ENVIOUS BOSSES: HOW LEADER ENVY MEDIATES THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN SUBORDINATE POWER AND LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE

By

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Abstract

Envious Bosses: How Leader Envy Mediates the Relationship Between Subordinate Power and Leader-Member Exchange, Master of Science in Management, 2019, Daniel J. Quintal-Curcic, Ted Rogers School of Management, Ryerson University.

Due to the nature of the leadership role, leaders are often assumed to have more power than their subordinates. However, the concept of power is multifaceted, and subordinates may possess power based on their likeability, knowledge, or influence in the organization. This research examines the effect of subordinate power on leader-follower relationships. Specifically, I focus on leaders' perception of subordinate power, how these perceptions affect the quality of the relationship they develop with subordinates, and propose that envy may act as a mediator. The results of a time-lagged study of 140 leaders suggest that when leaders perceive their subordinates have power, they are more likely to engage in a high-quality relationship. Further, envy mediates the relationship between power and relationship quality, but only when subordinates are perceived to have referent or global power. The results are discussed in terms of the implications for both leaders and subordinates.

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Introduction

The hierarchical structure of organizations mirrors the presumed distribution of power in any given organization. Generally, the higher one sits on the hierarchy, the more power one is afforded. Thus, as a result of the authority and influence associated with formal positions of leadership, it is reasonable to assume that leaders have more power than their subordinates. However, it is possible for a leader to believe that their subordinate may be able to lead and influence others in the organization more effectively (Martinez, Kane, Ferris & Brooks, 2012). I contend that this belief may lead a leader to become envious, thus triggering the social comparison process.

Intentional and unintentional social comparisons occur daily in organizations during meetings, performance evaluations, and everyday interactions with others. Independent of differences in education, qualifications, liking, and confidence, the social comparison process can lead to feelings of inferiority (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Duffy, Shaw & Schaubroeck, 2008). Inferiority is not only a result of upward comparison but can also be experienced when someone in a position of leadership compares themselves to someone lower on the organizational hierarchy (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Yu et al., 2017).

Though leaders have positional power based on the organizational hierarchy, having a higher position on the hierarchy does not mean that leaders do not compare themselves to those lower on the hierarchy (Yu et al., 2017). Downward social comparisons occur when a leader compares themselves to their subordinate, and can include comparison based on physical appearance, performance in the workplace, or social skills (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Duffy et al., 2012). Though leaders have positional power based on the organizational hierarchy, having a higher position on the hierarchy does not mean that leaders do not compare themselves to those lower on the hierarchy (Yu et al., 2017). If the social

comparison produces a negative reaction for leaders, this can impact the quality of relationship that a leader has with their subordinate (Yu et al., 2017; Tan et al., 2016).

The study of the relationship between a leader and their subordinate is known as leader-member exchange (LMX) (Cropanzano, Dashborough & Weiss, 2017; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX is the measure of relationship quality between a leader and their subordinate and this exchange quality is often used to explain how leader-subordinate dyads function as a unit in the organizational context.

Social comparison can impact the quality of LMX, especially when a leader perceives a power imbalance favouring their subordinate. Although an argument could be made that leaders have power by nature the of their position in the organization, and are therefore unlikely to perceive that their subordinates to have more power than them, research suggests that despite a lack of positional power, there are other bases of power that subordinates can draw on (French & Raven, 1959; Martinez et al., 2012; Nesler et al., 1999). These bases of power can be in the form of expert power – expertise and education, referent power – likability, and global power – the ability to influence and allocate resources (French & Raven, 1959; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989; Nesler et al., 1999).

The perception of expert power, the degree to which one has expertise, skills and qualifications, may encourage leaders to have a high-quality exchange with these subordinates as these subordinates in particular have valuable experience that would be of benefit to the leader (French & Raven, 1958; Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989; Nesler et al., 1999, Chernyak & Rabenu, 2018). This may be especially true when leaders are new to an organization or assigned to a new team and required to lead those who have been with an organization or team for a length of time significantly greater than the leader (Raven, 1992). The perception of referent power, which may be likened to amiability or charisma, can influence the exchange between leaders and their subordinates (Raven, 1992; Nesler et al.,

1999). If a subordinate is well respected by various employees in the organization, leaders are going to want to keep these subordinates closer to them. The rationale behind this is that generally speaking, people like to be around those who others like (Leheta et al., 2017; Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). The perception of global power, the degree to which a leader believes that their subordinate has influence in the organization, can influence the exchange between leaders and their subordinates. This could benefit leaders to have a high-quality of exchange with this subordinate as it could allow the leader to use them to get other employees to work harder (Nesler et al., 1999). Generally speaking a leader perceiving their subordinate to have a high degree of power will have a high-quality exchange with these subordinates as it adds to their value, thus benefitting leaders (Sacca, 2012; Martinez et al., 2012).

Leaders perception of their subordinate's power is one of the many factors that can influence the quality of exchange (Martinez et. al., 2012; Nesler et al., 1999). The thought that subordinates can possess power is a peculiar construct, especially because they are low on the organizational hierarchy in comparison to their leaders. French and Raven (1959), and Nesler et al., (1999), assert that perceiving an individual as powerful can influence several dynamics, including the relationships amongst individuals.

If a leader believes that their subordinate has several attributes that the leader themselves lack, the leader is likely to become envious (Duffy et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2017). Envy is explained to be a negative social comparison that is a response one has following feelings of threat to their self-esteem, as individuals believe that they are not to the same standard as their desired comparison (Duffy et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2017; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017). Many researchers speculate that envy can be the result of a threat to one's self-esteem or lead to self-esteem threat, there is no clear consensus (Campbell, Chuang, Liao & Zhou, 2017; Duffy et al., 2012; Leary & Baumeister 2000 Vrabel, Ziegler-Hill & Southard, 2018;

Yu et al., 2017). Envy is contextual and stems from a leader's individual values. Not all leaders are going to be envious of their subordinates for the same thing (Ling, 2013).

Envy may play a significant role in the quality of exchange that a leader has with their subordinate. This can be especially true if a leader believes that their subordinate a trait, achievements, or relationships with others that the leader wishes they had (Cohen-Charash, 2009). When a leader experiences a negative social comparison toward a particular subordinate, they are expressing episodic envy (Cohen-Charash, 2009). Episodic envy is explained to alter behaviours one of two ways, either through downward feelings of envy, or experiencing a downward comparison when comparing oneself to their subordinate. Downward comparison envy is a reaction that aims to improve, whereas downward feelings of envy is a negative emotional response with the intention to oppress the envied individual, both of which impact the quality of LMX (Cohen-Charash, 2009).

In this paper, I focus on perceptions of follower power and hypothesize that when a leader believes a follower has power, he/she will strategically engage in higher-quality relationships with that follower, in order to preserve their leadership position and status in the organization. However, this may depend on whether or not the leader is envious of his/her subordinate's power. To position my research, I review the literature on LMX and theorize that leader's perceptions of subordinate power may influence relationship quality. I next review the envy literature and propose that the relationship between perceptions of power and LMX may differ depending on the nature of envy that a leader may experience. Finally, I present the results of a study that examines the proposed relationships from the leader's perspective.

This paper offers the following theoretical contributions: How leader's perceptions of follower power influence the quality of LMX, especially how different types of perceived subordinate power may lead to different leader reactions in the form of envy. Additionally,

this paper proposes how envy, more specifically, comparison envy, may mediate the relationship between perceptions of subordinate power and the quality of LMX. Finally, the research seeks to investigate leaders' perspectives of how power relationships unfold, which aids in understanding how leaders approach relationships with their subordinates.

Theoretical Framework

Leader Member Exchange (LMX). Broadly, LMX centres on the quality of the relationship that leaders develop with their subordinates (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and is grounded in social exchange theory (SET) (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Settoon, Bennett & Liden, 1996; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). SET suggests that through mutually dependent behaviours, individuals create requirements and obligations with one another, that impact behaviours between individuals and the future of their relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997) To expand, SET has been used to explain various workplace relationships, such as the relationship between a leader and their subordinate (LMX), and relationships between an employee and a colleague (Team-Member Exchange) (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). There is a balance in the exchange when each party believes that the other has something to offer to one another, of equal, or greater value, which grounds the exchange in reciprocity (Graen & Scandura, 1987). This also impacts the attitudes and behaviours that are carried out by those who make up the exchange.

