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The Relationship Between Subordinates' Individual Differences and Their Perceptions of Abusive Supervision

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUBORDINATES' INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND
THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF ABUSIVE SUPERVISION

By

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A dissertation submitted to the
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For my Bebop.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the roles of subordinates' individual differences in predicting their perceptions of abusive supervision. Supervisor behavior was controlled via a video vignette to assess if subjects perceived the same supervisor behavior differently. A sample of 756 working adults revealed that subjects' hostile attribution styles, negative affectivity, entitlement, trait anger, and external locus of control directly predicted perceptions of abusive supervision while self-efficacy and internal locus of control did not. Attributions for performance failures mediated the relationships between hostile attribution style, self-efficacy, entitlement, external and internal locus of control and perceptions of abusive supervision.

These results extend abusive supervision research by controlling for differences in supervisory behavior and demonstrating that individual differences influence subjects' perceptions of abuse. Attribution research is extended by demonstrating that hostile attribution styles predict attributions and that attributions mediate the effects of individual differences in perceptions of abuse.

CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH STUDY

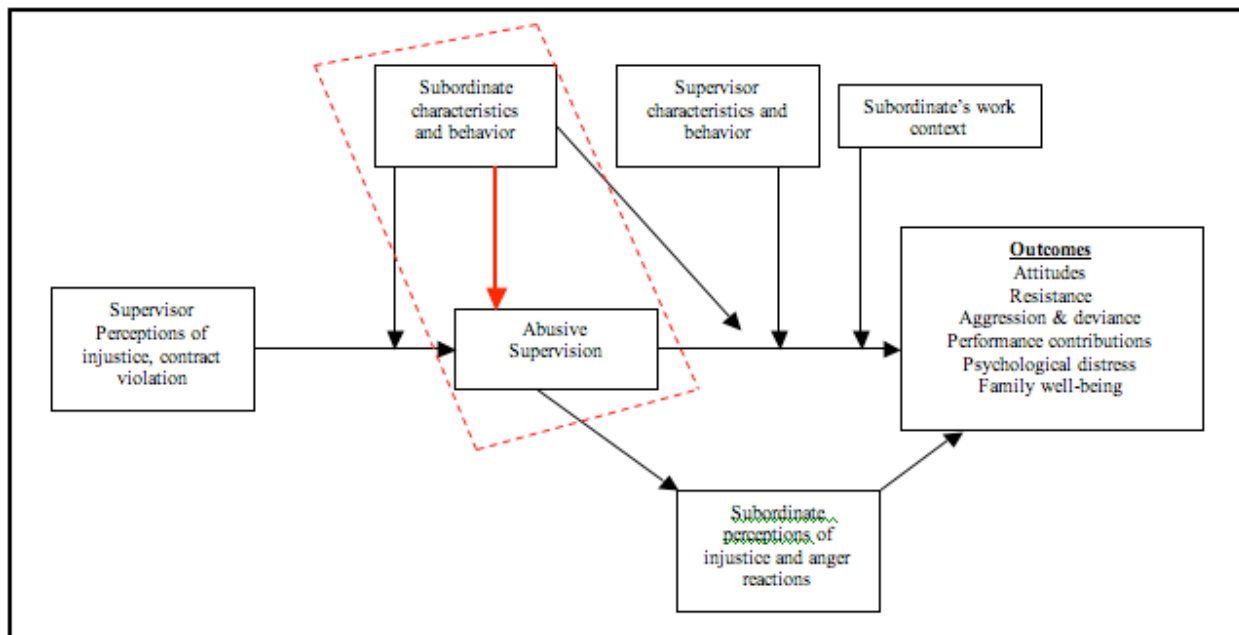
The idea that dysfunctional leader behavior exists within the workplace is not new, however, the construct of abusive supervision is. Abusive supervision is defined as “subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact” (Tepper, 2000; 178). Over the last decade, abusive supervision research has proliferated. Abusive supervision is associated with negative effects on employee attitudes (Schat, Desmarais, & Kelloway, 2006; Tepper, 2000), psychological distress (Grandey, Kern, & Frone, 2007; Harvey, Stoner, Hochwarter, & Kacmar, 2007), and deviant behavior (Inness, Barling, & Turner, 2005; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). However, a central component of abusive supervision has remained ignored; that the perceptions of abuse is a subjective judgment and that subordinate individual differences influence the degree to which they perceive abuse. Recent studies have provided initial evidence of these associations (Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, & Douglas, in press; Wu & Hu, 2009).

In a recent review, Tepper (2007) extended an emergent model of abusive supervision showing its known nomological network. Upon closer examination of this model, a large gap in abusive supervision research is obvious. Specifically, there are no relationships between subordinate individual differences and their perceptions of abusive supervision. This is surprising because a key element within Tepper’s (2000, 2007) definition argues that abusive supervision is defined by “subjective assessments subordinate’s make on the basis of their observations of their supervisors’ behavior” (2007: 264). To date, few empirical studies have tested antecedents to perceptions of abusive supervision and those that have been reported are limited to the characteristics and perceptions of supervisors rather than subordinates. Only two studies have tested subordinates’ individual differences and their association with perceptions of abuse. Wu & Hu (2009) found that core-self evaluations are negatively related to perceptions of abusive behavior and Martinko et al. (in press) found that subordinate external and stable attributions for failures are associated with perceptions of abuse. These studies provide initial support for the thesis that individual subordinate affect differentiate their perceptions of abusive supervision. However, more research is needed to see exactly which individual differences are the most important and predictive.

Humans have a personal and functional need to understand the reasons for their outcomes (White, 1959). “The attributor is not simply an attributor, a seeker after knowledge; his latent goal in attaining knowledge is that of effective management of himself and his environment” (Kelley, 1971: 22). Attribution theory argues that individuals assign causal structure to important, negative, or surprising events (Weiner, 1986). A vast collection of research shows that individuals differ in their perceptual (Motowidlo, 1986), interpretative (Wood & Bandura, 1989), and causal reasoning abilities (Weiner, 1986) when experiencing similar behavior/situations. Thus, it is difficult to predict how specific supervisory behavior (e.g., performance evaluations, feedback, directives) is interpreted and internalized by different subordinates. Very often, the same business meeting can leave each person in attendance with divergent interpretations of the same behaviors. Attribution theory provides a foundation for understanding differences in subordinate’s interpretations of interactions with supervisors (Martinko et al., in press; Martinko, Moss, Douglas, & Borkowski, 2007). Other individual differences also likely play important roles in cognitive functioning and interpretations of supervisors’ behaviors.

While organizational research studies a myriad of individual differences, the research that will be reviewed later in this proposal suggests that those that most likely play a role in interpreting another peoples' abusive behavior include attributions (Weiner, 1985), attribution styles (Weiner, 1995; Martinko, Harvey, & Douglas, 2007; Martinko, Moss, et al., 2007; Martinko et al., in press), negative affectivity (Watson & Clark, 1984), locus of control (Rotter, 1966), self-efficacy (Wood & Bandura, 1989), and need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), resilience (Masten, 2001), trait anger (Spielberger, Krasner, & Solomon, 1988), and entitlement (Naumann, Minsky, & Sturman, 2002). Each of these individual differences is included in this study because of research support indicating that it directly influences the human perceptual processes and interpretive lenses through which people view their world. As will be demonstrated later, it also appears that each of these factors also impact the types of attributions individuals make.

In summary, the purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the relationship between subordinate individual differences and abusive supervision and how these relationships are mediated by attributions (see Figure 1). In the following chapters I will explain how and why attribution processes and individual difference factors likely affect subordinates' perceptions of abusive supervision and describe a methodology for testing this thesis. This research is expected to fill in a large theoretical and empirical gap in abusive supervision research.



