefly reflect upon the topic of assessing *subordinates'* behaviours. Namely, researchers who have studied subordinates' use of influence tactics have suggested that it may be important to examine both subordinate self-evaluations and supervisor evaluations of subordinate behaviours. Examining both sources is beneficial because an actor's self-reports may be influenced by their knowledge of what behaviours they wish to portray, while other observers may be unaware of this intent (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). By way of explanation, Thacker and Wayne (1995) speculated that while subordinates may perceive an influence tactic like assertiveness as a display of competence or self-confidence, supervisors might interpret it differently, perhaps as an obvious attempt at control. In accordance with this logic, several studies have observed only small to moderate

agreement between rating sources (i.e., Roulin, Bangerter, & Levashina, 2015, 2014; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Thacker & Wayne, 1995).

The modest supervisor-subordinate agreement raises a challenging question regarding which rating source is adequate in addressing the current research questions. Thacker and Wayne (1995) discovered that a subordinate's likelihood of receiving a promotion rested on the supervisor's interpretation of their behaviours, but not the subordinates' self-rated behaviours. As such, past studies have relied on supervisor evaluations of subordinate behaviours to examine why supervisors abuse subordinates (i.e., Aquino & Bommer, 2003; Khan et al., 2016; Tepper et al., 2011). Because I am interested in predicting supervisors' mistreatment of subordinates, and because people can react more strongly to their own perception of the environment rather than to its objective features, it is appropriate to measure supervisor perceptions of subordinate behaviour (Lewin, 1951, as cited in Tepper et al., 2011, p. 280).

However, it might be difficult for supervisors to accurately detect and interpret the behaviours of their subordinates. Carpenter, Rangel, Jeon, & Cottrell (2017) argue that while observer ratings are a ubiquitous approach to measuring employee behaviour, behaviours cannot always be fully observed by others, and this creates the potential for a high level of inaccuracy and bias in ratings. In their study, they asked 363 full-time employees in the United States to rate the observability of counterproductive behaviours from Bennett and Robinson's (2000) workplace deviance scale. They determined that generally, supervisors and coworkers were unable to observe these behaviours, resulting in low self-other convergence (Carpenter et al., 2017). Upon inspecting the items of the upward influence tactic scale, it is possible that several behaviours (e.g., "This subordinate acts very humbly towards me when making a request") may not be detectable to a supervisor, especially if a subordinate is tactful in their execution of these

behaviours. As noted by Lin and colleagues (2016), a subordinate's self-reports might provide a more complete picture of their behaviours than could be captured by the supervisor. For these reasons, it is also vital to collect subordinate self-reports.

Gathering ratings from both sources allows me to test the robustness of my predictions by 1) examining abusive supervision from the perspective of the subordinate, 2) allowing me to understand how subordinates' use of assertiveness and ingratiation affected perceptions of threat, and consequently, abusive supervision, using both subordinates' self-ratings, and supervisors' evaluations of their subordinates' behaviours, and 3) further elucidating the issue of rating convergence.

Sample and Procedure

In the present study, participants were recruited using a convenience sampling technique. Specifically, subordinates were students who were enrolled in undergraduate courses at a large Canadian University. These subordinates were asked to complete a brief 15-minute survey in exchange for bonus course credit. To meet the inclusion criteria, subordinates must have been employed and working 20+ hours each week, must have regularly interacted with their immediate supervisor, and must have received permission from their supervisor to provide the researcher with their contact information. The subordinates who reported meeting these criteria registered for the study to receive a unique participant code. Upon receiving this code, they were directed to a password-protected online survey. Similarly to Study 1, subordinates were asked a series of questions at the beginning of the survey to confirm that they met the requirements set forth by the researcher. Thirteen subordinates were removed from the study because they did not meet the requirements. Moreover, two careless response items were randomly embedded into the questionnaire. Four respondents who failed to answer appropriately were removed from further

analyses. Last, two respondents had a substantial amount of missing data, and as such, their supervisors were not contacted. From these removals, a total of 207 ($N = 207$) subordinate surveys were retained for further analysis, and their supervisors were sent a request to complete the complimentary survey.

Supervisors were contacted through email, and were asked to participate in a study examining supervisor and subordinate behaviours in exchange for a $10 gift card. In this email, they were provided with a participant code that matched their subordinates'. Because the dyads were linked based on these pre-assigned matching codes, all responses were confidential and anonymous. The data from supervisors were carefully inspected and cases were removed if respondents failed to respond correctly to one or more careless response items, and if they had a substantial amount of missing data. A total of 146 supervisors completed the survey, which resulted in a dataset of 146 complete dyads (70.53% response rate).

Similarly to Study 1, each survey instrument contained a cover letter highlighting the research objectives. At every stage of the survey, participants were provided with clear instructions to think about their own beliefs, feelings, and attitudes, or the behaviours of one specific subordinate/supervisor. Furthermore, precautionary measures were taken to ensure that they reported the behaviours of the same supervisor or subordinate throughout the survey. Specifically, subordinates were asked at the beginning of the survey to provide the name of the supervisor whom they will be referring to, while supervisors were asked to provide the name of the subordinate who had referred them to this study. The names that were provided at the beginning of the survey were embedded into any question stem that required the participant to think about a specific referent other.

The subordinate sample was 17.8% male, with a mean age of 23.57 years (*SD* = 8.15). They reported working between 20-50 hours per week (*M* = 24.51, *SD* = 6.58), had a median organizational tenure of 1.25 years, and interacted with their supervisors on a regular basis. The supervisor sample was 31.5% male, with a mean age of 33.92 years (*SD* = 11.39). On average, they worked 40.99 hours per week (*SD* = 10.83), and had a median organizational tenure of 4.00 years. These supervisor-subordinate dyads worked in a wide range of industries (e.g., Food Services, Retail, Financial Services), and held a variety of roles

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Focal Variables in Study 2

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Abusive Supervision	1.26	.41	(.91)												
2. Perceived Threat	1.76	1.10	.10	(.73)											
3. Assertiveness[1]	1.42	.60	.11	.60**	(.68)										
4. Assertiveness[2]	1.34	.53	.34**	.21*	.23**	(.67)									
5. Ingratiation[1]	3.41	.89	-.02	-.02	.05	.10	(.75)								
6. Ingratiation[2]	3.50	.86	.05	.04	.09	.19*	.11	(.74)							
7. SDO	2.41	.86	.03	.29**	.31**	.04	.02	.23**	(.71)						
8. Power	5.52	.72	-.23**	-.30**	-.26**	-.14	.11	-.04	-.21*	(.75)					
9. Supervisor NA	1.60	.62	.19*	.35**	.38**	.12	-.02	.18*	.10	-.25**	(.79)				
10. Subordinate NA	1.82	.69	.06	-.02	.02	.20*	.05	.27**	.14	-.00	.05	(.76)			
11. Supervisor Age	33.92	11.39	.07	-.08	.05	.05	-.11	-.07	.02	.04	-.14	.02	-		
12. Subordinate Age	23.57	8.15	.01	.03	-.03	-.06	-.14	-.29**	-.07	-.13	.01	-.14	.31**	-	
13. Supervisor Gender[3]	-	-	.05	.04	-.11	-.04	.06	-.01	-.01	.09	-.01	-.14	.07	-.03	-
14.Subordinate Gender[3]	-	-	.05	-.04	-.07	-.01	.04	-.05	-.07	.08	-.04	.02	-.11	-.03	.30**

Note. $N = 146$. Coefficient alphas are reported along the diagonal in parentheses.
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level
[1]Supervisors' ratings of their subordinates
[2]Self-report ratings from subordinates
[3]Dummy variable (1= Male, 2 = Female)

Measures

The same scales were used as in Study 1 to measure the focal variables. However, because I used dyadic data to test my predictions in Study 2, some scales required minor modifications to accommodate the subordinate as a respondent. Although a full list of items is available in the Appendices, they will be briefly described below. Descriptive statistics, internal consistency reliabilities, and correlations among focal variables are reported in Table 7.