There are two types of exchanges that can occur with respect to LMX, as exchanges can either be high or low-quality. High quality exchanges are built on the balance of reciprocity between two individuals, where a leader and a subordinate are able to rely on one another and share resources with each other. For example, in high-quality exchanges, leaders are said to provide a subordinate with greater support in the organization, as well as opportunities for career advancement (Cropanzano, Dashborough & Weiss, 2017; Graen &

Uhl-Bien, 1995), whereas the opposite is the case in low-quality exchanges. Low-quality exchanges exist as employment contract is what binds a leader and a subordinate together (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Dienesch & Liden, 1986). In this type of exchange, reciprocity is in disequilibrium, causing either a leader or subordinate, to believe that there is inequity and unfairness in the organization (Deluga 1994; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006). For instance, in low-quality exchanges a leader may give a subordinate more mundane and remedial tasks, whereas they provide engaging tasks to other subordinates.

In general, leaders initiate high-quality exchanges with subordinates who perform well in the workplace (Alessio, 1990; Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). Prior research suggests that the quality of LMX will be greater when there is a great deal of perceived value between both individuals of the dyad (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997).

Although LMX focuses on the dynamics of the relationship between a leader and subordinate, LMX is inconsistent. Liden and Maslyn (1998) explain, this inconsistency exists because leaders develop different relationships with each of their subordinates; personality, perceptions of individual contributions, their actual contributions as well as likeability, will all affect the social exchange process and the resulting LMX relationships (Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Dienesch & Liden (1986), suggest the LMX relationship allows for the examination of how leadership and influence are conveyed and perceived through the exchange. For example, a subordinate meeting their leader's expectation, whether stated explicitly or implicitly, impacts the quality of the exchange between them (Lowin & Craig, 1968). LMX is measured by assessing whether or not the relationship between a leader and a subordinate is a high or low-quality exchange (Chullen, 2014; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). It is suggested that leaders are the initiators of the quality of LMX, as they initiate a relationship with their subordinate and then develop the quality of exchange

(Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Leaders do this by evaluating and determining if their subordinates are meeting their expectations. If subordinates are believed to be meeting a leader's expectations, they are then welcomed into a high-quality exchange (Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Dienesch & Liden, 1986).

High-quality exchanges benefit both the leader and the subordinate leading to higher social support, greater access to opportunities within the organization, increased networking opportunities, resources, and career progression (Chullen 2014; Liden & Maslyn, 1998)., A high-quality exchange, for example, allows the dyad to be more motivated and committed to work towards organizational goals (Chullen, 2014; Deluga, 1994; Dienesch & Liden 1986). Additionally, subordinates in high-quality LMX relationships believe that there is perceived fairness in decision making, and, as a result of the strong rapport built with their leader, are more likely to create personal relationships outside of the workplace (Chullen 2014; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). In contrast, low-quality exchanges are based on a forced relationship between a leader and subordinate, that function on the basis of the employment contract (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Research suggests that low-quality exchanges can occur if a leader believes that the subordinate of the dyad is incompetent, manipulative or envious of others, thus causing the leader to initiate a low-quality exchange (Chullen, 2014; Deluga 1994; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017). Low-quality exchanges result in a one-dimensional relationship, lacking in both substance and respect. In low LMX relationships leaders tend to adopt a more dictatorial leadership style and do not provide subordinates with the same opportunities provided to those with whom they have a high-quality relationship (Chullen, 2014). In turn, subordinates in low-quality relationships are likely to perceive more acts of injustice and unfairness in organizations (Deluga 1994; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006).

The perception of power can impact the quality of exchange that leaders initiate with their subordinates. Applying the concept of power to LMX, a leader and a subordinate have

the ability to impact one another using various bases of power (Martinez, Kane, Ferris & Brooks, 2012). Power may be derived from multiple sources; wealth, authority, and status, however, within organizations, the most important sources of power are expertise, such as one's education or experience, one's likeability in comparison to others, the ability to influence, as well as one's performance in the workplace (Martinez et. al., 2012; French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1992). Thus, power can shape the quality of exchange that leaders have with their subordinates as positional power does not guarantee that a leader is more powerful than their subordinates, when taking into consideration these various bases of power that do not stem from positional value (Martinez et al., 2012; Nesler et al., 1999).

Power. Broadly, power is dependent on status, hierarchical ranking, or monetary value. In the organizational context, power attainment functions differently, as it can be acquired through means other than status or hierarchical position (Martinez et. al., 2012; French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1992). Organizational power, is defined as the capability to influence, alter behaviour by using resources, and the ability to complete tasks in the organization (Galinksy et. al., 2006; Nesler et al., 1999; Provan, 1980). Though power comes from various bases, the perception of power is just as important as power itself (Leheta et al., 2017). Nesler et al., (1999) describe that power can be exerted by having control over resources, overcoming adversity, changing the behaviours of others, having various personality traits or qualities, and achieving various objectives. Power, in the context of this paper, is described as the degree to which one is able to demonstrate their skills, expertise and ability to influence others as a result of utilizing their resources and network (Martinez et. al., 2012).

Martinez et al., (2012) argue that positional power does not automatically grant a leader authority. Power can be something that can be exerted at any level of the organizational hierarchy (Sacca, 2015). Subordinates who believe they are more powerful

than their leaders are said to be less dependent on their leaders for resources, including tangible resources such as materials and equipment, and for intangible resources, such as needing self-enhancement or recognition from their leader (Martinez et al., 2012; Galinksy et al., 2003). The ability to control resources is seen as a vital power in organizations. Those who have the ability to utilize their power and allocate resources are perceived to have a great deal of power, regardless of their status, making others dependent on these individuals (Sacca, 2015; Martinez et. al., 2012). If a subordinate believes that they have more resources than their leader, whether that be more education or highly respected by many in an organization, theory suggests that leaders will perceive that subordinate to have a high degree of power (Martinez et al., 2012; Nesler et al., 1999; Raven, 1992). This could be the case as to why leaders who perceive their subordinates to have a high degree of power may initiate a high-quality exchange since they are dependent on the bases of power belonging to their subordinates.

Subordinates exert their power when they are able to influence others as a result of utilizing their resources and network (Martinez et. al., 2012). Leaders perceptions of their subordinate's power can shape the exchange of LMX. Although subordinates do not have the positional power of leaders, they do, potentially, have other resources that could lead to perceptions of power. Regardless of hierarchical position, those who allocate resources are seen to have a great deal of power, which adds to their value, thus benefitting leaders (Sacca, 2012; Martinez et al., 2012).

Galinksy et al., (2003) put forward that individuals who appear to be confident are perceived as more powerful to others. This is especially true for individuals who have lower levels of self-esteem. If a leader perceives that a subordiante believes that they have high power as well as other possessions that the leader lacks, they will try to keep them as close as possible (Leheta et al., 2017; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Leaders will take on a high-quality

exchange with a subordinate who they perceive to be powerful as they are motivated to retain their positional power and increase it at any opportunity (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Leheta et al., 2017).

Leaders typically engage in a high-quality exchange with subordinates who are effective and valuable in their organization (Liden & Graen, 1980). This is the result of leaders wanting to surround themselves with those who reflect positively on the leader's performance (Leheta et al., 2017; Liden & Graen; D'Arms & Kerr, 2008). This is the same case for leaders who are less effective, and their subordinates have particular qualities that make them more effective than themselves, as keeping invaluable subordinates close enhances the leader's status (D'Arms & Kerr, 2008). Raven (1992), presents several ways in which both the leader and subordinate of a dyad are able to power over one another, which impacts the quality of LMX. French & Raven's (1959), bases of power is the primary foundation of existing power literature. Of the six bases proposed by French and Raven (1959), expert and referent power are the relevant bases that can increase the power that subordinates have. Additionally, Nesler et al.'s (1999) global power is also a relevant source of power that can increase power that subordinates may have in organizations.

Expert power is based in education and experience (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1992). If a subordinate has more experience in a given area, or if their level of education is higher than that of their leader. This may impact the quality of exchange, in the case that a leader believes that their subordinates' expertise or education is to a higher degree than theirs, and consequently may want to have a high-quality exchange with this subordinate to benefit from their subordinates' skills (Raven 1992). This may be especially true when a leader is new to his/her role or organization and is tasked with leading experienced employees (Raven 1992).

Subordinates are able to express their expert power, regardless of where they are on the hierarchy (Nesler et al., 1999; Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004). Expert power encompasses having a great amount of skill, expertise, education and formal training, thus being an asset to the organization, especially in a pragmatic sense (French & Raven, 1958; Nesler et al., 1999, Chernyak & Rabenu, 2018). As such, I hypothesize that leaders who perceive their followers have high expert power will engage in high-quality exchanges with them.

