POLITICAL CYNICISM: A CRITICAL RE-EXAMINATION

BY

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Abstract

The social scientific study of political cynicism is a complicated one. Cynicism has been understood both as a motivating source for change as well as a deep-rooted obstacle. This paper argues that part of the problem is that current survey scale items for political cynicism studies are flawed. This paper proposes modifications to question wording based on a historical etymology of the term cynicism as well as a systematic analysis of past question wordings. Several European studies on political cynicism were used as a theoretical basis for a replication and extension of their work. A study was conducted using Amazon's Mechanical Turk service and students at Wake Forest University to evaluate the scale. While the results made it difficult to disentangle political cynicism from related constructs like political trust and political alienation, they did confirm the reliability of a new scale.

Introduction

The social scientific goal of attaining a more sophisticated understanding of political alienation in America is a pertinent one for political scientists as well as communication scholars. Moreover, understanding the relationship between political alienation and governmental legitimacy more broadly are a fundamental features of political communication as a sub-discipline. If it is truly the case that widespread political alienation among a population is corrosive to democratic governance in ways that threaten the functioning of our political system, then it follows that research methodologies should be able to accurately examine the valence of political cynicism. Without the ability to accurately map out the various intensities and dimensions of the population's negative affect towards the government, it becomes less and less possible to identify problematic trends and design effective solutions. As the study of this complex political phenomenon continues, the term cynicism has crept into the vernacular of researchers.

In this paper, I argue that the quantitative study of political cynicism remains unsatisfactory. Specifically, cynicism scales suffer from a lack of both reliability and predictive validity, and cynicism items within established scales lack face and construct validity. Over the years, calls have been made by scholars to revisit cynicism at the measurement level to rectify persistent problems associated with its use (Eisinger, 2000; Dekker & Meijerink, 2012). In other cases, scholars are simply beginning to abandon the cynicism variable altogether in favor of more trusted measures (Pederson, 2012). I contend that the lack of systematic engagement with the deeper, historical elements of cynicism has let contemporary scholars off the hook with shallow, superficial

explorations of both cynicism and its definitional parameters. The result is a variable in crisis. Lacking historical anchor points of its own, cynicism's definition has begun to bleed into our understanding of other related, but distinct, dimensions of political alienation and political trust. I argue that this definitional aloofness has become a critical barrier to the consistent performance of the cynicism variable in its formal study.

In turn, I hope to situate cynicism as a more distinct dimension within the larger construct of political alienation and present a revised scale that attempts to rectify measurement issues emphasized by researchers. This research will be replicating and extending work done by political communication scholars in a European context (Schyns, Nuus, and Dekker, 2004; Dekker, Meijerink, 2012; Pattyn et al, 2012). Using the new scale, I hope to advance the scholarly conversation on the continuing usefulness of the cynicism variable in few specific ways.

First, although there are a handful of quantitative studies attempting a quantitative interrogation of the political cynicism construct, nearly all of them are conducted with Dutch or European participants (Schyns, Nuus, and Dekker 2004; Dekker, 2006; Schyns and Nuus 2008, Dekker and Meijerink, 2012; Pattyn et al, 2012). These studies have shown promise in statistically disentangling trust and cynicism, demonstrating statistically significant predictive validity of cynicism even after controlling for trust as a separate variable. Although Schyns, Nuus and Dekker's (2004) study incorporated older American NES data in their analysis of political cynicism and political distrust, an overwhelming majority of analyses use international populations with minimal attention being paid to uniquely American political contexts and dynamics. This study adds a

more robust comparative element to the study of political cynicism as well as providing a more nuanced dataset based on an American sample.

Second, this paper combines and, importantly, adapts several of the different existing scales used in the political cynicism measurement literature in an attempt to synthesize key distinguishing factors in the survey instrument. First, an adapted version of Dekker and Meijerink's (2012) two dimensional political cynicism scale measuring perceived incompetence and perceived immorality is included. Second, Pattyn et al.'s (2012) social cynicism personality index is used. Third, adapted political trust items from Dekker (2012) are also used. Additionally, morality and competence dimensions have been found to be stable variables for explaining variance in young and old participants in a number of psychology studies (Rosenberg, Nelson and Vivekananthan, 1968; Kinder and Sears, 1985; Wojciszke and Klusek 1996; Chemers, 2001; Ybarra, Chan, and Park, 2001). In particular, the morality dimension of political cynicism added in Dekker and Meijerink's scale has proven to be particularly salient in negative evaluations of those external ourselves (Wojciszke, 2005). This provides a strong psychological justification for the addition of the morality to the political cynicism scale in addition to the historical justification. Political participation items are adapted from Ho et al (2011). Additionally, more reliable measures of external efficacy and political information efficacy are included in addition to a variety of political participation. Consequently, these alterations serve to build upon previous research done in the U.S. by Arthur Miller, Jack Citrin, and Robert Eisinger on the nature of social scientific survey research and the analysis of political trust and cynicism. Ultimately, the goal is to provide a better means of measuring political cynicism.

