

IS ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM POSITIVELY RELATED TO ATTITUDE TOWARDS
UNETHICAL WORKPLACE BEHAVIOR?

by

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ABSTRACT

Cynicism is conventionally thought of as a fixed attitude or personality trait characterized by skepticism and a general lack of trust in others. The concept of organizational cynicism was introduced in the early 1990s, when scholars argued that cynicism can be a fluid state and thus can be learned and unlearned based on beliefs, behaviors and affects. The purpose of this study is twofold: 1) to determine whether a positive relationship exists between organizational cynicism and self-reported attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior; and 2) to determine whether exposure to positive or negative organizational information in the form of short articles and sentences would moderate the effects of the aforementioned variables. Results from the study have demonstrated no relationships between the two variables, even taking into account the moderators, with results in p values reaching neither the .05 nor .01 levels. Both hypotheses are thus not supported.

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1) PURPOSE OF STUDY

The interest in cynicism and how it relates to organizations has persisted over the past few decades. Cynicism has demonstrated relationships with negative job satisfaction, loss in productivity, performance and support for future change. However, what is less understood is whether or not cynics endorse unethical behavior since the latter can be seen as a coping mechanism in an organizational setting. In this study I focus on organizational cynicism and attitudes toward workplace deviance, specifically, whether or not individuals high in organizational cynicism are more accepting of workplace deviance. Thus, the overall purpose of this study is to examine whether or not organizational cynicism is related to self-reported attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior, and whether manipulating the type of information people receive about how organizations and their agents act (i.e., positively or negatively) will moderate people's attitude towards unethical workplace behavior.

For this study, the concept of organizational cynicism is defined using the seminal work of Dean, Brandes and Dharwadkar (1998), where it was conceptualized as: "a negative attitude towards one's employing organization, comprising three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative affect toward the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviors toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect" (p. 345). The concept of unethical workplace behavior is formally categorized as 'negative workplace deviance' in the existing literature, and falls under the broader ethics umbrella. Using Robinson and Bennett's work (1995), negative workplace deviance is defined as voluntary behavior that 'violates significant organizational norms and, in doing so, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members, or both'.

The overall motivation for doing this study stems from the fact there has been a persistent gap in the literature that formally addresses or bridges the two variables. For example, significant work has been done on each of the two constructs, e.g. the antecedents and consequences of organizational cynicism or workplace deviance, but not on a possible relationship between them.

2) INTRODUCTION

Cynicism, now commonly used to express 1) an attitude or personality and the inclination characterized by a general lack of trust and skepticism in others (Oxford University Press, 2017) and 2) the belief that people are motivated predominantly out of self-interest, dates back to as early as the 5th century B.C.E. where it originated as a philosophy and way of life in Ancient Greece. The followers of this school of thought believed in the lack of necessity of societal institutions especially those of the religious and governmental functions (Fuller, 1931), promoted a simple and moderate way of living (Andersson, 1996), allegedly held themselves to higher standards of moral and ethical behaviors, and criticized those who only pursued money, power and wealth (Dudley, 1937; Goldfarb, 1991).

A quick search on Google using a combination of the keywords such as ‘cynicism’, ‘work’, ‘workplace’, ‘employees’, generates a return of at least 407,000 items and up to 8.45 million permutations including blog entries, business articles, and scholarly work spanning across decades. The results, pointing to the sources and outcomes of cynicism are mixed, with most results agreeing that cynicism is a negative element that could potentially plague and cripple an organization, while others (White, 1996) believe that employees, management and organizations could potentially benefit from cynical workplace or employees since they provide gut-reaction and unfiltered feedback. In addition, the common themes that are underscored throughout many academic and non-academic works mention that cynicism stems from repeated previous breaches

of trust, leading to a set of emotions and attitudes including but not limited to disappointment, criticism and pessimism towards the future that could be substantiated or unsubstantiated according to past and present information (Showkeir, 2010; Pearson, 2013; Hyatt, 2016).

A very recent study published by Stavrova and Ehlebracht (2016) examining survey data from thousands of people across United States and Germany discovered that cynics generally made less money than those who were more optimistic (Lebowitz, 2015). The rationale behind this finding suggested that cynics were less willing to collaborate with others, to ask for help, or to rely on others since they assume hidden motives behind others' behavior. Ironically, another link at the end of the online page where this article is located refers to a 2014 study by Oettingen who suggested that optimism could actually hinder people's chances of success (Baer, 2014).

Plenty of literature also supports the argument that cynicism is fluid, and that cynicism is detrimental to organizational change. For example, Wanous, Reichers and Austin (1994)'s research on 757 workers at a Midwestern manufacturing plant concluded that organizational cynicism can be defined as pessimism and hopelessness towards change due to prior and repeated mismanagement, disappointment and change attempts. Interestingly, those who were more cynical were not more likely to hold negative personality attributes compared to those who were not more cynical, suggesting that cynicism could be learned (and unlearned). Although cynicism is more prevalent among hourly and part time workers, likely because they have less information about an organization's decisions than do salaried workers, it impacts salaried workers' job satisfaction and commitment levels more severely. On the extreme end, the research has also found that rampant cynicism will definitely create a spiraling effect that will cripple the chances of future organizational change, and that failure of future change will essentially become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Grabmeier, date unspecified). The findings have

also been echoed and corroborated by Aslam, Ilyas, Imran and Ur-Rahman (2016), who found that this cynicism and resistance among employees increase their likelihood to display withdrawal and negative job satisfaction.

The purpose of this study is twofold: 1) to determine whether a positive relationship exists between organizational cynicism (independent variable) and self-reported attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior (dependent variable); and (2) to determine whether exposure to positive or negative organizational information in the form of short articles and sentences would moderate the effects of the aforementioned variables.

3) LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 History of Cynicism

Dating back to the 5th century B.C.E., cynicism as a philosophy and way of life started in Ancient Greece, where its followers believed that societal institutions, particularly those of the religious and governmental sectors, were unnecessary, unnatural and were subjected to despise (Fuller, 1931), and rather promoted a simple and moderate way of living (Andersson, 1996). These followers held themselves to hold high standards of morality and ethical behaviors and attacked those who did not (Dudley, 1937), as well as criticized their fellow citizens who chose only to pursue materialism, money and power (Goldfarb, 1991).

3.2 Contemporary definition of Cynicism

Fast forward to the contemporary times, where the definition of cynicism has evolved, yet nonetheless still remains largely negative. On one hand, our contemporary understanding of the word has deviated or evolved from that of the ancient Greeks, where the adherence to strict ethical or moral standards has been somewhat downplayed (Qian, 2007). As the topic of

cynicism has garnered attention since the 1990s across multiple disciplines such as psychology, sociology and business, the meanings and interpretations of the word have continued to evolve.

Judging by the dictionary definitions of the word ‘cynic’, a cynic is someone who is ‘a faultfinding captious critic’ (Merriam-Webster, 1999), ‘someone with little faith in human sincerity’ (Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 1995), or on the extreme spectrum, one ‘who shows a disposition to disbelieve in the sincerity and goodness of human motives and actions, and is wont to express this by sneers and sarcasm; a sneering fault-finder’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989).

3.3 Contemporary trends and conceptualization of cynicism

Kanter and Mirvis (1989), in their seminal and often-cited book The Cynical Americans, reported that 43% of Americans then were cynical, and that the public’s confidence in business and leadership was only about 15%, reflecting a much greater decrease from the reported 76% since the late 1960s. Specifically, they characterized cynicism as the distrust in human nature and social institutions after repeated unfulfilled promises by society (Qian, 2007).

