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**ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM:
A SOCIAL INFORMATION PROCESSING PERSPECTIVE**

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Organizational Cynicism:

A Social Information Processing Perspective

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

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JIALING XIAO

ABSTRACT

Prior studies on organizational cynicism mainly adopt a social exchange perspective in explaining how an employee's experiences with the organization or leader influence the development of organizational cynicism. Less effort has been made to explore other sources or possible mechanisms that influence one's organizational cynicism. In particular, we have little knowledge concerning the role of coworkers in how employees develop organizational cynicism. This dissertation aims to uncover additional antecedents of organizational cynicism. A social information processing (SIP) perspective is used to examine the role of coworkers in an employee's development of organizational cynicism and the subsequent employee work outcomes. The effect of the focal employee's group tenure and the consistency of peers' views on such social process are investigated.

Two independent studies were conducted with data from different sources (peers, focal employee, and direct supervisor) at different times to test the research model. The first study was conducted with a leading pharmacy company in mainland China, and the final sample included 377 employees and 100 store managers. The second study was conducted in a logistics company. In a three-wave survey, 31 leaders and 225 employees participated. Both studies suggested that peers' organizational cynicism significantly predicted the focal employee's organizational cynicism and related work outcomes (work engagement, CWB, OCB). In addition, such social information process was conditioned on the focal employee's group tenure and the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism, such that the shorter the group tenure and the more consistency among peers' views, the stronger the peers' influence.

This research advances our current literature by uncovering how coworkers' influence affects the construction of organizational cynicism and the subsequent employee outcomes.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“A cynic is not merely one who reads bitter lessons from the past; he is one who is prematurely disappointed in the future.”

—Sydney J. Harris

Organizational cynicism has important implications for the organization, though it has not yet become a popular concept in the current organizational research. It is derived from the cynicism concept in the social sciences. Social psychologists have long noted the important impact of cynicism on human life (Houston & Vavak, 1991; Mills & Keil, 2005; Pattyn, Hiel, Dhont, & Onraet, 2012). It was not until the 1990s that cynicism in the workplace began to draw researchers' attention (Bateman, Sakano, & Fujita, 1992; Kanter & Mirvis, 1989, 1991). With a rather short research history, organizational cynicism is still at its initial research stage.

To provide a better introduction to this concept, I first explain how organizational cynicism arises as an important organizational concept and discuss the significance of researching organizational cynicism. Then I state the unanswered questions and research need in the current literature as well as the research objectives. An overview of the research and the research contribution are

then provided. Finally, the research structure of the overall thesis is presented at the end of this chapter.

The Significance of Researching Organizational Cynicism

Organizational cynicism refers to one's belief that the employing organization is self-oriented, lacks morality, and tends to exploit employees when given the opportunity (Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998). Emerging studies have found that organizational cynicism has important implications for employee outcomes, such that it erodes employees' organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Abraham, 2000; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003), induces employees' withdrawal behaviors (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Mignonac, Herrbach, Serrano Archimi, & Manville Maslach., 2017; Treadway, Hochwater, Ferris, Kacmar, Douglas, Ammeter et al., 2004), and increases employees' deviant behaviors (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997).

Despite initial investigations that linked organizational cynicism to various antecedents and outcomes, we lack a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of organizational cynicism, as evidence from previous studies is too scattered to form a holistic view. I consider organizational cynicism as an important organizational concept that warrants more research because it has a great impact on important organizational outcomes. Below, I specify my interest in researching organizational cynicism.

First, organizational cynicism is prevalent in the workplace. Kanter and Mirvis (1989, 1991) noted that about half of working Americans hold cynical

attitudes toward their workplaces. This finding is especially noteworthy given that organizational cynicism carries negative connotations, and thus people tend to underreport the negativity due to social desirability and information sensitivity. For example, data about abusive supervision or deviant behavior are usually at the low end of the scale. However, unlike the other negative constructs, organizational cynicism in most studies has a mean score above the midpoint of the scale. We can expect that the actual level of cynicism in the workplace may be even higher. Therefore, cynicism is an important phenomenon in the organization and worth research efforts.

Second, organizational cynicism is a distinct construct in the organizational research, and it can predict unique employee outcomes. It is one's belief that the organization is self-oriented and low in morality. The belief is based on an assessment of the general character of the organization, not on the job characteristics or the relationship one has with the organization. Empirical evidence supports the distinctiveness of organizational cynicism from relevant concepts. Organizational cynicism is predictive of unique employee behaviors that may not otherwise be predicted by other organizational concepts (for example, organizational trust or job satisfaction). Examples of unique consequences are employees' compliance with unethical requests (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Fritz, O'Neil, Popp, Williams, & Arnett, 2013) and deviant behaviors, such as badmouthing of the organization (Wilkerson, Evans, Davis, 2008). In a meta-analysis, Chiabura, Peng, Oh, Banks, and Lomeli (2013) found that organizational cynicism is more important than trust in predicting job performance. Thus, organizational cynicism is a distinct concept worthy of more research.

Third, besides predicting unique employee outcomes, organizational cynicism has important impacts on a wide range of employee outcomes, including employees' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. Cynical employees are more likely to experience negative emotions in the workplace, perceive that their work is unworthy of effort, feel hopeless of positive change, and are less likely to be motivated. They are more likely to leave the organization or behave destructively in the organization (Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998). A comprehensive understanding of organizational cynicism is helpful to improve organizational functioning.

Organizational cynicism is prevalent in the workplace, is conceptually different from other concepts in the organizational research, and has unique and great impacts on organizational outcomes. However, due to its rather short intellectual history, we only have limited understanding of how such a negative belief is formed. Moreover, we do not have much solid empirical support to understand its important implications at work. Previous studies provide some evidence about the influence of organizational cynicism. However, the design adopted in most prior studies may not accurately reveal cynicism in the regular workplace context. Most of these studies used student samples (e.g., Kim, Bateman, Gilbreath, & Andersson, 2009), student solicited samples (e.g., Evans, Goodman, & Davis, 2011), or educational or medical samples (e.g., English & Chalon, 2011) to examine organizational cynicism. With the exception of a few studies that used a time-lagged design (Kuo, Chang, Quinton, Lu, & Lee, 2015; Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2005; Wilkerson et al., 2008), most studies used a cross-sectional design, which makes causality of the relationship unclear.

Therefore, I find a compelling need to study organizational cynicism to lift the veil of uncertainty.

Research Gaps and Research Questions

It is important to understand how and why employees develop organizational cynicism because such a negative belief has important implications on work outcomes.

Previous studies investigating antecedences of organizational cynicism mainly focus on employees' direct interaction with the organization or with their leader. For example, harsh layoffs (Andersson, Bateman, 1997), perceived insufficient support from the organization (Byrne & Hochwater, 2008) or from the supervisor (Cole, Bruch, & Vogel, 2006), perceived injustice or unfair treatment (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Pugh, Skarlicki, & Passell, 2003), or low quality of relationship with leaders (Davis & Gardner, 2004) lead to a sense that the organization violates the exchange relationship, and thus employees form cynical beliefs and accordingly react negatively to the organization. These initial investigations are invaluable for us to understand that cynical attitude is developed based on one's experiences in the organization. However, we have little knowledge about the role of coworkers in the process of how employees develop organizational cynicism.

One's coworkers in the same workgroup (peers) constitute one's immediate surrounding environment at work. Therefore, one's peers greatly influence one's work-related beliefs and attitudes (Nail & MacDonald, 2007). It is

important to understand the influence of peers on the focal employee's organizational cynicism.

Moreover, most past studies adopt a social exchange perspective and argue that an employee's negative experiences in the organization result in an imbalanced perception of the exchange relationship, and thus he/she develops a negative attitude toward the organization (Andersson, 1996; Dean et al., 1998). However, while organizational cynicism is a belief based on one's perception of the general character of the organization and not limited to the perception of the relationship one has with the organization, the social exchange perspective may not well explain the wide coverage of organizational cynicism in the workplace. If using the social exchange theory to explain such a phenomenon, we may infer that the majority of organizations in our society are exploitative and form imbalanced exchange relationships with their employees. Such an inference may be too assertive. The pervasiveness of organizational cynicism may be brought on by other sources or may be a result of the manner through which it spreads.

I am interested to know why organizational cynicism is so pervasive in the workplace. The imbalanced-employment-relationship notion the social exchange perspective espouses may not sufficiently explain such a phenomenon. I am also curious about the role of peers on one's organizational cynicism, of whether organizational cynicism disperses among people working in the same environment. I also want to know the factor affecting the strength of such peer influence if peers have a great impact on one's organizational cynicism.

Knowing how and why an individual develops organizational cynicism is of most interest and the emphasis of the current research. In addition, since the majority of previous studies use samples outside the work context, I am interested to know whether the work-related outcomes associated with organizational cynicism in these past studies remain the same in the typical business context.

To address these questions, the research objective is established, and the thesis overview is presented in the following section.

Research Objective and Contributions

To understand the influence of peers (coworkers in the same workgroup) on one's belief and attitude at work, the effect of peers' organizational cynicism on one's formation of organizational cynicism is investigated.

The general close proximity, similar hierarchical status, and common work goal usually foster frequent communication among coworkers. Peers become a crucial source from which one can obtain social information in the work environment. Therefore, social information processing (SIP) theory, which posits that individuals use information from social contexts to understand the environment, can best capture the influence of peers on the individual.

In addition, according to the SIP theory, the more salient, relevant, and (perceived) reliable the social information, the more likely the individual uses the information to construct his/her own belief, attitude, and behavior. To investigate the strength of social influence from peers, the length of time of the work

relationship between the focal employee and his/her peers as well as the consistency of information from different peers are taken into consideration.

Cynical employees are usually reluctant to perform well for the organization. They tend to reduce their effort in the organization and behave harmfully to the organization (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Evans et al., 2011; Neves, 2012). To verify the negative work consequences of organizational cynicism, an employee's work motivation, positive and negative work outcomes—specifically work engagement, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), counter-productive work behavior(CWB)—are investigated in the current research.

Overall, the purpose of this research is to unfold another mechanism through which employees develop organizational cynicism by examining how one's peers shape one's organizational cynicism and to understand how such negative belief affects an employee's motivation and work behaviors.

The current research makes several contributions to the literature. Firstly, this research advances our current understanding of how organizational cynicism develops by highlighting a new perspective. The existing conversation about organizational cynicism pervasively relies on the social exchange perspective. Scholars have argued that employees who have negative experiences in the organization, such as perceived injustice, consider the organization violates the psychological contract with them, resulting in an imbalanced perception of the exchange relationship, and thus they develop a negative view of the organization (Andersson, 1996; Dean et al., 1998). Research in the current study is the first to

examine peers' influence on the development of organizational cynicism. Prior research investigating antecedences of organizational cynicism mainly focused on factors regarding the organization or the leader, such as unfair compensation (Andersson & Bateman, 1997), psychological contract violation (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Pugh et al., 2003), perceived low quality of leader member exchange (LMX) (Davis & Gardner, 2004; Gkorzis, Petridou, & Xanthiakos, 2014), and a leader's lack of behavioral integrity (Fritz et al., 2013). While an individual usually interacts with coworkers in the same workgroup (peers), an individual's belief and attitude about the organization are strongly influenced by peers. However, research about peers' influence on employees' organizational cynicism is sparse. Therefore, I extend the current understanding by investigating peers as an important source of the development of organizational cynicism. I explore the influence of peers by examining how their general views about the organization influence the focal employee's development of organizational cynicism. As organizational cynicism is prevalent in the organization (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989), examining the effect of social influence on organizational cynicism may advance our knowledge on how such negative belief spreads and becomes a dominant belief in the work context.

Second, I explore the time effect of social influence by studying the contingency of group tenure. Early studies have suggested that tenure is related to an employee's positive attitudes toward the organization (Hall & Nougaim, 1968; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Stevens, Beyer, & Trice, 1978). Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) have found a weak positive correlation between tenure and commitment in their meta-analysis. However, they did not

agree with the notion that long tenure implies accumulated investment that leads to commitment. Instead, they argued that the correlation may be driven by other factors, such as employees' ability to find another job. I am interested in examining the role of time in the formation of one's judgment and belief about the organization, especially how it affects the social influence process. Employees with different group tenure may vary in the susceptibility to peer influence. While previous studies about peer influence usually neglect discussing an employee's tenure, I investigate the effect of an employee's group tenure on the relationship between peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism. Such an investigation may contribute to both the organizational cynicism and newcomer literature by revealing that peer influence on the focal employee is dependent upon the time the focal employee spends with the group.

Third, the investigation into the boundary effect of the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism provides us with better knowledge about how information cues from different people in the social context affect the social information process. The more consistent the information cues from different people, the more powerful the social information to an individual.

The attempt to exam the consequences of organizational cynicism is prompted by the inconsistent findings of behavioral consequences of organizational cynicism in the current literature. Though it has been found that organizational cynicism is negatively related to job satisfaction and commitment (Bedeian, 2007; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Kim et al., 2009), its relationships with behavioral outcomes are inconsistent. For example, while most studies have found that organizational cynicism relates negatively to job

performance (e.g. Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008; Kim et al., 2009), Brandes and Das (2006) suggest that cynicism can positively relate to job performance when it reaches a moderated level. On the other hand, Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly (2003) and other scholars (e.g. Wilkerson et al., 2008) did not find a significant relationship between organizational cynicism and job performance. While organizational cynicism is an employee’s general negative view about the organization, it is valuable to investigate how such negative belief affects an employee’s motivation and the important behavioral outcomes at work. I examine employees’ work engagement and both positive and negative work behaviors. The effort may cater to the needs of both scholars and practitioners to better understand the negative impacts of organizational cynicism on work.

Overall, I consider the social influence mechanism through which the cynical view is formed. The current research takes the initial effort to provide a new perspective to understand such an important and prevalent phenomenon in the organization.

In summary, this study may provide some explanations for the prevalence of cynicism in the workplace from a social information processing perspective. I also investigate how organizational cynicism subsequently affects an employee’s work motivation and work behaviors, such as work engagement and counterproductive work behaviors. An overview of the conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

Research Structure

This research consists of five chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction. Chapter two offers a review of the literature on organizational cynicism. Chapter three presents the theories and hypotheses of the current research. A social information processing perspective is used to investigate peer influence on the formation of organizational cynicism. Chapter four describes the research methods and results for studies 1 and 2. Lastly, chapter five presents the discussion of results, research implications, limitations, and future research directions.