This thesis proceeds as follows: First, I briefly review the history of cynicism both as a historical concept and a quantitative construct in order to properly situate my criticism of current scales. Second, I review the study of political trust and political alienation in the social sciences in order to illustrate several measurement issues. Next, I document the specific issues with reliability and validity associated with political cynicism scales. Fourth, I propose and justify my specific alterations to political cynicism scales. Finally, I test their results and discuss their implications for cynicism research going forward.

Rationale and Literature Review

The Etymology of Cynicism

For the purposes of this paper, cynicism can be thought of as containing three crucial elements: 1) a subject; 2) an orientation, and 3) an object. Cynicism contains both a cognitive and affective component and is, at base, an individual's attitude consisting of a deep-rooted conviction of the inherent evilness of politicians, political institutions, and/or the political system as a whole (Schyns, Nuus, and Dekker, 2004).

When definitions of cynicism are being formulated by researchers, cursory glances are often given to dictionary definitions and loose comparisons are drawn between cynicism and other variables. Cynicism seemingly emerged out of nowhere as a variable of analysis, lacking a robust history of its own in the account of many quantitative researchers. An etymological investigation of the term cynicism can help articulate meaningful distinctions within survey research designs that not only reflect the evolution of the term historically, but also add to the depth of analysis in survey instruments. The purpose of a historical account of cynicism is both to demonstrate how various elements contained within the term emerged as well as provide a sounder basis for drawing distinctions that can refine cynicism's measurement in practical ways.

Origins of Cynicism

Historically, cynicism is principally associated Antisthenes, Diogenes of Sinope, and the Cynic sects of ancient Greece and imperial Rome. The term cynicism originates from the Greek word cynic meaning, literally, dog-like (Branham and Goulet-Caze, 1996). The dog-like references stem from the deeply rooted counter-cultural aspects of cynicism based on a rejection of social convention and an unequivocal affirmation of

more natural and minimal forms of living. More specifically, the reference to a dog is based on parallels made by Greeks about Diogenes' uncivilized and animal-like qualities (Shea, 2010, p.14). Ancient Cynics did not simply hold negative beliefs towards politicians and political institutions; they expressed those negative beliefs in an extreme fashion.

David Mazella (2007) begins with these Greek origins and charts the evolution of the term's use throughout history. As the ancient Greek and Roman iterations of cynical practice came and went definitions of the general term cynicism retained explicit references to its philosophical roots during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. At the beginning of the 19th century, however, the term began to take on radically new meanings. Mazella terms this transition the "vernacularization" of cynicism. Mazella argues that cynicism became disconnected from is more deontological roots, and began to become interpreted as a condition of distrust in others. Throughout this historical evolution of the term cynicism, several dimensions that can be theoretically isolated which, I argue, should inform our measurement of the variable.

The following section will attempt to tease out several meaningful dimensions discussed under the umbrella of cynicism before I delve into criticisms of quantitative survey instruments measuring cynicism.

Perceived immorality. This dimension has largely been neglected by most political communication researchers when investigating cynicism quantitatively. Although the etymology of the term clearly points towards a deontological dimension of cynicism, only a handful of researchers have pursued it in a quantitative setting (e.g., Schyns, Nuus, and Dekker 2004; Dekker, 2006; Schyns and Nuus 2008, Dekker and

Meijerink, 2012; Pattyn et al, 2012). The etymological history of cynicism reveals this dimension as central.

This dimension sees cynicism as going beyond simply unmet expectations and the simple expression of negative attitudes towards the electoral process or politicians. Referring to Mazella's (2007) full genealogy on the subject, "cynicism targets institutionalization for the temporal gap it creates between the institutions and the beliefs that shaped it. The cynic then *moralizes* this gap by treating institutional settings as hypocritical, soulless, or otherwise devoid of the beliefs that once animated them" (p. 6) One crucial aspect of ancient cynicism that could be of theoretical use is the moral dimension of cynicism. Ancient understandings of cynicism were not simply negative attitudes based on unmet expectations or perceptions that politicians were unreliable. Rather, cynicism was a deeply rooted, moralized contempt closer to misanthropy than mistrust in that it connotes a far more harsh form of hatred. As a more contemporary example, Ted Windt (1972) applied ancient cynic lens to the domestic protests against the Vietnam War by the Yippies, a youth-led countercultural movement. The Yippies, like ancient cynics, engaged in forms of protest that relied heavily on moral purity to communicate their viewpoints towards politicians. Windt's applications allow us to more accurately identify the characteristics that help to distinguish between simple expressions of distrust in politicians and defying them in moralistic fashion.