The authors argued that cynical employees lacked trust in their organizations’ management, felt that they were being unfairly treated, and identified three factors which appeared to contribute to the growth of cynicism-- 1) the formation of unrealistic expectations of the self, others, organization or society at large, 2) the experience of disappointment after expectations were not been met, and 3) the disillusion and sense of betrayal, deceit, or been used by others. Correspondingly, they also came up with five constructs for cynicism, and argued that cynicism could be extended and applied to an organization. These five constructs were cynicism, depersonalization, estrangement, work ethic, and low self-esteem.

Building on Kanter and Mirvis, work on cynicism both across the business and academic literature in the 1990s rapidly expanded. The former is epitomized by Scott Adams' mid-90s newspaper comic strip Dilbert and bestselling book The Dilbert Principle, where the eponymous protagonist interacts with uncaring and incompetent leaders and unfortunate coworkers in his organization on a daily basis, and the author thereby constructs corporate America in a cynical light.

The concept of organizational cynicism as an attitude introduced and conceptualized by Dean, Brandes and Dharwadkar (1998). Unlike traditional conceptualization of cynicism, which focused on five main aspects, namely the personality approach, the societal/ institutional approach (Kanter and Mirvis, 1989), the employee cynicism approach, the occupational approach, and the organizational change approach, Dean et al (1998) introduced organizational cynicism as a fluid state where the degree of cynicism can change based on beliefs, behaviors and affects. They also introduced a tripartite model here for cynical attitude, namely "1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity; 2) negative affect toward the organization; and 3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviors toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect" (p. 345) (Dean et al 1998; Eaton, 2000).

This fluidity of cynicism has been corroborated and extended in other sources throughout the early 1990s, where Bateman, Sakano and Fujita (1992) and Stern, Stone, Hopkins and McMillion (1990) have also argued that the attitude is prone to change by exposure to factors in the subject's environment. Others, such as Guastello, Rieke, Guastello and Billings (1992) defined cynicism as a particular work value and that this value/ attitude is not related to any unchanging personality trait. Likewise, a 1994 study by Wanous, Reichers and Austin (1994)

found that organizational cynicism can be defined as pessimism and hopelessness towards change due to prior and repeated mismanagement and change attempts.

3.4 Antecedents of organizational cynicism

Taking into account Dean et al (1998)'s key element of organizational cynicism which focused on the fact that employees believe organizations lack integrity, Naus et al (2007) gives a list of antecedents consisting of characteristics, practices and events that involve organizations that can elicit the affects of organizational cynicism. Examples include 1) broken or unmet promises that give rise to psychological or real perceptions of contract breaches, 2) organizational politics at the expense of uprightness, 3) feeling of neglect and not being treated with respect and dignity, 4) lack of meaning of work, 5) lack of support and participation in decision making process, 6) managerial incompetence with lofty salaries, and 7) a history of failed change attempts, among others. These affects give rise to cynicism, also often accompanied by feelings of anger, rage, frustration and pessimism, which then translates into behaviors such as **'hostile impugning and vilification of motives... alienation, psychological exit and disengagement, a loss of faith in leaders... or as a distrust of person, group, ideology, social convention or institution'** (Naus et al, 2007).

It is useful to highlight here that earlier studies by Guastello et al (1992) found a strong correlation (0.79) between cynicism and work ethic, where people who believe or carry strong work ethics or relevant values are more prone to become cynical since they expect reciprocity (in the form of respect and dignity) from their employing organizations. Vice versa, those who do not place high value on honesty or sincerity tend to be less cynical since they learn over time to cope with it.

3.5 Approaches in Cynicism Discourse

3.5.1 Employee Cynicism Approach

Specifically, the foundations of the employee cynicism approach that Dean et al (1998) introduced for the purpose of organizational behavior was introduced by Andersson (1996) and Andersson and Bateman (1997), who concluded several findings. Firstly, they concluded that the targets of cynicism primarily included business organizations and business executives. Secondly, that negative emotions including cynicism also simultaneously contained feelings of contempt, frustration and hopelessness as attitudinal results of psychological ‘contract breaches’. Thirdly and most importantly, the latter study found that a) employee cynicism was positively related with high executive compensation, harsh layoffs and poor organizational and managerial performances, and b) that employees who were high on cynicism towards these three targets were unlikely in their intentions to carry out organizational behaviors that would overall benefit the organization.

3.5.2 Organizational Cynicism Approach, Abraham (2000)

Using all of these abovementioned resources as her starting points and reference, Abraham (2000) then greatly expanded on the definitions and dimensions of organizational cynicism. According to her, unlike general cynicism, where the individual generally directs this attitude towards society and businesses, organizational cynicism conceptually “refers to the lack, among workers, of the feelings of righteousness, confidence, fairness and sincerity towards the organization where they work” (Abraham, 2000). The emotional dimensions of this organizational cynicism include ‘disrespect, anger, boredom and shame’.

Furthermore according to Abraham (2000), the development of organizational cynicism can be seen as a mechanism of self-defense against the organization, which in this case serves as both the source of contempt as well as the target of derision. Correspondingly, employees with

high levels of organizational cynicism are of course more skeptical towards an organization's motives. Writing at a time amid the dot-com bubble, Abraham argued that employees with higher levels of organizational cynicism are more prone to believe that during companies' moves to 'rightsized' or 'restructure costs', their employers will exploit any opportune moment while on the way sacrificing principles such as 'honesty, fairness and sincerity'.

On the other hand, employees who report low levels of organizational cynicism are more prone to respond positively to positive social cues which make up the foundations of social exchange. In turn, these people are more committed their organizations, more connected to their social networks at work, and do not suffer from the same detachment and alienation as do those who score higher on the levels of organizational cynicism.

On a separate but relevant note, the health effects of cynicism, or cynical hostility, have also been well documented (Eaton, 2000). According to Everson et al (1997) and Greenglass and Julkunen (1989), cynical hostility is directly linked to an increase risk in cardiovascular disease, most likely mediated by a lack of social support.

3.5.3 Occupational Cynicism Approach

Interestingly, the occupational cynicism approach discussed by Dean et al (1998) invites another well-cited study by Niederhoffer (1967), one of the earliest researchers to document the subject. According to Niederhoffer, police cynicism occurs as a 'byproduct of anomie in the social structure' that is derived from a mixture of ambiguous roles and conflicting pressures from police work, and in turn translating into negative attitudes towards the police force (organizational cynicism) and the general public (work cynicism). Niederhoffer added that this resentment is made up of three elements, namely 1) a mixed feeling of hate, envy and hostility, 2) sense of powerlessness, and 3) continued re-experience of these feelings (Eaton, 2000). On an

extreme end, a police officer who was interviewed for this study even admitted to his hatred of civilians.

Blau (1974) documented a similar type of affect in medicine and social work, where students and young professionals who had just started out their careers in these fields begin to experience a ‘series of unmet expectations and unexpected events’ (Naus et al, 2007), culminating in what can be characterized as ‘reality shock’. As the subjects that these professionals work with are usually clients, patients or help recipients, affects such as appreciation and gratitude are usually anticipated; however in many cases, the subjects instead express emotions such as ‘resistance, negligence or even hostility’ (Naus et al, 2007). On a positive note, Blau (1974) argues that occupational cynicism may in fact increase a service provider’s proficiency and efficiency in a profession, as he/she is able to become less emotionally involved with the subjects and instead focus on procedure.