Subordinate survey. Subordinates were asked to reflect upon a) their use of assertive and ingratiatory influence tactics towards their supervisors, and b) the extent to which their supervisor displayed abusive behaviours towards them. Specifically, subordinates were instructed to consider how often they used ingratiation and assertiveness to influence their supervisors using 6-items from Schrieshiem and Hinkin's (1990) revised scale. In contrast to Study 1, the original items were not modified because this scale was developed as a self-report measure. Example items include: "I am forceful towards my supervisor; I try such things as making demands, setting deadlines, and expressing strong emotions" (Assertiveness), and "I act very humbly towards my supervisor when making a request" (Ingratiation). Abusive supervision was measured using Tepper's (2000) 15-item scale. Because Tepper's measure was developed to assess the subordinates' perception of whether their supervisor engages in these behaviours, no modifications were made to the original scale in Study 2 as in Study 1. Some items include: "My supervisor ridicules me" and "My supervisor tells me my thoughts and feelings are stupid".

Supervisor survey. The same measures and items were used in Study 2 as in Study 1 to capture supervisor ratings of themselves and their subordinates. Specifically, supervisors were asked to report on a) their subordinates' use of assertive and ingratiatory influence tactics using 6-items from Schriesheim and Hinkin's (1990) scale, b) the extent to which they feel threatened

by the specified subordinate using the perceived threat scale that was developed in Study 1, c) their perception of power within the organization using Anderson and colleagues' (2012) 'perceived sense of power' scale, and d) their SDO using Ho and colleagues' (2015) shortened SDO7 scale.

Controls. To rule out the possibility that demographic variables may influence my findings, I recorded supervisor and subordinate age, gender, and organizational tenure. I also measured supervisor and subordinate affect using the PANAS (Watson et al., 1988) because past research has discovered a link between abusive supervision and the negative affectivity of both supervisors (c.f., Yam et al., 2015) and subordinates (c.f., Harvey, Harris, Gillis, & Martinko, 2014; Tepper et al., 2006). In this sample, supervisor NA was significantly related to abusive supervision ($r = .19$, $p < .05$). As such, this was the only variable that was included as a control.

Results

The same hypotheses were tested in Study 2 as in Study 1, and as such, the analytic strategy presented in Study 1 remained largely unchanged. In most cases, however, additional analyses were conducted because hypotheses were tested using both supervisor ratings of subordinate behaviour, and subordinate self-reported behaviours. Note that all model fit tests and comparisons were based on a final sample of 146 supervisor-subordinate dyads ($N = 146$).

Discriminant validity. Two sets of confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to assess discriminant validity. In the first measurement model, I included all five variables that were rated by supervisors (i.e., subordinates' use of ingratiation and assertiveness, perceptions of threat, self-rated power, self-rated SDO). Results demonstrated that this hypothesized five-factor model fit the data well, $\chi^2(94) = 160.12$, CFI = .94, TLI = .92 RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07 (see Table 8), and all loadings were significant. I compared the fit of this model to an alternative four-

factor model using a chi-square difference test. Specifically, supervisor ratings of subordinates' assertiveness were combined with supervisor perceptions of threat due to their strong correlation (r = .60, p < .001). This four-factor model had a significantly poorer fit compared to the five-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(4) = 31.99$ p < .001. I also compared the fit of the five-factor model to a model where all of the items loaded onto a single factor. This one-factor model had a significantly poorer fit, $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 396.57$, p < .001. Taken together, these results provide support for the distinctiveness of the supervisor-rated variables in the study.

Table 8

Discriminant Validity for Supervisor Rated Measures – Study 2

					Fit Indices			
Model	df	χ^2	Δdf	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Five-Factor Model	94	160.12	-	-	.94	.92	.07	.07
Four-Factor Model	98	192.11	4	31.99	.91	.89	.08	.08
One-Factor Model	104	556.69	10	396.57	.56	.49	.17	.14

Table 9

Discriminant Validity for Subordinate Rated Measures – Study 2

					Fit Indices			
Model	df	χ^2	Δdf	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Three-Factor Model	32	50.33	-	-	.97	.96	06	.06
Two-Factor Model	34	115.17	2	64.84	.87	.83	.13	.10
One-Factor Model	35	226.15	3	175.82	.69	.61	.19	.14

In the second measurement model, I included all three variables that were rated by subordinates (i.e., self-rated use of ingratiation and assertiveness, abusive supervision). Results indicated that this hypothesized three-factor model fit the data well, $\chi^2(32) = 50.33$, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06 (see Table 9), and all loadings were significant. To test an alternative model, assertiveness and abusive supervision were combined based on their moderate correlation ($r = .34$, $p < .001$). Compared to the three-factor model, this two-factor produced a significantly poorer fit, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 64.84$, $p < .001$. Last, I combined all the variables to test the fit of a one-factor model against the three-factor model. This model also produced a significantly poorer fit, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 175.82$, $p < .001$. Overall, these results provide support for the distinctiveness of the subordinate-rated variables in the study.

Zero-order correlations. Hypothesis 1 stated that subordinates' use of assertiveness would be positively related to their supervisors' abusive behaviours. While subordinates' self-reports of assertiveness were significantly related to abusive behaviours ($r = .34$, $p < .001$), supervisors' ratings of assertiveness were not ($r = .11$, $p = .184$), thus providing partial support for Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 stated that subordinates' use of ingratiation would be negatively related to supervisors' abusive behaviours, however, this relationship was not supported when subordinates' provided self-reports of their behaviour ($r = .05$, $p = .538$), nor when supervisors provided ratings of subordinates' behaviour ($r = -.02$, $p = .823$). Hypothesis 3 stated that supervisors who perceive that their subordinates pose a threat to their authority or status would be more likely to engage in abusive supervision. As shown in Table 7, the results did not support this relationship ($r = .10$, $p = .212$). However, there was support for Hypothesis 4a, which stated that subordinates' use of assertive influence tactics would be positively related to supervisor perceptions of threat. Moreover, this relationship was found when supervisors rated the

behaviour of their subordinates ($r = .60$, $p < .001$), and when subordinates provided self-report ratings of their behaviour ($r = .21$, $p < .05$). In contrast to my prediction that ingratiation would be negatively related to supervisor perceptions of threat, there was no support for Hypothesis 5a. Specifically, there was no relationship when supervisors rated subordinates' ingratiatory behaviour ($r = -.02$, $p = .780$), or when subordinates provided self-report ratings of their ingratiatory behaviour ($r = .04$, $p = .672$).

Tests of indirect relationships. Controlling for supervisors' NA, results revealed that the indirect effects (Hypotheses 4b, 5b) were not supported (see Figure 6 & 7). Specifically, while the path between assertiveness and perceived threat were significant when both supervisors ($\beta = .54$, $p < .001$) and subordinates ($\beta = .18$, $p < .05$) provided ratings for this behaviour, no other path was significant, except for the direct effect between subordinate self-rated assertiveness and subordinate ratings of abusive supervision ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$).