*Relationships inside dashed red line box is where this dissertation will focus

FIGURE 1. Extent Research on Abusive Supervision

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND PROPOSED RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study investigates the role of subordinates' individual differences on their perceptions of abusive supervision. Abusive supervision is defined as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000: 178). Abusive supervision includes angry outbursts, rude behavior, invasions of privacy, lying, taking credit for subordinates' success, public ridiculing, and expressions of anger directed at subordinates (Keashly, Trott, & McLean, 1994; Tepper, 2000). It's estimated that 14% of U.S. workers experience abusive supervisors resulting in an annual estimated cost of \$24 billion to organizations from worker absenteeism, lost productivity, and health-care costs (Tepper, 2007).

The definition of abusive supervision includes several assumptions that we investigate. First, abuse is defined in terms of a subordinate's "*subjective* assessments" of their supervisors' behavior (Tepper, 2007: 264), as opposed to objective assessments. Therefore, we control supervisor behavior to assess if subordinates' perceive it differently. Second, many of the discussions in reports of abusive supervision research imply that the supervisor has been abusive and interventions and remedies focus exclusively on the supervisor (e.g., Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). Barring several studies, abusive supervision research has largely ignored subordinates' individual differences in their assessments of abuse.

Abusive supervision research has primarily conceptualized abuse from a leader-centric perspective and thus concentrated on identifying supervisor characteristics and behaviors that result in abuse (Tepper, 2007). Ironically, while studies illustrates that subordinates' individual differences explain significant variance in their *responses* to abusive supervision (Aquino, 2000; Aquino, Douglas, & Martinko, 2004; Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006), few studies consider if these same individual differences influence subordinates' perceptions of abuse (for exceptions see Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, & Douglas, 2011; Wu & Hu, 2009). As our research will demonstrate, these same or similar individual differences also increase one's perceptions of supervisor abuse.

Antecedents to Abusive Supervision

Supervisors and abusive supervision. It appears researchers assume perceptions of abusive supervision result from actual abuse. Consequently they have primarily focused on supervisory behavior and factors that cause supervisors to become abusive.

Abusive supervision has been viewed from a displaced aggression lens, whereby supervisor hostility is directed toward convenient targets when reprisal against the source of their frustrations is not possible or reasonable (Bushman, Bonacci, Pedersen, Vasquez, & Miller, 2005; Pedersen, Gonzales, & Miller, 2000). Other studies argue supervisors who experience injustice abuse subordinates. Tepper and colleagues (2006) found that supervisor depression mediates the relationship between supervisor's experienced procedural injustice and subordinate perceptions of abusive supervision. Interestingly, this relationship only occurred with high negative affectivity (NA) subordinates leading to the assertion that supervisor hostility is directed at safe targets. Aryee, Chen, Sun, and Debrah (2007) discovered supervisors who experience interactional injustice are perceived as more abusive. Hoobler and Brass (2006) found that supervisors who experience psychological contract breach are more likely to be abusive, and

supervisors with hostile attribution styles (i.e., external and stable attributions for others behavior) strengthened this effect. Lastly, Tepper and colleagues (2011) found that both supervisor/subordinate conflict and subordinate performance level mediates the relationship between supervisor's perceptions of deep-level dissimilarity and abusive behavior. Thus, conflicting subordinate and supervisor perceptions for subordinate outcomes increases the likelihood that supervisors become abusive.

As a group, these studies overlook the theoretical possibility that subordinates differ in their perceptions and beliefs of what constitutes abuse. Thus far, subordinate individual differences have only been used to predict the "type" of subordinate a supervisor targets for abuse (Tepper, 2007). Just as supervisor characteristics are associated with abusive behavior (Tepper, 2007), we predict subordinates' characteristics are associated with their perceptions of abusive supervision.

Subordinates and abusive supervision. Two studies reveal relationships between subordinates' individual differences and perceptions of abusive supervision. Wu & Hu (2009) found subordinate core-self evaluations (CSE) were negatively associated with subordinates' perceptions of abusive supervision. Using self-consistency theory, they argued that individuals process social information in a self-consistent manner to protect shifts in self-concept. This finding suggests that subordinates give greater attention and evaluate social interactions that support existing self-beliefs, whereas incongruent interactions are ignored and/or forgotten (Bellezza, 1992; Best, Stapleton, & Downey, 2005). In other words, high CSE subordinates more likely perceive and remember supervisor praise, and ignore and forget abuse. Similarly, Martinko et al. (2011) found that subordinates biased toward external, and more stable, attributions for negative outcomes perceived more abusive supervision than those with internal attribution biases. They argued that subordinates biased toward external attributions for failures, allowing them to deny personal responsibility, are likely to perceive negative feedback and punishment as unfair and abusive. Alternatively, subordinates who make internal attributions for failures likely perceive supervisor feedback and punishment as an appropriate and acceptable response because they believe they are the problem.

These studies illustrate that subordinate self-concepts influence their perceptions of supervisory behavior. Although these relationships were supported, both studies only tested a limited number of individual differences and did not test whether or not different subordinates judged the same supervisors behaviors differently. This study overcomes these limitations by testing a number of individual differences and controlling supervisor behavior across subjects.

Individual Differences

Lewin's (1935, 1948) process-oriented framework argues the most proximal cause of social behavior resides in the phenomenology of the perceiver, who conceives a psychological environment in accordance with one's own personal goals and motives. In other words, people react more strongly to their perception of the environment than to objective features of environments (Lewin, 1951). Social perception directs cognition toward systematic patterns of attributions for one's own and other's behavior and corresponding social outcomes (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996). Thus, individual differences influence how people perceive and interpret workplace events, which we believe includes supervisor abuse. Individual differences are also associated with specific types of attributions (Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Harvey & Martinko, 2009; Martinko, Douglas & Harvey, 2006).

Attribution Theory

Attributions are causal explanations (Martinko, 2002) and attribution theory argues that people perceive and interpret causation differently (Kelley, 1973; Weiner, 1985, 1986). “Causes are constructions imposed by the perceiver to account for the relation between an action and an outcome” (Weiner, 1986: 22) and people often exhibit attributional styles. These attribution styles describe individuals’ tendencies to make specific combinations of causal ascriptions across situations and content domains. These styles describe peoples’ perceptual biases (Russell, 1991).

Individual differences are associated with attributions (Douglas, Kiewitz, Martinko, Harvey, Kim, & Chun, 2008; Martinko et al., 2006) and attributions are likely associated with perceptions of abusive supervision (Martinko et al., 2011). Since individual differences influence social perception and are also associated with specific attributions, it is likely both direct and indirect (i.e., mediated by actual attributions) relationships exist between individual differences and perceptions of abusive supervision (see Figure 2).

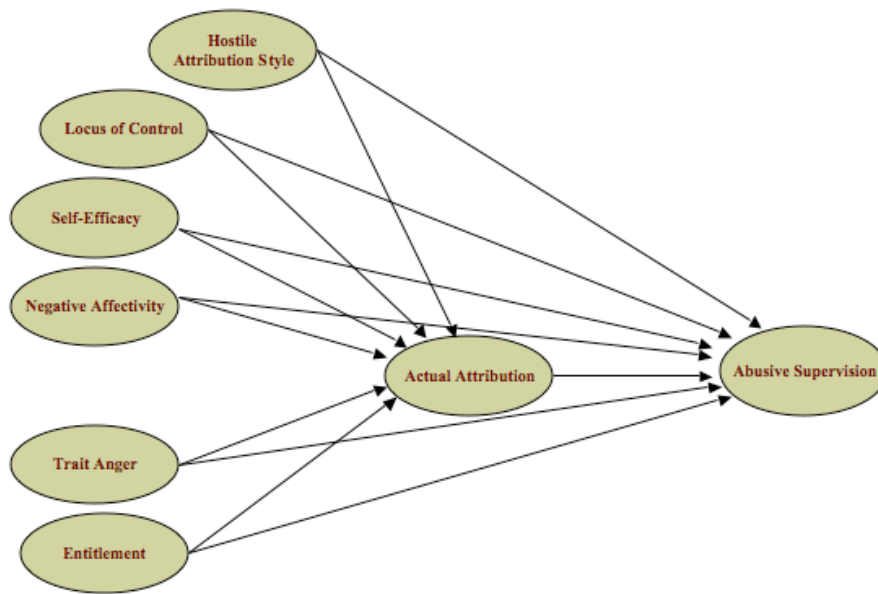


FIGURE 2. Research Model

Hostile Attribution Style

Hostile attribution style is defined as the tendency for individuals to make external and stable attributions for negative outcomes (Dodge & Coie, 1987). We believe this style will be related to subordinates’ perceptions of abuse. Specifically, individuals with hostile attribution styles are more apt to be aggressive because they disproportionately attribute their negative outcomes to internal and stable behavior of others, which elicits anger and frustration (Douglas & Martinko, 2001). People who exhibit a hostile attribution style have a tendency to assign hostile intentions to other’s actions, especially when other’s actions and behaviors are ambiguous (Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Weiner, 1995).