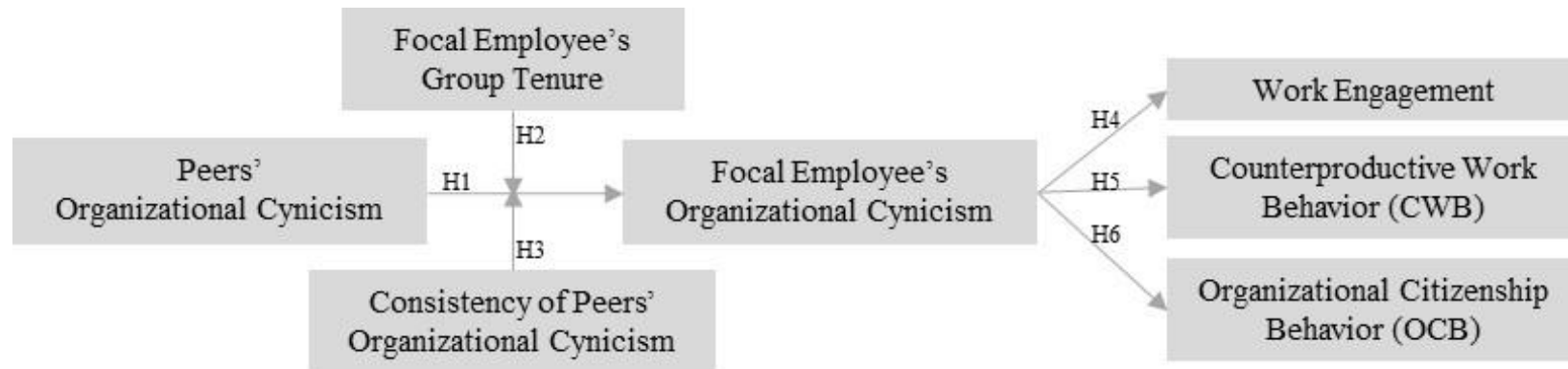


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review the literature on organizational cynicism, including definitions, similarities, and differences with other relevant constructs, antecedences, and consequences, which operate as the grounds for developing the research framework. In addition, the social information processing approach is reviewed as it is the core mechanism of the current research.

Conceptualization of Organizational Cynicism

Andersson (1996) defined general cynicism as “both a general and specific attitude, characterized by frustration, hopelessness, and disillusionment, as well as contempt toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution.” Using a contract violation framework, he depicted the antecedents of organizational cynicism and argued that three categories of workplace characteristics—business environment, organizational, and job—would influence an employee’s justice perception and subsequently form organizational cynicism. In addition to work-related factors, he posited that dispositional factors, such as negative affectivity, also influence an employee’s development of organizational cynicism. Andersson’s (1996) pioneering paper on organizational cynicism that detailed his psychological contract violation framework and definition of organizational cynicism were frequently adopted in subsequent cynicism research (e.g. Abraham, 2000; Andersson, & Bateman, 1997; Pugh et al., 2003). Researchers such as Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly (2003) and Pugh et al. (2003)

have provided support for such framework by empirically investigating the relationship between contract violation and organizational cynicism, and they have found a positive relationship between psychological contract violation and organizational cynicism. Based on Andersson's definition of organizational cynicism, the impacts of organizational cynicism on employees' organizational attitudes and outcomes have also been investigated, such as whether organizational cynicism erodes job satisfaction, organizational commitment and subsequently decreases organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (e.g. Abraham, 2000, Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003).

Later, in a conceptual paper, Dean et al. (1998) defined organizational cynicism more specifically as "a negative attitude toward 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 affects." The cognitive dimension is interpreted as an employee's judgment that the practices of the organization betray principles such as justice, honesty, and sincerity. For the affective and behavioral components, Dean et al. (1998) did not identify specific affect or behavior in their definition. They generally suggested that cynical employees may display emotions such as contempt, anger, and disgust and that the most obvious behavioral tendency of cynical employees is explicit statements about the lack of honesty, sincerity and so on, on the part of the organization. According to their own conceptualization, Brandes, Dharwadkar, and Dean (1999) developed a scale comprising the three

components—cognitive, affective, and behavior—to measure organizational cynicism.

Dean et al.'s (1998) paper has set off an upsurge in the cynicism research. Their three-dimension conceptualization has drawn much attention and has become a central discussion in organizational cynicism research. Scholars such as Davis and Gardner (2004), Cartwright and Holmes (2006), Kim and colleagues (2009) agree with and adopted Dean et al.'s (1998) definition of organizational cynicism. Yet there are also dissenting voices—to a certain degree—about the three-dimension definition. For example, Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly (2003) agreed with the cognitive and affective components but argued that organizational cynicism should not include the behavioral dimension. With a sample of employees from a bank, they found no association between organizational cynicism and work-related behaviors. On the other hand, Naus, Van Iterson, and Roe (2007) adopted the cognitive and behavioral dimensions but neglected the affective one. They posited that organizational cynicism is one's belief that the organization lacks integrity and one's behavioral response to adverse conditions in the workplace. They (Naus et al, 2007) provided empirical evidence that organizational cynicism differs from negative affectivity. O'Leary (2003) defined organizational cynicism as employees' beliefs that the practices of the organization lack justice, honesty, and sincerity. Such definition only covers one's cognitive evaluation but does not directly associate with one's affects or behaviors.

The inconsistency appears not only in the conceptualization of organizational cynicism but also in the measurement, as it differs among scholars. Pugh and colleagues (2003) defined organizational cynicism as both affect and

cognition. However, their measure only captures the cognitive component. The same issue occurs in Neves' (2012) research. Though he theoretically adopted Dean et al.'s (1998) three-dimension conceptualization, they only revealed the cognitive component in their measurement of organizational cynicism.

Due to the inconsistency in the conceptualization and measurement of organizational cynicism, scholars have argued whether organizational cynicism should be a multidimensional concept. Stanley et al. (2005) contended that the multidimensional conceptualization offered by Andersson (1996) and Dean et al. (1998) packs too many components and does not afford the precision requirement for deductive scale development (Hinkin, 1998; Schwab, 1980). They (Stanley et al., 2005, page 436) suggested a narrow and clear definition of organizational cynicism by focusing solely on the cognitive component, which is "disbelief of another's stated or implied motives for a decision or action." Many scholars support such a narrow, different definition from Stanley et al. (2005). Bedeian (2007) defined organizational cynicism as "an evaluative judgment stemming from an individual's employment experiences," and developed a new measure that reveals an employee's critical appraisal of the motives, actions, and values of the employing organization. Cole et al. (2006) adopted Bedeian's (2007) definition and investigated how perceived supervisor support and psychological hardiness influence employee cynicism.

In summary, existing research has discussed much to deepen our understanding of organizational cynicism. However, organizational cynicism is defined differently to different scholars. Instead of building on the current

conceptualization of organizational cynicism, we can benefit more from a fundamental reconsideration of what organizational cynicism is.

What Organizational Cynicism Is

One consensus among scholars in the existing literature is that they all regard organizational cynicism as a state construct developed from experiences that is comprised of a cognitive component (Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003; Vance, Brooks, & Tesluk, 1995). Most researchers agree that organizational cynicism is about one’s cognitive evaluation of the organization. In this current research, *organizational cynicism refers to one’s disbelief in the sincerity or goodness of motives, decisions, procedures, and actions in the organization.*

The target of organizational cynicism can be the organization as a whole or part of the organization such as its procedures, processes, management team, or people in the organization. Organizational cynicism is a learned belief that is induced by exposure to one’s negative experiences or by others, and it is difficult for employees high in organizational cynicism to believe in good motives of others in the organization.

Employees who are cynical about the organization tend to believe that people in the organization are self-oriented and do not have high moral principles such as integrity, justice, honesty, or sincerity. They also believe that the organization tends to varnish the stated motive or cover the true motive when doing so helps to achieve the ultimate self-serving end. By contrast, employees who are not cynical about the organization do not deny the goodness or sincerity of altruism in actions, decisions, or procedures of the organization.

What Organizational Cynicism Is Not

While it is necessary to define what organizational cynicism is, to clarify what organizational cynicism is not and how it differs from similar constructs are also important in understanding this concept. Organizational cynicism is related yet not redundant with constructs such as personality cynicism, social cynicism, distrust, and job dissatisfaction.

Organizational Cynicism vs. Trait and Social Cynicism

Organizational cynicism is a state variable that develops from one's experiences in the organization and is distinct from trait cynicism and social cynicism.

Studies about trait cynicism are mainly based on Cook and Medley's (1954) research about cynical hostility. Trait cynicism is an innate, stable trait reflecting a general lack of faith in human nature. People high in cynical hostility see others as dishonest, selfish and uncaring, and untrusting in relationships. Later work on cynicism focuses more on negative distrustful attitudes toward specific targets, such as institutions and society, which is defined as social cynicism (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989; 1991). People high in social cynicism consider the society, institutions, or others as self-centered and self-serving (Bateman et al., 1992). Because of the nature of the operationalization, there is some overlap between the conceptions of trait cynicism and social cynicism (Dean et al., 1998). Nevertheless, both trait cynicism and social cynicism are distinct from organizational cynicism, which is one's negative view of the employing

organization. Besides the conceptualization, they are also varied in their antecedences and outcomes.

Antecedences of the three constructs are different. Trait cynicism is an innate and stable personality, which can be found in one's early life. Mills and Keil (2005) found that young children can be cynical. In their experiments, they observed that seven- and eight-year-olds somewhat think about how self-interest influences what people say, and they assume that people intentionally mislead others for self-interest. Trait cynicism differs from organizational cynicism as the former is considered innate while the latter is derived from experiences in the organization. On the other hand, social cynicism stems from one's social experiences and targets at the society. The unmet expectations on government or institutions, such as rising prosperity, home ownership (Peterson, 1994), and payroll taxes (Cosgrove, 1996) arises feelings of wrongfulness, distrust in the system, and loss of faith in others (Rousseau, 1989). Compared to social cynicism that stems from experiences in the broader environment, organizational cynicism is derived from experiences in a much narrower context—one's employing organization. It is specific to an organization and varies when one shifts to another organization. While people who are cynical of human nature or society generally do not depend on the trustworthiness and sincerity of others, it is possible that people generalized such beliefs to a smaller domain such as the work context and become more likely to develop a negative view of the employing organization. However, a high level of organizational cynicism that develops specifically from the work domain may have limited influence on more stable cynicism like trait and social cynicism.

The three constructs also vary in their impacts. As personality and social cynicism have some overlap in their conceptualization, research found that they can bring similar outcomes in the social setting, such as interpersonal conflict (Smith, Pope, Sanders, Allred, & O'Keefe, 1988). However, they also have distinct outcomes. Besides outcomes in social relationships, trait cynicism also influences social-independent outcomes, such as personal health. Trait cynicism was found to relate to bitterness, resentment (Barefoot, Dodge, Peterson, Dahlstrom, & Williams, 1989; Greenglass & Julkunan, 1989), and coronary heart disease (Smith & Pope, 1990). Social cynicism has distinctive impacts on one's general attitudes and behaviors in society, such as when people lose faith in an institution and society, they become more short-term oriented and focus on instant returns in exchange relationships (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). On the other hand, organizational cynicism that derives from one's organizational experiences predicts organization-related phenomena, such as job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior (Abraham, 2000; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). Though trait and social cynicism are stable, higher-level constructs may affect one's likelihood to form organizational cynicism; organizational cynicism is a stronger predictor of organization-related outcomes, because the context-specific construct is more powerful to predict outcomes in that domain (Pierce, Gardner, Gummings, & Dunham, 1989).

Organizational Cynicism vs. Distrust

Individuals with high organizational cynicism depend less on the goodness and sincerity of others and do not trust others in the organization (Dean et al., 1998). While distrust often accompanies cynicism, it is necessary to understand how trust in the organization relates to and differs from organizational cynicism. Some scholars argue that trust and distrust are two distinct constructs rather than two extremes on a continuum of the same construct (Lewicke, McAllister, & Bies, 1998; Saunder, Dietz, & Thornhill, 2014). Compared to studies on trust, which are prevalent in the current organizational research (e.g., Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), studies on distrust are relatively scarce. To distinguish organizational cynicism from this similar construct, discussion in the current research would mainly focus on the low end of the continuum of trust. In other words, trust and distrust are viewed as opposites on the continuum of one construct.

Mayer et al. (1995) define trust as the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party, regardless of whether one can monitor or control the other party, and they argue that trust is based on the expectation that the other party will perform the action for the sake of the trustor. The three important components that determine trust are the trustee's trustworthiness—integrity, benevolence, and ability. Another definition of trust is articulated by McAlister (1995) who defined trust as a positive orientation. McAlister's definition is closer to Meyer's trustworthiness (antecedent of trust), and I focus on the difference between cynicism and trustworthiness.

While there is some conceptual overlap between trustworthiness and organizational cynicism, such that they both include the cognitive appraisal of integrity, the two constructs are unique in some domains.

One of the distinctive components is the appraisal of ability. Ability is an important dimension in trustworthiness. One is less likely to be vulnerable to the action of the other party if the other party is evaluated as low in ability. More precisely, distrust occurs when ability is perceived as low. However, evaluation of ability is not relevant to the conceptualization or the antecedence of organizational cynicism.

Another distinguishing factor is the availability of information in the formation of trust and organizational cynicism. Trust is based on the expectation that the other party can perform the action for the sake of the trustor (Mayer et al., 1995), and therefore it is possible that low trust is due to a lack of information in forming that expectation. In contrast, organizational cynicism is a judgment based on the information obtained from organizational experiences. In addition, while trust involves one's vulnerability to the actions of another party (Mayer et al., 1995), risk is often discussed in researching trust. However, risk is not a relative concept in the current literature of organizational cynicism. Moreover, individuals with high organizational cynicism tend to attribute actions to unscrupulous and self-serving motives, whereas individuals who distrust organizations may not have such attributions.

Therefore, organizational cynicism and distrust are two conceptually related but distinct constructs. There are also some empirical findings that support

the distinctiveness of the two constructs. For example, in a meta-analysis, Chiaburu and colleagues (2013) propose that employee organizational cynicism and trust can differentially predict attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. They found that organizational cynicism has a stronger impact on an employee's job satisfaction and job performance, while trust has a stronger impact on an employee's commitment and intention to quit.

Organizational Cynicism vs. Job Dissatisfaction

Organizational cynicism is one's cognitive evaluation of the organization and is related to but different from another important organizational construct—job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). Job satisfaction involves both cognitive evaluations of one's job and emotional responses to events that occur on the job (Hulin & Judge, 2003). Job satisfaction and organizational cynicism both reveal one's evaluation of some aspects of the workplace.

Organizational cynicism differs from job dissatisfaction in that the former is purely a cognitive evaluation of the organization, while the latter includes one's affectivity. They are also different in their formation and target. Organizational cynicism relates to a more diverse set of objects (Andersson, 1996), such as organizational policies or people in the organization, whereas job satisfaction mainly relates to one's job. Besides, organizational cynicism is anticipatory and

outwardly directed, while job satisfaction is retrospective and self-directed (Wanous, Reichers, & Austin, 1994).

Organizational cynicism and job dissatisfaction also have various antecedents. For example, job complexity is a major antecedent of job dissatisfaction (Schleicher, Hansen, & Fox, 2010), and it is theoretically not related to organizational cynicism, which focuses more on the sincerity and morality of others.

Antecedents of Organizational Cynicism

Organizational cynicism is a state variable that derives from one's experiences in the organization. It is generally affected by the perceptions or interactions with the organization and the leader. It is also affected by an individual's disposition.

Experiences with the Organization

Organizational justice is considered the primary determinant of an employee's organizational cynicism in most studies (e.g., Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Chiaburu et al., 2013; Dean et al., 1998). It refers to an employee's perceptions of the extent to which he/she is fairly treated in the organization (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Greenberg, 1988). Research on the relationship between organizational justice and employee organizational cynicism shows that distributive, procedural, and interactional justice relate negatively to an employee's organizational cynicism (Colquitt et al., 2001, Dean et al., 1998; Reichers et al., 1997). For example, high executive

compensation is likely to lead to employee cynicism due to a sense of distributive injustice (Andersson & Bateman, 1997). Extensive layoffs are suggested to lead to negative work attitudes and organizational cynicism because employees perceive the organization's lack of procedural justice (Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Pugh et al., 2003).