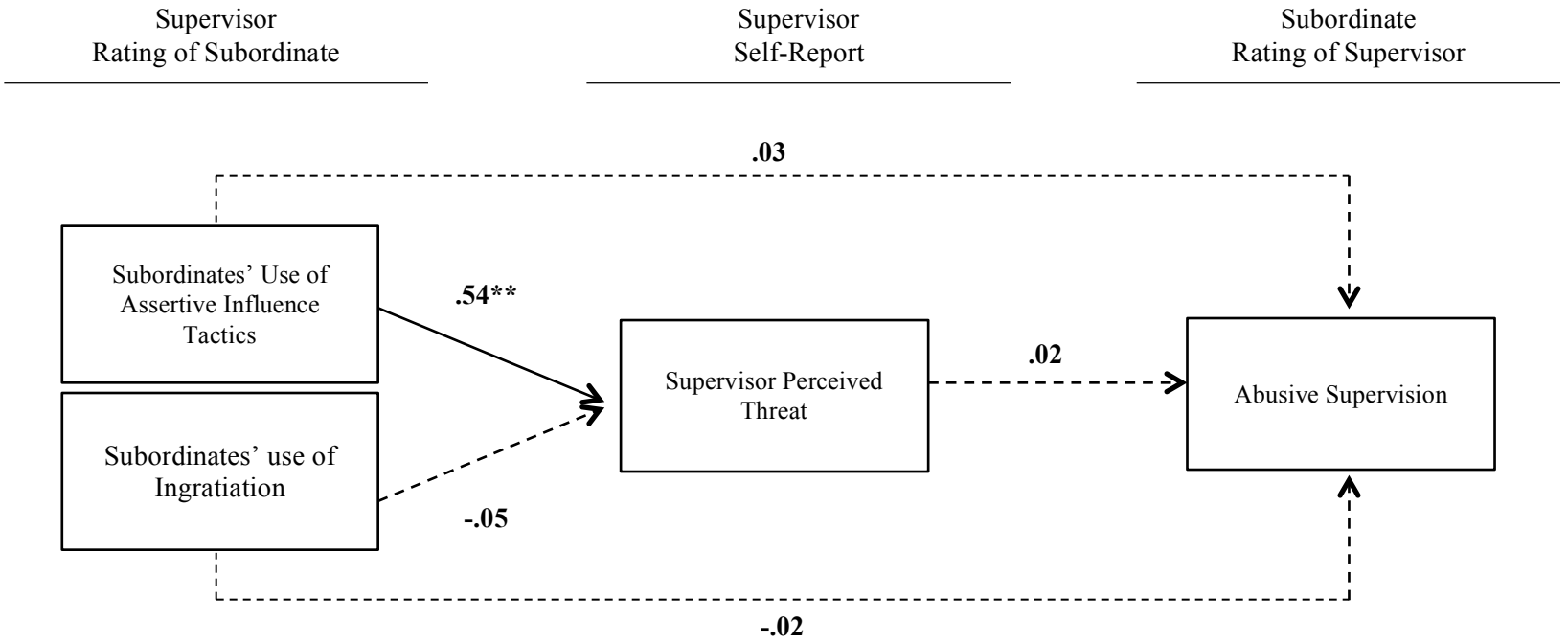

Figure 6. Mediation analysis of the relationships between supervisor ratings of subordinate assertiveness/ingratiation on abusive supervision via threat perceived threat (controlling for negative affect). *Note.* Standardized path estimates are reported in the figure. Dashed lines signify non-significant paths. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Indirect effect assertiveness → perceived threat → abusive supervision = .01, 95% CI [-.09, .09]

Indirect effect ingratiation → perceived threat → abusive supervision = -.00, 95% CI [-.02, .01]

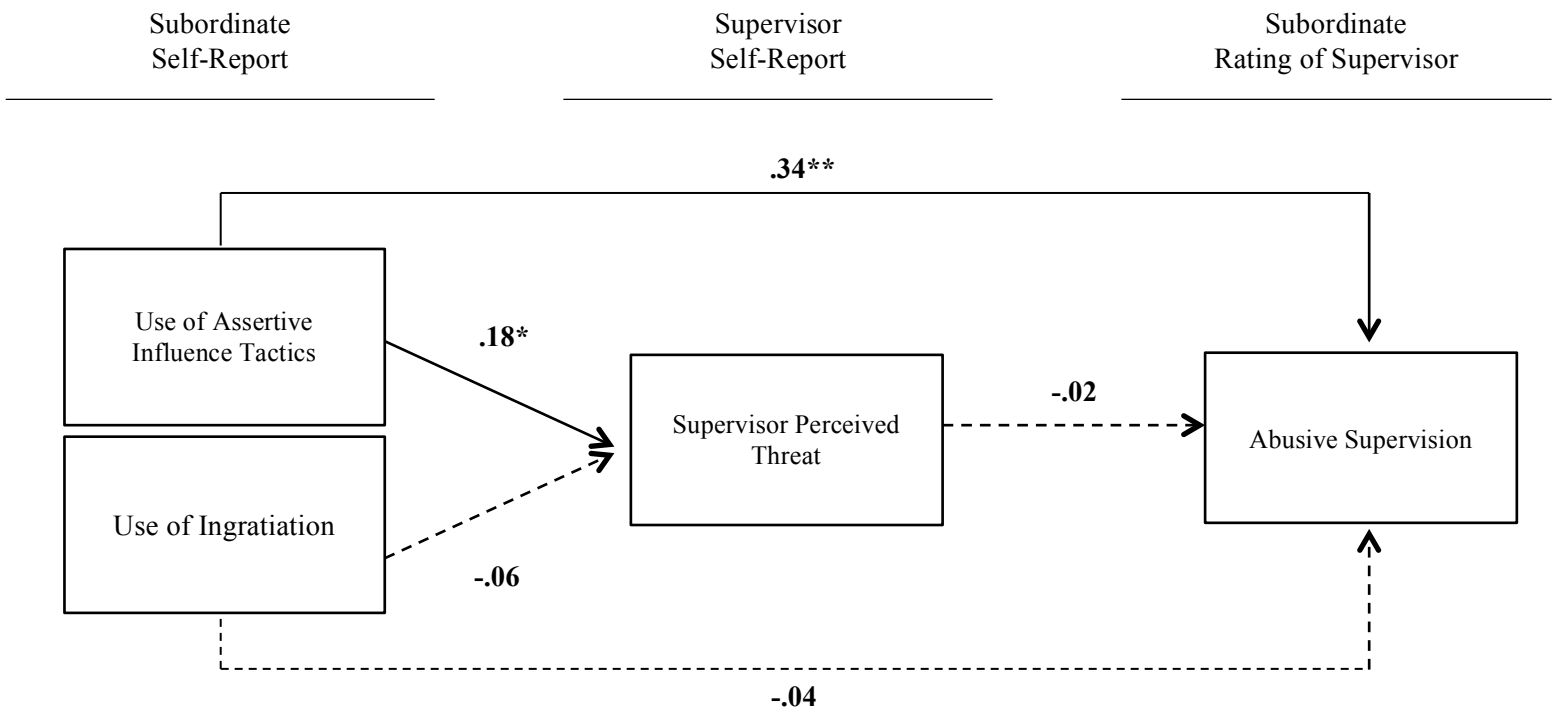

Figure 7. Mediation analysis of the relationships between subordinate self-rated assertiveness/ingratiation on abusive supervision via threat perceived threat (controlling for negative affect). Note. Standardized path estimates are reported in the figure. Dashed lines signify non-significant paths. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Indirect effect assertiveness → perceived threat → abusive supervision = -.00, 95% CI [-.04, .02]

Indirect effect ingratiation → perceived threat → abusive supervision = .00, 95% CI [-.01, .02]

Tests of moderated mediations. To test Hypothesis 6, I began by examining the moderating effect of supervisor perceived power on the link between *supervisor* ratings of subordinate assertiveness and perceptions of threat. Results yielded a significant interaction term (β = -.16, p < .01). However, an integrative test of the full moderated-mediation shows that the indirect effect of assertiveness on abusive supervision via supervisor perception of threat did not vary as a function of supervisor perceptions of power (*index of moderated mediation* = -.00, 95% CI [-.04, .02]). The pattern of results viewed in Figures 8 and 9 also supports this conclusion. Specifically, Figure 8 shows the relationship of the indirect effect at one standard deviation above and below the mean of perceived power, while Figure 9 demonstrates whether the pattern of results for the indirect effect changes as supervisors' ratings of power increases. There appears to be little to no fluctuation in the size and direction of the indirect relationship as a function of the moderator. I also examined the moderating effect of supervisor perceived power on the link between *subordinate* self-ratings of assertiveness and perceptions of threat. However, there was no significant interaction (β = -.10, p = .209). Further, a test of the full moderated-mediation was not significant (*index of moderated mediation* = .00, 95% CI [-.02, .03]). Taken together, there is limited support for Hypothesis 6 (see Table 10).