3.6 Examples of organizational cynicism effects in corporate and real world settings

Organizational cynicism has been recently well documented empirically in both the corporate and other real world settings. Byrne and Hochwarter (2008) discovered that among over 3,300 full time employees across governmental and non-governmental sectors, people with high cynicism levels actually interpreted cynicism differently, and that their performance in fact formed an inverse U curve with the amount of perceived support. Performance among them was highest when perceived support was at a moderate level, while performance was lowest when the perceived support was either highest or lowest.

Likewise, organizational cynicism also has a detrimental effect on altruistic behavior among employees. According to Konakli, Ozyilmaz and Cortuk (2013), 250 primary school teachers in 15 primary schools in Turkey held a medium level of cynicism, and that there existed a negative

relationship between organizational cynicism among teachers and their initiation of altruistic behaviors. In India, Nair and Kamalanabhan (2010) discovered that middle and senior managers who are generally less cynical are also less ethical, and that those employees among the management personnel at higher levels of organizational cynicism were less unethical than their peers at the junior levels.

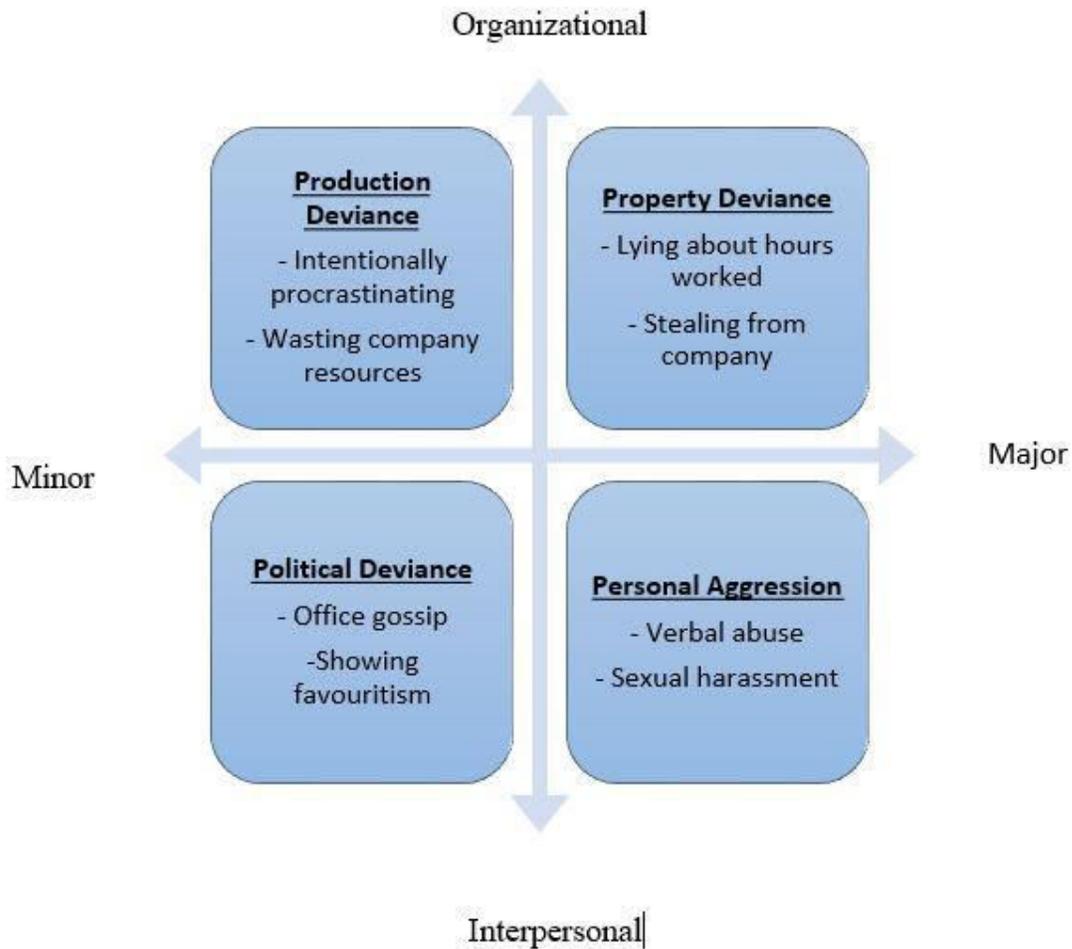
3.7 Conceptualization and Institutional Impacts of Workplace Deviance

The focus of this study is workplace deviance. In particular, the focus is on attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior. The reason for focusing on attitudes rather than actual behaviours is a pragmatic one: attitudes towards negative workplace deviance as manifested in behaviours is hard to measure, and so we look at attitudes as a proxy for willingness, and perhaps likelihood, to engage in deviance. Each of the questions in the dependent variable refers to a positive attitude towards engaging in a specific example of negative workplace deviance. According to Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004), the difference between unethical behavior and negative deviant behavior lies in the fact that the former deals with breaches of societal rules, while the latter focuses on violations of significant organizational norms (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007).

Robinson and Bennett (1995) defined workplace deviance as voluntary behavior that ‘violates significant organizational norms and, in doing so, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members, or both’. This definition is drawn from Kaplan (1975), who emphasized its voluntary nature since employees either lack motivation to conform, or become motivated to violate these expectations. Most importantly, Robinson and Bennett (1995) in the same study devised a four quadrant typology for deviant workplace behavior—on one hand a continuum along organizational and interpersonal, and on another hand a continuum along minor

and serious. Marking a departure from earlier literature, an important distinction on the type of deviance was made in that study: whether it was 1) organizational deviance (targeted towards the organization), or 2) interpersonal deviance (targeted towards members of an organization). In 2000, the same authors came up with a follow up study that included a list of 28 items for workplace deviance, which were further reduced to 19 (12 measuring organizational deviance and 7 measuring interpersonal deviance) after factor analysis. Attached on the next page is Figure A, an illustration of the typology and corresponding examples taken from their 2000 work (Robinson and Bennett, 2000).

Figure A: Illustration of Typology of Deviant Workplace Behaviors, adapted from Robinson & Bennett (2000)



There have been numerous estimates on the various impacts of negative workplace deviance, with figures generated differ vastly. McGurn (1988) reported that 75% of employees have reportedly stolen from their employees at least once, and Harper (1990) reported that somewhere between 33-75% of all employees have engaged in workplace theft, fraud, vandalism, sabotage or absenteeism (Bennett and Robinson, 2000). Greenberg in 1997 estimated that organizations lost up to USD 200 billion annually from employee theft, USD 4.2 billion for workplace violence and USD 5.3 billion on employees' non-related web surfing (Omar, 2011). More contemporary figures and studies have estimated annual employee theft in the US at about \$50 billion.

3.8 Causes and Predictors of Negative Employee Workplace Deviance

Many factors lead to negative workplace deviance, despite social mores governing individual behavior. Although society at large appreciates and values individuals who are honest and righteous, organizations could depend on employees to engage in dishonesty and deceit to gain a competitive edge (Sims, 1992). These behaviors, in turn, are also expected, supported and even encouraged by the organizations (Sims, 1992). As a result, Coccia (1998) had found that such organizations are prone to become toxic workplaces, producing employees who are plagued by poor performance and decision making, along with high levels of employee dissatisfaction and high levels of stress.