Psychological contract violation is another important predictor of organizational cynicism. It refers to an employee's perception that one or more obligations of the employing organization are unfulfilled (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Because psychological contracts are so fundamental to employment-related beliefs and experiences (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), psychological contract violation would result in an employee's cynical view about the organization (Andersson, 1996; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003).

Besides the main antecedents of organizational justice and psychological contract violation, other studies also found that perceived organizational support (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008) and perceived operational citizenship (Evans et al., 2011) relate negatively to organizational cynicism. Perceived organizational value (for example, integrity, helping) also influences the development of employee organizational cynicism.

Experiences with the Leader

While most studies about organizational cynicism focus on an employee's experiences with the organization, some studies have shown that experiences with the leader are also important in predicting an employee's organizational cynicism.

Cole et al. (2006) found that perceived supervisor support is likely to induce positive emotions in an employee and reduce negative emotions, and thus the employee is less likely to form negative attitudes or organizational cynicism. Fritz et al. (2013) observed that a leader's behavioral integrity relates negatively to an employee's organizational cynicism. A leader's positive humor and an employee's perceived LMX are found to negatively relate to an employee's organizational cynicism (Gkorezis et al., 2014).

Other Predictors

While the majority of studies about organizational cynicism focus on an employee's interactions and experiences with the organization and the leader, a few studies investigated the interaction and experience the employee has with his/her coworkers. One study showed that peers' badmouthing about the organization is likely to result in the focal employee's cynical attitude about the organization (Wilkerson et al., 2008). Though we currently have relatively little knowledge about the role of peers in the development of organizational cynicism, we can expect that peers have important implications in organizational cynicism, as individuals usually frequently interact with peers in the workplace.

Meta-analysis has shown that compared with individual dispositions, organizational experience exerts a stronger influence on organizational cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Individual dispositions and organizational experiences together can influence organizational cynicism. For example, employees with high negative affectivity tend to engender and experience more negative aspects in the organization, and thus are more cynical about the organization (Royle, Hall,

Hochwarter, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2005). Psychological hardiness relates negatively to organizational cynicism because it influences how employees experience, interpret, and cope with stressful events and situations in the organization (Cole et al., 2006).

Consequences of Organizational Cynicism

Organizational cynicism is not only prevalent in the workplace but also produces important consequences. It affects employee attitudes, well-being, and behaviors at work.

Attitudinal Consequences

Organizational cynicism erodes job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Such negative relationships are demonstrated by different samples in different industries. Using a sample of a community bank in the central United States, Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly (2003) found that organizational cynicism negatively predicts job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Bedeian (2007) found that faculty members who are cynical about the faculty are less committed to the faculty and less satisfied with their jobs. Arabaci (2010) argued that organizational cynicism results in a mental distance in educational employees and thus adversely affects employees’ job satisfaction. From samples of transportation industry and MBA student, Kim et al. (2009) found that organizational cynicism reduces organizational commitment. Moreover, organizational cynicism is found to reduce an employee’s affective commitment to the leader in Portuguese organizations (Neves, 2012).

Furthermore, organizational cynicism predicts employees' turnover intention. Employees who are cynical about the organization are less likely to identify with or commit to the organization and are more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs and thus quit (Bedeian, 2007).

There are also studies that focus on the negative consequences of organizational cynicism on employees' well-being, such as emotional exhaustion and burnout (Cherniss, 1980; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Maslach & Leiter, 2005; Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslac, 2009).

Behavioral Consequences

Organizational cynicism reduces extra-role behavior (for example, OCB). Andersson and Bateman (1997) argued that cynicism reduces an employee's intention to perform OCB because the organization is perceived as untrustworthy. Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly (2003) posited that a breach in the perceived psychological contract results in employee organizational cynicism and thus reduces OCB. Neves (2012) claimed that cynicism reduces an employee's affective commitment to organizational cynicism and thus reduces extra-role behaviors.

Organizational cynicism affects employees' in-role performance. Kim et al. (2009) found that organizational cynicism negatively predicts job performance of transportation employees. The same result was supported by two samples in Byrne and Hochwarter's (2008) research.

Organizational cynicism also reduces employees' motivation and work effort. Cynical employees are less likely to engage at work. Employees who feel

job insecurity and have a cynical view of the organization are less likely to exert effort into work (Brandes, Castro, James, Martinez, Matherly, Ferris, & Hochwarter, 2008). Atwater, Waldman, and Cartier (2000) conducted a study about the organizational cynicism of leaders. They found that when receiving negative feedback from followers, leaders with a lower level of cynicism exert more effort on improvement than leaders with a higher level of cynicism.

Cynical employees are also more likely to engage in CWB or deviant behaviors that harm the organization (Evans et al., 2011). CWB refers to behavior that violates the norms or interests of the organization and potentially do harm to others (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Sackett & DeVore, 2001). It occurs when individuals lack restraint such as social norms (Sykes & Matza, 1957), social bonds (Hirschi, 1969), or consideration for the long-term consequence of one's behavior (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Employees who have a cynical view of the organization tend to exhibit more CWB. For example, Wilkerson et al. (2008) observed that when peers badmouth the organization, the focal employee is likely to develop a cynical view of the organization and is more likely to engage in similar disparaging behaviors as his/her peers. The social norm in the work environment seems to allow for the disparaging behaviors, and thus the focal employee is less likely to restrict himself/herself from such destructive work behaviors.

Other Consequences

While most studies about organizational cynicism focus on the negative aspects of it, a few studies investigate the positive outcomes of organizational

cynicism. Reicher et al. (1997) argued that employees with high levels of organizational cynicism tend to take the negative event less personally and thus are more psychologically healthy. Similarly, service employees with high cynicism tend to be less involved in organizational events, which create psychological latitude for them to recover from negative service encounters (Blau, 1974).

Social Informational Processing

The social information processing (SIP) approach proceeds from the fundamental premise that “individuals, as adaptive organisms, adapt attitudes, behavior, and beliefs to their social context and to the reality of their own past and present behavior and situation” (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978, page 226). Such an approach is based on the premise that environments are socially constructed through individual and social processes (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Weick, 1977). Informational cues in the environment have great impacts on people’s judgments and consequently their attitudes and actions (March & Simon, 1958; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Schutz, 1967). Therefore, the social information processing approach is important in understanding people’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in the work context.

The Effect of Social Information

People obtain information from the social context to make sense of the events in the social environment and to construct socially acceptable beliefs and attitudes.

Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) theorized that social context has both direct and indirect effects on an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Social information provides direct meanings for individuals to interpret events. Especially when the context is complex or equivocal, individuals are more susceptible to social cues as to better interpret events, understand the environment, and construct socially acceptable beliefs, attitudes, and actions. The social context also indirectly affects individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and actions through structuring individuals' attention processes, focusing individuals' attention to certain information or specific aspects of the environment. The selective attention to information affects individuals' judgments of and reactions to the environment.

Selection of Information Source

One important source of information is individuals' immediate social environment (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). For example, employees tend to obtain information from their direct supervisors, experienced coworkers, other newcomers, subordinates, supportive personnel, superiors other than their immediate supervisor, or people outside the organization (Fisher, 1986; Louis, 1990; Miller & Jablin, 1991).

While social information is important for individuals to interpret and construct beliefs and attitudes, as well as reasons for actions, the impact of the informational social influence may vary with different social cues. Individuals tend to obtain social cues that are more salient and relevant to them (Festinger, 1954; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978)

Saliency refers to the extent to which the information can be immediately aware of by the target receiver. The more accessible the information, the more likely individuals receive and use the information to understand the environment (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Thomas & Griffin, 1983).

Relevance refers to the extent to which information is related to a specific context. Individuals evaluate information sources in terms of personal relevance. The more similar the person, the more relevant the information obtained from the person to interpret and construct an individual's own opinions (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; Jackson, Brett, Sessa, Cooper, Jolin, & Peyronnin, 1991).

Relevance and saliency have been found to be important determinants in the selection of information sources and affect the strength of the social process (Beach, Mitchell, Deaton, & Prothero, 1978; O'Reilly, 1982).

Application of SIP in Organizational Research

People's judgements and attitudes guide their reactions to the environment. Organizational researchers have found that social informational processing greatly impacts an employee's perceptions, attitudes, and work outcomes.

Social cues from the work context are important in constructing employees' work perceptions and attitudes, such as job satisfaction, commitment, and intention to leave (Oldham & Miller, 1979; Pfeffer, 1980; Zalesny & Ford, 1990). For example, through two field experiments, Thomas and Griffin (1983) found that informational cues from supervisors affect an employee's task perception and affective responses. O'Reilly and Caldwell (1985) discovered that employees are

more satisfied with the job when their group members highly agree with the norm of doing extra work.

Workplace social information also exerts great influence on employees' behaviors, such as task performance, citizenship behaviors, and deviant behaviors (Chen, Takeuchi, & Shum, 2013; Glomb & Liao 2003; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Wilkerson et al., 2008). For example, Liu, Gong, and Liu (2014) argued that collective citizenship behaviors of business management teams enhance business unit performance. One reason is that the informational social influence facilitates team members to develop positive norms. Lam, Huang, and Janssen (2010) found that subordinates who are emotionally exhausted are less likely to display positive emotion, especially when these subordinates received social cues about supervisors' suffering from emotional exhaustion.

These studies show that the social information processing approach is important in explaining people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in the workplace.

The current research aims to investigate the reasons employees develop organizational cynicism, why such negative belief has such a wide coverage in the organization, and what consequences it has on the organization. While the social information processing approach focuses on the individual and social process in constructing people's perceptions of the environment, I consider such an approach important for the investigation of organizational cynicism.

CHAPTER 3

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Organizational Cynicism: The Social Information Processing Perspective

In the current study, I aim to address the question about the prevalence of organizational cynicism from a social influence perspective. I focus on the focal employee's peers (coworkers in the same workgroup) and examine peer influence on an employee's organizational cynicism and the consequences of such social influence on an employee's work engagement and counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) and citizenship behaviors (OCB). I am also interested in the moderating effects of an employee's tenure and the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism on such a social influence process. The theoretical framework of the research is shown in Figure 1.

Peer's and Focal Employee's Organizational Cynicism

Social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978, page 226) posits that individuals "adapt attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs to their social context and to the reality of their own past and present behavior and situation." Social information in this theory serves two functions—the cognitive function, to make better sense of the environment, and the social function, to construct attitudes and beliefs that are acceptable in the context. This theory also suggests that the more salient and relevant the social information, the more likely individuals are to use it to construct their attitudes and beliefs (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zalesny & Ford, 1990). I suggest that an employee's peers are a relevant

and salient social information source that shapes an employee's view of the organization.

Peers' views are important in serving an individual's cognitive need to make sense of the social environment. Social cues from peers are salient to the focal employee in that peers are people that individual has most frequent interpersonal contact with. The more accessible a social cue, the more salient such cue to the receiver. Employees also evaluate information sources in terms of personal similarity (Festinger, 1954)—the more similar someone is, the more relevant his/her views are. Peers are important personal references for an employee in the workplace as they share the same working environment and have similar working experiences. Thus, peers' views are important sources for an individual to make sense of the organizational events. Through cognitively processing the information obtained from peers, individuals can better understand complex or ambiguous situations. Accordingly, peers' views influence an employee's construction of organization cynicism. When an employee's peers are cynical about the organization, their interpretations of organizational experiences comprise a generally negative view of the organization. Therefore, when the focal employee becomes accustomed to interpreting his/her own organizational experiences with the social cues from peers, he/she is seeing through a lens that is colored with his/her peers' general negative view of the organization. Subsequently, the focal employee is likely to internalize this negative view and develop organizational cynicism.

Peers' views not only help individuals understand the organizational events but also help them to understand what beliefs and attitudes are socially

acceptable in the group. To be socially accepted by the group, employees may need to understand what beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are appropriate, and to adapt to them. When peers are cynical about the organization, the focal employee tends to embed the social cues from peers into his/her own view and develop the same negative view to conform to his/her peers. This means that organizational cynicism spreads within the team, and an employee is likely to develop organizational cynicism when his/her peers are cynical about the organization, even though the employee does not have a direct negative encounter with the organization.

In the current literature, organizational cynicism is derived from negative experiences in the organization. Among the various predictors in previous research, perceived injustice is heavily investigated and is the major reason the employee develops such a negative judgment (e.g. Anderson, 1996). In the current study, to distinguish the effect of justice from the effect of peer influence, I include them both in the investigation and suggest that peer influence provides an additional explanation for organizational cynicism, which was previously explained by the employee's direct interactions with the organization. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Peers' organizational cynicism is positively related to an employee's organizational cynicism, controlling for the employee's perceived organizational justice.

Moderating Role of Focal Employee's Tenure

I suggest that the social process of peer organizational cynicism on the focal employee's organizational cynicism is contingent on the focal employee's group tenure.

The social information processing theory is rooted in Festinger's (1954) argument that when situations are equivocal, people tend to communicate with others and to develop stable, socially derived interpretations of events.

Shorter group tenure increases the saliency and relevance of social cues to the focal employee in that junior employees are highly motivated to understand and to be accepted by the new environment. New members of a group usually do not have a clear picture of the group, and their judgments about the work environment are vague (Louis, 1980; Miller & Jablin, 1991). To make sense of the complex or ambiguous situations, they heavily rely on information from the group. They are attentive to others' judgements, attitudes, and behaviors (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Bandura, 1977). Social cues, especially negative or threatening cues, are more salient to these newcomers because these cues are vital to the newcomer's adaptation and survival in the new environment (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). Peers' negative evaluations of the environment become more influential to employees with shorter tenure. Information from peers also becomes more relevant to new employees. Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) argued that new employees usually seek information from their coworkers rather than from their supervisors, because peers with the similar work role are relevant for employees to understand the norms and standards in the new environment. Besides the cognitive need to understand the environment,

newcomers are also keen on being socially included by others and building supportive relationships in the new environment (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Jones, 1986). To be accepted by other group members, newcomers tend to pay more attention to others' views and to conform to them. Social cues from peers therefore become more salient and relevant to them. The high saliency and relevance of peers' informational cues result in newcomers being more susceptible to peer organizational cynicism.

In contrast, social cues from peers are less salient and relevant to employees with longer tenure in constructing views about the environment. With their accumulated experiences, employees with longer tenure have a clearer sense of the work environment and thus rely less on information from peers. Employees who have stayed in a group for a longer time are more familiar with the working environment and may have developed stable perceptions about the organization and built stable relationships in the group. Both their cognitive need to understand the environment and their social need to be accepted by others, if not yet satisfied, are not as strong as that of newcomers. Besides using information from peers, tenured employees can also use information from other sources to construct their perceptions. These sources can be their own past decisions and behaviors or their relationships outside the group, such as employees in other groups. Thus, for tenured employees, saliency and relevance of peers' information are not as high as that for new employees, and peers' organizational cynicism exerts limited influence on tenured employees' views of the organization.

Accordingly, newcomers rely more on social information because of the cognitive need to understand the environment as well as the social need to be

accepted by the environment. Thus, peers' organizational cynicism has a stronger impact on newcomers' organizational cynicism than on tenured employees'. As such, I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: An employee's group tenure moderates the contagion effect of peers' organizational cynicism on the employee's organizational cynicism such that the shorter the tenure, the stronger the positive effect of peers' organizational cynicism on the employee's organizational cynicism.