Leaders who believe that their subordinate has high expert power may be inclined to get their subordinate's trust and respect through a high-quality exchange since the subordinate's expert power is a benefit to the leader in the organization (Chernyak & Rabenu, 2018). Leaders who believe that their subordinates have a high degree of expertise, will initiate a high-quality exchange, as they believe that keeping this particular subordinate close is valuable, as well as this subordinate has various endowments that will benefit the leader (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018).

Hypothesis 1a: Perceptions of subordinate expert power is positively related to LMX.

Referent power, perceptions of an individual's worth or respectability (French & Raven, 1959), may also impact the quality of exchange leaders have with their subordinate. Having a high degree of referent power allows one to be able to build dynamic interpersonal relationships and foster a sense of collaboration when working with others (French & Raven, 1959). Those high in referent power are said to be very charismatic, consequently others are drawn to establishing relationships with them as a result.

Leaders perceptions of subordinate referent power can impact the quality of exchange because people like to surround themselves with people who are liked by others. If a subordinate is known by others to have played an important role in various operations, or liked and admired by others in the organization, a leader will be under the influence that their subordinate has a great deal of traits that others admire (Leheta et al., 2017; Chernyak-Hai &

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Rabenu, 2018). Leaders would be inclined to have a high-quality exchange with subordinates perceived to have a high degree of referent power as they may have relationships with others inside and outside the organization that would be of a benefit to the leader.

Hypothesis 1b: Perceptions of subordinate referent power is positively related to LMX.

The final base of power that may impact leader-subordinate relationships is global power. Global power is the ability to influence and alter others' behaviours and attitudes (Nesler et al., 1999). It is suggested those high in global power are able to control or have resistance over certain matters (Nesler et al., 1999). For example, subordinates can exercise this power if they are able to convince their leader to include them on a project they may not otherwise have an opportunity to participate in (Nesler et al., 1999). Global power may lead to higher-quality LMX as a leader may believe that their subordinate can help shape the behaviours of others in their respective department or organization. Pfeffer (1992), advises that those who have a high degree of influence can be used to shape the behaviours of others.

Leaders who believe that their subordinates have a great deal of global power have the ability to induce others to work harder. Leaders can benefit from their subordinates' global power by getting their subordinates to get others onboard to increase their productivity and work towards organizational objectives, consequently allowing the leaders power and status to be reinforced. Moreover, having a high-quality exchange with subordinates high in global power can help leaders maintain the amount of leadership, authority and influence that they have in the organization (Leheta et al., 2017).

Hypothesis 1c: Perceptions of subordinate global power is positively related to LMX.

These hypothesized relationships are rationalized by the reality that a subordinate's power can restate a leader's status and authority in their organization. Leaders will keep subordinates who are liked by others close as individuals tend to like those who are liked by

others. Similarly, if a subordinate has more expertise or education than a leader, a subordinate will want to keep them close as it will allow them to learn new things, develop themselves and do better. Moreover, if a subordinate is performing well, it reflects positively on the leader. With that, it is safe to say that leaders will keep subordinates who they perceive to have a high degree of power close to them in order to preserve their position and status in the organization.

Perceptions of various bases of subordinate power, such as expert, referent and global are proposed to all lead to high-quality exchanges. Even though leaders do have more positional power over their subordinates in organizations, theory suggests that subordinates do have the ability to demonstrate power through their expertise, charisma and ability to influence in the organizational context. Liden and Maslyn (1998) state that if a leader believes that their subordinate can positively contribute to the organization, they will initiate a high-quality exchange. Having a high-quality exchange allows leaders to have access to these valued resources that leaders perceive their subordinates to have (Graen & Scandura, 1986; Liden and Maslyn, 1998). Though there are positive relationships between the various bases of power and LMX, this may be dependent on whether or not the leader is envious of the perception of their subordinates' power.

Envy. Envy is the belief that another individual possesses a desired trait/characteristic, achievement, relationship with someone, or ownership of something that one lacks, creating a personal sense of imbalance and displeasure (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006; Yu et al., 2017; Kim, Jung & Lee, 2013; Salovey and Rodin, 1986; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017; Vrabel et al., 2018). Envy is felt as an outcome of one's self-esteem being corroded, thus posing as a threat to the value of self, when comparing oneself to another (Salovey & Rodin, 1991; Vrabel, Ziegler-Hill & Southard, 2018; Vecchio, 2005). Envy is entrenched in the

belief that one lacks something of value that belongs to another person (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006; Duffy et al., 2012; Vrabel et al., 2018).

Duffy et al., (2012), believe that envy is used to mitigate the feeling of being threatened, which also creates negative ramifications in the workplace such as a lack of interpersonal relationships and organizational inefficiencies (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002). Feelings of inferiority lead to lowered self-esteem and negative coping behaviours such as bullying, social undermining, incivility, and interpersonal conflict (Leary & Baumeister 2000; Leary 2007; Salovey and Rodin, 1991; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

How intensely one feels envious of others is dependent on their self-esteem. Self-esteem is defined as one's self-assurance of their skills, abilities and competencies (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). It is a subjective feeling that one has about themselves that allows them to have a sense of value, belongingness and the feeling of being desired by others (Crocker &Park, 2004; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Research suggests that self-esteem is related to belongingness and interactions (Crocker &Park, 2004; Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

Self-esteem valence is determined by one's own belief of their value and is positively related to how one perceives how others judge their abilities (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Trait self-esteem allows one to feel good and confident with themselves when they are doing well and feel down when they are deficient in something (Leary & Kowalski, 1993; Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

Trait self-esteem can be used to determine how people act in social situations. Low self-esteem is said to lead to negative feelings about oneself including envy, depression and anxiety (Crocker &Park, 2004; Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Hill, DelPriore and Vaughan (2011) explain that envy is a negative emotion that is triggered by one comparing themselves to others. The degree to which one experiences envy is dependent on their self-esteem (Hill et al., 2011; Treviño, den Nieuwenboer & Kish-Gephart, 2014).

There is a negative relationship between one's self-esteem and the level to which they experience envy (Crocker & Park, 2004; Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Baumeister et al., 2003; Treviño, den Nieuwenboer & Kish-Gephart, 2014).

There are three different types of envy evident in organizations; upward-envy – when a follower is envious of his/her leader, downward-envy – where leaders are envious of their followers and peer-to-peer envy – where colleagues are envious of one another (Yu et al., 2017). Yu, Duffy and Tepper (2017) explain that when a leader perceives that their subordinate has something that the leader lacks, they are experiencing downward-envy.

Envy can be categorized in three related, but different ways (Duffy et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2017; Cohen-Charash, 2009; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006) situational, episodic and dispositional. Situational envy is explained as having feelings of envy in a group setting and making comparisons with multiple individuals (Duffy et al., 2012; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006). Episodic envy is an emotional reaction that results from a specific negative social comparison (Cohen-Charash, 2009). The main difference between situational and episodic envy is that situational envy has various social comparisons at once, whereas episodic envy only has a singular comparison (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006; Duffy et al., 2012; Cohen-Charash, 2009). For example, situational envy can be experienced if a leader is comparing themselves to a group of their subordinates, however, episodic envy is experienced when the leader is comparing themselves to one particular subordinate. Furthermore, dispositional envy is explained to be envy that is experienced in all situations (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006; Duffy et al., 2012; Smith, Parrott, Diener, Hoyle & Kim, 1999). More specifically, if someone is always envious, they have high dispositional envy, which makes this type of envy trait-based (Duffy et al., 2012; Smith et al., 1999; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006).

Yu, Duffy and Tepper (2017) suggest that leaders believe that their positional power should provide them with respect, influence, and the belief by others that they have various

benefits they can provide to others. When a leader's subordinate is seen to have benefits that are usually affiliated with those who have positional power, having a particular skill or being liked by various colleagues, it can trigger leader envy. When a leader perceive they lack experience, social skills, or the ability to influence, in comparison to a particular subordinate, they are experiencing episodic envy (Yu et al., 2017; Choen-Charash, 2009).

Episodic envy consists of two different components, specifically, a desired feeling, wanting what others have (comparison envy) and an emotional component (feeling of envy) (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006). The emotional state, also known as feelings of envy, is related to hatred, depression, feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Ghadi, 2018; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006). Feelings of envy can be described as wanting the envied to lose their competitive advantage (Ghadi, 2018; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2006).