To test Hypothesis 7, I began by examining the interactive effect of subordinate assertiveness and supervisor SDO on perceptions of threat. Contrary to my expectation, when *supervisors* rated subordinates' assertiveness, there was no significant interaction (β = .12, p = .050). Results from the full test of the moderated mediation also showed that the indirect relationship between assertiveness and abusive supervision via supervisor perceptions of threat did not vary as a function of supervisor SDO (*index of moderated mediation* = .00, 95% CI [-.02, .03]). Additionally, when *subordinates* provided self-reports of their assertive behaviours, there

was no significant interaction (β = .09, p = .261). The moderated mediation proposed in this model was also not significant (*index of moderated mediation* = .00, 95% CI [-.03, .02]). As a result, there was no support for Hypothesis 7 (See Table 11).

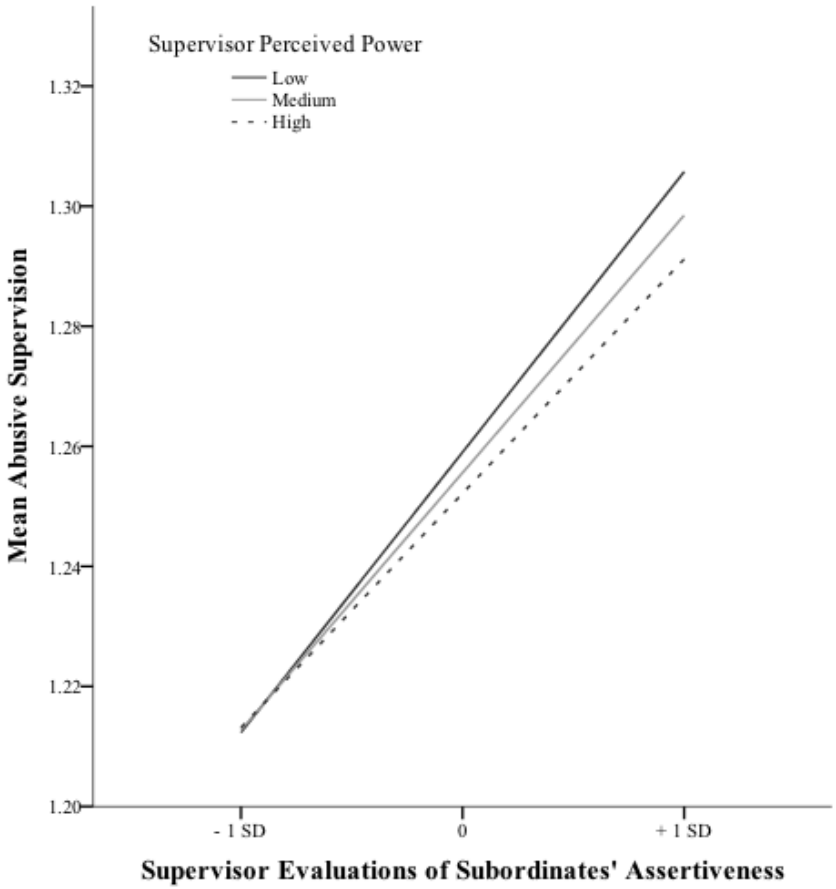

Figure 8. The indirect effect of supervisor evaluations of subordinates' assertiveness on abusive supervision (through supervisor perceived threat) at high and low levels of supervisor perceived power in Study 2.

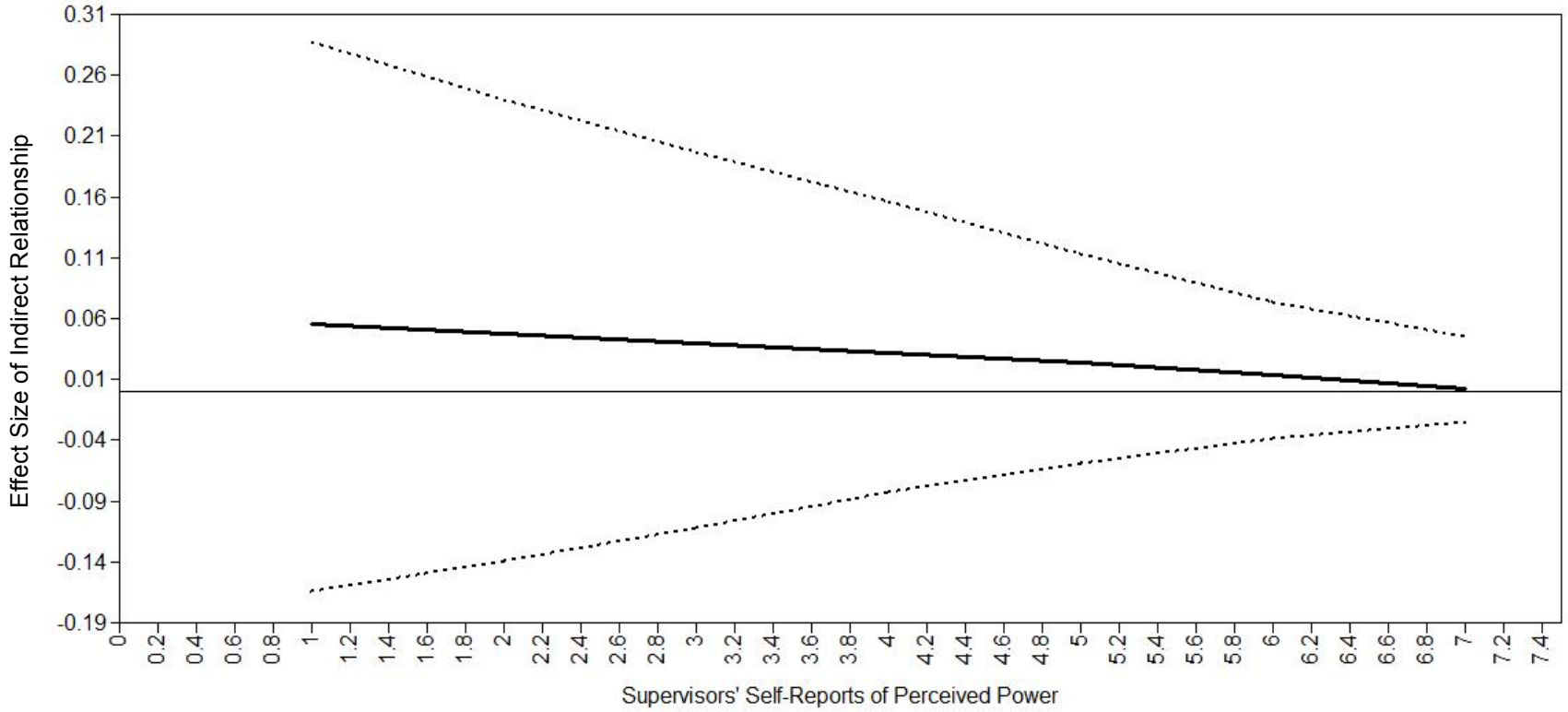

Figure 9. The indirect effect of assertiveness on abusive supervision (through supervisor perceived threat) at different levels of supervisor perceived power in Study 2. Upper and lower bound confidence intervals (95%) are shown using dotted lines.