Moderating Role of Consistency of Peers' Organizational Cynicism

The consistency of organizational cynicism among peers also affects the social informational process of peers on the focal employee's organizational cynicism. Consistency of peers' organizational cynicism refers to the level of agreement among peers' judgments about the organization—in other words, how similar are peers' organizational cynicism. High consistency means that peers have similar levels of organizational cynicism, regardless of the group mean level of organizational cynicism. The level of consistency for the view of the organization among peers influences the saliency of such social cues. When peers are consistent in their perceptions about the organization, the social cues about organizational cynicism are salient to the focal employee in as much as a homogeneous set of shared views are easily accessed by the focal employee. In contrast, when the degree of agreement of peers' views is low, peers' organizational cynicism is less likely to form a salient social cue for the focal employee to evaluate the organization. If peers have different perceptions about

the organization, the information cues in the group are too vague to constitute a clear social agreement for the focal employee to construct his/her own view. Consistency among peers' views of the organization also affects the relevance of social cues about organizational cynicism. Peers' views not only help an individual to better understand the social event but also help an individual to understand what beliefs and attitudes are socially acceptable in the group (Asch, 1951). Groups with high cohesiveness are more likely to exert influence on members toward compliance with group beliefs and norms (Festinger, Berard, Hymovitchi, Kelley, & Raven, 1952). High consistency in organizational cynicism among peers constructs a clear social agreement, and such social cue becomes important and relevant to the focal employee to construct his/her own view. However, when peers' views are not consistent, there is no socially constructed belief directing the group, and thus social cues regarding peers' organizational cynicism become less relevant to the focal employee to form perceptions about the organization.

The level of consistency in organizational cynicism among peers plays an important role in the social process of peers' influence, because the more salient and relevant a social cue, the more likely that individuals use that social information to construct their own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Salancik & Pfeffer 1978). Thus, I hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: Consistency of peers' organizational cynicism moderates the contagion effect of peers' organizational cynicism on the employee's organizational cynicism such that the higher the level of

consistency, the stronger the positive effect of peers' organizational cynicism on the employee's organizational cynicism.

Organizational Cynicism and Work Engagement

An employee's work engagement has great implications for the organization, as it is a multidimensional motivational concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional energy at work (Kahn, 1992; Rich, Lepin, & Crawford, 2010). Employees who are highly engaged not only physically invest their effort but are also cognitively vigilant and emotionally attach to work (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Kahn, 1990). Employees who are not engaged in work withhold energies and behave in a manner that is robotic, passive, and detached at work (Goffman, 1961; Kahn, 1990).

Engaged employees are important assets for the organization as they invest much into work (Kahn, 1992). They not only perform better at work but also tend to perform more citizenship behaviors that contribute to the organization (Kahn, 1990). Understanding what affects employee engagement at work is valuable for improving organizational functioning.

Perceived meaningfulness, safety, and personal availability at work are described as three important conditions for engagement (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). I suggest that organizational cynicism would erode work engagement by affecting the three important conditions of engagement. Perceived meaningfulness is one's judgment about the value of the work goal. Perceived safety is the feeling

that one can invest oneself without fear of negative consequences. Lastly, availability concerns an employee's self-evaluation of capability and psychological readiness to perform the task. According to expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), one can be motivated toward a goal if he/she believes that his/her effort can result in attainment of the desired performance goal (expectancy), one can receive a reward if the performance expectation is met (instrumentality), and the value one places on the rewards of an outcome is high (Valence). I believe that expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) provides the theoretical underpinnings relating employees' organizational cynicism to their work engagement.

Perceived meaningfulness is one of the most important psychological conditions for work engagement, which involves a sense of return on investments on the self (Kahn, 1990, 1992; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). It is the feeling of worthwhileness, usefulness, and value and the feeling that one is able to give oneself to the work role and others. Employees' perceived meaningfulness at work depends on the strength of expectancy that their investment of self will be followed by anticipated outcomes (such as performance) and the valence (attractiveness or satisfaction) of rewards (such as money, recognition) associated with those outcomes.

Cynical employees usually do not expect a high return on their investment at work and thus may perceive less meaningfulness to engage in work. Organizational cynicism is a cognitive assessment about the extent an employee believes that the stated motive of the organization is different from the true motive of the organization. When employees are low in organizational cynicism, they are less likely to be attentive to the self-serving and possible inconsistent aspects of

organization's decisions, procedures, and practices. The effort-reward relationship, as stated by the organization, can motivate them to invest in work. However, when employees are cynical of the organization, they believe that the organization is self-serving and lacks morality and consistency, which makes it difficult for employees to believe that their investment would lead to the return as the organization indicated. According to expectancy theory, if the connection between efforts and rewards is not clear or strong, individuals are less likely to exert effort to achieve the outcomes. Supporting my logic, Sims and Szilagyi (1975) argued that when the performance-reward probability perception is high, employees are more satisfied with the job. My prediction is also consistent with existing arguments about organizational cynicism and work outcomes. Studies have shown that employees' organizational cynicism leads to withdrawal attitudes, such as intention to quit (Bedeian, 2007; Naus et al., 2007) and low job performance (Brandes et al., 1999; Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008). Thus, organizational cynicism is likely to discourage work engagement as employees perceive low meaningfulness in terms of low return on investment on the self.

Besides perceived meaningfulness as an important psychological condition of work engagement, perceived safety at work is another psychological condition that is affected by one's cynical belief. The experience of safety involves a sense that the work context is trustworthy, secure, predictable, and clear in terms of behavioral consequences (Kahn, 1990). Employees' organizational cynicism tends to lower their perceived psychological safety, which results in low engagement. Employees who have a cynical view of the organization believe that to achieve the self-serving end, the organization can abandon moral principles, conceal true

motives, and exploit employees. When the organization is considered untrustworthy—inconsistent in what it says and does—employees are unable to clearly predict the consequences and rewards of their efforts and behaviors and feel insecure about the work context. Such a feeling of low psychological safety results in low engagement at work.

Employees who reported high in organizational cynicism are less likely to experience meaningfulness and safety at work and thus engage less at work. As I argued before, an employee's organizational cynicism is positively predicted by peers' organizational cynicism, and such peers' influence is moderated by the focal employee's group tenure and peers' consistency of organizational cynicism. Taken together, I hypothesize that peers' organizational cynicism positively predicts the focal employee's organizational cynicism, which subsequently decreases the focal employee's work engagement, and such relationship is moderated by the focal employee's group tenure and the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism.

Hypothesis 4a: The indirect effect of peers' organizational cynicism on work engagement via an employee's organizational cynicism is conditional on the focal employee's group tenure, in that the shorter the group tenure, the more negative the indirect effect.

Hypothesis 4b: The indirect effect of peers' organizational cynicism on work engagement via an employee's organizational cynicism is conditional on the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism, in that

the more consistency of peers' organizational cynicism, the more negative the indirect effect.

Organizational Cynicism and Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWB)

Employees who are cynical about the organization are more likely to engage in CWB. Counterproductive work behavior is defined as behavior that is “harmful to the organization by directly affecting its functioning or property, or by hurting employees in a way that reduce their effectiveness” (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001, page 292). This behavior is pervasive in the organization (Bennett & Robinson, 2000) and has great costs, though employees may not have the intention to harm (Spector & Fox, 2002).

Moreover, CWB occurs when employees lack effective restraint (e.g. Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hollinger & Clark, 1983; Tucker, 1989). The potential attractiveness associated with CWB (for example, theft, lateness) requires an individual's regulatory effort to restrict oneself from engaging in CWB. Individuals who want to maintain a positive relationship are more likely to establish restraint and inhibit themselves from engaging in deviant behaviors that potentially harm the relationship (Hirschi, 1969). In the work context, employees who have a good relationship with the organization are more attentive to the long-term consequences of their behaviors as to maintain the positive bond and are more likely to restrict themselves from engaging in CWB. In contrast, cynical employees are more likely to perform CWB as they exert less effort in regulating themselves from CWB. Employees who are cynical about the organization believe that the organization is generally exploitative and concerned only about its own

interests. These employees do not expect the organization would invest in them or strive to maintain a positive relationship with them in return for their effort investing in behavioral regulation and relationship maintenance. As a result, they are less likely to exert effort in regulating themselves from deviant behaviors that could potentially harm the organization.

CWB is positively associated with an employee's organizational cynicism, which is positively predicted by peers' organizational cynicism, and the relationship is moderated by the focal employee's group tenure and peers' consistency of organizational cynicism. Taken together, I hypothesis conditional indirect relationships:

Hypothesis 5a: The indirect effect of peers' organizational cynicism on CWB via an employee's organizational cynicism is conditional on the focal employee's group tenure, in that the shorter the group tenure, the more positive the indirect effect.

Hypothesis 5b: The indirect effect of peers' organizational cynicism on CWB via an employee's organizational cynicism is conditional on the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism, in that the more consistency of peers' organizational cynicism, the more positive the indirect effect.

Organizational Cynicism and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Employees who are cynical about the organization are less likely to engage in OCB. Organizational citizenship behavior refers to employees' discretionary behavior that promotes organizational effectiveness, which is neither

required by their work role nor explicitly rewarded by the organization (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Furthermore, OCB benefits the organization, and it has been the subject of increasing interest among scholars and practitioners (Grant & Mayer, 2009; Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, & Woehr, 2007; Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). With the principle of benefiting the organization, OCB is negatively associated with organizational cynicism, which is an employee's negative evaluation of the organization. Andersson and Bateman (1997) discovered that organizational cynicism negatively predicts an employee's self-reported OCB intentions. In Byrne and Hochwarter's (2008) two studies, though the negative relationship of organizational cynicism and citizenship behavior benefiting other employees was nonsignificant in study 1, the negative association between cynicism and citizenship behavior benefiting the organization was significant in study 2. Evans et al. (2011) also found a significant negative association of organizational cynicism and OCB directed at other employees and the organization.

The negative association between organizational cynicism and OCB were mainly explained by two perspectives in the current literature on organizational cynicism—the social exchange perspective (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Never, 2012; Wilkerson et al., 2008) and the attitude-behavior consistency perspective (Brandes et al., 1999; Evans et al., 2011).

Organizational citizenship behavior is rooted largely in a social exchange perspective (Kamdar, McAllister, & Turban, 2006; Organ, 1990), and thus social exchange is the main mechanism used to explain the negative relationship between organizational cynicism and OCB. For example, Andersson and Bateman

(1997) have argued that cynical employees are less inclined to perform OCB, as they consider the organization would not meet their expectations. A similar notion is posited in Wilkerson et al.'s (2008) study, which claims that cynical employees do not believe that their OCB would result in desired rewards from the organization, and that due to the low instrumentality, they are reluctant to engage in OCB. Byrne and Hochwarter (2008) have argued that employees are more likely to engage in OCB when they perceive the organization is providing support beyond what is expected in the basic employment contract. In sum, when cynical employees believe that the organization is self-serving and exploitative, they do not expect fair reciprocity from the organization, and thus their desire to engage in OCB decreases.

In addition to the above mentioned social exchange notion, an attitude-behavior consistency perspective is also used to explain the negative relationship of organizational cynicism and OCB in the current literature. According to the attitude and behavior framework (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), people strive for consistency between their evaluations of attitude objects and their behavioral intentions toward those objects. Performing OCB that benefits the organization would be inconsistent with beliefs associated with organizational cynicism (Evans et al., 2001). Brandes et al. (1999) have argued that performing OCB would cause cognitive dissonance for employees who are cynical about the organization. Their explanation is that the behavior of engaging in OCB that benefits the organization is not consistent with the negative evaluation of the organization. Cynical employees believe that the organization is untrustworthy, self-serving, and lacks morality. Exerting additional efforts above and beyond the

job requirements to benefit the organization violates the cynical employee's convictions about the organization.

In summary, employees who have a cynical belief about the organization are unlikely to engage in OCB, not only because they perceive the organization as not worth putting effort into, as reciprocation is not expected, but also in that such behavior that benefits the organization is not consistent with their negative evaluations about the organization. Peers' organizational cynicism is likely to have a great influence on the focal employee's organizational cynicism, and such peer influence is affected by the focal employee's group tenure as well as the consistency of peers' views about the organization. Taken together, I hypothesize,

Hypothesis 6a: The indirect effect of peers' organizational cynicism on OCB via an employee's organizational cynicism is conditional on the focal employee's group tenure, in that the shorter the group tenure, the more negative the indirect effect.

Hypothesis 6b: The indirect effect of peers' organizational cynicism on OCB via an employee's organizational cynicism is conditional on the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism, in that the more consistency of peers' organizational cynicism, the more negative the indirect effect.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Two independent data sets were collected to test the current research model. I used a multisource longitudinal design to investigate the proposed relationships. Such a design can reduce common method variances and provide better support for causal relationships (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Both samples were collected from different sources (peers, focal employee, and direct supervisor) in the organization with a time-lagged design. All scales in the survey were originally in English. As the two samples were both collected in China, I translated the questionnaire to Chinese and back translated it to English to ensure the reliability and validity of the scales (Brislin, 1980).

Method of Study 1

Sample and Procedures of Study 1

In the first study, a two-wave survey was conducted to test Hypothesis 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6. I did not measure work engagement in Study 1, and thus Hypothesis 4 was only tested in Study 2. I adopted a social influence perspective to examine how peers' organizational cynicism influences the focal employee's, and how such influence was moderated by the tenure of focal employee's and the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism. I also examined the impacts of organizational cynicism on an individual's work engagement, CWB, and OCB. As I aimed to examine social influence in the work context, specifically from

one's peers, I needed participants from organizations who worked in teams. I conducted a survey in a leading organization in the retail pharmacy industry in mainland China, which has more than 2,000 pharmacy stores. The majority of its retail stores have one store manager and around five employees. As employees in the same store were working for a common team goal and supervised by the same manager, I considered each chain store as a team in conducting the analysis. A total of 1,130 employees in 329 stores and their store managers were invited to participate in the survey. The key variable—organizational cynicism—contains negative judgment about the organization. To ensure confidentiality and to reduce participants' hesitation toward reporting sensitive questions in the survey, I asked employees to fill their questionnaires online through their personal cellular phones or computers. Employees were more comfortable with such arrangement as they could complete the survey alone, which reduced the likelihood that their supervisors obtained access to their answers. Store managers participated in a two-wave paper survey during the monthly manager meeting. A total of 402 employees participated in the first wave, and 289 participated in the second wave one month after the first wave, which corresponded to a response rate of 35.57% for the first wave and 25.58% for the second wave. In the end, the final sample included 377 employees within 100 stores. The employee demographics were as follows: 91.5% of employees were female, with an average age of 26.05 years and average store tenure of 15.92 months, and 50.93% of the sample had a junior college degree or above.

The independent variables (peers' organizational cynicism), mediator (focal employee's organizational cynicism), moderators (focal employee's group

tenure, consistency of peers' organizational cynicism), and control variables (sex, education, and age) were collected during the first wave survey (T1). The dependent variables were collected during the second wave (T2). Employees self-reported their CWB, and the store managers reported their subordinates' OCB. In summary, I collected data from three sources: the focal employee's peers, the focal employee, and his/her direct supervisor with a time-lagged design.

Measures of Study 1

Organizational cynicism. I employed a five-item scale from Brandes et al. (1999) to measure organizational cynicism. Employees reported their perceptions of the organization with five questions on a seven-point scale (1=*strongly disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*). Sample items included "My organization expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another," and "I believe that my company says one thing and does another."