Responding to a threat to one's self-esteem can be done by taking part in compensating behaviours (vanDellen et al., 2010). Compensating behaviours are acted upon when leaders take part in downward feeling of envy, and increase their positive self-evaluation, which can be done by engaging in comparison envy or downward feelings of envy (vanDellen et al., 2010).

Downward feeling of envy is defined as one feeling inferior to another person, or the belief that they are of lower value in comparison to the person they are envying (Cohen-Charash, 2009). It is likely that one will experience feelings of envy when an individual pose as a threat to one's self-esteem and self-concept. Though feelings of envy and jealousy are very similar, the two concepts are different. Van de Ven et al., (2011), explain that jealousy and envy are separate constructs as envy stems from lacking something that someone else has, while jealously is the result of being afraid of losing something to another individual (Cohen-Charash, 2009). Feelings of envy are explained to be malicious behaviours with

intent to pull-down an envied target by engaging in negative behaviours like social undermining (Tai et al., 2012). This is likely to be the case when an individual believes that what they have in comparison to the envied is of lesser value (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Duffy & Shaw, 2000; Duffy et al., 2012; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017).

Hypothesis 2: Perceptions of subordinate power is positively related to downward feelings of envy.

In contrast, comparison envy is explained to be how one anticipates improving themselves to work towards that which is possessed by the envied (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Ghadi, 2018; van de Ven et al., 2009). The biggest difference between feelings of envy and comparison envy is the behavioural expression, where antisocial and prosocial behaviours can be the outcome (Tan et al., 2016). For example, feelings of envy are considered to lead to antisocial behaviours as it can provoke an individual to alienate their envied target. In contrast, comparison envy is explained to lead to more prosocial behaviours as it can motivate an individual to work towards what an envied individual has, thus positively benefiting their performance in the workplace. Comparison envy can motivate individuals to want to self-improve and work toward something that the envied target has, a positive reaction (Vecchio, 2005; Yu et al., 2017).

Downward comparison envy is described as a need, want, and/or desire to have what another individual has (Cohen-Charash, 2009). Though comparison envy stems from a negative social comparison, it can help aid individuals who want to self-improve, be motivated, and strengthen their relationships with the envied (Vecchio, 2005; Yu et al., 2017). If a leader believes that their subordinate has a relationship with an individual that the leader does not, or have a skill that is not as developed as their subordinate's, is likely that they can engage in self-improvement techniques while being envious of their subordinate due to the perception their subordinate has more power than them (Yu et al., 2017).

Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of subordinate power is positively related to downward comparison envy.

The extent to which the type of episodic envy that a leader has toward their subordinate can also impact the quality of LMX they have. Feelings of envy can be expressed by trying to decrease one's competitive advantage (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Vecchio, 2005). For example, if a leader was experiencing feelings of envy towards their subordinate, they could deliberately ignore them, or not provide them with direction and information needed to complete tasks, with the intention that the subordinate will struggle. Downward feelings of envy can be explained as leaders wanting to exert their positional power and assert their formal power over their subordinate (Leheta et al., 2017). This can impact the quality of exchange that a leader has with their subordinate (Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017).

Similarly, leaders will engage in comparison envy when they view their subordinate as a benefit and will allow them to maintain their leadership positions. Tai et al., (2012), put forth that comparison envy can lead to more prosocial behaviours in the sense that the envied person has things to offer that will benefit the organization. Comparison envy allows a leader to keep their subordinate close, preserving their skills and abilities for self-gain (Duffy et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2017; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017). High-quality exchanges minimize the deficit a leader may experience when comparing themselves to their subordinate, thus leaders are more likely to experience comparison envy rather than feelings of envy (Treadway et al., 2017).

Tan et al., (2016) propose that when a subordinate is envious of their leader, the subordinate aspires to have a high-quality exchange with their leader. I propose that if a leader is experiencing envy towards their subordinate that stems from their perception of power, they will experience comparison envy and want to have a high-quality exchange with their subordinate. If a leader believes that their subordinate has a high degree of resources

and power, the leader will then engage in a high-quality exchange to benefit from the subordinate's.

Self-esteem is argued to be an inconsistent construct as self-esteem fluctuates as one becomes acquainted with other's opinions of them (Crocker &Park, 2004; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). This can be applied to LMX if a leader believes that they do not have approval from their subordinate, they may have low self-esteem in how they approach their tasks while working with this individual (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Low self-esteem can lead one to believe that they are of lesser value in comparison to another individual. More specifically, low self-esteem can lead to negative feelings about oneself including envy, depression and anxiety (Crocker &Park, 2004; Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Hill, DelPriore and Vaughan (2011) explain that envy is an emotion that is triggered by one comparing themselves to others. This can be the result of believing that they are excluded as a result of not having qualities or assets that are desired, causing one to have low self-esteem when comparing themselves to others, which can alter how individuals interact with one another (Hill et al., 2011; Treviño, den Nieuwenboer & Kish-Gephart, 2014).

To expand on how comparison envy and feelings of downward envy may impact the quality of LMX, I draw on the Conservation of Resources theory. The Conservation of Resources presents a paradox with how individuals direct their behaviour in comparison to high performers. If it is believed that an inferior leader can benefit from their subordinate, Campbell et al., (2017), suggest that the leader will then keep them close, and use them as a tool to progress in the organization. If it is believed that there is a limited amount of resources that exist in an organization, and a leader perceives that their subordinate has a high level of power, they will take on a high-quality exchange (Kim, O'Neill & Cho, 2010). Additionally, Reh, Troster and Van Quaquebeke (2018), put forth that envy and social undermining behaviours occur as a result of one perceiving their self-esteem as being threatened. Though

the relationship between high performers and individuals who feel inferior is complex, a leader's self-esteem can determine if the compared subordinate is a benefit or a threat to the leader's position in an organization (Campbell et al., 2017; Reh et al., 2018; Wayment & Taylor, 1995). If a leader believes that they are inferior to their subordinate, they may take on a high-quality exchange with that subordinate for the benefit of their self-esteem. A high-quality exchange may help a leader feel less inferior as they are able to keep that subordinate close and reap the benefits from their subordinate, that the leader themselves lack.

Both downward feelings or envy and comparison envy can impact the quality of exchange leaders have with their subordinates. Downward feelings of envy, an affective reaction, can cause leaders to be less susceptive to building a strong relationship with an envied subordinate. It is suggested that downward feelings of envy create destructive outcomes, as leaders who have downward feelings of envy are likely to deprive their subordinate of support, thus impacting the quality of LMX (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Heider, 1958). Dissimilarly, downward comparison envy, a controlled process which is evaluative and cognitive, can create a constructive relationship, where the leader wants to be close to their envied subordinate. This is done as a leader believes being close to a subordinate that has various skills or experience, is not only beneficial, but also provides them with the opportunity to learn and improve from their subordinate, thus having a positive impact on the quality of LMX (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Heider, 1958).

Hypothesis 4: Downward feelings of envy is negatively related to LMX.

*Hypothesis 5:* Downward comparison envy is positively related to LMX.

Envy is contextual and stems from what a leader values. Not all leaders are going to be envious of their subordinates for the same thing (Ling, 2013). If a subordinate has something that a leader values and they personally lack, then they can be envious, but leaders will not be envious of things that do not have value to them (Ghadi, 2018). Though this may

be the case, the three measures of power in this study are believed to be relevant to the leader especially in regard to their power, position and status in the organization. Expanding on that point, if a leader believes that their subordinate is better at something than they are, they may experience a negative social comparison. Although a negative social comparison may be the case, the relationship through comparison envy and its impact of LMX and the perception of subordinate power is hypothesized to be positive. Though a leader may have envy toward their subordinate, if experiencing downward comparison envy, they will not see that subordinate as a hindrance to their position, power, or status in the organization but a resource and want to have a high-quality exchange (Tai et al., 2012; Treadway et al., 2017). This high-quality exchange that is mediated by downward comparison envy as it will allow the leader to procure the skills and resources and gain from the perceived power a subordinate may have that a leader believes they may not have. Reh et al., (2018) present that if a leader is impressed with their subordinate's performance, they will keep that subordinate close as it positively suggests a leader is doing their job. Campbell et al., (2017), suggests that if leader believes that a subordinate is an asset to the organization, they will then keep them close and use them as a tool to progress in the organization. According to The Conservation of Resources, if there are is lack of resources that exist within an organization, and a leader perceives that their subordinate has a high level of power, they will take on a high-quality exchange, for preservation of power and status (Kim, O'Neill & Cho, 2010). Counter to the Conservation of Resources theory, if there is not a shortage of resources in the organization, it is expected that a leader will still initiate a high-quality exchange with their subordinate due to the reality that if a subordinate is performing well, it reflects positively on the leader (Duffy et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2017; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017).