Table 10

Study 2 (Hypothesis 6) – Standardized Bootstrapped Estimates

	Index of Moderated Mediation				Conditional Indirect Effect				
			95% CI					95% CI	
Path	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Power	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Assertiveness (Rated by Supervisor) → Threat → AS	-.00	.02	-.04	.02	-1 SD	.01	.05	-.09	.10
by Power					+1 SD	.01	.02	-.05	.05
Assertiveness (Self-Rated by Subordinate) → Threat → AS	.00	.01	-.02	.03	-1 SD	-.00	.02	-.05	.03
by Power					+1 SD	-.00	.01	-.02	.02

Note. $N = 146$, 5,000 bootstrap samples.
[a]AS, Abusive Supervision
[b]LLCI and ULCI indicate lower-level and upper-level confidence intervals, respectively

Table 11

Study 2 (Hypothesis 7) – Standardized Bootstrapped Estimates

	Index of Moderated Mediation				Conditional Indirect Effect				
			95% CI					95% CI	
Path	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	SDO	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Assertiveness (Rated by Supervisor) → Threat → AS	.00	.01	-.02	.03	-1 SD	.01	.03	-.06	.06
by SDO					+1 SD	.01	.05	-.09	.10
Assertiveness (Self-Rated by Subordinate) → Threat → AS	-.00	.01	-.03	.02	-1 SD	-.00	.01	-.02	.02
by SDO					+1 SD	-.01	.02	-.05	.03

Note. $N = 146$, 5,000 bootstrap samples.
[a]AS, Abusive Supervision; SDO, Social Dominance Orientation
[b]LLCI and ULCI indicate lower-level and upper-level confidence intervals, respectively

Chapter 4: Discussion

History is filled with examples of leaders whose behavioural repertoire includes hostility against direct reports. However, it is only in the past 20 years that we have seen rigorous scholarship devoted to understanding the causes and consequences of subordinate-targeted behaviours such as uncontrolled outbursts and public ridicule (Tepper et al., 2017). In spite of the significant body of research that has accumulated in the last two decades, research continues to disproportionately focus on exploring the consequences of abusive supervision (Tepper et al., 2007; Tepper et al., 2017). In effect, scholars have called for more work to be devoted to its antecedents (Tepper et al., 2007). The antecedents of abusive supervision deserve special attention and analysis because it is from such research that we are likely to derive insights that can inform the work of practitioners who aim to eliminate or manage the effects of supervisory abuse.

Accordingly, the primary contribution of this research was to broaden the existing knowledge on the antecedents of abusive supervision. While past studies have explored how subordinates' personality traits (e.g., Henle & Gross, 2014; Wang et al., 2015) and performance (e.g., Khan et al., 2016; Tepper et al., 2011) can contribute to their victimization, this paper focused on the understudied role of wilful subordinate behaviours. Drawing on victim precipitation theory, I developed and tested a model that aimed to identify when, and under what conditions, certain subordinate behaviours will elicit abusive supervisory responses. To offer a novel set of behaviours as potential predictors of abusive supervision, I introduced two behaviours from the taxonomy of upward influence tactics: assertiveness and ingratiation. My hypotheses were tested using a sample of full-time supervisors (Study 1), and a sample of supervisor-subordinate dyads (Study 2). Below, I discuss the main findings from these studies

and consider their implications for theory and practice. Following this discussion, I outline some of these studies' limitations and suggest directions for future research.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Study 1. In Study 1, hypotheses were tested using a sample of full-time supervisors. These supervisors were asked to provide their subjective interpretations of subordinates' assertiveness and ingratiation, rated their own feelings of threat, and were asked about their abusive supervisory behaviours. Because supervisors provided ratings for all constructs, the interpretation of these findings was based on a *supervisor's perceptions*, rather than on objective behaviours. From this angle, there was evidence to support the proposed indirect relationships. Specifically, supervisors who perceived their subordinates to be *assertive* towards them reported being more abusive because this behaviour threatened their role in the organization. On the other hand, supervisors who believed that their subordinates *ingratiated* towards them were less likely to be abusive because they viewed these individuals as less threatening. Contrary to my expectation, supervisor perceived power and SDO did not moderate the relationship between assertiveness and threat. These findings contribute to the abusive supervision literature in a number of ways.

First, this study extends the small body of research that has sought to explore abuse from the supervisor's perspective. Scholars may question the value of collecting supervisors' self-reports of abusive supervision because its definition implies that it is based on the subordinates' subjective perception (see Tepper, 2000). However, understanding psychological phenomena from the perspective of the perpetrator is not a new idea. For example, the use of self-reports has been the primary form of measurement for several years in studies of counterproductive workplace behaviour (CWB; Berry, Carpenter, & Barratt, 2012), a topic that shares conceptual

similarities with abusive supervision. The general trend in the CWB literature is that while there is appreciable overlap between self- and other ratings, there is still strong indication that each rating source captures a fair amount of unique variance (Berry et al., 2012). Given this evidence, it stands to reason that collecting supervisor self-reports of abusive supervision can provide value to both theory and practice. Indeed, in the current study, the finding that supervisors' reports of their subordinates' behaviours are related to self-reported abuse would suggest that abusive supervision might be a conscious response to subordinates' behaviours. If it is the case that supervisors are knowingly engaging in the perpetuation of abuse, then this challenges the prevailing belief that the subordinate possess certain traits and characteristics that make them more likely to interpret their supervisor's behaviours as abusive (Henle & Gross, 2014; Wang et al., 2015). All together, examining abusive supervision from this lens helps reconceptualise our current understanding of abuse, and offers a novel approach for future researchers to understand why abuse may occur.

Second, this finding contributes to the victimization literature by suggesting that assertiveness is a previously unidentified risk factor for abusive supervision. Relating these findings to the victim typology literature, it appears that when supervisors identify their subordinates as assertive, the subordinate becomes categorized as a *provocative victim*. This norm violating behaviour subsequently increases a supervisor's identity threat and cues that it is acceptable to play a *reactive perpetrator* role (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). To add further credence to these findings, the results from this study also imply that while provocative victims may damage the supervisor-subordinate relationship, behaviours that diminish threat, such as ingratiation, can have reparative properties in the eyes of the supervisor. This is one of the first studies (to my knowledge) to suggest that victimization may be attributable to behaviours

beyond subordinate job performance (see Khan et al., 2016; Tepper et al., 2011). As a result, the present findings may offer a much more pragmatic approach for advising organizations on ways to mitigate abuse. For example, prior research has advised high performers to avoid the spotlight or downplay their performance to avoid victimization (e.g., Kim & Glomb, 2014). Others have advised that the subordinate share the additional resources they enjoy as a result of their performance with their supervisors (e.g., Khan et al., 2016). The recommended actions can be professionally damaging, as masking one's accomplishments, or sharing in the benefits of their hard work can both reduce future chances for career advancement. If it is the case that victims must alter their behaviour to mitigate abuse, requesting that subordinates decrease their assertive behaviours and increase their ingratiatory (i.e., friendly) behaviours seems to be a more reasonable request.

This study provided some insight into the role that subordinate behaviours may have on abusive supervision. Nevertheless, it would have been premature to draw any definitive conclusions based on these findings, given that only supervisor evaluations were used. Indeed, it is often the goal of abusive supervision researchers to understand what factors contribute to a *subordinate's* subjective interpretation of abuse. This begged the question: would the same findings be observed when both supervisors and subordinates provide input into the hypothesized relationships? To answer this question, my assumptions were evaluated using dyadic pairs.

Study 2. In Study 2, students working at least 20 hours per week were asked to evaluate their use of assertive and ingratiatory influence tactics towards their supervisor, as well as their supervisors' abusive behaviours. They were also asked to refer their supervisor (whom they had rated on the abusive supervision measure) to this study, and these supervisors provided self-evaluations of threat, power, and SDO. Supervisors were also asked to assess their subordinates'

use of assertive and ingratiatory influence tactics. More succinctly, this study differed from Study 1 in that subordinates provided ratings of abusive supervision, and both subordinates and supervisors rated the influence tactics used by subordinates. As previously mentioned, measuring behaviour from both the subordinate and the supervisor's perspective was appropriate because prior research has observed only small to moderate agreement between rating sources (i.e., Roulin, Bangerter, & Levashina, 2015, 2014; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Thacker & Wayne, 1995), suggesting that each perspective offers discrete information. For example, a subordinate's self-reports may include insight about the behaviours they wish to portray (Stevens & Kristof, 1995), while supervisors may be more inclined to view these behaviours at face value. Consistent with past research, the present study found that subordinate self-reports of assertiveness and supervisors' reports of subordinate assertiveness had a weak positive relationship ($r = .23$, $p < .01$). An even smaller relationship emerged in self-other reports of ingratiation ($r = .11$, $p = .191$). Given the lack of convergence, it was important to consider how rating sources might differentially influence the findings of the present study.