Peers' organizational cynicism. The mean score of organizational cynicism reported by peers (all employees in one store except the focal employee) was calculated as the peers' organizational cynicism for each focal employee.

Peers' consistency of organizational cynicism. The standard deviations of organizational cynicism among peers were calculated to measure agreement among peers. As higher standard deviation represents greater difference, I multiplied the standard deviations by negative one to make the final score fit with the construct name. For the final score, the higher the value equated to more consistency of peers' organizational cynicism.

CWB. A six-item scale from Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, and Hulin (2009) was used to measure CWB. Employees self-reported their CWB with a six-point scale (1=*never*, 6=*always*). Sample items included “worked slower than necessary” and “spoke poorly about my organization to others.”

OCB. A six-item scale from Dalal et al. (2009) was used to measure OCB. Employees’ direct supervisors (the store manager) reported each of their follower’s behaviors using a six-point scale (1=*never*, 6=*always*). Sample items were “volunteered for additional work tasks” and “spoke highly about the organization to others.”

Control variables. I controlled focal employee’s gender (0=*female*, 1=*male*), age (year), and education level (1=*bachelor’s or below*, 2=*university or above*) to rule out the effect of demographic factors on the focal employee’s organizational cynicism and the subsequent employee outcomes.

Results of Study 1

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Study 1

The measurement model was tested before testing the hypotheses. For the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess homogeneity of key constructs (organizational cynicism, CWB, and OCB). Each of the focal employee's coworkers in the same workgroup self-reported his/her organizational cynicism. The average score of all peers' organizational cynicism was calculated as the peers' organizational cynicism (independent variable). As peers' organizational cynicism was measured using the same method as the focal employee's organizational cynicism (mediator), I did not include peers' organizational cynicism in the CFA. The fit statistic (CFI, RMSEA) was used to evaluate the global fit of the model. I also conducted a series of CFA to assess other alternative measurement models. The results (see Table 1) indicated that the focal model ($\chi^2=380.89$, $df=132$, confirmatory fit index [CFI]=.91, Tucker-Lewis index [TLI]=.90, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA]=.07, standardized root mean square residual [SRMR]=.07) yielded a better fit than other alternative measurement models, such as the one-factor model ($\chi^2=2013.77$, $df=135$, [CFI]=.35, [TLI]=.27, [RMSEA]=.19, [SRMR]=.19).

Table 1 CFA Results (Study 1)

	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	Chi-square Model Fit	<i>Df</i>
3-Factor (ME, DV1, DV2)	0.91	0.90	0.07	380.9	132
2-Factor (ME, DV1+DV2)	0.85	0.83	0.09	569.5	134
2-Factor (ME+DV1, DV2)	0.86	0.84	0.09	535.7	134
1-Factor (ME+DV1+DV2)	0.35	0.27	0.19	2014	135

CFI: Confirmatory Fit Index

TLI: Tucker-Lewis Index

RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics, Zero-Order Pearson Correlations, and Internal Reliabilities (Study 1)

Study 1	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Sex	1.83	0.38									
2. Education	1.60	0.63	-.22**								
3. Age	26.05	6.94	-.09	.26**							
4. Group Tenure (month)	15.96	23.52	-.02	.01	.29**						
5. Consistency of Peers' Organizational Cynicism	-1.05	0.61	-.07	-.09	-.16*	-.13*					
6. Peers' Organizational Cynicism	3.71	1.09	.11	.10	.03	.06	-.03				
7. Focal Employee's Organizational Cynicism	3.77	1.39	-.08	.07	.07	.11*	-.01	.20**	(.88)		
8. Focal Employee's CWB	1.95	0.67	-.22**	.15	-.03	.01	.21*	-.01	.24**	(.77)	
9. Focal Employee's OCB	3.52	0.83	.09	.04	.14**	.00	-.08	-.09	-.16**	-.13	(.91)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (Two-tailed). N=118-317

Table 3 Results of Multilevel Analysis on Focal Employee’s Organizational Cynicism, CWB, and OCB (Study 1)

Study 1	Focal Employee’s Organizational Cynicism						CWB				OCB			
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<i>Control Variables</i>														
Sex	-.30	.21	-.24	.21	-.06	.24	-.22	.14	.00	.15	.17	.11	.23	.12
Education	.17	.12	.22	.12	.16	.14	.12	.09	.05	.10	.02	.07	.02	.08
Age	.01	.01	-.00	.01	.00	.01	.00	.01	.00	.01	.02**	.01	.02**	.01
<i>Independent Variables</i>														
Peers’ organizational cynicism (POC)	.26**	.07	.41**	.08	.12	.18	-.04	.07	-.03	.14	-.05	.06	-.09	.12
<i>Moderator</i>														
Focal employee’s group tenure (GT)			.05**	.01			-.01	.02			-.00	.01		
Consistency of Peers’ organizational cynicism (CPOC)					1.25*	.58			.04	.46			-.16	.36
<i>Interaction</i>														
POC×GT			-.01**	.00			.00	.01			.00	.00		
POC×CPOC					-.33*	.15			.05	.11			.04	.10
<i>Mediation</i>														
Focal employee’s organizational cynicism							.11*	.05	.09*	.05	-.07*	.03	-.08*	.37
<i>R-Square</i>	.06*	.03	.10**	.03	.13**	.04	.11	.06	.10	.07	.10*	.04	.15*	.07

Note. Study1: N=90–377; b=unstandardization coefficients, SE=Standard Errors.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$. (Two-tailed)

Descriptive Statistics of Study 1

Means, standard deviations, zero-order Pearson correlation, and internal reliabilities for all the variables are displayed in Table 2. All measures were acceptable, and an initial investigation of the correlations suggested that all the correlations were consistent with my expectations. Peers' organizational cynicism was positively and significantly correlated with the focal employee's organizational cynicism ($r=.20, p<.01$), and the focal employee's organizational cynicism was positively and significantly correlated with CWB ($r=.24, p<.01$) and negatively and significantly correlated with OCB ($r=-.16, p<.01$).

Hypothesis Testing of Study 1

The relationships of peers' organizational cynicism on the focal employee's organizational cynicism (Hypothesis 1), the interaction between peers' organizational cynicism and the focal employee's group tenure on the focal employee's organizational cynicism (Hypothesis 2), the moderating role of the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism on the relationship of peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism (Hypothesis 3) were specified. The current research also specified the conditional indirect relationships from peers' organizational cynicism on CWB and OCB through the focal employee's organizational cynicism that are conditional on the focal employee's group tenure (Hypothesis 5a, 6a) and the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism (Hypothesis 5b, 6b).

While all study variables were captured at the individual level, individual respondents were nested within groups (under the same manager within a store).

Hence, before testing each hypothesis, I calculated the intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC1) to examine the group variances of the key variables. This calculation (ICC1) assesses the percentage of variance for individual variables in the model that were attributable to the differences between groups and was used as indicators of the clustering effect embedded at the group level (Bliese, 1998; Hox, 2002). The ICC1 for the key variables was .01 for organizational cynicism, .00 for employees' self-reported CWB, and .03 for manager-rated OCB. All ICC1s were below 0.09, indicating weak group effects (Hox, 2002). Nevertheless, to control for possible group variances and to respond to the call for precise approaches to assess models that combine moderation and mediation (Bauer et al., 2006; Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010), I addressed the nested nature of the data by conducting multilevel structural equation modeling (MSEM) and tested the model using a bootstrapped approach to provide a rigorous empirical examination of the hypothesized conditional indirect model. I used MPLUS 7.0 to conduct MSEM with a conventional estimator of maximum likelihood.

The within-structures results of the MSEM showed that peers' organizational cynicism positively predicted the focal employee's organizational cynicism ($b=.26, p<.01$), lending support to Hypothesis 1. The focal employee's group tenure (interaction term: $b=-.01, p<.01$) and the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism (interaction term: $b=-.33, p<.05$) moderated the positive relationship of peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism. To determine whether the forms of the interactions match those suggested by Hypothesis 2 and 3, I tested the simple slopes at the value of one standard

deviation (SD) above and below the mean of group tenure and consistency of peers' organizational cynicism (Aiken & West, 1991). The results showed that peers' organizational cynicism was more positively related to the focal employee's organizational cynicism for employees with shorter tenure (-1 *SD*: simple slope=.49, $p<.01$) than with longer tenure (+1 *SD*: simple slope=-.05, *n.s.*). Accordingly, Hypothesis 2 was supported. However, the interaction pattern concerning the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism was not as I expected; the relationship of peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism was significantly positive both when the level of consistency of peers' organizational cynicism was high (+1 *SD*: simple slope=.27, $p<.05$) and low (-1 *SD*: simple slope=.66, $p<.01$). While the effect size of lower consistency was stronger than that of the higher consistency, such pattern was not as I predicted and did not support Hypothesis 3. Figures 2 and 3 graphically depict these findings.

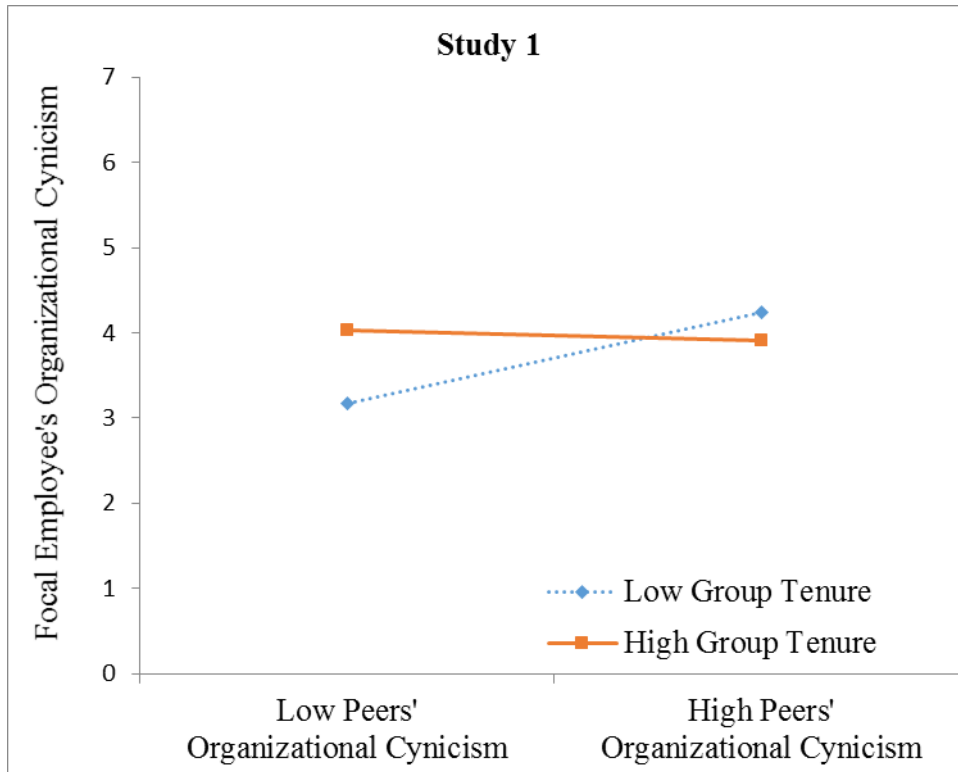


Figure 2 Interactive Effects of Peers' Organizational Cynicism and Focal Employee's Group Tenure on Focal Employee's Organizational Cynicism (Study 1)

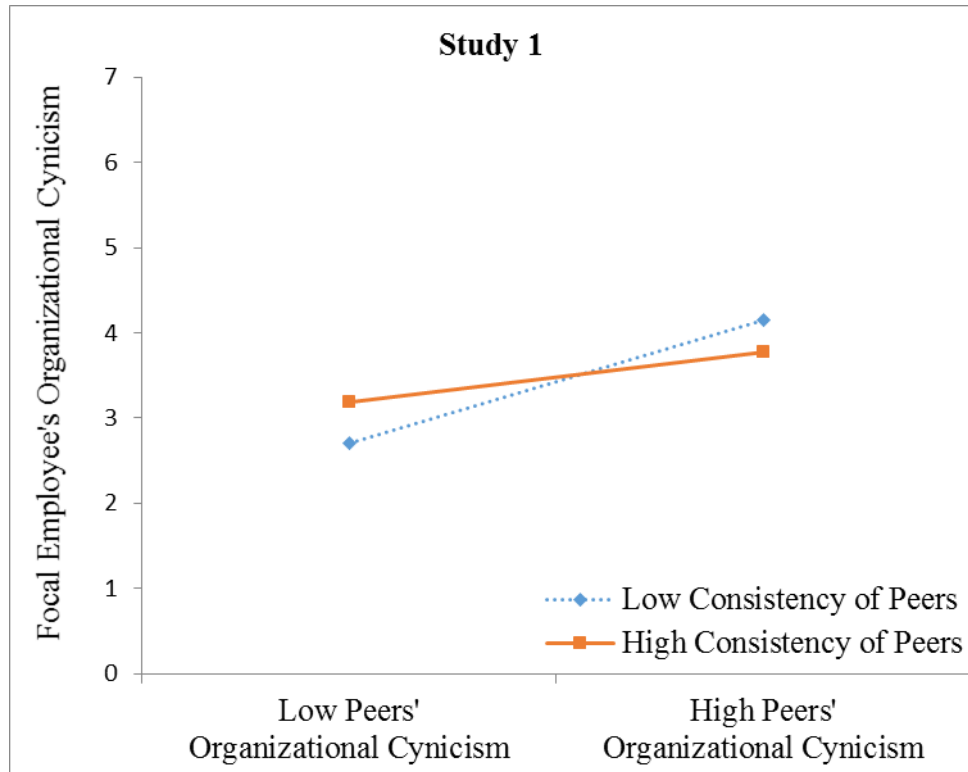


Figure 3 Interactive Effects of Peers' Organizational Cynicism and Consistency of Peers' Organizational Cynicism on Focal Employee's Organizational Cynicism (Study 1)

Hypotheses 5 and 6 proposed that the effects of peers' organizational cynicism on the focal employee's CWB and OCB via the focal employee's organizational cynicism are subject to the length of the focal employee's group tenure and the level of consistency of peers' organizational cynicism. To test the significance of the conditional indirect effects with the nested data, I followed Preacher et al.'s (2010) 1-1-1 model with a fix slope. Such method avoids the dubious assumption of normal distribution of indirect relationships. I estimated the conditional indirect relationship at the higher (+1 *SD*) and lower levels (-1 *SD*) of the two moderators as well as the differences of the high and the low level of the two moderators using the procedures suggested by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007). Table 4 presents the bootstrapped conditional indirect effects at the higher and lower levels of group tenure and their difference, and at the higher and lower level of consistency of peers' organizational cynicism and their difference. All results were based on one-tailed.

For the conditional effect of group tenure, results indicated that the indirect effect on CWB was positive and significant when the focal employee's group tenure was shorter ($b=.80, SE=.34, p<.01, [0.24, 1.34]$), rather than longer ($b=-.01, SE=.01, n.s., [-0.03, 0.02]$). The difference between shorter and longer tenure was also significant ($b=-.81, SE=.34, p<.01, [-1.37, 0.24]$), supporting Hypothesis 5a. Concerning OCB, results were similar: Peers' organizational cynicism more negatively predicted the focal employee's OCB via the focal employee's organizational cynicism when employees had shorter group tenure ($b=-.49, SE=.25, p<.05, [-0.91, -0.07]$) rather than longer group tenure ($b=.00, SE=.01, n.s., [-0.01, 0.02]$). The difference between the shorter and longer tenure

was also significant ($b=.49$, $SE=.26$, $p<.05$, $[0.08, 0.91]$). Thus, Hypothesis 6a was supported.