> **Hypothesis 6:** Envy will mediate the relationship between LMX and perceptions of subordinate expert, referent and global power.

Downward feelings of envy are not hypothesized to mediate the relationship of leader's perceptions of subordinate power and LMX as theory suggests that the hypothesis would not be supported. Cohen-Charash (2009) put forth that if an individual has downward feelings of envy towards an individual, it can provoke the envious individual to create as much of a gap as possible to deprive the envied of their superiority. If a leader is to have downward feelings of envy towards their subordinate, it is likely that leaders will take on workplace aggression behaviours, be resentful and hostile towards their envied subordinate in order for the leader to subside their feelings of inferiority (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Heider, 1958). As such, downward feelings of envy are not proposed to mediate the relationship between perceptions of subordinate power and LMX.

Figure 1
Proposed Theoretical Framework
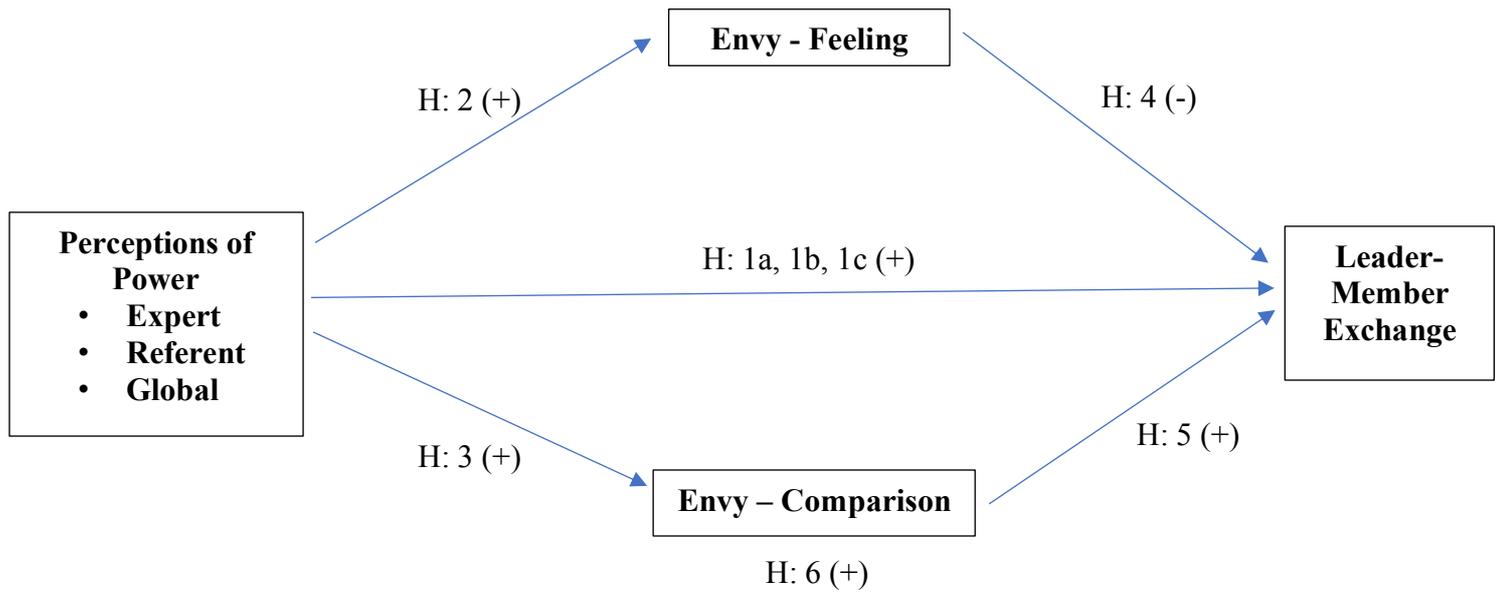
<center>**Method**</center>

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited from Prolific, an online crowdsourcing platform designed specifically for research. Participants completed the study across three time points, each separated by two weeks. The Time 1 survey included a measure of power and trait self-esteem, envy was measured at Time 2, and LMX at Time 3. Participants received £1.00 at Time 1, £0.75 at Time 2, and £0.50 at Time 3. Three hundred and fifty-six participants completed the study at Time 1. Of those, two participants failed to provide appropriate contact information (Prolific ID), five had greater than 5% missing data, and 11 failed the attention checks included in the survey. These individuals were then excluded from further analyses. Three hundred and thirty-eight participants were invited to participate at Time 2 and 332 completed the survey (98% response rate). Of those, three participants failed to provide appropriate contact information, 23 had greater than 5% missing data, and 21 failed the attention checks in the survey. These individuals were excluded from further analyses. Two hundred and eighty-five participants were invited to complete the Time 3 survey, resulting in 249 responses (87% response rate). Of those, five participants had greater than 5% missing data, and seven failed the attention check in the survey. At Time 1, leaders were asked to identify a subordinate who reports to them, prior to completing any of the measures. Leaders were then were asked to reference the identified subordinate at Times 1, 2, and 3. To ensure that participants were referencing the same subordinate at each time, they were asked to provide the first name and last initial of their subordinate before completing the measures. An examination of the data revealed that 97 participants failed to recall the same subordinate across the three surveys and were excluded from further analysis. Analyses were completed with the remaining 140 participants.

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All participants were from North America (85% U.S., 15% Canada). Approximately 63% were male, 78% were Caucasian, and an average age of 35 (X = 35.25 years, SD = 9.1). 91% of the participants had either a university degree (undergraduate/masters/PhD) or college certificate. As required for participation, preliminary examination of the data revealed that all participants were employed and held a leadership position, and had worked with their focal subordinate for an average of 2.8 years (SD= 2.9 years) Participants were employed across many industries (e.g., education, finance, for-profit services) and functional areas (e.g., science, technical services, information technology).

Measures

LMX. Participants completed the revised LMX-7, to assess their perceptions of their relationship with their subordinate (Bauer & Green, 1996). The scale consists of 8-items and were rated on a 7-point scale (Strongly Disagree, – Strongly Agree). Sample items include "I would characterize the working relationship I have with my subordinate as extremely effective" and "I usually know how satisfied my subordinate is with me." (α = .93).

Expert Power. Perception of subordinate expert power was measured with Hinkin and Schriesheim's (1989) a 4-item scale. Example items include "My subordinate gives me good technical suggestions" and "My subordinate can share with me their considerable experience and training." and all items were rated on a 7-point scale ((Strongly Disagree, – Strongly Agree; α = .89).

Global Power. Perception of subordinate global power was measured with Nesler et al.'s (1999) a 4-item scale. Example items include "My subordinate can influence me to work harder at my job" and "My subordinate can influence how I evaluate the work of others in our field." and all items were rated on a 7-point scale ((Strongly Disagree,– Strongly Agree; α = .80).

Referent Power. Perception of subordinate referent power was measured with Hinkin and Schriesheim's (1989) a 4-item scale. Example items include ""My subordinate can make me feel valued" and "My subordinate can make me feel important." and all items were rated on a 7-point scale (Strongly Disagree,– Strongly Agree; α = .90).

Downward Feeling of Envy. Downward Feeling of Envy was measured 6-items from Cohen-Charash's Episodic Envy Scale (2009). Participants used a) to report their level of agreement with each item. Sample items include "I feel rancor towards my subordinate" and "I feel some hatred toward my subordinate" and all items were rated on a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree, – Strongly Agree; α = .90).

Downward Comparison of Envy. Downward Comparison of Envy was measured with a 4-item scale that was developed and validated by Cohen-Charash's (2009) Episodic Envy Scale. Participants used a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree) to report their level of agreement with each item. Example items include "I lack some of the things my subordinate has" and "My subordinate has things going better for them than I do." (α = .75).