Rating sources were differentially related to abusive supervision in one case. Specifically, there was a significant direct effect between subordinates' self-reports of assertiveness and their perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$). However, it appears that supervisors' ratings of subordinate assertiveness were not directly related to abusive supervision ($\beta = .03$, *ns*). From a victim precipitation perspective, these findings indicate that targets of hostility may knowingly participate in their own victimization (Aquino, 2000). That is, if it is the case that subordinates knowingly play a role in victimization, then this should be reflected in their self-reported behaviours, even in the absence of a relationship between supervisor ratings of assertiveness and abusive supervision. The results of this study would suggest that this might be

the case. Discovering that a subordinate's own identification of assertive tactics is related to perceptions of abuse challenge the assertions of Cortina and colleagues (2017), who suggest that it is not appropriate to examine how subordinates may contribute to their victimization. Moreover, these results could also indicate that while supervisors may perceive their subordinates to be assertive, this does not necessarily result in retaliation that is observable to the subordinate. However, caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions from these results. From a methodological standpoint, cross-ratings may have affected the ability to detect an effect between supervisors' ratings of subordinate assertiveness with abusive supervision. The potential for cross-ratings to minimize observed relationships will be discussed in greater detail in the proceeding sections. Given this possibility, future research is needed to definitively understand the contribution of different rating sources on abusive supervision.

While the direct effects begin to yield some insight into the findings of Study 2, there are also additional results that should be discussed. Specifically, when the indirect effects were tested using this dataset, the hypothesized predictions were broadly unsupported. Moreover, as in Study 1, supervisor perceived power and SDO did not moderate the relationship between assertiveness and threat. While these findings may appear bleak, a closer inspection of the specific paths of the model revealed a pattern of results that should not be discounted.

First, consistent with the results of Study 1, assertiveness was positively related to supervisor perceptions of threat. This relationship appeared to be quite robust, and was observed when subordinates provided self-reports of their behaviour, and when supervisors rated their subordinates' behaviours. In contrast, subordinates' use of ingratiation was not significantly related to supervisor perceived threat, although it was trending in the predicted negative direction. This was the case when both subordinates provided self-reports and when supervisors'

rated their subordinates' behaviour. If these relationships varied as a function of the rater, this would provide some indication that the rating source was influential in predicting perceived threat. However, because the same pattern emerged between each behaviour and perceived threat regardless of the rating source (i.e., positive relationship between assertiveness and threat, negative non-significant relationship between ingratiation and threat), it is important to consider what other factors may have contributed to these findings.

It is possible that supervisors in Study 2 were not influenced by their subordinates' ingratiatory behaviour because they did not spend enough time with their subordinates. More specifically, while supervisors would have worked approximately 40 hours per week in both studies, the number of hours that subordinates worked per week may have been more varied. Presumably, if supervisors in Study 1 referenced an employee whom they worked closely with, these subordinates should have worked approximately the same number of hours as themselves. In contrast, subordinates in Study 2 were mostly part-time employees who worked an average of 24.51 hours (SD = 6.58) per week. Because ingratiation is considered a subtler form of influencing (Kipnis et al., 1980), a minimum amount of contact may have been necessary to elicit a psychological response from supervisors (i.e., a diminished sense of threat). In contrast, assertiveness, which is described as an overt display of insubordination (Kipnis et al., 1980), may be sufficiently antagonistic to consistently produce an increase in threat, regardless of the amount of time the supervisor spends with their subordinate. There have been some concerns about the consistent and accurate interpretation of influence tactics in past studies. For example, in a study by Kristof-Brown and colleagues (2002), they decided not to ask interviewers about their perceptions of impression management tactics because they were concerned that interviewers would not be able to accurately judge its use. Therefore, it may be that while highly perceptible

behaviours are easier to interpret, more subtle behaviours require a minimum level of interaction between dyads for supervisors to accurately interpret and react to them.

Second, contrary to my predictions, increased perceptions of supervisor threat was not related to increases in subordinate ratings of abusive behaviours. The absence of this relationship was somewhat puzzling. There is an abundance of theoretical and empirical evidence that point to a positive relationship between these two constructs (e.g., Mawritz et al., 2014; Simon, Hurst, Kelley, & Judge, 2015; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016; Tepper et al., 2017). For example, a recent paper by Tepper and colleagues (2017) dedicated an entire section to reviewing the role of identity threat in abusive supervision. Moreover, the results of Study 1 also provided support for this relationship. Because of these discrepant findings, it was important to investigate possible explanations for these findings.

The use of 'cross-rated' data may provide insight into these irregularities. Recall that in Study 2, supervisors rated their perception of threat, while subordinates rated the abusive behaviours of their supervisors. As I mentioned earlier, researchers tend to find only small to moderate correlations between self- and supervisor ratings when the *same* construct is assessed (c.f., Roulin, Bangerter, & Levashina, 2015, 2014; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Thacker & Wayne, 1995). Therefore, attempting to find significant relationships between self- and supervisor ratings across *different* constructs may have been challenging from a methodological standpoint, especially given both constructs had low mean response rates.

More broadly, it is also possible that the method chosen to collect dyadic data may have masked the overall strength of the observed indirect relationships. As I mentioned, supervisors in Study 1 were asked to choose a subordinate whom they had worked closely with over the past six months when responding to a series of questions. In contrast, subordinates in Study 2 were

asked to refer their supervisor to participate. Because supervisors in Study 1 were provided with the option to select their subordinates, there may have been more variability in regards to the nature of the relationships that were observed within the particular data set. That is, when supervisors were free to choose the subordinate whom they would like to rate in the survey, they may have been drawn to subordinates whom they have developed both good and bad relationships with. However, it is likely the case that in Study 2, subordinates would not have asked their manager to participate if they had a strained relationship. The dyadic pairs may have also held additional concerns about the anonymity of their data and responded more positively in some cases to buffer any adverse effects. In other words, the supervisor-subordinate relationship may have lacked diversity, and may have generally consisted of stable, and non-hostile relationships.

Indeed, while the average ratings of ingratiation were consistent across studies (Study 1: $M = 3.42$, $SD = .81$, Study 2 supervisor reports: $M = 3.41$, $SD = .89$; Study 2 subordinate reports: $M = 3.50$, $SD = .86$) the mean level of assertiveness and threat were significantly lower in Study 2. Specifically, follow-up analyses revealed that ratings of assertiveness in Study 1 ($M = 1.61$, $SD = .83$) were significantly higher than *supervisor-rated* assertiveness in Study 2 ($M = 1.42$, $SD = .60$), $t(348) = -2.36$, $p < .05$. Ratings of assertiveness in Study 1 were also significantly higher than *subordinate self-reports* of assertiveness ($M = 1.34$, $SD = .53$), $t(348) = -.3.46$, $p < .01$. Finally, ratings of perceived threat in Study 1 ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.45$) were significantly higher than in Study 2 ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 1.10$), $t(348) = -2.95$, $p < .01$. Given this evidence, it is possible that some of the proposed relationships were concealed in the present study.

Overall summary. Taken together, the results of both studies supported the role of assertiveness (either directly or indirectly through threat) on abusive supervision. As a result,

these findings provide some empirical support for the notion that assertive employees may play a provocative victim role. These findings have implications for scholars who discourage the use of victim precipitation theory in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Specifically, there has been recent debate about the merits of using this theoretical framework to guide the development of scientific questions (see Cortina, 2017). Cortina (2017) has discouraged the use of this theoretical framework because it suggests that the culpability of abuse is influenced in part by the victim. However, they do not discuss how subordinates might engage in wilful acts of disobedience to provoke abusive supervision. This study sought to contribute to the literature by examining such behaviours. In advocating for the use of this theory in victimization research, I do not suggest that the fault of abuse is solely attributable to the victim. Rather, there is a difference between blaming the victims and using their behaviours to predict when perpetrators will target them (see Jensen & Raver, 2017).