Subordinate perceptions of abusive supervision may be salient within performance evaluation contexts (Tepper et al., 2011). Performance evaluations elicit attributions from both subordinates and supervisors and often yield conflicting perceptions (Martinko et al., 2006;

Martinko & Gardner, 1987; Martinko, Moss, et al., 2007). These conflicting attributions for subordinate performance failures likely bias subordinates' to perceive supervisor abuse when subordinates have a hostile attribution bias because if subordinates attribute their performance failure to external and stable causes (e.g., their supervisor), negative feedback will likely be perceived as inappropriate and unwarranted, since the subordinate believes they were not the cause of their failure.

Hostile attribution style is positively associated with perceptions of hostility (Douglas & Martinko, 2001) and perceptions of victimization (Aquino et al., 2004). Martinko and Sikora (2010) argued that a subordinate's hostile attribution style would be positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision. Therefore, we posit that subordinates with a hostile attribution style will perceive their supervisor as exhibiting more hostile behavior toward them, mediated by external and stable attributions for their own performance failure.

Hypothesis 1a. There is a positive relationship between subordinate hostile attribution style and perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 1b. External and stable attributions for performance failure mediate the hostile attribution style - perception of abusive supervision relationship.

Locus of Control

Locus of control (LOC) is a generalized disposition to perceive personal outcomes as due to either internal (internal) or environmental causes (external) (Rotter, 1966). Locus of control is highly perceptual in nature (Wang, Bowling, & Eschleman, 2010), predisposes individuals to either internal or external attributions (Martinko et al., 2002), and shapes expectancies for future behavior (Spector & O'Connell, 1994; Weiner, 1985).

Internals perceive greater volition over their behavior and outcomes (Martinko et al., 2006), view the work environment more positively (Wang et al., 2010), and demonstrate greater confidence, alertness, and initiative in controlling their environment (Ng, Sorensen, & Eby, 2006). An internal LOC is a component of a hardy personality, defined as someone with a high stress tolerance (Manuck, Harvey, Lechleiter, & Neal, 1978). Attribution theorists argue that an internal LOC is positively associated with an internal locus of causality (Martinko et al., 2002; Martinko et al., 2006), which leads individuals to make internal attributions. Based on these findings, we posit that an internal LOC is positively associated with internal attributions for personal failure because these individuals are predisposed to perceive greater control over their outcomes and thus associate more responsibility for them.

Hypothesis 2. Subordinate internal locus of control is positively associated with internal attributions for personal failure

Locus of control also shapes interpersonal relationships through its impact on individual behavior (Wang et al., 2010). Internals, relative to externals, are more adept in social situations and more effective in influence attempts (Kapoor, Ansari, & Shukla, 1986; Ringer & Boss, 2000). Due to their proactive predisposition, internals engage in more problem-focused coping behaviors designed to ease workplace stressors (Gianakos, 2002; Ng et al., 2006) and are less likely to appraise events as threatening (Allred & Smith, 1989). Research on LOC suggests that internals are more likely to experience better interpersonal relationships with their supervisors

and are better adept at perceiving situations and environments and constructing them in such a way that facilitates positive outcomes and personal goal attainment. Therefore, we posit a negative relationship between an internal locus of control and perceptions of abusive supervision mediated by internal attributions, because internals are more inclined to experience workplace events positively, proactively exert control over stressors, and have productive relationships with their supervisors.

Hypothesis 3a. Subordinate internal locus of control is negatively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 3b. Internal attributions for performance failure mediate the internal locus of control – perception of abusive supervision relationship.

Conversely, externals blame powerful others or environmental factors for their outcomes and are predisposed to viewing their work environment more negatively (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997; Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). Externals perceive less personal control over outcomes and more often play a passive role within their environment. Individuals who don't feel in control of important aspects of their work lives experience those environments as more threatening and stressful (Payne, 1988; Perrewé & Spector, 2002; Spector & O'Connell, 1994). Based on these findings, we posit that an external LOC is positively associated with external attributions for failure, because externals feel their outcomes are more often decided for them rather than them exerting control over them.

Hypothesis 4. Subordinate external locus of control is positively associated with external attributions for personal failure

Externals engage in less active coping activities in response to workplace stressors (Gianakos, 2002; Ng et al., 2006) and are less adept at effectively managing social relationships and interactions (Kapoor et al., 1986; Ringer & Boss, 2000). Therefore, we posit a positive relationship between an external LOC and perceptions of abusive supervision mediated by external attributions, because externals are more likely to experience workplace events as threatening, less likely to engage in coping processes, less effective at managing important workplace relationships, and perceive more environmental stressors.

Hypothesis 5a. Subordinate external locus of control is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 5b. External attributions for performance failure mediate the external locus of control – perception of abusive supervision relationship.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the subjective-based belief one has the capabilities to meet a given situational demand (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Although conceptually similar, self-efficacy and locus of control are different (Ajzen, 2002). Locus of control involves individuals' beliefs they exert control over their outcomes, whereas, self-efficacy is the belief in ease or difficulty in performing a specific behavior or realizing an outcome.

Self-efficacy directly influences individuals' thought patterns, perceptual processes, and behavioral responses within given situations (Bandura, 1982; Wood & Bandura, 1989). For example, higher self-efficacy limits apprehensive cognitions when individuals experience potential threats, whereas lower self-efficacy triggers individuals to dwell on personal deficiencies and heighten perceptions of environmental threats (Ozer & Bandura, 1989). Higher self-efficacy thought patterns are self-aiding by facilitating more productive, positive impressions of environmental factors, while lower self-efficacy result in self-hindering patterns (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Thus, self-efficacy molds individual cognitive assessments of social interactions (e.g., supervisor behavior) in order to align them with personal goals and motives.

Duffy, Ganster, and Pagon (2002) found a negative relationship between perceptions of abusive supervision and resulting subordinate self-efficacy. Theory argues self-efficacy beliefs and resulting cognitive constructions are bidirectional (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Therefore, if abusive supervision results in lower self-efficacy, then low self-efficacy is probably also associated with initial perceptions of abuse. Therefore, we propose that self-efficacy is negatively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision, because higher self-efficacy will buffer individuals from perceiving threatening behavior within their environment, while lower self-efficacy heightens one's awareness and perceptions of it.

Hypothesis 6a. Subordinate self-efficacy is negatively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Self-efficacy beliefs are also associated with attributions (Martinko et al., 2006). Greater self-efficacy is associated with more external attributions for failures (Silver, Mitchell, & Gist, 1995; Thomas & Mathieu, 1994), because individuals with greater confidence in their abilities often attribute failures to external causes.

Hypothesis 6b. External attributions for performance failure mediate the self-efficacy – perception of abusive supervision relationship.