According to Sims (1992), toxic workplaces depend on a high level of interpersonal, face to face interactions among employees whose personal priorities and agendas do not coincide with that of the organization's primary interest. A second condition for the development of this type of workplace would be the presence of managers who are ineffective or immoral (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007).

As mentioned above, organizations could benefit from depending on employees to engage in dishonesty and deceit. This is a function of the ‘bottom line mentality’ (Appelbaum et al 2005, Sims, 1992), where employees are expected or encouraged to engage in unethical behavior for the benefit of the organizations’ financial gain. On the other hand, according to social learning theory, role models within any group or organization set the tones of their organizations, and will influence other members of a groups to mimic their behaviors. Hence, deviant role models will naturally influence others in a group to mimic deviant acts (Appelbaum et al, 2005). Trevino and Brown (2005) concurred, arguing that leaders who engage in such unethical practices are essentially creating an environment of allowance conducive for such behaviors to replicate within the ranks and organization.

Situational-based behavior constitutes a third predictor of workplace deviance. According to Henle et al (2005), certain conditions of the organizational environment predisposes employees to deviance, and factors could include ‘stressors, organizational frustration, lack of control of the **work environment, weak sanctions... and organizational changes** such as downsizing’ (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007). Lastly, for the purposes of this study, the emphasis on a person-based perspective (or an individual’s personality) as a predictor of deviance (Henle et al, 2005) will not be utilized because as stated in earlier sections, organizational cynicism is able to be learned and unlearned.

3.9 Other Underlying Conditions and Workplace Variables of Workplace Deviance Deviant

behavior can be seen as a combination of the abovementioned causes and predictors, none of which alone can be considered enough or sufficient. In addition to these elements, other factors underlying the possibility of workplace deviance also include ‘unfair treatment, organizational culture and climate and supervisory behavior’ (Caruana, 2001).

According to Robinson and Bennett (2000), a strong relationship between frustration and deviant behavior has been demonstrated. The origins of workplace deviance can be reflected from four major categories devised by Bolin and Heatherly (2001), which include theft approval, intention to quit, dissatisfaction with the organization and contempt of the company, of which the symptoms of such manifestations include ‘substance abuse, absenteeism, abuse of employment privileges and theft’.

Larger firms with greater resources have been demonstrated to be more likely to involve employees who engage in illegal or negative behavior, as such activities have been found to be linked to social acceptance within the organizations (Baucus and Near, 1991). The same researchers also found that negative deviance, specifically production and property deviance, are more likely to be associated with younger employees, part timers, those who are new into their jobs or careers, or who take up low-paying positions.

Demographic factors also influence unethical behavior and workplace deviance. According to Appelbaum et al (2005), four of these factors include gender, tenure, age, and education level. Their findings concluded that men tend to engage in more aggressive behavior than women at work, that employees with less tenure are more likely to commit property deviances (such as theft or sabotage), older employees tend to be more honest than their younger counterparts, and that the more educated the employee is, the less likely he or she will engage in unethical behavior.

The feeling of commitment is also instrumental in assessing the possibilities of unethical or deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Building on social bonding theory, Hirschi argued that a person “may be simply too busy doing conventional things to find time to engage in deviant behavior”. According to Sims (2002), employees with higher levels of job and organizational

satisfaction reported lower likelihoods of ethical transgression, and those who are most loyal and passionate about their work are also the least likely to quit.

Race and ethnicity may be another factor that can explain workplace deviance. Liao et al (2004) found that ethnic similarity increases the likelihood of workplace deviance, and that an increase in ethnic differences between employees was inversely proportional to the likelihood of deviance. They reasoned that this could possibly be because employees from different ethnicities feel the need to conform to organizational norms, in an effort to avoid undesirable consequences with not abiding by them.

The last point of discussion here involves the concept of organizational justice, where many have argued that workplace deviance occurs as a response to unfair treatment in the workplace. Drawing from equity theory, Henle et al (2005) argue that employees compare their fill of outcomes (pay, promotions and raises) with their inputs (skills, trainings, efforts, time). Equity occurs where a balance of outcomes and inputs occurs; and in contrast, when a discrepancy occurs, employees experience inequity. As such, resorting to acts of deviance would help them restore their senses of equality. This concept of organizational justice and revenge and retaliation will also be explored in the section under abusive supervision and workplace deviance.

3.10 Stress and Employee Workplace Deviance

The relationship between stress and workplace deviance has been very well documented, where a positive relationship between stress and workplace deviant behavior has been witnessed. According to Spector and Fox (2005), '**perceived stressors... can lead to emotional reactions and as a result can induce deviant behaviors in organizations**', a finding which was initiated by Chen and Spector (1992). Likewise, Fox, Spector and Miles' (2011) survey on organizations in

southern and central Florida determined that a ‘significant relationship between job stressors and deviance’ has been found, judging from the amount and frequencies of arguments, yelling or rudeness an employee experiences with his or her coworkers at a workplace. A meta-analysis by Herchkovis et al (2007) found that deviance serves as a coping method for workplace stressors. Along with interpersonal conflicts and situational constraints, workplace stressors serve as a strong predictor for workplace deviance.

Workplace stressors also cause other problems for the victims and employers. For example, Henle et al (2005) found that they have demonstrated a ‘relatively decreased productivity, lost work time and high turnover rate’ (Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek, 2007). Similarly, Appelbaum (2005) agreed that stressors are shown to lead to workplace deviance, and that all stressors (except workload) are directly proportional to an increase in ‘aggressive acts, theft, and the wanting to quit’.

The purpose of the research was to determine whether or not exposure to positive or negative information on organizations would moderate the effects of organizational cynicism on self-reported attitudes toward unethical workplace behavior. This study builds on the framework of Dean et al (1998), and specifically how negative organizational attitudes shape reactions to organizational events and decision making. There are two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards accepting unethical workplace behavior.

Hypothesis 2: Employees’ exposure to positive or negative organizational information will moderate the relationship between organizational cynicism and their attitudes toward accepting unethical workplace behavior.

4) METHODOLOGY

Participants who hold full time jobs were recruited on Prolific Academic, an online crowd-sourced research platform associated with Oxford University. The only participants who were recruited were those who held Prolific scores of at least 90 out of 100. This score is designed to let researchers know whether or not participants have provided quality responses in the past.

Study 1 – Method

Participants and Procedure

Two hundred and sixty-one participants completed Study 1, a scenario based study. The mean age among the respondents was 37.09 (SD = 10.03). 56.3% of respondents were female and 42.1% were male; 77.8% resided in the United Kingdom, 1.1% in Canada and 19.5% in the United States. Sixty-two percent held leadership positions of some capacity. Participants received GBP 1.00 for participating in the study.

Upon stating their consent to participate and entering the study, they were prompted to answer a set of 13 questions on a standardized, validated 5 point Likert scale developed by Brandes, Dharwadkar and Dean (1999) that measured their organizational cynicism. A distractor was also included that checked for their attention. Then, they proceeded to answer 20 questions on a 5 point Likert scale developed by Goldberg (1992) that assessed their personality profile according to the Big 5 Personality Factors, each with four questions (two distractors were also included that checked for their attention). The five aspects are as follows: openness, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability. Next, they were assigned to read a short fictional workplace behavior scenario (attached to Appendix) which was designed to present either positive or negative information about organizations, before being asked to write a

short synopsis of the paragraph to check for attention. Lastly, respondents were asked to complete the dependent variable— a set of 20 questions on a 7 point Likert scale that assessed the extent to which they agree whether various unethical workplace behaviors are acceptable in the workplace. For a respondent, the entire process was designed to be completed within 10-15 minutes.