Control variables

Trait Self-Esteem (Time 1) and Malicious Envy (Time 2) were controlled for in the study while conducting the analysis. Trait self-esteem helps to determine how people act in social situations. Low self-esteem is said to lead to negative feelings about oneself including envy, depression and anxiety (Crocker &Park, 2004; Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Hill, DelPriore and Vaughan (2011) explain that envy is a negative emotion that is triggered by comparing oneself to others. The degree to which one experiences envy is dependent on their self-esteem (Hill et al., 2011; Treviño, den Nieuwenboer & Kish-Gephart, 2014). Previous research suggests that the lower one's self-esteem, the more they experience envy (Crocker & Park, 2004; Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary

& Baumeister, 2000; Baumeister et al., 2003; Treviño, den Nieuwenboer & Kish-Gephart, 2014). As a result, malicious envy was controlled for when running the analysis as it is trait-based envy. Both variables were controlled for in order to verify that leaders' traits did not impact the analyses.

Malicious Envy. Malicious Envy was measured using 5-items from the Benign and Malicious Envy Scale (Lange & Crusius, 2015) The scale assesses trait-based envy, meaning how envious one generally feels. Example items include "Seeing other people's achievements makes me resent them" and "If other people have something that I want for myself, I wish to take it away from them." ($\alpha = .88$), and all items were rated on a 6-point scale (strongly disagree – strongly agree).

Trait Self-Esteem. Trait Self-Esteem was measured using Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale. The scale consists of 10-items and example items include, "I take a positive attitude towards myself" and "At times I think I am no good at all" (reverse-scored). Participants reported how often they experienced feelings described in each item using a 4-point response scale (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree) ($\alpha = .91$).

Results

The data was analyzed using Conditional Process Analysis (Hayes, 2013), specifically Model 4, to test the hypothesized relationships between power, envy and LMX. Trait Self-Esteem and Malicious Envy were used as controls in all analyses. Analyses also controlled for age, leader gender, as well as the time leaders had been working with their subordinate. Gender congruence and the length of their working relationship were also used as controls, however neither variable was significant, and their inclusion did not change the significance or pattern of relationships and these were excluded from further analysis. The means and standard deviations and correlations can be found in Table 1.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that leaders' perceptions of subordinate power would be related positively to LMX. The results provide support for the predicted relationship for all three types of power, Specifically, perceptions of subordinate expert power (b = .38, p < .01, 95% CI [.26, .50]), referent power (b = .27, p < .01, 95% CI [.13, .41]), and global power (b = .19, p < .01, 95% CI [.04, .35]) are all positively related to LMX.

Hypothesis 2, that perceptions of subordinate power are positively related to downward feelings of envy, was not supported. However, there was a significant relationship opposite to what was predicted when the independent variable is expert power. Leaders who perceived their followers had expert power (b = -.10, p < .05, 95% CI [-.19, -.01]), referent power (b = -.08, *ns*, 95% CI [-.18, .03]), and global power (b = .03, *ns*, 95% CI [-.08, .15]) did not report downward feelings of envy.

Hypothesis 3, that perceptions of follower power are positively related to downward comparison envy, was supported. Leaders who perceived their subordinate had expert power (b = .25, p < .01, 95% CI [0.15, 0.34]), referent power (b = .24, p < .01, 95% CI [.13, 0.35]), and global power (b = .28, p < .01, 95% CI [.17, .40]), also reported downward comparison envy.

Hypothesis 4, that downward feelings of envy will be negatively related to LMX, was supported. Leaders who perceived their subordinate to have expert power (b = -.48, p < .01, 95% CI [-.68, -.28]), referent power (b = -.56, p < .01 [-.78, -.35]), and global power (b = -.63, p < .01, 95% CI [-.85, -.42]), did not report downward feelings of envy impacting their quality of exchange.

Hypothesis 5, that comparison envy will be positively related to LMX, was not supported when leaders who perceived their subordinate to have expert power (b = .16, *ns*, 95% CI [-.03, .36]). Hypothesis 5 was supported when leaders who perceived their

subordinate to have referent power (b = .29, p < .01, [.08, .50]), and global power (b = .32, p < .01, 95% CI [.11, .54]).

Hypothesis 6, that comparison envy will mediate the relationship between LMX and perceptions of subordinate expert power, was not supported (b = .04, *ns*, 95% CI [-.02, .10]). Hypothesis 6, that comparison envy will mediate the relationship between LMX and perceptions of subordinate referent power (b = .07, p < .00, 95% CI [.01, .14]), and global power (b = .09, p < .01 95% CI [.02, .17]), was supported.

The results suggest that malicious envy predicts both comparison envy and feelings of envy. Additionally, the results show that there is a negative significant relationship with trait self-esteem predicting envy. Moreover, neither trait self-esteem and malicious envy predicted LMX.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Expert Power (T1)	(.89)							
2. Referent Power (T1)	.59**	(.90)						
3. Global Power(T1)	.63**	.59**	(.80)					
4. Trait Self-Esteem (T1)	.17*	.21*	.07	(.91)				
5. Envy – Downward Feeling (T2)	-.16	-.12	.03	-.16	(.90)			
6. Envy – Downward Comparison (T2)	.35**	.28**	.36**	-.25**	.12	(.75)		
7. Malicious Envy (T2)	.02	-.03	-.04	-.38**	.42**	.20*	(.88)	
8. LMX (T3)	.57**	.42**	.27**	.15	-.42**	.23**	-.16	(.93)
Means	4.84	5.22	4.73	3.02	1.60	2.19	2.38	5.17
SD	1.44	1.27	1.17	.58	.85	.88	1.05	1.18

Note: $* p < .05$; $** p < .01$. Coefficient alpha reliability estimates are in parenthesis on the

main diagonal.

Table 2

Indirect Effect of Perceptions of Subordinate Power on LMX Mediated by Downward Comparison and Downward Feeling of Envy

Independent Variables	Mediators	Path *a*	Path *b*	Indirect effect via mediator *a*b*
Expert Power	Comparison Envy	b = 0.25, SE = 0.05, p < .01, 95% CI [0.15, 0.34]	b = 0.16, SE = 0.10 *ns*, 95% CI [-.03, 0.36]	b = 0.04, SE = 0.03, *ns*, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.10]
	Feeling of Envy	b = - 0.10, SE = 0.05, p < .03, 95% CI [-0.19, -0.01]	b = - 0.48, SE = 0.10, p < .01, 95% CI [-0.68, -0.28]	b = 0.05, SE = 0.03, *ns*, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.12]
Referent Power	Comparison Envy	b = 0.24, SE = 0.05, p < .01, 95% CI [0.13, 0.35]	b = 0.29, SE = 0.10, p < .01, 95% CI [0.08, 0.49]	b = 0.07, SE = 0.03 p < .01, 95% CI [0.01, 0.14]
	Feeling of Envy	b = - 0.08, SE = 0.05, *ns*, 95% CI [-0.18, 0.03]	b = -0.56, SE = 0.11, p < .01, 95% CI [-0.78, -0.35]	b = 0.04, SE = 0.04, *ns*, 95% CI [-.03, .13]
Global Power	Comparison Envy	b = 0.28, SE = 0.06, p < .01, 95% CI [0.17, 0.40]	b = 0.32, SE = 0.11, p < .01, 95% CI [0.11, 0.54]	(b = .09, SE = 0.04, p < .00 95% CI [.02, .17])
	Feeling of Envy	b = 0.03, SE = 0.06, *ns*, 95% CI [-0.08, 0.15]	b = - 0.63, SE = 0.11, p < .01, 95% CI [-0.85, -0.42]	(b = -.02, SE = 0.04 p < .00 95% CI [-.09, .07])

Path *a* refers to the path from the independent variables (Expert, Referent and Global power) to the mediators (Comparison envy and Feeling of envy); Path *b* refers to the path from the mediators (Comparison envy and Feeling of envy), to the dependent variable (Leader-Member Exchange).

<center>**Discussion**</center>

Implications for Theory and Research

  The purpose of the study was to analyze leaders' perceptions of subordinate power and propose a positive relationship between the perception of subordinate power and the quality of exchange that a leader has with the intention to preserve their leadership position and status in their organization. However, this may depend on whether or not the leader is envious of his/her subordinate's power, as well as determining if comparison envy mediates the relationship between perceptions of subordinate power and the quality of LMX. A strength of the methodological approach in this study was assessing participants across three different points in time. This was done to determine if leader's attitude and emotions towards a subordinate change over time. This was an important factor when priming leaders to think about their subordinate corresponding to their perceptions of power, how envious a leader may be of their subordinate, and also how the leader believes their relationship with their subordinate functions with respect to LMX.