Interestingly, a contradiction exists. Theory and empirical studies suggest that both high and low subordinate self-efficacy are positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision. Self-efficacy theory argues that higher self-efficacy individuals perceive their environments as more positive and facilitating of their personal goals. Empirical studies support this showing lower subordinate self-efficacy is associated with greater perceptions of abusive supervision (Duffy et al., 2002). In direct opposition, higher self-efficacy is associated with external attributions for failures (Silver et al., 1995; Thomas & Mathieu, 1994), and external attributions for failures are associated with greater perceptions of abuse (Martinko et al., 2011). Schaubhut, Adams, and Jex (2004) showed that subordinate deviance reactions to abuse were greater for high self-esteem individuals, suggesting high self-efficacy individuals are more aware of and susceptible to perceiving abuse. Their rationale was that individuals who possess more motivation to maintain and prove self-worth are more attuned to challenging behaviors (Thau & Mitchell, 2006). Due to this contradiction we also posit:

Hypothesis 6c. Subordinate self-efficacy is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Negative Affectivity

Negative affectivity (NA) is the tendency to experience negative emotions across time and situations (Watson & Clark, 1984). The majority of NA research focuses on the influence of an individual's heightened sensitivity to negative perceptions, affect, and cognitive processing.

Negative affectivity has been indirectly associated with abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007) and directly with victimization (Aquino, 2000; Aquino & Bradfield, 2000). Studies show high NA subordinates are abused more often (Tepper et al., 2006) and disproportionately perceive being victimized. Abusive supervision researchers hypothesize that high NA subordinates *cause* their supervisor to respond with abusive behavior because they are either easy targets or solicited that type of response. These researchers ignore the theoretical possibility that high NA subordinates may simply perceive supervisory behavior as more abusive.

Spector, Chen, and O'Connell (2000) discuss four ways NA impacts cognitive functioning and perception. First, NA may increase individuals' tendencies to perceive job stressors (e.g., abusive behaviors). Secondly, high NA individuals may be hypersensitive to strain responses from environmental stressors (e.g., abuse impacts them more negatively). Third, high NA individuals may indirectly create a more stressful environment through their own behavior (e.g., their behavior causes them to be abused). Lastly, since NA increases experienced negative mood and affect, individuals cannot help but perceive their environments more negatively (e.g., NA causes more perceptions of abuse). Research overwhelmingly illustrates that high NA individuals perceive their environments as more stressful, threatening, and negative (Perrewé & Spector, 2002; Spector & Jex, 1998). Therefore, we posit that high NA subordinates more likely appraise supervisor behavior as abusive.

Hypothesis 7a. Subordinate negative affectivity is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Negative affectivity is also associated with attributions (Martinko et al., 2006). Attribution researchers argue that high NA individuals disproportionately dwell on negative aspects of themselves and their world, engage in more frequent attributional processing, are more likely to exhibit hostile attribution styles (i.e., external and stable attributions for failures), and believe that causes are more stable over time. Douglas and Martinko (2001) found a positive relationship between a hostile attribution style and negative affectivity. Theoretically, hostile attributions and negative affectivity both bias individuals' perceptual tendencies to interpret other peoples' behaviors as threatening and hostile. Therefore, we posit that NA is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision mediated by external and stable attributions for failures.

Hypothesis 7b. External and stable attributions for performance failure mediate the negative affectivity – perceptions of abusive supervision relationship.

Trait Anger

Trait anger refers to the individual tendency to perceive a wide range of environments as anger provoking across situations and time (Spielberger, Krasner, & Solomon, 1988). Research has shown high trait anger is associated with favorable attitudes toward revenge, hostile attribution styles (Douglas & Martinko, 2001), increased interpersonal conflict, and greater perceptions of procedural injustice (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001).

High trait anger individuals use their preexisting negative emotional states for judging and reacting to situations in the workplace (Douglas et al., 2008). People with high trait anger are more inclined to perceive environments, situations, and other's behavior as provocative and hostile because they believe others purposely and unnecessarily cause them to happen, thus producing anger responses (Speilberger, 1996). Gibson and Barsade (1999) found subordinates reporting more anger are less likely to believe they have been treated by their supervisor with dignity and respect and more likely to feel betrayed. Trait anger is associated with greater perceptions of procedural injustice (Fox et al., 2001) and subordinate deviant responses to abusive supervision are often due to violated justice perceptions (Burton & Hoobler, 2006; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001). Therefore, high trait anger subordinates are more likely to perceive interpersonal interactions as hostile.

Hypothesis 8a. Subordinate trait anger is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Trait anger is also associated with attributions (Martinko et al., 2006). Douglas and Martinko (2001) found that individuals high in trait anger tend to attribute negative outcomes (e.g., abuse) to external and stable factors and also exhibit a greater inclination toward aggressiveness. Therefore, the positive relationship between trait anger and perceptions of abusive supervision is likely to be mediated by external and stable attributions.

Hypothesis 8b. External and stable attributions for performance failure mediate the trait anger – perceptions of abusive supervision relationship.

Entitlement

Entitlement is the stable belief that one should receive desirable treatment with little consideration of actual deservingness (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004; Snow, Kern, & Curlette, 2001). While entitlement exists in all humans, people differ in their levels of entitlement. Entitlement originates from personal beliefs that rewards should be afforded to one based on social relationships (Snow et al., 2001), valued personal characteristics (Major, 1994), and/or perceived psychological contracts (Naumann, Minsky, & Sturman, 2002).

A greater sense of entitlement is almost universally linked with negative outcomes. The operative mechanism within entitlement is the unequal reciprocity expectation within social exchanges. Research shows a greater sense of entitlement encourages an idealistic view of the world, oneself, and motivates avoidance and/or discrediting of anything that challenges this view (Snow et al., 2001), negatively alters personal judgments (Levine, 2005), creates a chronic sense of dissatisfaction (Robinson, 2007), results in overly self-centered behavior (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), causes negative reactions to criticism (Campbell et al., 2004), and decreases job satisfaction and increases conflict with supervisors (Harvey & Martinko, 2009).

These studies corroborate that greater entitlement beliefs are associated with ineffective relationship partners and unrealistic expectations for social and professional interactions (Campbell et al., 2004; Harvey & Martinko, 2009). Therefore, as elevated entitlement beliefs significantly alter subordinate expectations and perceptions of social interactions and heightens one's awareness of treatment inequity; any challenging, questionable, or ambiguous supervisor behavior will likely trigger perceptions of injustice and/or hostility.

Hypothesis 9a. Subordinate entitlement is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Entitlement beliefs are associated with a self-serving attribution style (i.e., external attributions for failures, internal attributions for successes) (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). Since entitlement is conceptualized as a sub-dimension of narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988), an operative function of entitlement is a disproportionate expectation of what is “deserved” and also includes an ego-protecting perceptual distortion of reality (Stucke, 2003). Thus, with greater entitlement beliefs comes a biased perceptual tendency to attribute negative events to external factors and positive events to internal characteristics (Snow et al., 2001). Therefore, we posit that external attributions mediate the entitlement – perceptions of abusive supervision relationship.

Hypothesis 9b. External attributions for performance failure mediate the entitlement – perceptions of abusive supervision relationship.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

Sample & Procedure

A cross-sectional, convenience sample of working adults was solicited via undergraduate business students at a southeastern university. Over 12 weeks, 756 working adults completed the online survey (51% response rate). The average age of the subjects was 41.3 years old ($SD = 12.4$); average company tenure was 7.6 years ($SD = 1.3$); and 50% of the sample was female.

Undergraduate business students emailed online surveys to working adults over the age of 25 working at least part-time. Extra credit points were provided for their participation. Subjects were told they were responding to an anonymous online questionnaire, which included a video role-play, for which they needed to devote about 20 minutes to complete. Subjects first completed the individual difference measures. Next, an introduction and description of the video vignette was provided. The subjects were told they were going to engage in a role-play whereby they assumed the role of a subordinate receiving a performance appraisal from the supervisor depicted in the video. The subjects were asked to vividly imagine themselves in the role of a sales agent of a Fortune-500 pharmaceutical company having his or her official performance evaluation with their supervisor. They were told the person seen in the video was playing the role of their supervisor.