Measures

Organizational cynicism: Organizational cynicism was measured using 13 questions, each on a 5-point scale ‘(Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree)’. Each of the question starts with the prompt ‘Thinking about your current organization, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement’. Sample questions include ‘I believe that my company says one thing and does another’, or ‘When my company says it’s going to do something, I wonder if it really will happen’. ($\alpha = 0.95$)

The dependent variable measures the extent to which the participants find an unethical workplace behavior acceptable. The acceptability of unethical workplace behavior was measured with 20 items on a 7-point scale ‘(Very Strongly Disagree to Very Strongly Agree)’. Samples of the 20 questions include ‘calling in sick when you just don’t feel like going to work’, and ‘taking extra-long breaks’ ($\alpha = 0.95$).

Manipulation

The manipulation for Study 1 was two short fictional workplace behavior scenarios (each about 250 words) that described either positive or negative organizational information. The pieces were written in a manner that emulates and summarizes the information covered by many corporate reports or whitepapers on institutional and corporate trends or behaviors, such as the Ethics at Work: 2015 Survey of Employees report. All of the conditions and wordings were kept

identical, apart from the information and figures that emphasized the differences in the positive or negative organizational information. Approval was sought and received from Ryerson University's Research Ethics Board. See Appendix (I) for the scenarios.

Results – Study 1

Means, reliability and standard deviations were calculated for 1) each of the five personality traits, 2) questions on organizational cynicism as a whole, and the 3) questions on attitudes towards unethical behavior as a whole. Interaction terms were created by mean centering the cynicism variables and personality variables to prepare for regression analyses. Multiple regression analyses were conducted using the interaction terms as moderator on the relationships between organizational cynicism and the manipulation on attitudes toward unethical behavior.

Two types of attention checks were used throughout the study— 1) distractor items and 2) an attention check. Distractors were placed throughout the study, one each among the organizational cynicism, personality test and dependent variable section where respondents have been explicitly prompted to fill out “please enter strongly agree” or “please enter moderately inaccurate” for a specific question. In addition, participants in Study 1 were asked to write a short synopsis of the article they read to check for attention. Responses that did not follow the requests, and those that included unsubstantial content pertaining to the articles that were assigned, were discarded. Of the 261 respondents recruited in Study 1, 73 were discarded. The analyses were then conducted on the remaining 188.

Attached on the next page is Table 1, a correlation table (that includes the reliabilities, means and standard deviations) that examines the relationships between average organizational cynicism, each of the big five personality categories, and attitudes towards unethical behavior.

Attached to its following page is Table 2, the results of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis between organizational cynicism and attitudes toward unethical behaviour. The articles (positive or negative) to which participants were exposed served as a moderator. Organizational cynicism was mean centered prior to computing the interaction term.

Table 1: Correlations Table for Study 1

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) Organizational Cynicism (.95)							
(2) Extroversion	.014	(.84)					
(3) Agreeableness	-.004	.269**	(.81)				
(4) Conscientiousness	-.183*	.027	-.015	(.80)			
(5) Emotional Stability	.293**	-.240**	-.071	-.248**	(.79)		
(6) Openness	.024	.098	.196**	.079	-.127	(.72)	
(7) Ethics	.068	-.036	-.158*	-.117	-.013	.011	(.95)
Mean	2.82	2.79	3.75	3.43	2.81	3.65	2.00
SD	1.34	.96	.79	.90	.92	.76	.89

*= Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

**= Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 2: Regression Table for Study 1

Variable	DV (Ethics)
Step 1	
IV (Organizational Cynicism)	.045
Moderator (Condition)	.017
R^2	.005
Step 2	
IV (Organizational Cynicism)	.003
Moderator (Condition)	.021
Interaction (Centered Org Cyn * Condition)	.072
R^2	.003
Total R^2	.008

Note: Values presented are unstandardized coefficients.

As demonstrated in Table 1, there is no relationship between attitudes of organizational cynicism and attitudes towards unethical behavior as a whole ($p > .05$). As a result, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Table 2 shows the results of the regression analysis. The results suggest that there is no significant relationship between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards unethical behavior. As a result, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Taking into consideration the positive or negative conditions that participants are exposed to serving as moderator, the relationship between the two variables weakens, and a total of 0.5% ($R^2 = .005$) of attitudes towards unethical behavior can be attributed to organizational cynicism. When an interaction term is included in the model, total R^2 increased to .008.

Study 2 – Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were again recruited from Prolific and received GBP 1.25 in appreciation of their participation in a 15 minute study. One hundred and forty-four participants completed Study 2 ($M_{age} = 35.77$; 47% female). Sixty percent of participants were UK residents with the remaining participants residing in the United States or Canada. Sixty-five percent held leadership positions of some capacity.

As in Study 1, participants first completed the sets of questions that assessed their attitudes on organizational cynicism and measure of personality. They were then given instructions for a scrambled sentence task, which served as the manipulation for this study in lieu of the scenario readings in Study 1, before getting an opportunity to practice the task. Once they understood the procedures they were given six minutes to unscramble a set of 15 sentences

designed to prime either positive or negative organizational behavior. Following the task they completed the ethics DV used in Study 1.

Measures

All measures were identical to those from Study 1. ($\alpha = 0.94$)

Manipulation

The manipulation for Study 2 was the two sets of scrambled sentences that, when unscrambled, will reflect either positive or negative organizational information. The purpose of incorporating this task is to find out whether exposure to positive or negative organizational cynicism information through a series of short sentences are able to shift beliefs and attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior.

Each set of scrambled sentences contains 15 short scrambled sentences that each consisted of five words, including a filler word. An example of a scrambled sentence would be ‘decisions fair mug managerial are’, when unscrambled will become ‘Managerial decisions are fair’. Like Study 1, all of the conditions and wordings were kept identical for the two treatment groups, apart from the wordings that emphasized the differences in the positive or negative organizational information. The sets of scrambled sentences can be found in Appendix II.

Results – Study 2

The steps and procedures used to analyze the results from Study 2 were identical to those from Study 1.

Similar to Study 1, respondents who failed to follow the instructions on the attention checks and correctly answer them were discarded. In addition to discarding these respondents, those who did not fully unscramble questions among the question sets were also discarded, e.g. having left word choices out, as well as those who left out two or more sentences. Of the 144

respondents recruited in Study 1, 17 were discarded. The analyses were then conducted on the remaining 127.

Table 3 shows the correlations, reliabilities, means and standard deviations for all of the variables in this study. Table 4 provides the results of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis between the organizational cynicism and attitudes toward unethical behaviour. The scrambled sentence task conditions (positive or negative) were used as a moderator in the analysis.