Not only could cynicism be conceived of as deontological, but the intensity of such viewpoints could be more deeply explored as well. Moralistic survey items have the potential to provide another layer of explanation on top of already telling trust-in-government statistics. I argue that stripping the deontological aspects of cynicism over

the course of history has removed much of the unique explanatory features of the construct that have the potential to enrich 21st century studies of political negativity. Cynicism researchers have historically incorporated question items that hint at this moral dimension by asking participants whether or not they think politicians are "crooked" and whether or not they do what is "right" (Rodgers, 1974), but these items do not explicitly make morality a dimension of inquiry. Thus, I attempt to incorporate and adapt several cynicism questions that tap into the moral dimension suggested by Schyns, Nuus, and Dekker.

Perceived incompetence. Adriaansen, Praag & Vreese's (2010) scales isolate perceived incompetence as an important dimension of cynicism. Indeed, many scholars include items that tap respondent's perceptions of the competence of politicians and political institutions. Ancient cynics certainly perceived the ruling class, and society writ large, to be profoundly incompetent at performing their jobs and mocked them accordingly. Many quantitative scholars today not only focus on the decision-making skills of politicians, but tend to do so with questions related to finance management (Miller, 1974), to whether or not politicians understand the problems facing society (Brants et al., 2010), and to how often issues of general importance are discussed and whether solutions offered for them (Adriaansen, Praag & de Vrese, 2010). How well one believes political actors perform their jobs is a very common way that people express deep-rooted hatred of government institutions and politicians. While the morality dimension attempts to tap into how people perceive other's motivations, perceived incompetence helps assess whether or not those motivations were manifested in a failure to get their job done as an elected official. Thus, incompetence constitutes a helpful

measure of perceived intelligence and merits inclusion as a dimension of political cynicism.

Perceived self-interest. In qualitative research on political cynicism, one of the more consistent definitional themes is a perception of self-interestedness. Cynics are overtly calculative and have little interest in a more general goodwill towards society because of an overwhelming perception that others are just as selfishly calculating and lack genuine altruism (Chaloupka, 1999; Kanter & Mirvis 1989). Although ancient cynics could easily be described as either self-interested themselves because of their minimalist beliefs, their moral calculations of public officials and society at large certainly retained a widespread belief that others act in their own self-interest. Quantitative studies routinely ask respondents to respond to statements like "politicians spend most of their time getting re-elected or reappointed," (Agger, Goldstein, & Pearl, 1961) or more explicit statements like "[politicians] are primarily self-interested," (Adriaansen, Praag, & Vreese, 2010). There is a vast philosophical debate about the relationship between morality and self-interest that will remain outside of the scope of this paper. In distinguishing between perceived immorality and perceived self-interest, I do not mean to suggest that immoral actions cannot stem from self-interest, nor am I suggesting that self-interest cannot, at times, be immoral. The analytical division between the two is made to afford researchers a more direct analysis of how expressions of perceived self-interest relate to on-point measurements of perceived immorality, not to codify a separation of the two concepts. Though both may be correlated, or even causally related, the purpose of such analysis is to test the assumed relationship between these concepts.

Based on the previous five sub-sections, I predict that:

H1: Political cynicism will load onto three dimensions: perceived morality, perceived incompetence, and perceived self-interest.

As I have argued there will likely be three dimensions of cynicism. However, a truly valid scale should also capture the necessary negative emotion in item wording in order to reflect the vitriol associated with cynical attitudes.

Negative emotion. The strength of item wording across all three dimensions (self-interestedness, perceived incompetence, and perceived immorality) has an important influence. Cynicism has historically contained an extremely negative attitude towards others, particularly in a political context (Goldfarb, 1991; Chaloupka, 1999). Cynicism is not simply a negative attitude about a candidate or institution, but rather contains a level of contempt expressed in the projected attitude itself. Citizens can think and feel cynically about politicians, about institutions, and about the political system as a whole (Schyns, Nuus, and Dekker, 2004). I argue that the degree of negativity is not necessarily an explicit dimension of political cynicism. Rather, the level of negativity in analyzing cynicism is reflected in how strongly question items are worded for each dimension (Eisinger, 2000). Adriaansen, Praag, and de Vreese (2010) very explicitly altered their scale to respond to criticisms in the literature that questions are not being worded strongly enough in previous research on political cynicism by adding the following item: "political parties are only interested in my vote, not in my opinion." The researchers concluded by suggesting that scholars develop even more strongly worded questions on the basis that a majority of those questioned in their study agreed with the statement, suggesting that more harsh wording may help build some form of gradation into research findings.