Studies have shown that hypothetical situations and role plays are very effective methods for gauging how a person would actually react within a similar situation within the workplace (Greenberg & Eskew, 1993; Wiseman & Levin, 1996) and have been used in prior abusive supervision research (see Burton & Hoobler, 2006). Every subject viewed the same video, thus all subjects viewed the same supervisory behavior. The subjects were told that once the video was completed, they would respond to questions regarding their performance review.

The pre-recorded performance evaluation lasted six minutes, wherein the “supervisor” (a middle-aged white male) simulated a performance evaluation with his sales subordinate (i.e., the subject). The supervisor discussed various positive and negative sales behaviors displayed by the subordinate during the evaluation period and eventually provided the subject with a rating of “failed to meet expectations”, communicating a performance failure. After the video was completed, the subjects were asked to provide their attributions for their performance failure and then took the abusive supervision measure. Lastly, the participants provided demographic and control data.

Measures

Hostile attribution style. The Organizational Attribution Style Questionnaire (OASQ) by Kent and Martinko (1995) was used to assess hostile attribution style. The scale presents subjects with 3 negative hypothetical workplace scenarios and asks them to imagine the outcomes happening to them and to indicate the extent to which they believe the causes of the outcomes would be due to internal or external and stable or unstable factors. An example item is “To what extent is the failure to receive a promotion likely caused by something about you versus other people or circumstances?” Responses were recorded on a 7-point scale (1 = “completely due to me,” 7 = “completely due to other people or circumstances”).

Locus of control. Locus of control was measured using Spector’s (1988) Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS). This measure is a 16-item, 6-point scale (1 = “Disagree very much”, 6 =

“Agree very much”). Eight reverse-coded items measured internal work locus of control and 8 non reverse-coded items measure external work locus of control (Oliver, Jose, & Brough, 2006).

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was measured using Chen, Gully, and Eden’s (2001) Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE). This 8-item measure uses a 5-point scale (1 = “strongly disagree”, 5 = “strongly agree”).

Negative affectivity. Negative affectivity was measured using the 10-item Negative Affect subscale of the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Using 10 mood descriptors (e.g., afraid, upset, hostile), participants were asked to use a 5-point scale (1 = “very slightly or not at all”, 5 = “extremely”) to indicate the degree to which they generally feel the way being described.

Trait anger. Trait anger was measured with the 10-item subscale of the Trait-Anger Expression Inventory (Spielberger, 1996) using a 4-point scale (1 = “always never”, 4 = “almost always”). Several sample items are “I fly off the handle” and “I have a fiery temper.”

Entitlement. Entitlement was measured using the Campbell et al. (2004) 9-item scale. Several sample items are “I honestly feel I’m just more deserving than others” and “Great things should come to me.” Responses are recorded on a 7-point scale (1 = “strong disagreement”, 7 = “strong agreement”).

Marker variable. To estimate common method variance (CMV), a marker variable approach recommended by Lindell and Whitney (2001) was used, which includes a 3-item measure of personal preferences for name brand versus store brand products. A sample item is “I usually purchase brand name products.” Responses were recorded on a 5-point scale (1 = “strongly disagree”, 5 = “strongly agree”).

Attributions. Attributions for each subject’s video performance evaluation were based on two items adapted from the Attribution Style Questionnaire (ASQ) by Peterson, Semmel, von Baeyer, Abramson, Metalsky, and Seligman (1982). The measure referred the subject to the performance evaluation they experienced in the video and asked them to indicate the extent to which they believe the cause of their negative performance evaluation was due to internal or external and stable or unstable factors. An example item is “To what extent was this negative performance evaluation outcome likely caused by something about you versus other people or circumstances?” Responses were recorded on a 7-point bipolar scale (1 = “completely due to me,” 7 = “completely due to other people or circumstances”).

Abusive supervision. Abusive supervision was measured using a modified version of the 15-item Tepper (2000) Abusive Supervision measure. The original measure assesses subordinates’ perceptions of specific supervisor behaviors over time and across situations. Because this study design does not allow subjects to experience supervisor behavior over time and multiple situations, it was necessary to alter the *experienced* supervisory behavior response scale (i.e., supervisor behavior in the past) to an *anticipated* supervisory behavior scale (i.e., anticipated supervisor behavior in the future). The respondents were asked to imagine reporting to this supervisor in real life and respond to the question “This supervisor would...” Responses were recorded on a 5-point scale (1 = “not likely use this behavior with me”, 5 = “use this behavior very often with me”). Two sample items include “ridicule me” and “be rude to me.”

Control Variables

Age. Research shows age influences attributions. Older individuals make more self-serving attributions than do younger individuals (Mezulis, Abramson, Hyde, & Hankin, 2004).

Gender. Research shows that men and women differ in their attribution styles (Martinko et al., 2006). Men exhibit a stronger tendency to exhibit a self-serving and hostile bias and women tend to attribute more things to external factors (Garland & Price, 1977).

Organizational tenure. Organizational tenure was controlled for in order to account for any spurious effects associated with longer tenure within an organization.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Measurement Model Results

Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted with maximum likelihood estimation to examine the distinctness of the variables using AMOS 18.0. The measurement model consisted of all eight factors: abusive supervision, internal and external work locus of control, self-efficacy, trait anger, negative affectivity, entitlement, and hostile attribution style items.

The results indicated that the nine-factor χ^2 (288) = 573.02, $p < .001$, chi-square statistic = 1.99, root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .036, comparative fit index (CFI) .977, normed fit index (NFI) = .956, Tucker-Lewis index (TFI) = .973. RMSEA scores below .08 (Hoyle & Panter, 1995) and CFI and TLI scores above .90 (Bentler & Bonnett, 1980; Bollen, 1989) with values approaching .95 indicating better fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). All indices were above or below guidelines for good model fit.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and internal consistency/reliability coefficients for the study variables.

Table 1
Summary Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Gender	1.5	0.5	—													
2. Org tenure	3.6	1.3	-.04	—												
3. Age	43.16	12.4	.05	.43**	—											
4. Hostile attribution style	15.9	2.8	-.03	.08**	.07*	(.76)										
5. Self-efficacy	4.36	.53	-.08*	-.04	-.04	-.08*	(.91)									
6. Negative affect	1.60	.54	.00	-.09**	-.18**	.13**	-.26**	(.87)								
7. Trait anger	1.97	.55	-.01	-.12**	-.16**	.05	-.08*	.47**	(.84)							
8. Entitlement	3.58	1.15	.02	-.09**	-.15**	.13**	.01	.12**	.22**	(.88)						
9. IWLOC	37.7	4.83	-.01	.00	.03	-.24**	.37**	-.25**	-.14**	.01	(.73)					
10. EWLOC	22.96	7.93	-.02	-.06*	-.08**	.23**	-.21**	.25**	.23**	.35**	-.30**	(.89)				
11. Abusive supervision	2.52	1.01	.01	.02	.01	.13**	-.05	.17**	.19**	.15**	-.09**	.18**	(.97)			
12. External	2.61	1.44	.00	.02	-.04	.13**	-.13**	.11**	.11**	.13**	-.20**	.20**	.35**	—		
13. Internal	3.56	1.24	-.01	.00	.03	-.11**	.15**	-.12**	-.12**	-.05	.20**	-.16**	-.30**	-.10**	—	
14. External & Stable	6.73	2.25	-.01	-.01	-.01	.36**	-.11**	.11**	.11**	.06	-.15**	.16**	.26**	.67**	-.61**	—

Note. Internal reliability coefficients (alphas) appear in parentheses along the main diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed tests)

Hierarchical regression was used to assess the direct hypotheses. The Hayes and Preacher (2011) multiple mediator method was used to assess the mediated hypotheses because it enables testing multiple independent variables across mediator variables and the bootstrapping method used bypasses reliance on a normal sampling distribution (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

Hypothesis Test Results

All variables appeared normally distributed and fell within normal skewness and kurtosis ranges (Muthen & Kaplan, 1985). Variance inflation factors scores for predictive variables were well below the 10 standard (Ryan, 1997), thus multicollinearity did not appear to bias the results. A marker variable technique (Lindell & Whitney, 2001) assessed the impact of CMV within the data. After the variance ($r = -.017$) was partialled out, all relevant relationships remained significant, suggesting CMV did not bias the results.