Table 3: Correlations Table for Study 2

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) Organizational Cynicism (.94)							
(2) Extroversion	.005	(.84)					
(3) Agreeableness	.057	.232**	(.74)				
(4) Conscientiousness	-.079	.258**	.113	(.69)			
(5) Emotional Stability	.295**	-.290**	-.071	-.285**	(.71)		
(6) Openness	.106	.199*	.210*	.124	-.071	(.64)	
(7) Ethics	.152	-.154	-.192*	-.144	-.023	-.158	(.95)
Mean	2.96	2.70	3.83	3.42	2.89	3.80	1.83
SD	.98	1.03	.78	.86	.93	.78	1.00

*= Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

**= Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 4: Regression Table for Study 2

Variable	DV (Ethics)
Step 1	
IV (Organizational Cynicism)	.165
Moderator (Condition)	-.237
R^2	.037
Step 2	
IV (Organizational Cynicism)	.132
Moderator (Condition)	-.237
Interaction (Centered Org Cyn * Condition)	.077
R^2	.002
Total R^2	.039

Note: Values presented are unstandardized coefficients.

As demonstrated in Table 3, the relationship between organizational cynicism and attitudes toward unethical behavior was not significant and Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

According to the regressions table of Study 2, there is no significant relationship between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards unethical behavior. As a result, Hypothesis 2 was again not supported. Taking into consideration the positive or negative conditions that participants are exposed to serving as moderator, the relationship between the two variables weakens, and a total of 0.2% ($R^2 = .002$) of ethical outcome can be attributed to organizational cynicism. When an interaction term is included in the model, total R^2 increased to .039.

5) DISCUSSION

This overall study was designed to assess two hypotheses, specifically whether 1) a positive relationship exists between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior, and 2) whether exposure to positive/ negative organizational information will moderate the relationship between organizational cynicism and attitudes toward unethical workplace behavior. As none of the findings from this overall study has generated results with p values significant enough at the .05 or .01 levels to illustrate any relationship, both hypotheses have not been supported. The results from this study have demonstrated no relationships between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards acceptance of unethical workplace behavior, and the effects from positive or negative organizational information do not serve as strong moderators between the two variables.

As Hypothesis 1 was not supported, the results from this study are unable to address or bridge the persistent gap in literature involving the relationship between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior. That being said, there is however, a movement of the results in the expected direction from the independent to dependent variables taking into account the moderator and interaction terms, even though the figures have not reached significance. There could be many possible explanations for this. Since the sample pool from this study was derived from a primarily UK population, cultural differences could be a major determinant in explaining why there is a gap between the two variables. This proposition could be a possibility given the issue is not just confined to the United Kingdom, considering that literature from Nair and Kamalanabhan (2010) examining middle and senior level managers in India found that those who are less cynical tend to be less ethical. Also, it is also possible that the manipulation was not strong enough to have generated an effect. It is also possible that the

two variables are simply unrelated to each other, that the level of organizational cynicism an individual possesses simply does not affect changes in attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior. Lastly, it is also possible that a Type II error has occurred in both studies due to a lack of power both studies. This could occur if the number of participants recruited here has not reached the number to be representative of the entire population that this study covers, even though high internal reliabilities have been recorded across both the independent and dependent variables.

Findings from Konakli, Ozyilmaz and Cortuk (2013) and Nair and Kamalanabhan (2010) perhaps relate most closely with the overall direction of Hypothesis 1, yet focus on different sets of sample participants and have generated different results. Specifically, the former study was conducted using questionnaires distributed to 250 primary school teachers at 15 primary schools across the central district of Kocaeli, Turkey, and found that among Turkish primary school teachers, those who held high levels of organizational cynicism were less likely and less willing to engage in the altruistic behavior. The latter study was conducted using a set of vignettes developed, pretested and used by Fritzsche and Becker (1984) and was modified to make them fit into an Indian context—the study found a positive relationship between levels of cynicism and ethical behavior among middle and senior level managers in India, which takes the opposite direction of Hypothesis 1. As participants in this particular study were exposed to the manipulation in between cynicism and attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior, it is also possible that the relationship between the two variables have been washed out by the manipulation. What this entails is that if there were indeed any relationships between the two variables, the positioning and the effects of the manipulation for this study could have nullified the relationship.

Several reasons could also explain why Hypothesis 2 was not supported, even though as with Hypothesis 1, the results showed movement in the expected direction yet did not reach significance. It is possible that within the duration of the study, the manipulations in the form of the short articles and scrambled sentences have not been strong enough to shift participants' attitudes on unethical workplace behavior based on their levels of organizational cynicism. It is also possible that neither positive nor negative organizational cynicism can be reproduced simply by these written verbal manipulation, that the environment an individual is in (e.g. organization, institution or society at large), workplace stressors, or behavior of people that one comes to interact with (e.g. supervisors, managers and peers) are predominantly responsible for shifting these effects on unethical workplace behavior.

Although the results from this study have not demonstrated significant results between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards unethical workplace, this study is still important in several aspects. It has long been known that cynicism among employees has been a persistent issue that weakens organizations, despite the fact that organizations are often responsible for generating employee cynicism and that cynicism cannot be accurately traced and pinpointed to a single source. The implications of employees' organizational cynicism for organizations have been adequately demonstrated through decades of literature, including negative job satisfaction to loss in productivity, performance and support for future change. It is with this intent that this study was carried out – to examine whether or not cynics are more likely to endorse unethical behavior. If the results had turned out to be substantial, it is expected to serve as a red flag for organizations, so that they could come up with possible measures to curb organizational cynicism in order to minimize potential losses due to possible unethical behavior.

6) LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Many limitations existed in these studies, even though the results did not show any significant relationship between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior. Neither hypothesis was supported based on the results of this study.

The first limitation pertains to the overall sample pool. As Prolific is a UK based platform, the participants gathered for these studies have been predominantly British. In terms of racial makeup, they have been overwhelmingly Caucasian (86%). These two attributes alone dictate that the respondents have been derived from a very specific subset of the overall working population worldwide, where the issues of organizational cynicism and ethics are also widely applicable. All respondents hold fulltime positions, which further narrows down the scope of the population, and hence the generalizability of these findings among other workers worldwide. For example, the findings from Nair and Kamalanabhan (2010) found a positive relationship between the levels of cynicism and ethics among mid to senior level Indian managers at an IT company, hence taking the opposite direction of Hypothesis 1. As with this study, their study was also limited in its scope and generalizability as it occurred and focused on an Indian setting.

Secondly, had the length of the study and tasks that participants were asked to perform been different, the results produced could have been inherently different. For example, if participants in Study 2 were tasked to perform the task in Study 1 and vice versa, the results produced could consequently be different since different participant pools will be used. However, this limitation is inevitable and cannot be addressed since participants at any given time enroll according to a set of demographic criteria. If participants were given a longer or shorter period of time to complete the studies, the results could have been different due to longer or shorter time constraints that may shape or alter participants' perception and attitudes. Also, as the two studies rely largely on respondents' verbal skills in the form of reading and writing,

respondents who were relatively weak in these two aspects could be placed at a disadvantage and hence generate inaccurate results. Although it is unlikely that this would considerably affect the results from Study 2 since each set of sentences were relatively short and were thus less time-consuming to unscramble, it could be a possibility in Study 1, where respondents were essentially expected to recall and summarize what they had read. In addition, a study that had been set up differently could produce different results judging by their effects, e.g. where an audio or video clip had been used in place of the short articles in Study 1.