This harsh form of negativity is present historically, allowing researchers to ground cynicism in a more anchored fashion. The level of contempt exhibited by cynicism has a strong ties to ancient cynics like Diogenes tap into shocking the sensibilities of the public through his evocative tirades lambasting citizens with diatribes vehemently criticizing politicians as well as entire political institutions. Cynics are generally described as not simply holding negative beliefs, but expressing them in distinctly negative ways. For example, the first quantitative study done on political cynicism relied on a dictionary definition of cynicism as "*contemptuously* distrustful of human nature" [emphasis mine] (Agger, Goldstein, & Pearl, 1961). The evolution of the study of cynicism has slowly chipped away at the valence of this negativity by diluting the strength of questions through a conflation with other dimensions (Eisinger, 2000). In the scale I propose, words such as "evil," "corrupt," and "immoral," are included in order to more deeply gauge cynicism in participant responses for each identified dimension.

Although I argue that the three aspects covered so far are, in fact, part of the cynicism scale, I also posit that three additional dimensions are typically lumped into contemporary studies on political cynicism. This conflation is a result of the vernacularization of the term cynicism, and its subsequent loose association with a variety of other constructs such as perceived unreliability, political trust, and political alienation.

Perceived unreliability. The perceived unreliability dimension has been explicitly isolated by cynicism scholars (Adriaansen, Praag, & Vreese, 2010; Adriaansen, 2011; Adriaansen, van Praag, & de Vreese, 2012) in quantitative studies. I argue that

reliability has begun to be included in the definition of cynicism as a result of the initial conflation of cynicism with political distrust. Moreover, I argue that unreliability should be omitted from the measurement since it was neither part of early etymological meanings nor is it truly a part of the cynicism construct. Unreliability is traditionally interpreted as promising more than one can deliver or being more loyal to those that got them elected than voters. Unmet expectations form the basis for this dimension. I argue that the unreliability dimension more closely resembles political distrust, which I consider to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for political cynicism. One can feel as though politicians are unreliable for reasons external to their level of intelligence. Democrats may feel as though a fellow Democratic candidate is not reliable because of an obstructionist Republican party rather an intellectual failure on the part of the Democratic candidate. Similarly, one is perfectly capable of feeling that a politician can be counted on to follow-through on political promise but also express cynicism towards them or the political institutions they operate within.

Questions geared towards evaluating whether or not political expectations are met have contributed to the dilution of negativity in data collection on cynicism. While perceived unreliability is undoubtedly a useful dimension for political analysis, there is little to no in-depth exploration of the historical or analytic evidence to support its inclusion as a dimension of political cynicism other than to reference previous quantitative research. Indeed, one may think a politician is unreliable in achieving campaign promises, but not be cynical about their corrupt motives or their technical competencies. Those individuals may harbor the belief that those campaign promises by

individual politicians are constrained by their cynical views on political parties or the government, generally.

I have identified unreliability as being more related to political trust than to political cynicism. In the following section, I more fully develop my argument that the trust, cynicism, and alienation constructs have been conflated and argue for their separation.

Political Trust

Abstractly, trust refers to a multitude of interpersonal factors (Duck 1997; Kramer and Tyler 1995) and has been defined as a situation "when parties holding certain favorable perceptions of each other allow this relationship to reach the expected outcomes" (Wheeless and Grotz 1977, 251). It has only been quite recently that both cynicism and political trust have emerged in social scientific research as a variable of analysis. It was not until the 1950's and 1960's that political trust and cynicism began to receive serious attention by the social scientific community. I argue that since the start of quantitative research on the subject, political distrust and cynicism have been treated as synonyms, resulting in a conceptual conflation that limits our ability to truly tap more deeply cynical sentiments among citizens. Instead, trust is distinct and likely to predict, rather than encompass, cynicism.

Agger, Goldstein, and Pearl (1961) first developed a political cynicism scale based on the Webster's Collegiate Dictionary definition of cynical as contemptuously distrustful of human nature. From this definition, a six-item agree/disagree index was created with response items such as: "Politicians spend most of their time getting re-elected or reappointed," and "In order to get nominated, most candidates for political

office have to make basic compromises and undesirable commitments." Further, respondents, based on their composite scores, were grouped into the categories of "politically cynical," "politically neutral," or "politically trusting." Thus, from its social scientific beginning, the study of political cynicism has been, by definition, equated with a lack of political trust. This pairing of political cynicism with political trust on a single dimension is also prevalent in a number of studies focusing on either subject (Citrin & Luks, 2001; Erber & Lau, 1990; Koch, 2003; Peterson & Wrighton, 1998; Rodgers, 1974; Southwell, 2008, Schuck et al, 2013; Pinkleton and Austin, 2012; Balmas, 2012).