Moreover, this study highlighted the role of subordinate behaviour using two different perspectives. Specifically, abusive supervision was reported by supervisors in Study 1, and by subordinates in Study 2. Recall that abusive supervision is defined as a subjective assessment subordinates make on the basis of their observations of their supervisors' behaviour (Tepper, 2000). As a result, most studies of abusive supervision have operationalized the focal construct with evaluations supplied by subordinates (Tepper et al., 2017). While soliciting subordinate reports in abusive supervision research is useful, Tepper and colleagues (2017) suggest that depending on the research context, collecting the supervisor's self-reports on his or her own abusive behaviour can also be informative (e.g., Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, & Chang, 2012; Lin, Ma, & Johnson, 2016). For example, one advantage to having supervisors report about their own behaviour is that subordinates may not be able to observe all instances of abusive leader

behaviour (Lin et al., 2016). Self-reports may therefore provide a more complete picture of the total leader behaviours. By focusing on supervisors' ratings of their subordinates' behaviours in Study 1, the paradigm was also shifted to focus on the perpetrator. The findings from this study suggested that when a supervisor interprets their subordinates as assertive, they are likely to knowingly engage in abuse.

However, a drawback of self-reports is that they may be biased if a leader does not report their actual behaviours (Lin et al., 2016). Self-reports may be similarly biased by social desirability concerns (supervisors may underreport their abusive behaviour; Lin et al., 2016). Therefore, Study 2 measured abusive supervision from the subordinate's perspective. In this study, subordinates who reported using assertive behaviours towards their supervisors were more likely to provide higher ratings of supervisor abuse, suggesting that subordinates may be aware of the implications of their actions. Taken together, I propose that researchers would benefit from using the theoretical framework of victim precipitation, and collecting ratings of abuse from both supervisors and subordinates to understand the role of wilful subordinate behaviour in greater depth.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the contributions of these studies, limitations of this work should be acknowledged. A limitation of this study was that multi-wave methodology consistent with the presumed ordering of effects was not employed (i.e., periods of at least one week separating the measures of the predictors, mediator, and outcome variable). As a result, the cross-sectional design of both studies restricts the inferences that can be made about any causal relationships that were found (or not found) among the study variables. It is encouraging that theory supports the time ordering of events in which victims initiate some type of action that results in their

subsequent victimization (e.g., Meier & Miethe, 1993). With that being said, it would be beneficial for future research examining subordinate behaviours to consider adopting designs beyond field surveys. For example, scholars may find it valuable to adopt a cross-lagged panel design (c.f., Lian et al., 2014) or a repeated-measure design (c.f., Simon, Hurst, Kelley, & Judge, 2015) to capture the process of abuse. It is important to note that while an experimental study would be ideal to definitively ascertain the causal nature of relationships, abusive supervision itself is defined as a *sustained* display of hostile behaviours. To truly capture the phenomenon in an experimental study, one would need to abuse study participants repeatedly over time. Research ethics protocols would likely preclude the study of abusive supervision using this strategy. Employing innovative statistical methodologies that aim to uncover the causal nature of relationships is therefore an appropriate approach to expanding the work on subordinate behaviours.

A second limitation is that neither study collected ratings of abusive supervision from both supervisor and subordinate perspectives simultaneously. Collecting ratings of abusive supervision from only one of these sources may restrict our understanding of abusive supervision for several reasons. For example, employees may be reluctant to report the negative behaviours of their supervisors for fear that this information will be disclosed. On the other hand, supervisors may underreport their own abusive behaviours for fear of facing punishment, or because they are simply unaware that they are engaging in these behaviours. Accordingly, Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, and Douglas (2011) have recently expanded the view of abusive supervision, suggesting that it may be understood as a function of both a subordinate's idiosyncratic perceptions and overt abusive behaviours on the part of the supervisor. In other words, multiple rating sources may capture the observable component of abusive supervision,

but also the unique and incremental variance of different raters (see Ogunfowora, 2013 for an example). Since little is known about the convergence of ratings between abusive supervision, it would be a fruitful avenue for further exploration.

Third, both studies face sampling limitations. Specifically, Study 1 used a sample of managers from Amazon's online platform (MTurk), and the subordinates of Study 2 consisted mainly of undergraduate students. It is possible that these sampling limitations may have impacted the validity of the findings, and as such they will be discussed in the proceeding section. First, the use of MTurk has been scrutinized given its deviation from traditional approaches to data gathering. Specifically, the downside to faster and cheaper data collection is the potential for data to be of low quality (Mason & Suri, 2012). From the workers' perspective, more money can be earned by completing the surveys as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Because of this concern, there were several measures that were taken to ensure data adequacy. For instance, supervisors responded to a series of careless response items that were embedded into the questionnaire. Those who failed to respond appropriately to one or more questions were removed from further analyses. This is a method that has been used successfully in the past to increase data quality (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009). However, it has recently come to the attention of some researchers that given the dearth of studies MTurk users complete (especially those with higher than 95% approval rates), they may know more about social science research procedures than a random population (Hauser & Schwarz, 2016). Specifically, Hauser and Schwarz (2016) mention that the heightened attention that is paid to instructional checks may be a mixed blessing such that the MTurk population may be going through a different mental process when approaching tasks compared to traditional subject pools, and that paying close attention to wording may lead to different question interpretations. However, it is

encouraging that several researchers have viewed the comparison between an undergraduate university sample and Mechanical Turk very favourably for Mechanical Turk, in that samples obtained through this method were substantially more representative of a working population than student participants (e.g., Behrend, Sharek, Meade, & Wiebe, 2011; Buhrmester et al., 2011). The quality of data provided by MTurk also tends to meet or exceed the psychometric standards associated with published research (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Overall, it is clear that more research is needed on the MTurk population to ascertain whether they are a suitable alternative to traditional samples, and as such, the findings of Study 1 should be interpreted with caution.

Second, undergraduate students were recruited as one half of the dyad in Study 2. The use of undergraduate students has been formally recognized, and heatedly debated in a variety of disciplines over the past few decades (Peterson, 2001). In the current study, the biggest concern with using an undergraduate sample is that given their role as full-time students, they may not have sufficient time to interact with their supervisors. Necessary precautions to ensure these individuals had sufficient exposure to their workplace and regularly interacted with their supervisors were taken. Nonetheless, it is possible that students could have overinflated the amount they worked, and the extent to which they interacted with their supervisors. If this were the case, then it would be difficult for both supervisors and subordinates to accurately rate subordinate behaviours, and abusive supervision respectively. Future research would benefit from testing the hypotheses of the present study against a full-time working sample of supervisors and subordinates.

A final limitation of this study was the inability to detect any significant moderating effects. Specifically, in an attempt to draw our attention to the characteristics of individuals who

abuse others, this study proposed that a supervisor's perceived power and SDO would moderate the indirect relationship between assertiveness and perceived threat. This is an important endeavour because it allows researchers to place some agency and control clearly into the hands of the perpetrator (Cortina, 2017). However, contrary to my predictions, two hypothesized moderators (i.e., supervisor perceived power, SDO) failed to affect the indirect relationship between assertiveness and abusive supervision through supervisor perceptions of threat. Despite these findings, it is possible that other mechanisms can still be influential in the prediction of abusive behaviours. Drawing from victim precipitation theory, one potential avenue would be to explore the organizational factors that allows, or fails to impede harmful actions. Specifically, Aquino and Lamertz (2004) contend that organizations may foster an environment that cultivates and condones this type of behaviour. Therefore, examining a supervisor's perceptions surrounding the acceptability of hostile behaviours in the workplace may be an important route for future research.

Additionally, while this study alluded to the importance of understanding abusive supervision as a function of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, I did not include a measure of overall relationship quality. Leader-member exchange (LMX) is a framework that has been used in past research to fully capture the relationship that develops over time between a supervisor and subordinate, with high LMX representing high levels of supervisory support and guidance (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This theoretical framework suggests that while one may have an overall positive relationship with one's supervisor and/or subordinate, it does not rule out the possibility that negative behaviours may be exhibited by either party (Lian et al., 2011). Given this logic, it is possible that relationship quality (i.e., LMX) may have a moderating effect on the relationship between assertiveness and perceived threat. Specifically, it may be the case

that high LMX would exacerbate the reaction to assertive behaviours because it is considered rare, unexpected, and surprising (see Lian et al., 2011). For example, Lian and colleagues (2011) discovered that subordinates who perceived a high quality relationship with their supervisor found supervisors' mistreatment more threatening to their basic needs. Taken together, it is important for researchers to continue to expand our understanding of when, and under what conditions, increased threat results in abusive supervision.