As the study took place in an artificially contrived situation (online platform) across a relatively brief period of time (10 to 15 minutes), it is highly plausible that this set up was not effective enough in mirroring real life situations and environments that give rise to organizational cynicism and attitudinal shifts towards unethical workplace behavior. It is also possible that the monetary compensation offered for this study (GBP 1.00 or GBP 1.25 for 10 to 15 minutes of work) was not incentivizing enough for people to put in their best efforts, hence leading to inaccurate results. Also, as participants in this particular study were exposed to the manipulation that was placed in between cynicism and attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior, it is also possible that the relationship between the two variables have been washed out by the manipulation.

The final limitation could involve a discrepancy between what participants provided as answers versus what they actually believe in, which is in fact a concern in any study that relies on self-reported information. This is an example of the social desirability bias, where respondents in a study tend to answer questions that would be perceived as more favorable and acceptable according to social norms, thus producing inaccurate and unreliable results. In other words, regardless of how a study is set up, there is always the possibility that people lie

consciously or unconsciously, and again reinforcing the adage that there's a difference between what people do (or believe), versus what they say they do (or believe).

7) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

General suggestions for future research could include ideas for bridging gaps that had either been opened up by this research or left persistent from previous research. Specifically, future research can 1) focus on the limitations of this research, and/or 2) look for possibilities on improving this research. For the former, suggestions for possible topics include exploring the relationship between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior in a country outside of the UK, among different or specific age groups, gender, race, occupation, industry, income and tax brackets, or leadership positions.

As for the latter, there are also numerous ways to improve upon this current study. Some of the ideas have been mentioned in the limitation section, for example, providing participants with more incentives (monetary or otherwise) in hopes of generating more genuine or accurate responses, or substituting the current manipulation for an audio or video clip. Other possible ideas could include increasing the time and length of the manipulation, by for example, incorporating more than one article or sentence sets that would emphasize on the positive or negative conditions.

8) CONCLUSION

This study was conducted with an overarching goal to bridge a persistent gap in the literature between organizational cynicism and attitudes towards unethical workplace behavior. A deductive study was carried out using Dean et al (1998)'s work as a framework, with two hypotheses proposed, namely 1) whether a positive relationship exists between organizational cynicism (independent variable) and self-reported attitudes towards unethical workplace

behavior (dependent variable); and (2) whether exposure to positive or negative organizational information in the form of short articles and sentences would moderate the effects of the aforementioned variables. Based on the results from both Study 1 and Study 2, neither hypothesis was supported although results from both studies have moved in the predicted direction and yet did not reach significance (evidence from past literature would conjecture otherwise). Reasons that Hypothesis 1 has not been supported could include a cultural bias in the sample pool, the possibility of an ineffective manipulation, the possibility that the independent and dependent variables were not actually mutually related, and the possibility that a Type II error has not been detected. Reasons that Hypothesis 2 has not been supported include the possibility of an effect being washed away due to the placement of the manipulation, the duration of the study being ineffective in considerably shifting attitudes, and the possibility that attitudes cannot simply be manipulated by verbal manipulation. Limitations of this study and recommendations for future research have also been discussed. The gaps that are left open by this research would be best addressed by future research.

Appendix I: Two Fictional Workplace Behavior Scenarios for Study 1

Positive Scenario:

The Organizational Behavior Institute (OBI), one of the world's largest nonprofit organizations that serves as a watchdog on establishing and maintaining high standards for business behavior, recently published its 2016 Whitepaper on Employee Experiences. The study is by far the largest ever conducted in the UK, with data derived from interviews with over 700 full time workers nationwide. Over the last three years, overall employee experiences are more positive and employees perceive that businesses predominantly behave honestly, and that employees have not felt compelled to compromise their integrity. Two of the key findings from the report's summary are particularly encouraging and worth reporting, namely that 74% of respondents agreed that honesty is always or frequently practiced in their workplaces, and that 60% of all respondents responded to 'yes' when asked if they were 'satisfied with the outcome of speaking up' when they spotted small infractions. When asked to elaborate on their answers, respondents offered concrete examples, such as generally feeling satisfied that a promotion of a peer is fair and well earned, or that their higher ups are willing to listen to them and offer changes to their work or workplace when problems are raised. In line with the aforementioned findings, only 15% felt 'pressured to compromise their current organization's standards of acceptable behavior', and 87% believed that 'people were being treated appropriately or fairly'.

Negative Scenario:

The Organizational Behavior Institute (OBI), one of the world's largest nonprofit organizations that serves as a watchdog on establishing and maintaining high standards for business behavior, recently published its 2016 Whitepaper on Employee Experiences. The study is by far the largest ever conducted in the UK, with data derived from interviews with over 700 full time workers nationwide. Over the last three years, overall employee experiences are more negative, employees believe that businesses behave predominantly dishonestly, and employees have increasingly felt compelled to compromise their integrity. Two of the key findings from the report's summary are particularly disturbing and worth reporting, namely that 74% of respondents disagreed that honesty is always or frequently practiced in their workplaces, and that 60% of all respondents responded to 'no' when asked if they were 'satisfied with the outcome of speaking up' when they spotted small infractions. When asked to elaborate on their answers, respondents offered concrete examples, such as generally disagreeing that a promotion of a peer is fair and well earned, or that their higher ups are unwilling to listen to them and offer changes to their work or workplace when problems are raised. In line with the aforementioned findings, 75% have felt 'pressured to compromise their current organization's standards of acceptable behavior, and 87% believed that 'people were being treated inappropriately or unfairly'.

Appendix II: Two Sets of Scrambled Sentences Used for Study 2

Positive Set:

1) decisions fair mug managerial are
Answer: Managerial decisions are fair.

2) are coworkers book trustworthy my
Answer: My coworkers are trustworthy.

3) generally wait teams reliable are
Answer: Teams are generally reliable.

4) keep leaders their be promises
Answer: Leaders keep their promises.

5) have organizational call integrity leaders
Answer: Organizational leaders have integrity.

6) deserved rewards wrote are always
Answer: Rewards are always deserved.

7) my are honest with colleagues
Answer: My colleagues are honest.

8) rewarded hard is green work
Answer: Hard work is rewarded.

9) useful workplace run are rules
Answer: Workplace rules are useful.

10) are people never stairs selfish
Answer: People are never selfish.

11) employees changes jump all benefit
Answer: Changes benefit all employees.

12) sorting memos leaders send the
Answer: Leaders send the memo.

13) teams people grass in work
Answer: People work in teams.

14) week they textbook all worked
Answer: They worked all week.

15) purple leader the dedicated is
Answer: The leader is dedicated.

Negative Set:

1) purple leader the dedicated is
Answer: The leader is dedicated.

2) decisions unfair mug managerial are
Answer: Managerial decisions are unfair.

3) are coworkers book untrustworthy my
Answer: My coworkers are untrustworthy.

4) generally wait teams unreliable are
Answer: Teams are generally unreliable.

5) break leaders their be promises
Answer: Leaders break their promises.

6) lack organizational call integrity leaders
Answer: Organizational leaders lack integrity.

7) deserved rewards wrote are never
Answer: Rewards are never deserved.

8) my are dishonest with colleagues
Answer: My colleagues are dishonest.

9) rewarded hard green isn't work
Answer: Hard work isn't rewarded.

10) workplace run are useless rules
Answer: Workplace rules are useless.

11) are people often stairs selfish
Answer: People are often selfish.

12) management changes jump only benefit
Answer: Changes only benefit management.

13) sorting memos leaders send the
Answer: Leaders send the memo.