Direct hypothesis tests. The results are provided in Table 2. For hierarchical regression, control variables were entered first, followed by the individual difference variables, and hostile

attribution style was entered last. One of our objectives was to test whether a hostile attribution style explained variance in abusive supervision, and how much variance above and beyond other individual difference variables. This provided a more conservative method of assessing the influence of attribution style on perceptions of abusive supervision.

Table 2
Hierarchical Regressions

Variable	Abuse Supervision		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Control			
Age	.00	.05	.02
Org tenure	.02	.04	.03
Gender	.02	.02	.02
Predictor			
Trait anger		.12***	.12**
Negative affect		.09*	0.08*
Entitlement		.10**	.09*
Self-efficacy		.01	.01
Internal LOC		-.03	-.02
External LOC		.09*	.08*
Hostile Attribution Style			.07*
ΔR^2		.07***	0.01*
R^2	.00	.07	.08
Adjusted R^2	.00	.06	.07
F	.15	6.52***	6.30***

Note: Standardized beta coefficients are reported.

Statistical tests are based on two-tailed tests.

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

Hypothesis 1a was supported and the results demonstrated that subordinate hostile attribution style (i.e., external and stable attributions for failures) is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = .07, p < .05$). Hypothesis 2 was supported showing that subordinate internal work locus of control is positively associated with internal attributions for failures ($\beta = .29, p < .01$). Hypothesis 4 was confirmed showing that external work locus of control is positively associated with external attributions for failures ($\beta = .28, p < .01$). On the other hand, hypothesis 3a was not supported. Our results did not demonstrate that subordinate internal work locus of control is negatively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = -.03, ns$). Neither hypothesis 6a nor 6c were supported. The results showed subordinate self-efficacy was not ($\beta = .01, ns$) associated with their perceptions of abusive supervision. Hypotheses 5a, 7a, 8a, and 9a were all supported demonstrating that subordinate external work locus of control ($\beta = .09, p < .05$), negative affectivity ($\beta = .09, p < .05$), trait anger ($\beta = .12, p < .001$), and entitlement ($\beta = .10, p < .01$) were all positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Mediated hypothesis tests. Confidence intervals are provided for each hypothesis. If zero is included in the confidence interval, the indirect effect was not significant. Mediation analyses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Mediation Results

Independent variables (IV)	Mediating variable (M)	Dependent variable (DV)	Effect of IV on M	Effect of M on DV	Direct effects	CI		Total effects
						LLCI	ULCI	
Entitlement	external attribution	Abuse	.09	.23***	.08**	.001	.04	.10**
Self-efficacy	---	---	-.26**	---	.01	-0.10	-.02	-.05
External LOC	---	---	.03***	---	.01*	.004	.01	.02**
Internal LOC	internal attribution	---	.05***	-.23***	-.01	-0.02	-0.01	-.02*
Negative Affect	external/stable attribution	---	.16	.10***	.15*	-.01	.04	.17*
Trait anger	---	---	.14	---	.27***	-.01	.04	.29***
Hostile attribution style	---	---	.15***	---	.01	.01	.02	.02**

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

Confidence intervals = .95

Bootstrapped = 5000

Hypothesis 1b was supported. The results support that subordinate external and stable attributions mediated the relationship between subordinate hostile attribution style and perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = .02, p < .01; LLCI = .01, ULCI = .02$). Hypothesis 3b was also supported demonstrating that subordinate internal attributions mediated the relationship between subordinate internal work locus of control and perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = -.01; LLCI = -.018, ULCI = -.008$). Hypothesis 5b was supported suggesting that subordinate external attributions mediated the relationship between subordinate external work locus of control and perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = .01; LLCI = .003, ULCI = .01$). Hypothesis 6b was only partially supported. The results show that subordinate external attributions mediated the relationship between subordinate self-efficacy and perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = -.06; LLCI = -.11, ULCI = -.01$). Self-efficacy was proposed to be positively associated with external attributions; however, the data indicates a negative relationship. Hypothesis 7b was not supported. Thus it did not appear that subordinate external and stable attributions mediated the relationship between subordinate negative affectivity and perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = .02; LLCI = -.025, ULCI = .042$). Hypothesis 8b was not supported, therefore subordinate external and stable attributions did not mediate the relationship between subordinate trait anger and perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = .01; LLCI = -.016, ULCI = .05$). Hypothesis 9b was supported and the results demonstrated that subordinate external attributions mediated the relationship between subordinate entitlement and perceptions of abusive supervision ($\beta = .02; LLCI = .001, ULCI = .04$).

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

This study's primary purpose was to determine if subordinates' individual differences account for significant variance in their perceptions of abusive supervision. The results suggest they do. Results demonstrate that subordinates' attributions, hostile attribution style, self-efficacy, trait anger, negative affectivity, entitlement, and locus of control beliefs all predict the degree to which individuals perceive abusive supervision. A major contribution of this study as compared to previous studies is that the current study design assessed subordinates' reactions to the same set of *objective* supervisor behaviors rather than relying on the subordinates' selective recall of stored memories and interactions with their supervisor. Prior study designs have not permitted the direct comparison of subjects' perceptions of the same supervisor behavior.

These findings suggest that subordinate personality differences, while largely ignored by abusive supervision research, are vital in understanding how subordinates perceive supervisor behavior. Although abusive supervision is defined as subjective subordinate perceptions of leader behavior and is measured by self-report, the implications of these assumptions have not yet been fully examined. While previous abusive supervision research argues that subordinate individual differences are important in predicting *responses* to supervisor abuse, most studies implicitly assume that the same supervisor behavior is *perceived* with the same degree of hostility. This study successfully challenges one of the most foundational assumptions of abusive supervision: the notion that perceived abuse is a valid measure of abuse.

It is important to emphasize that these results were based on reactions to a six-minute video role-play. Subordinates' perceptions of their actual supervisors' behavior may yield stronger correlations with their individual differences, because actual workplace interactions may elicit stronger perceptions. Future research is needed to explore this possibility.

The results regarding subordinate NA deserve discussion. Studies by Tepper (2007) and Tepper et al. (2006) hypothesized that subordinates exhibiting high NA behaviors *caused* their supervisor to respond with abusive behavior because they were either easy targets or solicited that type of response. These studies neglect the plausible alternative that high NA subordinates simply perceive more environmental stressors (Spector et al., 2000) and thus perceive more abuse. The current study design facilitated testing this alternative hypothesis. By isolating objective supervisor behavior, thus excluding any chance of supervisor retaliation, we found that high NA subordinates perceive supervisor behavior as more abusive. This challenges the notion that subordinate NA *causes* supervisory abuse. Nevertheless, it is not the intent of this paper to argue that supervisors do not abuse high NA subordinates, only that there are multiple reasons for the positive relationship between subordinate NA and perceptions of abusive supervision.