Conclusion

In summary, this research provided insight into how subordinates' behaviours influences perceptions of, and reactions to, abusive supervision. Specifically, this study found that employees demonstrating assertive behaviours consistently elicited abusive responses from their supervisors (either directly or indirectly through perceptions of threat). In doing so, this study also presented an initial attempt to raise awareness about how different perspectives can add value to our understanding of abusive supervision.

Although the present research represents a contribution to the growing literature on the antecedents of abusive supervision, more research is needed to help potential targets before they are abused. One way to achieve this is to gain greater clarity on the additional behaviours that can lead to abuse. Moreover, researchers can explore the conditions under which feelings of threat leads to abuse. By identifying the specific conditions that increase (or decrease) victimization, organizations may be able to affect employees' vulnerability to mistreatment, which, in turn, can decrease the likelihood that such treatment will provoke destructive acts of retaliatory aggression. My hope is that these studies spur additional research examining the role of employee behaviour in the formation of abusive supervision.

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Appendix A: Upward Influence Tactics Scale (Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990)

Instructions: Please answer honestly. When responding to the following questions, please think of the subordinate/supervisor whom you referred to this survey.

Never Rarely Sometimes Very Often Always

Supervisor Report of Subordinate

1. This subordinate acts very humbly towards me when making a request
2. This subordinate acts in a friendly manner prior to asking for what he/she wants
3. This subordinate makes me feel good about them before making any requests
4. This subordinate has showdowns with me where they confront me face-to-face
5. This subordinate verbally expresses his/her anger towards me
6. This subordinate is forceful with me; Trying such things as making demands, setting deadlines, and expressing strong emotions towards me

Subordinate Self-Report (Original Scale)

1. I act very humbly towards my supervisor when making a request
2. I act in a friendly manner prior to asking my supervisor for what I want
3. I make my supervisor feel good about me before making a request
4. I have showdowns with my supervisor where I confront him or her face-to-face
5. I verbally express my anger towards my supervisor
6. I am forceful towards my supervisor; I try such things as making demands, setting deadlines and expressing strong emotion

Appendix B: Existing Measures of Threat

Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neither Disagree nor Agree*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

Kraimer, Wayne, Liden, & Sparrowe (2005)

1. I fear that a temporary employee may someday take my job
2. Temporary employees have more interesting job assignments than full-time (permanent) employees at my organization
3. When my organization hires temporary employees, I feel less secure about my job
4. The temporary employees make me feel threatened
5. Temporary employees threaten my job status
6. I do not consider temporary employees to be a threat to my job (reverse scored)

Khan, Moss, Quratulain, & Hameed (2016)

1. I feel a threat to the existing hierarchy by this subordinate
2. I feel my status will be threatened by the performance of this subordinate
3. The existing hierarchy will no longer be maintained if this subordinate performs very high

Appendix C: Supervisor Perceived Threat Initial Item Pool

Instructions: When responding, please think of the [*insert subordinate's name*]. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neither Disagree nor Agree*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

1. I never feel threatened by this employee's behaviours (R)
2. This employee frequently tries to jeopardize my position in the organization
3. I feel that this employee's behaviours are meant to challenge my authority*
4. In no way does this employee threaten my status in the organization (R)
5. I always feel that this employee is threatening my authority
6. This employee never tries to threaten my image (R)*
7. Now and again, I get the feeling that this employee is out to get me
8. I often wonder if this employee intends to tarnish my reputation*
9. I strongly feel that this employee's behaviours are meant to undermine me
10. This employee's behaviours demonstrate a disregard for my position*

Items denoted with an "R" are reverse-keyed.

* = Items retained for the Perceived Threat Scale.

Appendix D: Abusive Supervision Scale (Tepper, 2000)

Adapted Scale for Supervisor Self-Report

Instructions: Please answer honestly. When responding to the following questions, please think of [*subordinate's name*].

I cannot remember ever using this behaviour with this employee	*I very seldom use this behaviour with this employee*	*I occasionally use this behaviour with this employee*	*I use this behaviour moderately with this employee*	*I use this behaviour very often with this employee*

1. I ridicule this employee
2. I tell this employee that his/her thoughts or feelings are stupid
3. I give this employee the silent treatment
4. I put this employee down in front of others
5. I invade this employee's privacy
6. I remind this employee of his/her past mistakes and failures
7. I don't give this employee credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort
8. I blame this employee to save myself from embarrassment
9. I break promises I have made to this employee
10. I express anger at this employee when I am mad for another reason
11. I make negative comments about this employee to others
12. I am rude to this employee
13. I do not allow this employee to interact with his/her coworkers
14. I tell this employee that he/she is incompetent
15. I lie to this employee

Original Scale

Instructions: Please answer honestly. When responding to the following questions, please think of [*supervisor's name*]. My supervisor…

I cannot remember him/her ever using this behaviour with me	*He/she very seldom uses this behaviour with me*	*He/she occasionally uses this behaviour with me*	*He/she uses this behaviour moderately with me*	*He/she uses this behaviour very often with me*

1. Ridicules me
2. Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid
3. Gives me the silent treatment
4. Puts me down in front of others
5. Invades my privacy
6. Reminds me of my past mistakes and failures
7. Doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort
8. Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment
9. Breaks promises he/she makes
10. Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason
11. Makes negative comments about me (to others)
12. Is rude to me
13. Does not allow me to interact with my coworkers
14. Tells me I'm incompetent
15. Lies to me

Appendix E: Generalized Sense of Power Scale (Anderson, John, & Keltner, 2005)

Instructions: In my interactions with my employees…

Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neither Disagree nor Agree*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

1) I can get them to listen to what I say
2) My wishes do not carry much weight
3) I can get them to do what I want
4) Even if I voice them, my views have little sway
5) I think I have a great deal of power
6) My ideas and opinions are often ignored
7) Even when I try, I am not able to get my way
8) If I want to, I get to make the decisions

Appendix F: Social Dominance Orientation (Adapted from Ho et al., 2015)

Instructions: Please rate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neither Disagree nor Agree*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

1. An ideal workplace requires supervisors to be on top and subordinates to be on the bottom
2. Subordinates are simply inferior to their supervisors
3. In the workplace, no one group should dominate
4. Subordinates are just as deserving as supervisors
5. In the workplace, we should strive to maintain equality between groups
6. It is unjust to try to make groups equal in the workplace
7. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for supervisors and their subordinates
8. We should work to give all groups an equal chance to succeed at work

Original Social Dominance Orientation Scale

1. An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom
2. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups
3. No one group should dominate in society
4. Groups at the bottom are just as deserving as groups at the top
5. Group equality should not be our primary goal
6. It is unjust to try to make groups equal
7. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups
8. We should work to give all groups an equal chance to succeed

Appendix G: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age:
2. Gender:
    a. Male
    b. Female
3. What industry do you work in?
4. What is your job title?
5. How many months have you been working at your current organization?
6. How many months have you been working in your current position?
7. On average, how many hours per week do you work at your current job?
8. What is your highest level of education?
    a. Less than high school
    b. Some high school
    c. High school
    d. Some college/University
    e. College/University
    f. Master's degree
    g. Doctorate degree

Appendix H: Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988)

Instructions: Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space provided. Indicate the extent to which you generally feel this way, that is, how you feel on average

1 – Very slightly or not at all 2 – A little 3 – Moderately 4 – Quite a bit 5 – Extremely

1. Irritable
2. Alert
3. Ashamed
4. Inspired
5. Nervous
6. Determined
7. Attentive
8. Jittery
9. Active
10. Afraid