For the conditional effect of peers' consistency of organizational cynicism, the conditional indirect effect of peers' organizational cynicism on CWB via the focal employee's organizational cynicism was not significant neither when consistency was low ($b=-.00$, $SE=.02$, $n.s.$, $[-0.04, 0.04]$) nor high ($b=-.04$, $SE=.04$, $n.s.$, $[-0.11, 0.03]$), and the difference between the different level of consistency was also not significant ($b=.04$, $SE=.03$, $n.s.$, $[-0.01, 0.08]$). As such, Hypothesis 5b was not supported. The indirect relationship of peers' organizational cynicism on OCB via the focal employee's organizational cynicism was not significant neither when consistency of peers' organizational cynicism was low ($b=.00$, $SE=.02$, $n.s.$, $[-0.03, 0.04]$) nor high ($b=.04$, $SE=.04$, $n.s.$, $[-0.03, 0.10]$). The difference between the high and low consistency was not significant ($b=-0.03$, $SE=0.02$, $n.s.$, $[-0.07, 0.00]$). Thus, Hypothesis 6b was not supported.

In summary, results of study 1 supported Hypothesis 1, 2, 5a, and 6a.

Table 4 Conditional Indirect Models (Study 1)

Dependent Variables	Moderator	Effect Size	SE	P-Value	CI (95%)	
					Lower	Upper
CWB	Short group tenure (-1 <i>SD</i>)	0.80**	0.34	0.01	0.24	1.34
	Long group tenure (+1 <i>SD</i>)	-0.01	0.01	0.33	-0.03	0.02
	<i>Difference of long/short tenure</i>	-0.81**	0.34	0.01	-1.37	0.24
	Low consistency (-1 <i>SD</i>)	-0.00	0.02	0.56	-0.04	0.04
	High consistency (+1 <i>SD</i>)	-0.04	0.04	0.19	-0.11	0.03
	<i>Difference of high/low consistency</i>	0.04	0.03	0.08	-0.01	0.08
OCB	Short group tenure (-1 <i>SD</i>)	-0.49*	0.25	0.03	-0.91	-0.07
	Long group tenure (+1 <i>SD</i>)	0.00	0.01	0.33	-0.01	0.02
	<i>Difference of long/short tenure</i>	0.49*	0.26	0.03	0.08	0.91
	Low consistency (-1 <i>SD</i>)	0.00	0.02	0.47	-0.03	0.04
	High consistency (+1 <i>SD</i>)	0.04	0.04	0.18	-0.03	0.10
	<i>Difference of high/low consistency</i>	-0.03	0.02	0.06	-0.07	0.00

Note. CI=Confidential Interval. Results based on one-tailed.

Method of Study 2

Sample and Procedures of Study 2

In the second study, to test the research model, I conducted a multi-source survey at three times, with a one-month time lag between each two waves.

The data were collected from an international logistics company located in China. The company is a Fortune 500 company and the market leader in the logistics industry. I invited employees that work in project groups and their immediate leaders to participate in the survey. To increase response accuracy, employees and leaders participated in the survey either in separate rooms or during separate time slots. I briefly informed the respondents of the purpose of the study and explained the procedures for administrating the survey. Questionnaires were administered to respondents with a cover letter explaining the study, a questionnaire, and a return envelope. To increase participants' sense of confidentiality, I did not ask those who participated to specify their names on the questionnaire, and I instructed the respondents to return the completed questionnaires directly to the researchers on site. I coded each questionnaire with a researcher-assigned identification number as to match ratings from employees' peers, the focal employee, and the immediate leader of the focal employee.

A total of 225 employees and 31 leaders were contacted in this survey. The first wave involved 216 employees, 213 participated in the second wave one month after the first wave, and 210 participated in the third wave one month after the second wave, which corresponded to a response rate of 96.0% for the first wave, 94.7% for the second wave, and 93.3% for the third wave. The demographic information for employees were as follows: 74.2% of employees

were female, with an average age of 27.7 years and average group tenure of 17.4 months, and 57.3% of employees had a bachelor degree or above.

Measures of Study 2

Tenure (in month) and other demographic variables were reported at Time 1. Employees' self-reported organizational cynicism was collected at both Time 1 and Time 2. Organizational cynicism at Time 1 was used to calculate peers' organizational cynicism (Independent variable), and Time 2 was used to examine the focal employee's organizational cynicism (Mediator) in the research model. All dependent variables were measured at Time 3, including employees' self-reported work engagement (Dependent variable 1), immediate leader's rating of CWB (Dependent variable 2), and OCB (Dependent variable 3). While organizational justice is a main predictor of organizational cynicism in the previous literature, I controlled organizational justice when testing the model as to distinguish the effect from peers' organizational cynicism from the effect of organizational justice.

Organizational Cynicism. The five-item scale adapted from Stanley et al. (2005) was used to measure organizational cynicism. Each employee reported his/her own perceptions of the organization on a seven-point scale (1=*strongly disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*). Sample items included "I think that management would misrepresent its intentions to gain acceptance for a decision it wanted to make," and "I believe that there are ulterior motives for most of the decisions made by management in this organization."

Peers' Organizational Cynicism. The mean score of organizational cynicism (Time 1) reported by group members except the focal employee was calculated as peers' organizational cynicism for each focal employee.

Peers' Consistency of Organizational Cynicism. Similar to the measure in study 1, I first calculated the standard deviation of peers' organizational cynicism then reverse coded by multiplying it by negative 1. A higher value represents a higher level of consistency of peers' organizational cynicism.

Work Engagement. Rich et al.'s (2010) eighteen-item scale was used to measure employee work engagement. The scale measures the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of work engagement. I measured the construct level instead of the dimension level as to ensure congruence with the theory. Employees self-reported their work engagement using a five-point scale (1=*strongly disagree*, 5=*strongly agree*). One sample item from each dimension included "At work, I pay a lot of attention to my job," "I am enthusiastic in my job," and "I exert my full effort to my job."

CWB. A seven-item scale adapted from Bennett and Robinson (2000) was used to measure CWB. Immediate leaders reported each of their follower's behaviors using a seven-point scale (1=*never*, 2=*once a year*, 3=*twice a year*, 4=*several times a year*, 5=*every month*, 6=*every week*, 7=*every day*). Sample items were "He/She comes in late to work without permission," and "He/She has taken property from work without permission."

OCB. A six-item scale from Dalal et al. (2009) was used to measure OCB. Leaders reported behaviors of their followers with a seven-point scale (1=*strongly disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*). Sample items included "He/She spoke highly about

the organization to others,” and “He/She went above and beyond what was required for the work task.”

Control Variables. I controlled organizational justice as it is a predominant predictor of organizational cynicism in the current literature. I selected the item with the highest loading on each of the four dimensions in Colquitt’s (2001) multidimension organizational justice scale. The four items were “I am able to appeal the outcome arrived at by those procedures” (procedural justice), “My outcome reflects that I have contributed to the organization” (distributive justice), “My supervisor refrained from improper remarks or comments” (interpersonal justice), and “My supervisor communicated details in a timely manner” (informational justice). Employees responded to the four organizational justice questions at Time 1 with a five-point scale (1=*strongly disagree*, 5=*strongly agree*). I also controlled focal employees’ gender (0=*female*, 1=*male*), education level (1=*High school or below*, 2=*Junior college*, 3=*Bachelor*, 4=*Master or above*), and age to rule out the effect of demographic factors on employee’s organizational cynicism and work outcomes.

All scales in the survey were originally in English. I translated the questionnaire into local language and back translated to English to ensure the reliability and validity of the scales (Brislin, 1980).

Table 5 CFA Results (Study 2)

	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Chi-square	Df
4-Factor (ME, DV1, DV2, DV3)	0.83	0.80	0.11	0.07	648.84	183
3-Factor (ME, DV1, DV2+DV3)	0.68	0.64	0.15	0.10	1050.03	183
2-Factor (ME, DV1+DV2+DV3)	0.62	0.58	0.16	0.12	2885.84	210
1-Factor (ME+DV1+DV2+DV3)	0.45	0.39	0.19	0.16	1657.46	189

CFI: Confirmatory Fit Index

TLI: Tucker-Lewis Index

RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

SRMR: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics, Zero-Order Pearson Correlations, and Internal Reliabilities (Study 2)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Sex	1.74	0.44											
2. Education	2.61	0.53	-.09										
3. Age	27.69	3.44	-.07	.00									
4. Organizational Justice	3.53	0.57	.09	.07	-.15*								
5. Group Tenure	17.41	17.67	-.10	.05	.34**	-.02							
6. T1-Consistency of Peers' Organizational Cynicism	-0.98	0.33	-.01	-.01	.00	-.08	.03						
7. T1-Peers' Organizational Cynicism	3.38	0.56	-.12	-.05	.04	-.10	.01	-.22**	(.81)				
8. T2-Focal Employee's Organizational Cynicism	3.55	1.12	-.16*	-.07	.05	-.42**	-.00	-.01	.14*	(.86)			
9. T3-Focal Employee's Engagement	3.91	0.44	.07	-.03	-.02	.35**	.12	-.12	.09	-.32**	(.92)		
10. T3-Focal Employee's CWB	1.18	0.47	.06	-.19**	.03	-.14	.03	-.12	.10	.16*	-.13	(.87)	
11. T3-Focal Employee's OCB	5.41	0.88	-.04	.13	-.11	.26**	-.00	.13	-.06	-.12	.12	-.53**	(.92)

N=187–225. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (Two-tailed).

Results of Study 2

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Study 2

CFA was conducted to assess homogeneity for the study variables (organizational cynicism, engagement, CWB, and OCB). As in study 1, I did not include the independent variable (peers' organizational cynicism) in the CFA analysis because it was measured the same way as the mediator—focal employee's organizational cynicism. The fit statistic (CFI, RMSEA) was used to evaluate the global fit of the model. The results (see Table 5) of the focal model as well as other alternative measurement models indicate that the focal model ($\chi^2=648.84$, $df=18$, CFI=.83, TLI=.80, RMSEA=.11, SRMR=.07) yielded a better fit than other alternative measurement models, such as the one-factor model ($\chi^2=1657.46$, $df=189$, CFI=.45, TLI=.39, RMSEA=.19, SRMR=.16).

Descriptive Statistics of Study 2

Means, standard deviations, zero-order Pearson correlation, and internal reliabilities for study variables are displayed in Table 6. All measures were acceptable. Peers' organizational cynicism was positively and significantly correlated with the focal employee's organizational cynicism ($r=.14$, $p<.05$), and the focal employee's organizational cynicism was negatively and significantly correlated with work engagement ($r=-.32$, $p<.01$), positively and significantly correlated with CWB ($r=.16$, $p<.05$), and negatively though not significantly correlated with OCB ($r=-.12$, *n.s.*).

Hypothesis Testing of Study 2

In study 2, I specified the relationships of peers' organizational cynicism on the focal employee's organizational cynicism (Hypothesis 1), the interaction between peers' organizational cynicism and the focal employee's group tenure on the focal employee's organizational cynicism (Hypothesis 2), and the interacting role of the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism on the relationship of peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism (Hypothesis 3). I also specified the indirect relationships from peers' organizational cynicism on work engagement, CWB, and OCB through the focal employee's organizational cynicism conditional on the focal employee's group tenure (Hypothesis 4a, 5a, 6a) and the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism (Hypothesis 4b, 5b, 6b).

Individual respondents were nested within project groups, and I conducted multilevel analysis to control for possible group effects. Similar to study 1, I first accessed ICC1 of the key variables. The ICC1 values were .01 for the focal employee's organizational cynicism, .01 for employee self-rated work engagement, and .10 and .17 for leader-rated CWB and OCB, respectively. Since ICC1 of the leader-rated CWB and OCB were above .09, I conducted multilevel analysis to control for possible group effects (Hox, 2002). I used MPLUS 7.0 to conduct MSEM with a conventional estimator of maximum likelihood.

The within-structures results of the MSEM (see Table 7) showed that peers' organizational cynicism positively predicted the focal employee's organizational cynicism ($b=.35$, $p<.05$), lending support to Hypothesis 1. The focal employee's group tenure moderated (interaction: $b=-.02$, $p<.01$) the positive relationship of peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism. The

consistency of peers' organizational cynicism also moderated (interaction: $b=.93$, $p<.05$) the positive relationship of peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism. To determine whether the forms of the interactions match Hypotheses 2 and 3, I conducted simple slope tests at different levels of group tenure and consistency of peers' organizational cynicism. The results indicated that peers' organizational cynicism was more positively related to the focal employee's organizational cynicism when employees reported shorter tenure (1 *SD* below mean: Simple slope= $.70$, $p<.01$) over longer tenure (1 *SD* above mean: Simple slope= $.10$, n.s.). Similarly, I conducted simple slope tests at one standard deviation below and above the mean for consistency of peers' organizational cynicism. Results indicated that the relationship between peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism was positive both when consistency of peers' organizational cynicism is higher (+1 *SD*: Simple slope= 2.28 , $p<.01$) and lower (-1 *SD*: simple slope= 1.66 , $p<.01$). The effect size of higher consistency was stronger than that of lower consistency, and thus the result supported my prediction that the positive relationship of peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism is stronger when consistency of peers' organizational cynicism is high. Figures 4 and 5 graphically depict these findings. The results and patterns of interaction supported Hypothesis 2 and 3.