  Firstly, the results suggest that leaders' perceptions of expert, referent, and global power are positively related to LMX. The results suggest that leader's perception of subordinate expert power, encourages leaders to have a high-quality exchange with their subordinate as their subordinate may have valuable experience that would be of benefit to the leader (French & Raven, 1958; Nesler et al., 1999, Chernyak & Rabenu, 2018). Similarly, perceptions of subordinate referent power positively influences the exchange between leaders and their subordinates (Raven, 1992; Nesler et al., 1999). Equally, perceptions of subordinate global power have a positive influence on the exchange between leaders and their subordinates. Generally speaking, if a leader perceives their subordinate to have a high degree of power, a leader will keep a high-quality exchange with their subordinate as it adds to their value, thus benefitting a leader (Sacca, 2012; Martinez et al., 2012).

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Secondly, the results for downward feeling envy are more complex. Contrary to expectations, only perceptions of subordinate expert power were related to downward feelings of envy, whereas referent and global power were unrelated to downward feelings of envy. Cohen-Charash (2009) concluded that downward feelings of envy are negatively related to one's behaviours to improve their position in the organization. Moreover, if a leader believes that their subordinate has high referent or global power, they are more likely to react more constructively rather than destructively in order to equalize the social comparison (Heider, 1958). There was a significant relationship between expert power and downward feelings of envy, however it was opposite to the predicted direction. Leaders who perceive their followers to have expert power report feeling less malice toward them. This suggests that leaders may believe that their subordinate's experience and expertise is more of an asset to them in an organization that their charisma and ability to influence. This could be explained as leaders believing that a subordinate's expertise provides a leader with an added advantage as a subordinate's capabilities can allow a leader to surpass their deliverables and tactfully learn from their subordinate. Moreover, it is important to highlight that though Malicious Envy was controlled for to reduce the effect of confounding variables in the study, it could be accounting for some of the variance in downward feelings of envy.

Thirdly, the results between perceptions of subordinate power and downward comparison envy were more straightforward. All three types of power were positively related to downward comparison envy, supporting Hypothesis 3. The positive relationship can be explained as leaders acknowledge that their subordinate has a particular set of skills, qualities and work ethic that the leader themselves do not have, but have a great amount of veneration toward their subordinates and experience comparison envy (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Leheta et al., 2017; Tai et al., 2012).

Fourthly, Hypotheses 4 and 5 were largely supported. Downward feeling envy was negatively related to LMX across all analyses, suggesting that leaders who harbour negative feelings toward their subordinates develop lower quality relationships with them. Tai et al., (2012), explain that feelings of downwards envy are explained to be actions and behaviours that are carried out maliciously. Downward feelings of envy steers one to take on more antisocial behaviours, due to immense amount of rancor one has toward their envied subordinate (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Tai et al., 2012; Treadway et al., 2017). Moreover, Matta and Van Dyne (2018) explain that if a leader believes that their subordinate is rejecting their exchange, theory suggests that leaders will experience downward feelings of envy. It is possible for a subordinate to reject a leader's exchange if a subordinate believes that they are more valuable than their leader. This can also be the case if a subordinate believes that their leader is not trustworthy, and lacks the power, such as skills or experience to be in a leadership position (Matta & Van Dyne, 2018). Provided this is the case, this would impact LMX as a leader will experience downward feelings of envy to distance themselves from their subordinate and engage in a low-quality exchange.

Downward comparison envy was positively related to LMX when global and referent power were the focal power, but the relationship between downward comparison envy and LMX was not significant when expert power was the focus. This could be the case if a leader's subordinate has international experience or education, which may not be valued by the leader, or even the leader themselves have a higher degree of expertise and education in a given field. In addition, though subordinate expert power would be more of a resource a leader than referent and global power, it could be that the subordinate has worked under the leader for long period of time or that the leader does not believe the subordinates expertise is much of an asset to them. Moreover, it could also be that the leader does not think that their

subordinate carries themselves with such poise that allows the leader to believe that they are able to showcase their expertise in a field.

Finally, Hypothesis 6 also received partial support. Downward comparison envy mediated the relationship between referent power and LMX, global power and LMX, but not expert power and LMX. This means that the if a leader perceives that their subordinate has high referent and global power respectively, the more comparison envy is felt and consequently, leaders are going to develop a high-quality exchange with their subordinate.

Additionally, another implication to note is the lack of effect that gender congruence had on the results. Gender congruence was controlled for while conducting the analyses and did not have a significant impact on the proposed hypotheses. While interesting, Riordan (2000), suggests that a lack of similarities, such as gender, can create an imbalance in relationships (Rink & Ellemers, 2006). Schieman and McMullen (2008) suggest that gender congruence can cause female leaders to take on workplace aggression behaviours, whereas Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, and Keiser (2012), suggest that gender congruence among males is positively related to satisfaction and retention in the workplace. While counterintuitive to what the literature suggests, it is important to highlight that gender congruence had no impact on the results of this study.

By and large, the results suggest that leaders who believe that their subordinate has a high degree of power will initiate a high-quality exchange. High-quality exchanges allow a leader and their subordinate to build greater rapport, have access to more resources in addition to information, along with more influence being prevalent in the dyad itself (Chullen 2014; Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Nesler et al., 1999) A leader who believes that their subordinate has qualities, relationships, and resources that they may be lacking may wish they had these assets themselves and develop a high-quality relationship with their subordinate to have access to their subordinate's capital. Regardless of the hierarchical

position of subordinates, if a leader believes that a subordinate has resources that are seen as an asset, a leader may believe that this subordinate could add to their positional power and value as they have something the leader lacks, thus benefitting leaders (Sacca, 2012; Martinez et al., 2012). Leaders who believe that their subordinates are well respected, liked and charismatic want to keep them close and admire their subordinate because they may lack the degree of referent power that their subordinate exerts. Moreover, leaders who believe that that their subordinate has the ability to influence others in the workplace could be used to bolster the leader's ability to get the team at large to meet their organizational goals and be effective. Comparison envy mediates the relationship for these two power bases and LMX because leaders see the skills and abilities that these subordinates have as a strength that will allow them to maintain their leadership positions (Tai et al., 2012). Comparison envy can lead to prosocial behaviours, much like high-quality exchanges can as well. Comparison envy can be seen as a motivational tool for leaders to work toward having what their subordinate has that they currently lack (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Tai et al., 2012). This will encourage leaders to take on a high-quality exchange as they are more likely to get more information and reap the benefits of their powerful subordinates by keeping them close (Martinez et al., 2012; Sacca, 2012; Treadway et al., 2017).

While leader's perception of subordinate expert power and LMX is not mediated by comparison envy, the individual relationships are still significant. Though the results could be explained due to a leader believing they have higher expert power, or that their subordinate's expert power is not as germane as other bases of power. Perhaps comparison envy would mediate the relationship between expert power and LMX if a leader's subordinate was previously in a leadership position and after a number of years decided to step down. In that case, a leader may believe that their subordinate may have expertise that the leader can benefit from that they may lack, thus wanting benefit from a close working relationship.

Leheta, Dimotakis and Schatten (2017) explain that leaders who believe they are ineffective in comparison to their subordinate will become envious of their subordinate's expertise and experience. The authors second this notion by suggesting that ineffective leaders are likely to want to have a high-quality exchange with subordinates who are more skilled as subordinates who have a high degree of expert power support the leader in their position.

Future Research Directions and Limitations

Though several implications for theory and research have been highlighted, the following study also has its limitations. Firstly, LMX is a dyadic process and this study only examines the leader's perspective (Lowin & Craig, 1968; Mowday, 1978; Deluga & Perry, 1991). Conducting a dyadic study will enable the analysis of perceptions of power from perspective of both leaders and subordinates and the resulting impact on LMX. The perception of power and its impact on relationships in the workplace is an area of research that needs to be explored more thoroughly, more specifically examining how power relationships of all sorts unfold, whether that be through LMX, or team-member exchange (TMX). This can help to better understand how employees in the workplace develop relationships with their colleagues, but even more specifically, try and understand if there are any motiving factors as to what may encourage or deter individuals to have a closer relationship with some more than others inorganizations.