This study also revealed some unexpected findings regarding self-efficacy. Abusive supervision research suggests that subordinate self-efficacy is negatively associated with perceptions of abuse because abused subordinates experience decreased self-efficacy (Duffy et al., 2002) and self-efficacy beliefs and resulting cognitive constructions are bidirectional (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Alternatively, attribution theory suggests that subordinate self-efficacy is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision because high self-efficacy is associated with external attributions for failures, which in turn are associated with perceptions of abuse (Martinko et al., 2011). Although the direct relationship between self-efficacy and perceptions of abusive supervision was not supported, we did find that this relationship was mediated by external attributions.

The entitlement and perceptions of abuse relationship deserves elaboration. Subordinate entitlement has been positively associated with negative workplace outcomes (Campbell et al., 2004), conflict with supervisors (Harvey & Martinko, 2009), and influences perceptions of workplace events (Naumann et al., 2002). Our results reveal entitled subordinates perceived greater supervisor abuse, mediated by external attributions. This finding was expected because entitled individuals more often attribute failures to external causes and downplay their own responsibility for negative outcomes (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). Thus it appears that entitlement results in more negative cognitive constructions of workplace events that lead to unequal reciprocity expectations and more negative reactions to criticism (Campbell et al., 2004).

While trait anger has been associated with attributions, its relationship with perceptions of abusive supervision had not yet been explored. This is surprising because trait anger is associated with greater perceptions of procedural injustice (Fox et al., 2001) and subordinate deviant responses to abusive supervision have been attributed to violated justice perceptions (Aryee et al., 2007; Burton & Hoobler, 2006; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper et al., 2001). Our study found that subordinate trait anger was positively associated with their perceptions of abusive supervision. This is not surprising since individuals with greater trait anger perceive other's behavior and environments as more provocative and hostile (Speilberger, 1996). Interestingly, while prior studies show trait anger is associated with external and stable attributions for failures (Douglas & Martinko, 2001), this study did not. This inconsistency suggests that trait anger may be more strongly associated with attributions in real life situations with real consequences versus situations that do not, such as the video role-play within this study.

The current study reveals that hostile attribution style and attributions for specific events are both associated with perceptions of abusive supervision. This study confirms the finding by Martinko et al. (2011) that external and stable attributions for failures are associated with perceptions of abusive supervision and extends them by including attribution mediators. While not every individual difference was significantly associated with attributions, each attribution was strongly correlated with perceptions of abusive supervision and in the proposed direction.

Study Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, the cross-sectional research design precludes any inference of causality, despite the sequencing of the measures used. As discussed, future studies should use a longitudinal research design to help assess the causal order of these relationships. Secondly, this study's methodology, while a strength, does not allow subordinates to experience supervisor behavior over time and across situations. While this is a limitation we also believe that it is possible that the relationships we identified may be stronger when the subordinates experience supervisory behaviors over an extended period of time. Nevertheless, this study advances prior abusive supervision research in that it provided us the opportunity to assess different subordinates' perceptions of the same supervisor's behaviors. Specifically, the subjects all experienced the exact same objective supervisory behavior in the video vignette, so that, for the first time, we were able to objectively quantify whether or not subordinates differed in their ratings of the same supervisory behaviors. Such conclusions are practically impossible to obtain from typical field studies.

Conclusion

This study found that subordinates' individual differences account for significant variance in their perceptions of abusive supervision. The results show that subordinates' attributions, hostile attribution style, self-efficacy, trait anger, negative affectivity, entitlement, and work locus of control beliefs predict the degree to which they perceive abusive supervision. These findings indicate that subordinate personality differences are central to understanding how subordinates perceive supervisor behavior in the workplace, particularly those that can be construed as abusive.

We achieved three primary objectives in this study. First, we controlled supervisor behavior and confirmed that individual differences influence the degree to which subordinates perceive supervisor behavior. Secondly, we provided a constructive replication and extension of the Martinko et al. (2011) study, demonstrating that hostile attribution style and attributions are both associated with perceptions of abusive supervision. Thirdly, we demonstrated the relative strength of individual differences in predicting perceptions of abusive supervision.

In conclusion, we are hopeful that this study will contribute to the current literature on abusive supervision by clarifying the role of subordinate characteristics in perceptions of abusive supervision. By helping to more fully understand the dynamics of these perceptions we are hopeful that our research will enable researchers and practitioners to develop strategies and programs to ameliorate the negative consequences associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

APPENDIX 1 SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1a. There is a positive relationship between subordinate hostile attribution style and perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 1b. External and stable attributions for performance failure mediate the hostile attribution style - perception of abusive supervision relationship.

Hypothesis 2. Subordinate internal locus of control is positively associated with internal attributions for personal failure

Hypothesis 3a. Subordinate internal locus of control is negatively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 3b. Internal attributions for performance failure mediate the internal locus of control – perception of abusive supervision relationship.

Hypothesis 4. Subordinate external locus of control is positively associated with external attributions for personal failure

Hypothesis 5a. Subordinate external locus of control is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 5b. External attributions for performance failure mediate the external locus of control – perception of abusive supervision relationship.

Hypothesis 6a. Subordinate self-efficacy is negatively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 6b. External attributions for performance failure mediate the self-efficacy – perception of abusive supervision relationship.

Hypothesis 6c. Subordinate self-efficacy is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 7a. Subordinate negative affectivity is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 7b. External and stable attributions for performance failure mediate the negative affectivity – perceptions of abusive supervision relationship.

Hypothesis 8a. Subordinate trait anger is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 8b. External and stable attributions for performance failure mediate the trait anger – perceptions of abusive supervision relationship.

Hypothesis 9a. Subordinate entitlement is positively associated with perceptions of abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 9b. External attributions for performance failure mediate the entitlement – perceptions of abusive supervision relationship.

APPENDIX 2 APPROVAL LETTER

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673, FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 4/5/2011

To: Jeremy Brees

Address: Address

Dept.: COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research

Individual differences and perceptions of supervisor behavior (Dissertation)

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and one member of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be **Expedited** per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 4/3/2012 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is FWA00000168/IRB number IRB00000446.

Cc: Mark Martinko, Advisor

HSC No. 2011.5761

APPENDIX 3

Informed Consent Form

Dear Study Participant,

I am conducting a study of how employees think and feel about their jobs, supervisors, and workplace. We ask a variety of questions relating to these topics. Please read the following details about this research study. At the end of this letter, you will be asked to decide whether or not you choose to participate in this study.

This survey is to be completed online, and it will take about 20 minutes. The survey asks questions about your personal attitudes and perceptions about your work and supervisor. The purpose of this research is to learn more about how personality variables influence interactions with supervisors and how these perceptions influence job outcomes.

Risks: Some questions may be considered by some to be personal in nature and thus have the potential to cause distress. You may stop taking the survey at any time. Some questions ask about your relationship with your supervisor, thus may result in sensitive information being shared. You may choose to complete this survey in private, in order to prevent others from seeing your responses.

Benefits: By completing this survey, you will help broaden researcher understanding in how employee attitudes and perceptions influence social interactions at work.

Please respond as honestly as possible, even if the information you provide is not favorable. A common problem is that survey respondents select what they *want to do* or what they think is *ideal to do* and not what they *actually do*. Please answer questions honestly and based on your actions. Please address each statement carefully, but do not spend considerable time on any particular question.

Your responses to this survey will be kept anonymous once obtained by the researcher. At the end of the survey, we ask that you provide a code, which is associated with the student who requested that you complete this survey, to ensure the student gets extra credit. Once associated with a student, the code will be deleted from your survey so as to ensure completely anonymity.

Information gathered during this study will be combined with the responses of others for research purposes only. The results of the research study may be published and the research results and data will be held confidential to the extent allowed by law.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. If at any time you do not wish to participate, you may end the survey by exiting out of the survey program. You will be identified by an identification number only. Your name will not appear on any of the results. No individual responses will be reported. Only group findings will be reported. Group results will be sent to you upon request.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED] or my research advisor, Dr. Mark Martinko, at mmartinko@cob.fsu.edu. You may also contact the Human Subjects Committee at Florida State University if you have additional concerns about this study at (850) 644-8673.