Arthur Miller (1974) and Jack Citrin (1974) both had substantial influence on the construction of trust-in-government items used for the National Election Study (NES). Both of their academic work with the NES formed the basis for the quantitative study of political trust as well as political cynicism by virtue of their use of the term in their respective academic arguments. Miller's definition of political trust at the beginning of his touchstone article not only leads off with the heading, "The Study of Political Cynicism," but also proceeded to equate distrust with cynicism immediately. Miller's defines political distrust as "the degree of negative affect towards the government and is a statement of the belief that the government is not functioning and producing outputs in accordance with individual expectations." He does not articulate the degree of negative affect associated with an unmet expectation and the more deeply rooted derision historically associated with cynicism. Citrin's response essay did not contest this definition of political trust and continued, just as Miller had, to treat trust and cynicism as interchangeable. Although Citrin challenged Miller on the grounds of construct validity, calling into question the ability of the trust-in-government scale to actually be measuring

social or psychological attitudes underlying Miller's construct, cynicism received only passing references throughout.

As the trust-in-government measures developed by Miller and Citrin made their way into the NES, their question wordings became widely emulated by researchers. Political trust continues to be used as both a dependent variable predicted by various external political issues such as international affairs, domestic scandals (Chanley, Rudolph, & Rahn, 2000) and the media's framing of politics (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997) as well as an independent variable predicting political participation (de Vreese, 2005). Bernard Barber's (1983) influential treatise helped shape the debate by defining political trust as consisting of a set of expectations to be fulfilled, identifying three distinct types. First was the expectation of technically competent performance. Second was the expectation of fulfilling fiduciary responsibilities. Third, and most interestingly, was a more general, yet underexplored, moral dimension of these expectations. Barber focuses on the first two, folding his moral argument under evaluations of fiduciary responsibility. By doing so, Barber made the assumption that handling money incompetently represented a moral failing, an underlying assumption that has not been tested empirically.

Additionally, the conflation of cynicism and trust is made more complicated due to the failure to craft survey questions that account for the various levels of the polity that cynicism can be direct at. Miller (1974) and Citrin (1974) disagreed heavily about the validity of their political cynicism questions and quibbled for decades over whether or not their items adequately accounted for partisan disdain for incumbent politicians than identifying more deep seated issues with entirely anti-establishment attitudes. The belief

that politicians waste money, a common cynicism item, could easily be a Republican expressing their contempt for an incumbent administration than revealing fundamentally cynical attitudes. Without controlling for the various partisan leanings, it is difficult to differentiate between ritualistic disdain for incumbents of the opposite political stripe and genuine expressions of cynicism. Researchers mainly focus on politicians and the government when putting together questions to the neglect of other targets of cynicism like political parties, the broader political environment, or even people more generally. If a respondent displays a high level of cynicism generally, findings about political cynicism may not mean as much. Additionally, even when researchers account for one target specifically, such as politicians, there is little attempt to analyze that target in the context other targets for political contempt like political parties. Such analysis is critical to overcome the issues associated with the Miller-Citrin exchange.

Recent literature references political trust as the ratio of people's evaluation of government performance relative to their normative expectations of how government ought to perform (Hetherington, 1998; Hetherington 2005; Miller 1974; Stokes 1962; Hetherington & Husser, 2012). Trust includes, at its core, an evaluation of how often one can count of a politician to follow-through with their commitments. This evaluation is separate from an evaluation of their intellectual competence and whether or not there is intent to mislead the public on the issue. Cynical people express more deeply rooted sentiments whereas politically distrustful people simply do not place faith in a given set of political expectations to be fulfilled by those in office. Those who are more politically distrustful are also likely to be cynical about the reasons why they cannot trust politicians, but these are still conceptually distinct.. I contend that these evaluations of

trust-in-government should be considered distinct from more cynical attitudes towards politicians and political institutions. Political trust and political cynicism should be thought of as having an orthogonal relationship with one another. They are both related; yet they are conceptually distinct and do not operate as anchors at opposite ends of two extremes.

Based on the above arguments, I posit that:

H2: Political trust will load separately from the revised political cynicism measures.

Thus far, I have argued that perceived unreliability and political trust should be thought of, and measured distinctly from, political cynicism. In addition, political alienation is another common concept in the political communication literature that has demonstrated definitional fuzziness in relation to cynicism. In the following section, I explore the measurement of political alienation relative to cynicism.

Political Alienation

In quantitative analysis, political alienation has largely been defined by four dimensions: estrangement, normlessness, meaninglessness, and powerlessness (Seeman, 1959; Finifter 1970; Olsen 1969; Lyons, 1970; Schwartz, 1975). Estrangement refers mainly to political isolation of an individual. Normlessness is similar to estrangement but implies that established and accepted political and social norms are being widely ignored by other political actors. Powerlessness refers largely to external political efficacy, or the perception that one feels as though they cannot meaningfully influence political events. Meaninglessness refers largely to the perception that political decisions are being made in

an arbitrary manner with little chance of predictability. These four dimensions make up the vast majority of political alienation research (Finifter 1970; Schwartz, 1975). When one refers to political alienation, one generally must consider two additional questions: Who is alienated and what are they alienated from? (Schwartz, 1975; Olsen, 1969). Typically, the subject is the alienated citizen who expresses that alienation by expressing attitudes towards politicians, political institutions, and the political system as a whole. It is critically important not only to take into account the various dimensions of political alienation, but also account for the subject and object of that alienation in research studies. Most researchers include items that tap into the sense of alienation citizen feel from the government as a whole (Finifter, 1970; Southwell, 2012).