Secondly, I note that the number of participants in the study is lower than expected partly because a relatively large number of participants (97), failed to reference the same subordinate across all points of measurement. This could have influenced the results as maybe leaders chose a subordinate they had a good relationship with, a subordinate that they do not work closely with, or only reports to them occasionally, and a subordinate that they generally do not like. Moreover, analyses were conducted with the 97 participants that failed to reference the same subordinate over the three time points, and it is important to note the

differences in the data. In comparison to the results reported in this paper, Hypothesis 5, that downward comparison envy would be positively related to LMX, was supported when leaders perceived their subordinate to have expert, referent, and global power, whereas perceptions of expert power was not supported in the current data. Similarly, Hypothesis 6, that envy would mediate the relationship between LMX and perceptions of subordinate expert, referent and global power, was supported for all three bases of power, whereas it was only supported for referent and global power in the smaller sample. These limitations are important to highlight moving forward as they may influence the results of the study. Other than these two hypotheses having a positive relationship, all other results were consistent with ones presented in this paper.

A future direction that this research can explore is conducting a dyadic study with the same conceptual model having leaders evaluate their perceptions of subordinate power, while having the subordinate of the dyad evaluate their perception of power and determine if there is a positive relationship between the two. This would allow researchers to determine if there is a correlation between leader's perceptions of subordinate power and the connection that may exist if subordinates too think they are powerful.

Moreover, another future direction that is to be explored is if admiration can mediate the relationship between perceptions of subordinate power and LMX. Admiration is described as an emotion that is experienced from a positive social comparison (Cohen-Charash, 2009). Future research can seek to examine how admiration can impact the quality of exchange a leader has with their subordinate when admiring a subordinate perceived power. This could provide insight as to how a positive social comparison can influence a leaders exchange with their subordinate.

Thirdly, although I assessed the variables at different points in time, this is not a true longitudinal design. Assessing all variables at multiple points in time would allow for a more

detailed examination of the relationships of these constructs and how perceptions of power

and envy change over time. Future research can also seek to explore a longitudinal dyadic

study with the variables presented in this study to determine if perceptions of power and envy

change over time. This would provide insight to how envy operates in dyads and determine if

it impacts the relationships the quality of exchange within dyads.

Fourthly, using structural equational modeling (SEM), would allow for an analysis of

all of the relationships presented in this study simultaneously. Though it will allow for an

analysis of the relationships concurrently, I have no reason to expect that the pattern of

results would be different.

Another future direction that can be explored from this research is how threat to state

self-esteem and envy mediate the relationship between LMX and leader's perceptions of

subordinate power. The results suggest that trait self-esteem is positively related to downward

feelings of envy, where was trait self-esteem is negatively related to downward comparison

envy. Though trait self-esteem was used and controlled for in this study, examining the

impact of state self-esteem can provide even more understanding as to how one's relational

self, meaning whether or not an individual is accepted or rejected by others in a particular

situation, impacts how envious the are in organizations. (Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary &

Baumeister, 2000). A threat to self-esteem is defined as an event that causes an infraction to

one's esteem, self-worth and how one views themselves (vanDellen, Campbell, Hoyle &

Bradfield, 2011). Salovey and Rodin (1991), propose that a threat to one's self-esteem can be

as a result of a threat to their evaluation, altering how one actually views themselves,

especially when comparing themselves to those they perceive to be inferior. If a leader

believes that a subordinate has assets or skills in an area that the leader is lacking, there is the

potential that this can serve as a threat to the leader's self-esteem. It is suggested that if

someone has low self-esteem, the more likely they are to deem others as rivals as they believe

that the divide is big enough that they cannot catch up, thus posing as a threat to their success in an organization (vanDellen et al., 2011). Yu et al., (2017), propose that it is after leaders feel envious that they feel threatened by an individual, which explains why leaders may engage in either abusive supervision behaviours or self-improvement behaviours. It would be beneficial to revisit the ideas presented by Yu et al., (2017) and determine if a threat to one's self-esteem initiates one to feel envious as Vrabel, Ziegler-Hill and Southard, (2018) propose that envy is felt as an outcome of self-esteem corrosion, thus posing as a threat to the value of self. Understanding how a threat to a leader's self-esteem and the type of envy they engage in will allow researchers to have a more comprehensive understanding in leaders' perceptions of subordinate power and generally, understanding the perception of power dynamics that exist in dyads.

Similarly, examining if there is moderated mediation with trait self-esteem and its impact on envy in the relationship between leader's perception of subordinate power and LMX would allow for a more extensive analysis on the conceptual frame work presented in the current study. Having a deeper understanding of leader's trait self-esteem and how they generally feel about themselves will allow for a more definitive explanation of the function of trait self esteem in the process of social comparison and envy. For example, it is possible that self-esteem may be a key in determining whether or not leaders are more susceptive to taking on downward feelings of envy or comparison envy due as a result of how they feel about themselves.

Finally, because the study was conducted with participants in a variety of industries I am unable to draw any conclusions about the broader context in which subordinate power and leader envy may impact LMX. I believe that of the industries represented by participants, some are known to be more competitive than others. Conducting the study in two different industries and determining if leader envy is more prevalent in one versus the other would

could be a contributing factor to understanding envy more specifically in the workplace. Moreover, Tan et al., (2016) suggest that how individuals express their envy is culturally specific. It would be of interest to measure how perceptions of follower power and its impact on LMX could be influenced by a particular culture of origin. This may be able to provide insight to how different cultures take on more of a downward feeling of envy, versus downward comparison envy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the primary intention of this study was to examine how leaders' perceptions of subordinate power impact the quality of LMX. Additionally, the study proposed a mediated relationship of comparison envy between all measured bases of perception of subordinate power (expert, referent and global) and LMX. The results present that leaders perceptions of subordinate power positively impact the quality of LMX. The results also suggest that comparison envy is positively related to LMX, whereas feelings of envy is negatively related to LMX. Though comparison envy mediated the relationship between perceptions of subordinate power and LMX for referent and global power, further research seeks to examine why the relationship is not the same for leader's perception of subordinate power. By studying LMX from the leader's perspective and examining how the quality of the exchange is dependent on perceived subordinate power, mediated by envy, this study adds to the literature that examines LMX from the leader's perspective and sheds light on how leaders approach relationships with their (powerful) subordinates.

Full Scale Items Used in Study

LMX – Bauer and Green, (1996)
1. I usually know where I stand with my subordinate.
2. I usually know how satisfied my subordinate is with me.
3. My subordinate understands my problems and needs extremely well.
4. My subordinate recognizes my potential well.
5. I would characterize the working relationship I have with my subordinate as extremely effective.
6. Regardless of his/her formal authority, my subordinate is inclined to use his/her power to help me solve problems at work.
7. Regardless of his/her formal authority, I can count on my subordinate to "bail me out" at his/her own expense when I really need it.
8. I have enough confidence in my subordinate that I would defend or justify his/her decisions if he/she were not present to do so.

All questions answered on a 7-point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree).

Expert Power - Hinkin & Schriesheim (1989)
1. My subordinate can give me good technical suggestions.
2. My subordinate can share with me his/her considerable experience and/or training.
3. My subordinate can provide me with sound job-related advice.
4. My subordinate can provide me with needed technical knowledge.

All questions answered on a 7-point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Referent Power - Hinkin & Schriesheim (1989)
1. My subordinate can make me feel valued.
2. My subordinate can make me feel like he/she approves of me.
3. My subordinate can make me feel personally accepted.
4. My subordinate can make me feel important.

All questions answered on a 7-point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Global Power - Nesler et al., (1999)
1. My subordinate can influence me to work harder at my job.
2. My subordinate can influence the type of projects I become involved in.
3. My subordinate can influence my work-related activities.
4. My subordinate can influence how I evaluate the work of others in our field.

All questions answered on a 7-point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Downward Feeling of Envy – Cohen-Charash, (2009)
1. I feel bitter.
2. I feel envious.
3. I have a grudge against my subordinate.
4. I feel gall.
5. I feel some hatred toward my subordinate.
6. I feel rancor toward my subordinate.

All questions answered on a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Downward Comparison Envy - Cohen-Charash, (2009)
1. I lack some of the things my subordinate has.

2. I feel envious.
3. I want to have what my subordinate has.
4. My subordinate has things going for them better than I do.

All questions answered on a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

Malicious Envy - Lange and Crusius, (2015)
1. I wish that superior people lose their advantage.
2. If other people have something that I want for myself, I wish to take it away from them.
3. I feel ill will towards people I envy.
4. Envious feelings cause me to dislike the other person.
5. Seeing other people's achievements makes me resent them.

All questions answered on a 6-point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree).

Trait Self-Esteem Scale - Rosenberg, (1965)
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

All questions answered on a 4-point scale (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree)

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No table of figures entries found.

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