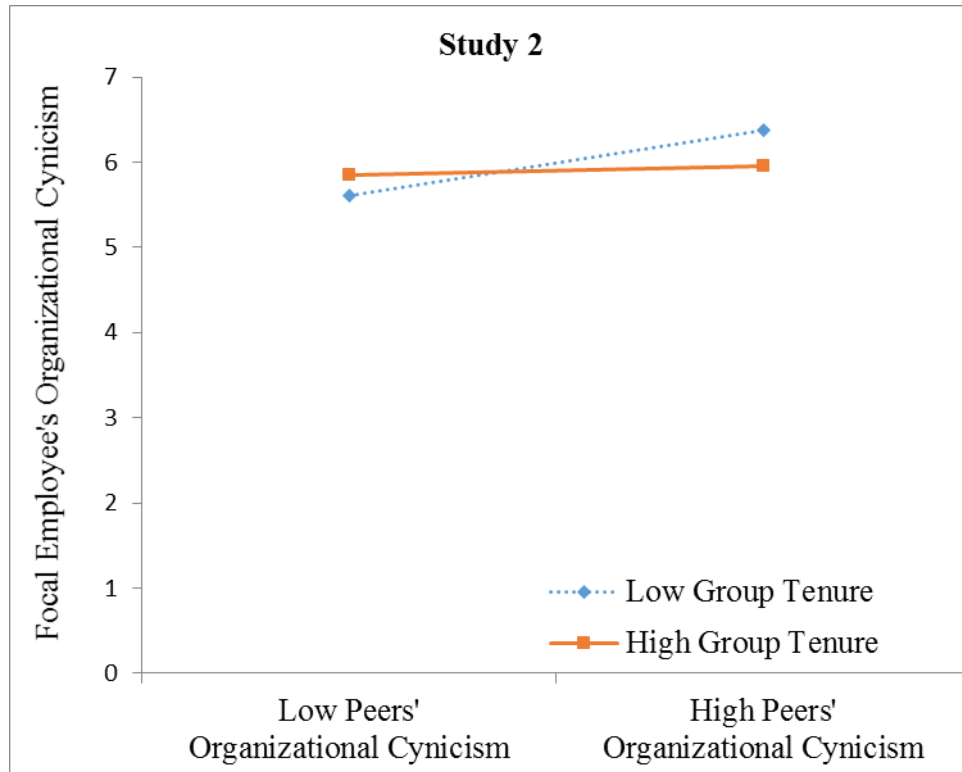


Figure 4 Interactive Effects of Peers’ Organizational Cynicism and Focal Employee’s Group Tenure on Focal Employee’s Organizational Cynicism (Study 2)

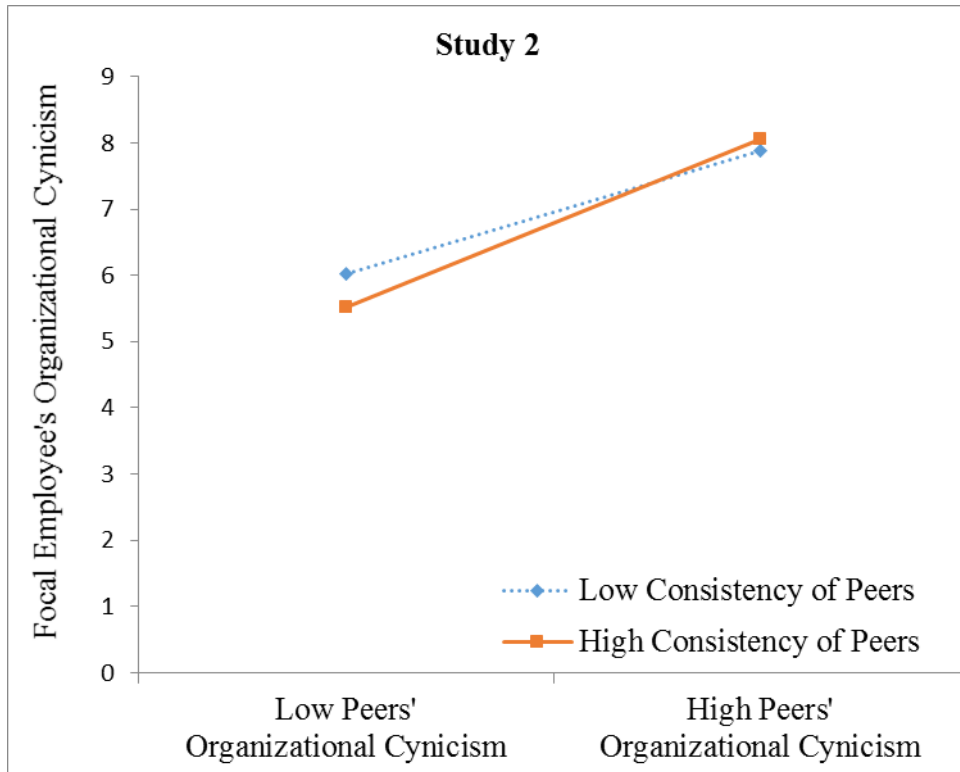


Figure 5 Interactive Effects of Peers' Organizational Cynicism and Consistency of Peers' Organizational Cynicism on Focal Employee's Organizational Cynicism (Study 2)

Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 proposed that the relationships of peers' organizational cynicism on the focal employee's work engagement, CWB, and OCB via the focal employee's organizational cynicism were conditional on the focal employee's group tenure and the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism. Results in Table 7 show that with group tenure and the interaction term included, the focal employee's organizational cynicism negatively predicted work engagement ($b=-.08, p<.01$), positively predicted CWB ($b=.07, p<.05$), but was not significantly associated with OCB ($b=-.08, n.s.$). With consistency of peers' organizational cynicism and the interaction term included, results showed that the focal employee's organizational cynicism was negatively related to work engagement ($b=-.08, p<.01$) but was not significantly related to CWB ($b=.02, n.s.$) or OCB ($b=-.01, n.s.$). According to the results of MSEM, I specified three conditional indirect relationships. To test the significance of the conditional indirect effects with nested data, I followed Preacher et al.'s (2010) and Preacher et al.'s (2007) approach; I estimated the conditional indirect effect at a 1-1-1 model with fix slope at one standard deviation above and below the mean, and the differences between high (+1 *SD*) and low (-1 *SD*) levels of employee's group tenure and consistency of peers' organizational cynicism. Table 8 presents the bootstrapped results. All results were one-tailed based.

Table 7 Results of Multilevel Analysis on Focal Employee's Organizational Cynicism, Work Engagement, CWB, and OCB (Study 2)

	Focal Employee's Organizational Cynicism						Engagement				CWB				OCB			
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<i>Control Variables</i>																		
Sex	-.13	.17	-.26	.16	-.28	.18	.02	.06	.07	.07	.06	.07	.03	.07	-.19	.12	-.17	.12
Education	.03	.13	.04	.13	-.12	.13	-.08	.05	-.07	.05	-.09	.06	-.09	.06	.17	.10	.16	.10
Age	.03	.02	.01	.02	-.01	.02	-.01	.01	.00	.01	.00	.01	-.00	.01	-.02	.02	.00	.02
Organizational Justice	-.60**	.13	-.64**	.12	-.76**	.13	.21	.05	.21**	.05	-.05	.06	-.08	.06	.32**	.10	.39**	.10
<i>Independent Variables</i>																		
Peers' Organizational Cynicism (POC)	.35*	.17	.69**	.19	1.05**	.39	.09	.09	-.18	.18	.01	.12	.31	.25	-.09	.21	-.34	.43
<i>Moderator</i>																		
Focal Employee's Group Tenure (GT)			.06**	.02			-.00	.01			-.00	.01			-.01	.02		
Consistency of Peers' Organizational Cynicism (CPOC)					-3.41*	1.53			1.31	.81			-1.47	1.09			1.87	1.90
<i>Interaction</i>																		
POC×GT			-.02**	.01			.00	.00			.00	.00			.00	.01		
POC×CPOC					.93*	.42			-.37	.21			.38	.30			-.43	.52
<i>Mediation</i>																		
Focal Employee's Organizational Cynicism							-.08**	.03	-.08**	.03	.07*	.03	.02	.03	-.08	.05	-.01	.06
<i>R-Square</i>	.17**	0.05	.22**	.05	.25**	.05	.22**	.05	.23**	.06	.07	.05	.08	.06	.19**	.06	.16**	.06

Note. Study1: N=90–377; b=unstandardization coefficients, SE=Standard Errors.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$. (Two-tailed)

Table 8 Conditional Indirect Models (Study 2)

	Moderator	Effect Size	SE	P-Value One-Tailed	CI (95%)	
					Lower	Upper
Work Engagement	Short group tenure (-1 <i>SD</i>)	-0.06*	0.03	0.01	-0.10	-0.02
	Long group tenure (+1 <i>SD</i>)	-0.01	0.01	0.31	-0.03	0.01
	<i>Difference of long/short tenure</i>	0.05*	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.09
	Low consistency (-1 <i>SD</i>)	-0.01	0.02	0.29	-0.03	0.02
	High consistency (+1 <i>SD</i>)	-0.15*	0.08	0.03	-0.28	-0.02
	<i>Difference of high/low consistency</i>	0.14*	0.08	0.04	0.01	0.27
CWBo	Short group tenure (-1 <i>SD</i>)	0.05*	0.03	0.04	0.00	0.09
	Long group tenure (+1 <i>SD</i>)	0.01	0.01	0.32	-0.01	0.02
	<i>Difference of long/short tenure</i>	-0.04*	0.02	0.04	-0.08	-0.00

Note. CI=Confidential Interval (One-tailed).

For the focal employee's group tenure, results indicated that the indirect effect on work engagement was more negative in employees with shorter tenure (-1 *SD*: $b = -.06$, $SE = .03$, $p < .05$, [-0.10, -0.02]) than with longer group tenure (+1 *SD*: $b = -.01$, $SE = .01$, n.s., [-0.03, 0.01]). The difference between the shorter and longer tenure on work engagement was also significant ($b = .05$, $SE = .02$, $p < .05$, [0.01, 0.09]). Therefore, Hypothesis 4a was supported. In terms of the conditional effect of tenure on CWB, results indicated that the indirect effect was more positive for employees with shorter tenure (-1 *SD*: $b = .05$, $SE = .03$, $p < .05$, [0.00, 0.09]) than with longer tenure (+1 *SD*: $b = .01$, $SE = .01$, n.s., [-0.01, 0.02]), and the difference between shorter and longer tenure was also significant ($b = -.04$, $SE = .02$, $p < .05$, [-0.08, -0.00]). As such, Hypothesis 5a was supported.

For peers' consistency of organizational cynicism, the indirect effect of peers' organizational cynicism on work engagement via the focal employee's organizational cynicism was more negative when consistency was high (+1 *SD*: $b = -.15$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$, [-0.28, -0.02]) than when it was low (-1 *SD*: $b = -.01$, $SE = .02$, n.s., [-0.03, 0.02]). The difference between higher and lower levels of consistency was also significant ($b = .14$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$, [0.01, 0.27]). Thus, Hypothesis 4b was also supported.

In conclusion, results of study 2 supported Hypothesis 1, 2, 3, 4a, 4b, and 5a.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Organizational cynicism has important impacts on employee outcomes and organizational functioning (Anderson & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998). While organizational cynicism is prevalent in the workplace (Kanter & Marvis, 1989, 1991), research on how such negative belief develops and spreads in the workplace is still in its infancy. Previous studies that attempted to understand such a phenomenon mainly emphasized the role of the organization or leader; less effort has been made to explore the influence of coworkers. While in most work contexts, an individual most frequently interact with their peers, peers may have great influences on the construction of an individual's perception and judgment about the working environment. Thus, such overlooked source of influence on organizational cynicism drives us to investigate the role of peers in one's development of organizational cynicism. From a social information processing perspective (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), I argued that peers' perceptions and judgments about the organization have great influence on the focal individual employee's construction of organizational cynicism. Because informational cues from peers are usually salient (easily accessed) and relevant (facing similar work situation), an individual tends to use informational cues obtained from peers to understand the workplace events. The individual also tends to adapt his/her own beliefs and attitudes to become socially acceptable to conform to the group. Therefore, when peers are cynical about the organization, the focal employee tends to interpret the organizational experiences with a similar perspective as peers and thus gradually develops organizational cynicism. Moreover, for

newcomers or employees with short group tenure, since they lack adequate information about the working environment, they rely more on the information from their peers and are therefore more likely to be influenced by peers' views about the organization. The consistency among peers' views also plays an important role in the social information process. When peers are more consistent in their view about the organization, such cues become more salient and relevant for the individual to interpret the work environment, and accordingly peers' views have a greater influence on the focal employee's organizational cynicism when consistency of peers' organizational cynicism is high. I also argued that employees with high organizational cynicism tend to engage less at work and perform more CWB and less OCB.

To investigate these relationships, I conducted two independent survey studies, the details of which were reported in the previous chapters. The following sections are an overview of the results and a discussion of the theoretical and managerial implications. I also discuss the limitations of the current research and end with some future research suggestions.

Overview of the Results

The results from both studies generally confirmed my arguments.

In study 1, I conducted a survey using full-time employees that work in chain pharmacy stores. The geographic separation of stores created a workforce structure that is appropriate for testing the research model. Employees work with their peers and frequently interact with each other to perform a common store target. In study 2, I conducted another survey using full-time employees that work

in project teams in an international company. These project teams are also quite stable (average group tenure is 17.4 months) and enable employees to frequently interact with each other to achieve a common team goal. The structure of these two independent samples is both appropriate for us to test the social information process of organizational cynicism.

Results from both studies reveal that peers' organizational cynicism is significantly and positively related to an employee's organizational cynicism, confirming my major research interest on peer influence on an individual's development of organizational cynicism. While organizational justice is the dominant antecedent in the current literature on organizational cynicism, I measured and controlled organizational justice in study 2. Results in study 2 showed that after controlling for the effect of organizational justice, peers' organizational cynicism remained, positively predicting the focal employee's organizational cynicism, which indicates that peer influence has incremental validity that contributes to additional explanations for the development of organizational cynicism.

Concerning the potential boundary conditions of the social information process, I argued that the focal employee's group tenure and the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism affect the strength of peer influence. Employees with shorter tenure are more sensitive to peer influence. Employees' average group tenure was 16.0 months in study 1 and 17.4 months in study 2. When I calculated the shorter tenure employees, I deducted one standard deviation (23.5 in study 1, 17.7 in study 2) from the mean, which denotes that employees with shorter tenure are those who just joined the group, the newcomers. Results from

both studies 1 and 2 indicated that peers' views become more influential on the focal employee's organizational cynicism when employees are newcomers to the group. Studies 1 and 2 revealed similar patterns (see Figures 2 and 4): when peers' organizational cynicism is high, newcomers are more cynical than employees with longer tenure. The explanation could be that newcomers usually lack sufficient knowledge about the workplace environment, and they rely more on the information provided by their peers. Because peers are similar other, the sense-making need of newcomers results in more salience and relevance in peers' informational cues. Newcomers are also more eager to be socially accepted and to build social relationships in the new environment and are consequently more likely to conform to peers' views. Therefore, newcomers are more likely to form organizational cynicism when their peers have such negative views about the organization.

Along with employee's group tenure, I also considered that the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism also plays an important role in the social process. The results and patterns of interaction in study 2 supported my prediction (see Table 7 and Figure 5). Results in study 2 indicated that peers' organizational cynicism was more positively related to the focal employee's organizational cynicism when consistency among peers' evaluations of the organization was high. When peers in the same workgroup have a similar view about the organization, the social informational cues from peers about the evaluation of the organization become more salient to the focal employee. When peers form a consensus on the evaluation of the organization, they are more likely to share opinions with each other, and thus such informational cues become more

accessible to the focal employee. Moreover, the homogenous view in the group is more valuable to the focal employee to understand the organization. When peers have a common view about the organization, such socially constructed evaluation becomes more influential to the cue receiver. However, in study 1 (see Figure 3), results and patterns of the interaction of peers' organizational cynicism and consistency of peers' views were not as I expected. When peers were not cynical about the organization, focal employees were lower in organizational cynicism when peers' views were not consistent rather than consistent. A possible explanation for such unexpected results may be the characteristic of the sample. Research has found a consistent association between people's socioeconomic status (income, education) and their cynical and distrustful belief about others (Haukkala, 2000, Stavrova & Ehlebracht, 2016). People in the low socioeconomic status group are more sensitive to threatening and negative stimuli. Participants in study 1 earned lower income and were generally not highly educated (only 7.7% of participants with a bachelor's degree or above). Negative cues in the social context are salient to these participants. Low consistency of peers' views means level of peers' organizational cynicism are more dispersive. In other words, with the same mean score of peers' organizational cynicism, the highest score of organizational cynicism usually appears in the low consistency situation. When people are attentive to negative cues, negative social cues become more salient and relevant for them to interpret events and make judgements. Therefore, it is the most cynical view among peers rather than the average level of peers' views that has a stronger influence on the focal employee. Thus, focal employees with low consistency of peers' views tend to form a higher cynical view about the

organization. Overall, results from study 1 and study 2 supported the social information processing perspective of organizational cynicism. Peers' organizational cynicism positively predicted focal employees' organizational cynicism, and such process was affected by the saliency and relevance of the information.