Although a subject's condition of alienation can be viewed as distinct from one's expression of cynical attitudes, expressions of both alienated and cynical attitudes manifest themselves similarly in survey measures; both ask respondents to express their attitudes about their general orientation towards differing aspects of political disaffection (expressions of powerlessness, expressions of cynicism, expressions of normlessness, etc). Given all of this, cynicism would appear to be a dimension of political alienation. In fact, several scholars have forwarded this argument over the years (Southwell, 2008; Dekker and Meijerink, 2012) though there have been some who have begun to challenge this notion (Schyns and Nuus, 2008).

I argue that despite perceived conceptual fit, researchers lack sufficient quantitative evidence to claim cynicism is a distinct dimension of political alienation or something wholly different. I argue that the dimensions of political alienation have begun to bleed into contemporary understandings of cynicism in ways that make an

accurate analysis of cynicism profoundly difficult. For example, Southwell (2012) studies political alienation and its effects on voter turnout by situating the powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness, and estrangement dimensions as equivalent to internal efficacy, external efficacy, and political trust in addition to rhetorically conflating alienation with political cynicism. Similarly to political trust, items used to tap the dimensions chosen by Southwell assume the target of the alienated attitude is the government as a whole without distinguishing between politicians, political parties, and government more generally.

Without specifying the target of alienated attitudes it is nearly impossible to distinguish between more ritualistic expressions of alienation associated with party ideology and incumbency than deep-seated feelings of alienation from politics. Just as expressions of political distrust may be informed more by policy dissatisfaction from Republican respondents towards a Democrat-run government, alienation may be influenced by similar dynamics; particularly if various dimensions of trust, cynicism, and alienation have been conflated historically. In order to rectify such measurement issues, more nuanced assessments of the various dimensions of political alienation are necessary.

Based on these arguments, I posit that:

H3: Political alienation items will load separately from the revised political cynicism measures.

Now that I have demonstrated several conceptual concerns in a broad sense, the following section will document how this measurement conflation manifests itself in specific studies measuring political cynicism.

Problematic Question Wording

Robert Eisinger (2000) notes that Miller and Citrin's research on political cynicism was "clearly flawed," based on a lack of hostility and bitterness historically associated with the term. In Eisinger's eyes, "survey questions mis-measure cynicism, and social scientists disregard the important distinctions between loss of confidence, dissatisfaction, cynicism, and hatred." In more egregious examples, studies of cynicism by Kanter and Mirvis (1989) go so far as to cite low church attendance, high divorce rates, and higher rates of income tax evasion as evidence of a growing condition of cynicism in America. In response, Eisinger aptly points out that, "to [Kanter and Mirvis], the workplace was rife with cynicism, but their data showed a society not of cynics, but of skeptical, tax evading divorcees."

Further analyses of studies on political cynicism consistently demonstrate that question items do not provide adequate face or construct validity. Table I displays various examples of possible theoretical conflations from a variety of question items from more recent publications on cynicism. In terms of face validity, most of the items in the table can too easily be read to tap existing dimensions of political alienation or political trust rather than other dimensions of cynicism, as identified historically. Although the table represents a small sample of the questions asked by cynicism researchers, they also tend to be quintessential examples of the types of questions typically asked. Most political cynicism scales in the literature use categories of questions that center on promise-keeping, fiduciary responsibility, political connectedness, and overt self-interest.

Table I

Typical Cynicism Survey Items	Powerlessness	Estrangement	Normlessness	Meaninglessness	Political Trust	Perceived Self-interest	Negative Emotion	Perceived Incompetence	Perceived Unreliability	Perceived Immorality
Elections give voters a real choice among candidates with different positions. (Pingree, Hill, and McLeod, 2013)	X			X						
Politicians promise more than they can hold, even though they know better. (Brants et al, 2010)				X	X				X	X
During the European Parliamentary election campaign, many promises were made that were never kept. (Schuck et al, 2013)				X	X				X	
Politicians promise more than they can deliver (Jebril, Albaek, and de Vreese, 2013)				X	X				X	
Candidates seriously discuss major problems facing the nation and offer detailed solutions to those problems. (Brants et al, 2010)			X			X		X		
Politicians never tell us what they really think (Dancey, 2012)				X						
Politicians lose touch with the people once elected," (Pinkleton, Um, and Austin, 2002)					X				X	
Politicians don't understand what is happening in society (Jebril, Albaek, and de Vreese, 2013)				X				X		
Do you think the people in government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes? (Lee, 2005)					X			X	X	
Ministers and junior ministers are primarily self-interested (Adriaansen, Praag, & Vreese, 2010)					X	X			X	