14) teams people grass in work
Answer: People work in teams.

15) week they textbook all worked
Answer: They worked all week.

Appendix III: Online Consent Form for Participation in Research

TITLE: Organizational Attitudes

Introduction and Purpose of this Research

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this study conducted by ShiChao (Lawrence) Yuan, Dr. Kristyn Scott and Dr. Chris MacDonald from the Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University. The purpose of this research is to better understand differences in attitudes toward organizations. We are requesting your assistance as a voluntary participant in this study to help us further develop the knowledge base in this area. All of the questionnaires that we are asking you to fill out are for research purposes only.

What You Are Being Asked to Do & Compensation

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete several questionnaires and read through a short scenario. The entire process will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will receive £1.00 in appreciation of your participation. In order for all of your answers to be collected you must go to the end of the survey and click 'submit survey'. This will demonstrate your full consent to participation.

Potential Benefits

Although we cannot guarantee any benefits to you personally as a result of your participation, the results of this studies will help us better understand organizational attitudes and how they differ among employees.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will have no impact on future relations with Ryerson University. Please be assured that all data generated during this study will remain anonymous. To ensure confidentiality, your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous and cannot be traced back to your name or identity and none of this information you provide will in any way be used to identify you personally and no personal information will appear in any published study.

Please note that you will be completing the questionnaires on Qualtrics which is located on a USA-based server. Consequently, Qualtrics or USA authorities may access survey data in some forms (e.g., aggregate usage information) and under strict policies. Qualtrics employs a variety of security features to make sure that the data collected are not accessible by outside bodies. More information on Qualtrics' security systems can be viewed here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/security-statement/>. Information regarding their protective privacy policy is available here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>.

Your decision to participate in this study will remain completely confidential and only the researchers named above will have access to any of the individual data. All data will be stored on

a password-protected computer in a locked office and shared through Google Drive in the researchers' offices. Any data used in conference presentations and in journal publications will be presented in aggregate form only. We will store the data for five years after any research papers based on it are published at which point all digital files will be deleted. If needed, the graduate supervisors will use the data for their own research and dissemination in connection to their previous study.

Potential Risks

Although there are no risks anticipated as a result of your participation in this study, because some of the questions ask you about how you feel about your current organization, you may feel uncomfortable answering these questions. Because this study is completed online there is no way to associate you with your answers. Additionally, you may decline to answer any question, and may withdraw your participation at any point with no consequences by closing your browser. Even if you withdraw, you will still receive credit for the portion of the study in which you do participate. Incomplete data will be deleted and not used in any of our analyses.

This study has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Boards at Ryerson University.

If you wish to obtain further information regarding your rights as a participant, you may contact:

Ryerson Research Ethics Board Coordinator, Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation, rebchair@ryerson.ca.

You may also contact myself at sl yuan@ryerson.ca, Dr. Kristyn Scott at (416) 979-5000 x2482 (kristyn.scott@ryerson.ca) and Dr. Chris MacDonald at (416) 979-5000 x 6903 (chris.macdonald@ryerson.ca) for further information or to answer any questions about this research.

I agree to participate in research being conducted by ShiChao (Lawrence) Yuan, Dr. Kristyn Scott and Dr. Chris MacDonald. I understand that I will be asked to complete several questionnaires and it will take approximately ten (10) minutes. I understand that I will receive £1.00 in appreciation of my participation. I understand that I can withdraw my consent to participate at any time and by giving consent I am not giving up any of my legal rights.

If you do not wish to participate, please close your browser now.

Having read and understood the above information, I agree (1) to participate in this study, and (2) to permit use of my data for research purposes.

✓ I agree to participate in the study.

Appendix IV: 13 Questions Assessing Organizational Cynicism

Thinking about your current organization, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe that my company says one thing and does another.					
My company's policies, goals, and practices seem to have little in common.					
When my company says it's going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen.					
My company expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another.					
I see little similarity between what my company says it will do and what it actually does.					
When I think about my company, I experience irritation.					
When I think about my company, I experience aggravation.					
When I think about my company, I experience tension.					
When I think about my company, I experience anxiety.					
I complain about how things happen at my company to friends outside the organization.					
I exchange "knowing" glances with my co-workers					
I often talk to others about the way things are run at my company.					
I criticize my company's practices and policies with others					
Please enter Strongly Agree (attention check)					

Appendix V: 20 Questions Assessing Personality Profile

Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you are, and roughly your same age. So that you can describe yourself in an honest manner, your responses will be kept in absolute confidence. Indicate for each statement whether it is a very inaccurate, moderately inaccurate, neither accurate nor inaccurate, moderately accurate, or very accurate description of you.

	Very Inaccurate	Moderately Inaccurate	Neither Accurate Nor Inaccurate	Moderately Accurate	Very Accurate
I am the life of the party.					
I sympathize with others' feelings					
I get chores done right away					
I have frequent mood swings					
I have a vivid imagination					
I don't talk a lot					
I am not interested in other people's problems					
I often forget to put things back in their proper place					
I am relaxed most of the time					
I am not interested in abstract ideas					
I talk to a lot of different people at parties					
I feel others' emotions					
Please enter Moderately Inaccurate (attention check)					
I like order					
I get upset easily					
I have difficulty understanding abstract ideas					
I keep in the background					
I am not really interested in others					
I make a mess of things					
I seldom feel blue					
I do not have a good imagination					

Appendix VI: 20 Questions on Attitudes Towards Unethical Workplace Behavior

The following statements refer to behaviors that may occur in the workplace. For each statement, please indicate the extent to which you agree that it is an acceptable behavior.

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
Calling in sick when you just don't feel like going to work							
Taking office supplies from work for your personal use at home							
Taking credit for someone else's ideas							
Taking credit for someone else's work							
Taking extra-long breaks							
Wasting time on social media or the Internet during working hours							
Stealing a co-worker's food or beverage from the office fridge							
Criticizing a colleague's work because you don't like them							
Submitting an expense claim that you know is misleading							
Failing to report a problem that you believe poses a safety risk to co-							

workers							
Encouraging a co-worker to do something that you know to be unethical							
Invading a co-worker's privacy by looking through their desk or locker							
Failing to report sexual harassment witnessed in the workplace							
Failing to report bullying in the workplace							
Ignoring your employer's illegal actions							
Submitting work-related reports that you know are incorrect							
Offering someone a bribe							
Accepting a bribe							
Accepting a business-related gift that you know is being given to influence your decisions							
Coming to work while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs							
Please Enter Very Strongly (attention check)							

Appendix VII: Debrief Form for Study 1

Debrief Form

Thank you for helping out with this study! The phenomenon of interest that we are interested in exploring here is the relationship between organizational cynicism and ethical behavior. Organizational cynicism is a relatively new phenomenon that has been identified and studied over the last couple of decades, and unlike what we usually think of cynicism as a static personality trait, organizational cynicism is a fluid state that can be learned and unlearned. Based on existing literature, we predict that the level of organizational cynicism is expected to be positively correlated to the levels of self-reported unethical behavior. The scenarios that you have received for your scenario reading are purely fictional, and was expected to give you either a positive or negative prime that is expected to alter your attitudes and hence your self-reported ethical behavior. Due to the nature of this study, we could not disclose the intent of our study at the beginning to avoid compromising the data. If you are uncomfortable with this or have any questions, please contact me at slyuan@ryerson.ca to have your data removed from the study.

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