I also examined the work consequences of the focal employee's organizational cynicism that was induced by peers' organizational cynicism. The important work consequence I investigated included the focal employee's work engagement, CWB, and OCB. I consider the investigation of these consequences important as engagement, CWB, and OCB are major work outcomes that reveal employee motivations, negative work behaviors, and positive work behaviors (e.g. Kahn, 1990; 1992; Rich et al., 2010; Robinson & Bennett, 1997; Organ et al., 2006; Podsakoff et al., 2000). In study 1, results showed that the focal employee's organizational cynicism is positively and significantly associated with CWB and negatively and significantly associated with OCB. Results of the bootstrapped indirect effects on CWB and OCB were only conditional on the focal employee's group tenure but not on the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism. In study 2, the MSEM results indicated that the focal employee's organizational cynicism was negatively associated with work engagement, positively associated with CWB, but not significantly associated with OCB when the moderators and interaction term were included in the equations. Results of the bootstrapped indirect effect on work engagement were conditioned on both group tenure and peers' consistency. The bootstrapped indirect effect on CWB was conditional on

the focal employee's group tenure. The conditional indirect effect on OCB is not supported by study 2.

There may be several reasons for the results not supporting some of the conditional indirect arguments. One reason may be that organizational cynicism is a belief that contains negative connotations, and thus it is more related to one's motivation and negative behaviors that correspond to the negative belief. While OCB is a constructive work behavior that may be stimulated by different motives, such as the impression management motive (Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2002) and reciprocated motive (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994), OCB may not closely relate to an employee's cognitive judgment of the organization. Another possible explanation concerns the consistency of peers' views. The examination of the social process from peers on the focal employee focuses on the average level of peers' views and the level of peer agreement. While peers are an important social source for employees to make sense of social events, whether individuals are more influenced by the average score or extreme negative score of information from peers may depend on many factors, such as work interdependence, personal relationship, social identity, or the socioeconomic status, as discussed before. It is possible that social cues from specific peers exert greater influence on the focal employee's construction of organizational cynicism. Therefore, the moderating role of the consistency of peers' views in the proposed indirect relationships on work outcomes may be affected by focal employees' individual differences and their relationships with peers. Further work to investigate the boundary conditions of the social information process is needed.

Nevertheless, results from studies 1 and 2 support most of the arguments for conditional indirect relationships.

The current research has several theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical Implications

Firstly, I extended the literature on organizational cynicism by demonstrating that coworkers are an important source in the construction of organizational cynicism. Previous studies investigating reasons of an employee's development of organizational cynicism mainly focus on factors regarding the organization or the supervisors. For example, antecedents of organizational cynicism include high executive pay, poor firm performance (Andersson & Bateman, 1997), insufficient organizational support (Cole et al., 2006; Treadway et al., 2004), organizational injustice or contract violation (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Pugh et al., 2003), perceived low quality of LMX (Davis & Gardner, 2004; Gkorzis et al., 2014), and leader's lack of behavioral integrity (Fritz et al., 2013). However, while peers construct the immediate surroundings of the focal employee, research on peer influence on the employee's organizational cynicism is sparse. Wilkerson et al.'s (2008) research indicates that peers' badmouthing of the organization is positively related to an employee's organizational cynicism and the subsequent badmouthing behaviors. Their study provides some initial evidences on peers' influence. While they focus on a single explicit behavior (badmouthing), I moved further to explore more general social influence from peers by investigating how peers' general views of the organization influence an employee's construction of organizational cynicism. From a social information

processing perspective, I argued the employee is influenced by peers as they are similar other from who employee can obtain information that helps to better understand the organizational events. Employees also tend to conform to peers as they share the same social identity. Results of the data confirm the hypothesis and indicate that peers' social influence is important to the focal employee's view about the organization, extending our current understanding of how an employee develops organizational cynicism from a social information processing perspective. Moreover, I measured peers' organizational cynicism not by the focal employee's perception but by peers' own ratings. Compared to measuring from the perception of the focal employee, the measure of peers' organizational cynicism more accurately captures peers' evaluation of the organization and better depicts the process that peers exert influence on the focal employee's construction of organizational cynicism. The operationalization of study variables also avoided common method variance by collecting data from different sources at different times and thus better supported the social information processing perspective of organizational cynicism.

Secondly, the findings indicate that an employee's group tenure plays an important role in social information processing. Previous studies on peer influence usually neglect discussing an employee's group tenure. I investigated the effect of the focal employee's group tenure on the relationship between peers' and the focal employee's organizational cynicism. Counter to the intuition that the longer the employee works with peers, the stronger the effect of peer influence, the results show that peer influence exerts a stronger effect on newcomers. In other words, peers' organizational cynicism is more positively related to the focal employee's

organizational cynicism when the focal employee's group tenure is short. This is because newcomers rely more on their peers to acquire information to make sense of the workplace. Newcomers also tend to conform to their peers' views as they strive for social inclusion. On the other hand, longer-tenure employees have more experiences and therefore may have formed their own judgments about the organization. Moreover, besides the peer influence discussed in the current study, organizational cynicism is also influenced by other factors, such as job characteristics or the relationship with their leader, which may explain why long-tenure employees are less susceptible to peer influence. Such findings extend our understanding of peer influence on organizational cynicism and may also enrich the implication of the theory of social information processing.

Thirdly, I also explore the role of the consistency of peers' organizational cynicism in the social information process from peers on the focal employee's organizational cynicism. The findings indicated that the more consistent among peers' views about the organization, the greater the influence of peers' organizational cynicism on the focal employee's. The consistency of peers' organizational cynicism affects the perceived saliency and relevance of peers' views. When peers' consistency is high, the social cues from peers become more salient to the focal employee because peers are more likely to share their views about each other, and the homogeneous set of shared views are easily accessed by the focal employee. High consistency on organizational cynicism also increases the relevance of the informational cues from peers—because social beliefs are socially constructed, and peers' views not only help an individual to better understand the social events but also help to understand what beliefs and attitudes

are socially acceptable in the group. Thus, the more consistent the peers' views, the more relevant the social cue for the focal employee to construct his/her own view about the organization. The investigation on the role of consistency among peers provides more explanation of peers' influence process on the focal employee's organizational cynicism while also extending the implication of the social information processing theory.

Finally, I explored the relationship between an employee's organizational cynicism and his/her work outcomes (work engagement, CWB, OCB) and found that it was significantly associated with work engagement, CWB, and OCB, uncovering more on how organizational cynicism affects the organization. Though organizational cynicism is prevalent in organizations, research about what it brings to the organization is still in the initial stage. Responding to the call for exploring the consequences of organizational cynicism on organization outcomes (e.g. Wilkerson et al., 2008), I investigated the consequences of organizational cynicism. Prior studies investigating the negative consequences of organizational cynicism found that it is related to employee's deviant behaviors (Evans et al., 2011) and badmouthing of the organization (Wilkerson et al., 2008). These studies are valuable for us to know the consequences of organizational cynicism; still, there is much to be unveiled about organizational cynicism. The current study extends our understanding of organizational cynicism by investigating its relationship to an employee's motivation, negative work behaviors, and positive work behaviors. The findings indicated that organizational cynicism has a significant negative impact on an employee's work engagement. Engagement is a multidimensional motivational concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of

an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional energy at work. Engaged employees are valuable to the organization. However, when employees are cynical about the organization, they are less likely to engage at work as their negative judgments about the organization inhibit their motivation to fully express and devote themselves to work. Negative judgments about the organization also restrict an employee's effort to regulate him/herself from performing CWB. Compared to badmouthing which is one specific negative behavior to the organization, CWB includes a broader range of negative behaviors that are destructive to organizational functioning. Counterproductive work behavior is also different from deviant behavior. While deviance emphasizes rule breaking or abnormal behaviors (Robinson & Bennett, 1997), CWB is behavior with intentions to harm the organization. Cynical employees are also less likely to perform OCB as they consider the organization self-serving and thus do not expect their extra effort at work to be reciprocated. Investigating the relationship between organizational cynicism, work engagement, CWB, and OCB contributes to the current literature by providing a more general picture of what organizational outcomes cynical employees bring to the organization.

Managerial Implications

The current research provides some practical implications for the management of organizational cynicism. Some organizations may intend to introduce new members to a group with high levels of organizational cynicism. Such a decision may be based on two considerations: One is to reduce the negative consequences (such as CWB in the current study) by replacing cynical

employees with new members, and the other is to fill the vacancies caused by the turnover of high cynical employees. Turnover is quite possible for cynical employees as previous studies have provided evidence that organizational cynicism is positively related to turnover intention (Bedeian, 2007; Cinar, Karcioğlu, & Aslan, 2014). However, according to the current research, introducing new members into a group with an average to high level of organizational cynicism may not change the situation much. The findings suggest that employees with a shorter tenure, especially new members, are very susceptible to peers' organizational cynicism. In contrast, employees who stay in a group for a longer time are less likely to be influenced by their peers' negative view about the organization. While introducing new members may not be an ideal solution to deal with the negative consequences associated with organizational cynicism, I suggest organizations should seek other alternatives, such as to design job roles to be more independent or to provide new employees with sufficient knowledge and information about the work environment through training. This may result in newcomers relying less on their peers for information and therefore weaken peer influence on organizational cynicism.

The findings also suggest that organizational cynicism is positively related to employees' CWB and negatively related to work engagement and OCB. Though organizational cynicism is considered to be an employee's stable view of the organization, it can gradually be changed with new experiences. Organizations can consistently distribute resources and reward employees in a just manner and provide organizational support to employees, as these practices are suggested by

the current literature that is negatively related to employees' organizational cynicism (e.g. Cole et al., 2006; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003).

Limitations

The current research has several limitations. First, although the hypotheses were developed from theory and the multi-source time-lagged survey design allows for more convincing conclusions, I cannot draw a definitive conclusion on causality. Unlike experimental research, field study is more complex, and relationships are affected by many contextual factors. In the two survey studies, I controlled participants' demographic differences and their perceived organizational justice (only in Study 2), which is the predominant predictor of organizational cynicism in previous research. Nevertheless, the findings are susceptible to other unmeasured variables, such as emotions and affects (Andersson, 1996; Cole et al., 2006) or experiences with previous employers (Pugh et al., 2003), which may affect one's formation of organizational cynicism and work outcomes. Further evidence based on experimental studies is needed to increase the cause-and-effect validity.

Second, the measurement of organizational cynicism may be a concern. I used different measurement scales in the two studies. The use of different measures in the two independent studies was intended to prove that the proposed causal relationships do not rely on a specific measure. However, it is not clear how the different scales affect the statistical test of the relationships. Examining and validating the scales are needed to improve construct validity.

Finally, the data were collected from companies located in China, and therefore the generalizability to other cultures or other nations is a concern. China is a collective society (Hofstede, 1984; Earley, 1989), and individuals' beliefs and attitudes are strongly affected by collective views. Peers' views about the organization is important for an individual to form his/her own view and judgment. While the effect of social influence may be influenced by the cultural value, it is possible that different results may be found in other nations. Future studies can be conducted in other cultures and examine the relationship of peer influence on individuals' organizational cynicism.

Future Research Directions

The current research suggests several future research directions. First, there are many scales of organizational cynicism, such as the three-dimensional scale (Brandes et al., 1999), the scale questioning the intention of management (Stanley et al., 2005), the scale from self-perspective (Bedeian, 2007), and the scale from the group perspective (Cole et al., 2006). Though each of these scales may cover certain domains of organizational cynicism and may fit specific research contexts, a more extensive and validated scale independent of context is needed to ensure construct validity and better interpretation of the relevant relationships. Future research on organizational cynicism can focus on scale development and validation to provide a better foundation for further research.

Second, the current work suggests that coworkers should have important roles in one's formation of organizational cynicism. I examined peer influence on the average level of peers' organizational cynicism and did not consider the

relationship or the interaction the focal employee has with each of his/her coworkers. Research has found that one's position in the network affects his/her personal influence on others (Venkataramani & Tangirala, 2010). The influence from different peers on one's interpretation and evaluation of the organizational reality may be different. Further research can focus on exploring the effect of influence from different coworkers with consideration of the network issue.

Third, in the current study, when examining the saliency and relevance of the information source in the social information process, I did not go in depth in discussing how the perceived social identity with peers may influence an employee's assimilation of peers' social cues. While social identity may influence an employee's conformity intention (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), future research can explore the interaction effect of peer influence and social identity on employees' organizational attitudes and behaviors. It is also worthwhile for future studies to consider the different social targets to account for the weight of influences, such as comparing the influence from one's peers with that of one's mentor or advisor in the organization.

As organizational cynicism is prevalent in the workplace and affects important organizational outcomes, it is worth further investigation.

APPENDIX

Measurement Scale of The Constructs

Organizational cynicism (Study 1)

Brandes, Dharwadkar, Dean (1999)

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.

Organizational cynicism (Study 2)

Stanley, Meyer, Topolnytsky (2005)

Management is always honest about its objectives. [R]

Management in this organization is always up-front about its reasons for doing things.[R]

I often question the motives of management in this organization.

I believe that there are ulterior motives for most of the decisions made by management in this organization.

I think that management would misrepresent its intentions to gain acceptance for a decision it wanted to make.

Work Engagement (Study 2)

Rich, Lepine, & Crawford (2010)

Physical engagement

I work with intensity on my job.

I exert my full effort to my job.

I devote a lot of energy to my job.

I try my hardest to perform well on my job.

I strive as hard as I can to complete my job.

I exert a lot of energy on my job.

Affective engagement

I am enthusiastic in my job.

I feel energetic at my job.

I am interested in my job.

I am proud of my job.

I feel positive about my job.

I am excited about my job.

Cognitive engagement

At work, my mind is focused on my job.

At work, I pay a lot of attention to my job.

At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job.

At work, I am absorbed by my job.

At work, I concentrate on my job.

At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job.

Counter productive work behavior (CWB) (Study 1)

Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch & Hulin (2009)

Did not work to the best of my ability

spent on tasks unrelated to work.

Criticized organizational policies.

Took an unnecessary break.

Worked slower than necessary

Spoke poorly about my organization to others.

Counter productive work behavior (CWB) (Study 2)

Bennete & Robinson (2000)

Taken property from work without permission

Taken an additional or longer break than is acceptable at the workplace

Come in late to work without permission

Littered my work environment

Neglected to follow supervisor's instructions

Intentionally worked slower than I could have worked

Put little effort into my work

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Study 1 & 2)

Lee & Allen (2002)

Volunteered for additional work tasks

Went above and beyond what was required for the work task

Defended organizational policies

Chose to work rather than to take a break

Persisted enthusiastically in completing a task

Spoke highly about the organization to others

Control Variable:

Organizational Justice (Study 2)

Colquitt (2001)

Procedural Justice

I am able to appeal the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures.

Distributive Justice

My outcome reflects that I have contributed to the organization.

Interpersonal Justice

My supervisor refrained from improper remarks or comments

Informational Justice

My supervisor communicated details in a timely manner.

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