Survey items such as "elections give voters a real choice among candidates with different positions," (Pingree, Hill, and McLeod, 2013) aim to measure political cynicism as a distinct variable but the question more centrally taps the powerlessness dimension of political alienation than a historically defined definition of political cynicism. Similarly, items such as, "During the European Parliamentary election campaign, many promises were made that were never kept." (Schuck et al, 2013) and, "Politicians promise more than they can deliver" (Jebril, Albaek, and de Vreese, 2013) speak more to political trust, perceived reliability, or meaninglessness than they do more deeply-rooted forms of disdain associated with cynicism. Some items in this category get very close to tapping moral dimensions with items such as, "Politicians promise more than they can hold, even though they know better." (Brants et al, 2010). The explicit reference to intent can possibly form the basis for a moral judgment rather than simply an expression of unmet expectations. By the same token, survey items like, "politicians never tell us what they really think," (Dancey, 2012) clearly measure the meaninglessness dimension of political alienation because such a condition would make political decisions entirely unpredictable for citizens because of a lack of information. Survey items such as, "Politicians lose touch with the people once elected," (Pinkleton, Um, and Austin, 2002) taps into the estrangement dimension of political alienation because of their intimations of political isolation rather than the cognitive and affective attitudes that make up cynicism. Questions about fiduciary responsibility clearly tap competence dimensions, but fail to adequately capture the moral force of the attitude without making explicit that such an action should be considered immoral.

The problem with all of these examples of cynicism questions is that they fail to capture the negative emotional force necessary for an understanding of cynicism that captures both the breadth of its historical meaning while at the same time providing researchers a useful variable to study. Additionally, the vagaries associated with particular word choices made by researches compounds the problem of adequately tapping various dimensions of cynicism in ways that are consistently interpretable. These scale and item level issues with political cynicism as a variable require a re-formulated political cynicism scale in order to determine the ultimate usefulness of cynicism as a variable of analysis.

One additional issue with current scale construction for political cynicism is that many of the published scales suffer from not only low levels of reliability between items, but also have found the ranges of alpha levels to be quite volatile. Although some studies report highly acceptable alpha levels of .80 (Pinkleton, Austin, Zhou, Willoughby, & Reiser, 2012), .85 (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997) .88 (Pinkleton, Um, & Austin, 2002), a number of published scales fall far below acceptable ranges for empirical postulation. Cynicism scales are routinely published with alpha levels of .65 (Sweetser & Kaid, 2008), .67 (de Vreese and Semetko, 2002), .69 (Pinkleton and Austin, 2001), even as low as .59 (de Vreese, 2005). In some cases, calculating reliability is impossible because cynicism scales are created consisting of only a single item to measure cynicism (Balmas, 2012). These low levels of reliability contribute to erratic statistical results that define the extant study of cynicism. Thus, I posit the following research question:

H4: The new political cynicism scale will have higher reliability than existing scales.

Predictive Validity

Arguably as a result of the lack of consistent reliability in scales, predictions made based on the cynicism variable do not reveal consistent results. One of the biggest problems with social scientific research on political cynicism is that the variable rarely does anything interesting. Even when significant predictive relationship can be isolated, they only appear to hold under certain conditions and cannot be consistently replicated. In order to test the predictive effects of the suggested alterations to cynicism items, three different dimensions will be explored: Social cynicism, political participation, and political information efficacy (PIE).

Social cynicism. Social cynicism taps into one's more general feelings of misanthropy towards other humans in general, regardless of whether or not they have a political context. Higher levels of reported political cynicism should logically correlate with recorded levels of social cynicism. Moreover, we can start to determine whether or not social cynicism predicts political cynicism or if there is something about political cynicism that makes people more cynical generally. A personality level measure of social cynicism was used by Pattyn et al. (2012) when testing a new cynicism scale in order to make such comparisons, which should warrant its inclusion.

Based on my arguments to this point, I posit that:

H5: The new political cynicism scale will be more strongly related to social cynicism than both political trust and political alienation

Political participation. In addition to social cynicism, political participation more generally is a fundamental variable of comparison. While there are many scholars

who have found evidence corroborating the claim that increased cynicism reduces political participation (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Valentino et al, 2001), there are a number of other scholars who have reached completely opposite conclusions about cynicism's effect on political engagement (de Vreese, 2005; Vreese & Semetko, 2002). Even when results are significant in either direction, the strength of any given cynicism prediction is generally quite low. For example, although Valentino et al. (2001) found a negative relationship between strategic news coverage and political participation using items that gauge dimensions of both trust and cynicism, the relationship is not strong and barely significant. Recently, Jackson (2010) conducted similar tests on issue-specific cynicism in comparison to a number of variables such as internal political efficacy, partisanship, voting likelihood, and found few significant results. Where results were significant in Jackson's study, the strength of the relationships were small.