Do you, as an adult, give your consent to participate in this study? By clicking 'yes' below, you authorize your voluntary consent and indication that you understand the information and agree to participate in the study as described in the informed consent form above. Even after clicking 'yes', you recognize that you may quit the survey at anytime, and in doing so you indicate your decision to not participate in the survey. By clicking 'no', you are indicating that you do not want to participate in this study.

Do you wish to participate in this survey? Yes/no

APPENDIX 3

Measures

Attribution Style

Organizational Attribution Style Questionnaire – OASQ (Kent & Martinko, 1995)

6-items

Scale: 1-7 Likert style agreement

Instructions to participant:

Please try to vividly imagine yourself in the situations that follow and think of the most likely cause of the situations. Then answer the questions about each scenario.

1. You received a poor performance evaluation.

A. To what extent is this poor performance evaluation caused by something about you versus other people or circumstances?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely due to me	Completely due to other people or circumstances
B. To what extent will the things that caused the poor evaluation be present in the future in similar situations?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Never present	Always present
C. To what extent is the cause of your poor performance evaluation due to controllable or uncontrollable things?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely uncontrollable	Completely controllable
D. To what extent is the cause of your poor performance evaluation due to intentional or unintentional things?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely unintentional	Completely intentional

2. You failed to receive a promotion that you wanted for a long time.

A. To what extent is the failure to receive the promotion caused by something about you versus other people or circumstances?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely due to me	Completely due to other people or circumstances
B. To what extent will the things that caused the failure to receive the promotion be present in the future in similar situations?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Never present	Always present
C. To what extent is the failure to receive the promotion due to controllable or uncontrollable things?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Completely uncontrollable	Completely controllable
D. To what extent is the failure	1 2 3 4 5 6 7		

to receive the promotion due to something intentional or unintentional? Completely unintentional Completely intentional

3. You receive almost no raise compared to others in your department.

A. To what extent is the small raise caused by something about you versus other people or circumstances?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely due to me	Completely due to other people or circumstances
B. To what extent will the things that caused the poor raise be present in the future in similar situations?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Never present	Always present
C. To what extent is the cause of the poor raise due to controllable or uncontrollable things?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely uncontrollable	Completely controllable
D. To what extent is the cause of the poor raise due to intentional or unintentional things?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely unintentional	Completely intentional

Locus of Control

Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS) Spector (1988)

16-items

Scale: 5-point Likert Scale 1 = Disagree very much, 5 = Agree very much

Instructions to participant:

Work Locus of Control Scale (R) should be reverse coded							
The following questions concern your beliefs about jobs in general. They do not refer only to your present job.							
	Disagree very much	Disagree moderately	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree moderately	Agree very much	
1. A job is what you make of it. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
2. On most jobs, people can pretty much accomplish whatever they set out to accomplish (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
3. If you know what you want out of a job, you can find a job that gives it to you (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
4. If employees are unhappy with a decision made by their boss, they should do something about it (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
5. Getting the job you want is mostly a matter of luck	1	2	3	4	5	6	
6. Making money is primarily a matter of good fortune	1	2	3	4	5	6	
7. Most people are capable of doing their jobs well if they make the effort (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
8. In order to get a really good job, you need to have family members or friends in high	1	2	3	4	5	6	

places						
9. Promotions are usually a matter of good fortune	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. When it comes to landing a really good job, who you know is more important than what you know	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Promotions are given to employees who perform well on the job (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. To make a lot of money you have to know the right people	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. It takes a lot of luck to be an outstanding employee on most jobs	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. People who perform their jobs well generally get rewarded (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Most employees have more influence on their supervisors than they think they do (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. The main difference between people who make a lot of money and people who make a little money is luck	1	2	3	4	5	6

Self-efficacy

New Generalized Self-efficacy Scale (NGSE) Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001)

8-items

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

Instructions to participant:

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.
2. When facing difficult tasks, I am certain I will accomplish them.
3. In general, I think I can obtain outcomes that are important to me.
4. I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.
5. I will be able to be successfully overcome many challenges.
6. I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.
7. Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.
8. Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.

Negative Affectivity

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

10-item Negative Affect subscale

Scale: 1 = very slightly or not at all, 2= A little, 3= Moderately, 4= Quite a bit, 5 = extremely

Instructions to participant:

The following section consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Please indicate the degree to which you generally feel this way – that is, how you feel on average.

- Distressed ____
- Upset ____
- Guilty ____
- Scared ____
- Hostile ____
- Irritable ____
- Ashamed ____
- Nervous ____
- Jittery ____
- Afraid ____

Trait Anger

Trait-Anger Expression Inventory (Spielberger, 1996)

10-item subscale

Scale: 1 = almost never, 4 = almost always

Instructions to participant:

For the following: Read each statement and then select the number on the scale which best describes how you generally feel. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement.

1. I have a fiery temper.
2. I am quick tempered.
3. I am a hot - headed person.
4. I fly off the handle.
5. When I get mad, I say nasty things.
6. When I get frustrated, I feel like hitting someone
7. I feel infuriated when I do a good job and get a poor evaluation.
8. It makes me furious when I am criticized in front of others.
9. I feel annoyed when I am not given the recognition for doing good work.
10. I get angry when I'm slowed down by others' mistakes.

Marker Variable

Marker variable designed to partial out Common Method Variance (Lindell & Whitney, 2001)

3-items

Scale: 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree

Instructions to participant:

Please select the answer that best describes how much you agree with the following statements.

1. I usually purchase brand name products
2. Store brands are of poor quality
3. All brands are about the same

Entitlement

Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES) Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman (2004)

9-items

Scale: 1= strong disagreement, 7= strong agreement

Instructions to participant:

Please respond to the following items using the number that best reflects your own beliefs.

1. I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others
2. Great things should come to me
3. If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the *first* lifeboat!
4. I demand the best because I'm worth it
5. I do not necessarily deserve special treatment (R)

- 6. I deserve more things in my life
- 7. People like me deserve an extra break now and then
- 8. Things should go my way
- 9. I feel entitled to more of everything

Mediator Variable

Attributions

Actual Attributions modified from the Attribution Style Questionnaire – ASQ (Peterson, Semmel, von Baeyer, Abramson, Metalsky, & Seligman, 1982)

4-items

Scale: 1-5 Likert style agreement

A. To what extent was this negative performance evaluation outcome likely caused by something about you versus other people or circumstances?	1 2 3 4 5	Completely due to me	Completely due to other people or circumstances
B. To what extent will the things that caused this negative performance evaluation outcome be present in the future in similar situations?	1 2 3 4 5	Never present	Always present
C. To what extent was this negative performance evaluation outcome likely caused by controllable versus uncontrollable factors?	1 2 3 4 5	Completely under my control	Completely out of my control
D. To what extent was this negative performance evaluation outcome likely caused by intentional versus unintentional factors?	1 2 3 4 5	Completely unintentional	Completely intentional

Dependent Variable

Abusive Supervision

A combination of the Tepper, (2000) Abusive Supervision measure

15-items

1-5 Scale points

1= “rarely”

2= “very seldom”

3= “occasionally”

4= “moderately often”

5= “very often”

Instructions to participant:

“Now imagine the supervisor in the video is your actual real life supervisor. Please respond to the following statements regarding how you would imagine him acting.”

“If I actually reported to this supervisor, I expect that he would be likely to...”

1. Ridicule me
2. Tell me my thoughts and feelings are stupid
3. Give me the silent treatment
4. Put me down in front of others
5. Invade my privacy
6. Remind me of my past mistakes and failures
7. Not give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort
8. Blame me to save him embarrassment
9. Break promises he makes
10. Express anger at me when he is mad for another reason
11. Make negative comments about me to others
12. Be rude to me
13. Not allow me to interact with my coworkers
14. Tell me I am incompetent
15. Lie to me

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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