Given the overwhelming level of negativity associated with a historically anchored understanding of political cynicism, it is more likely that political participation is lower in the aggregate when reported levels of cynicism are higher. Thus, I posit that:

H6a: After controlling for political alienation, the new political cynicism scale will have a negative effect on political participation.

H6b: After controlling for political trust, political cynicism will have a negative effect on political participation.

Lastly, in addition to analyzing social cynicism and political participation, it is also useful to compare political cynicism to how respondents think about their ability to synthesize and act upon the political information they have.

Political information efficacy (PIE). Political information efficacy (PIE) measures one's confidence in their ability to gather sufficient information to make informed political decisions. The construct was recently introduced by Kaid, McKinney, and Tedesco (2007) in an attempt attempt to tap more nuanced forms of internal political efficacy in relation to political cynicism. In these studies, which are growing more numerous (Kaid, Postelnicu, Landreville, Yun, & LeGrange, 2007; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008; Lariscy, Tinkham, & Sweetser, 2011), ground many of their predictions about cynicism and PIE using survey items that conflates various dimensions of political alienation such as "people like me don't have any say about what the government does," (Sweetser & Kaid, 2008) which clearly taps the powerlessness dimension of alienation. Any predictions made on this basis will, by definition, be predicting effects of different dimensions of entirely different constructs.

Similarly to political participation, I would expect cynicism to negatively predict levels of political information efficacy. It is likely that the addition of morality along with the explicit focus on negativity involved in cynicism will result in a higher likelihood that one feels a lack of confidence about the political information they have to act upon

H7: Political information efficacy and the new cynicism scale will be negatively correlated.

By and large, studies of cynicism leave researchers wondering about the ultimate significance of cynical attitudes if research findings are not only inconsistent, but also hardly strong enough to make credible predictions relative to other variables. Without an adequate ability to establish predictive validity on a consistent basis, political cynicism as a variable of analysis is likely to find itself being increasingly abandoned in a similar

fashion to Pederson's (2012) explicit disavowal of the cynicism. I argue that a reformulated political cynicism scale with a sensitivity to the various historical dimensions of cynicism can help advance the ongoing conversation about the usefulness of the cynicism construct in the broader constellation of variables measuring political disaffection.

Proposal for Replication and Extension

Thus far, I have demonstrated that political cynicism is analyzed using survey instruments that conflate distinct, yet related constructs, such as political trust as well inadequately parse out attitudes targeted at various levels of political organization (politicians, political parties, government as a whole, etc). The result of this conceptual conflation of political cynicism with other is an inability to generate results that are reliable and, more importantly, valid. Without measurement techniques that avoid this conceptual flattening of political attitudes, attempts to analyze political cynicism as an either independent or dependent variable are greatly constrained. This analysis attempts to fill the research gap by conducting a replication and extension of the work done by several researchers in the Netherlands focused on distinguishing political cynicism as a construct.

Method

Design

In order to compare to similar studies attempting to distinguish cynicism from other constructs, a cross-sectional survey design was used for data collection. This research design is intended to act as a pilot study in order to gauge the need for larger, more complex experimental designs to refine the measurement of political cynicism. As such, recruited participants are not intended to be generalized to a broader population, but rather are to be used to guide future research designs regarding political cynicism scale development. The Qualtrics survey was distributed to two different sample populations from March 1st, 2015 until April 8th, 2015. The first sample population was a convenience sample of Wake Forest students (N = 126) and the second was distributed through the Mechanical Turk service operated by Amazon.com (N = 181).

MTurk and Social Science Research

Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) service is becoming an increasingly popular venue for recruiting participants for social scientific research (Johnson & Borden, 2012). Empirical researchers have long lamented the convenient sampling of college students as a basis for academic research. As a result, researchers have explored various crowdsourcing options for data collection that reach a wider demographic.

Generally, MTurk uses Amazon.com's web platform as an online marketplace for completing tasks that require human subjects. Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs) extend across a range topics, including, but not limited to, coding assistance translation, transcription, labelling, opinion surveys, and more (Goodman et al., 2013). Requesters post advertisements for various tasks that MTurkers can filter by various criteria and

select to participate in exchange for compensation per completed Once a HIT has been accepted, the MTurker has a set amount of time to complete the task, which is then sent for final approval by the requester. Requesters can also set qualification criteria in order to screen out workers who engage HITs in bad faith. Specific approval rate percentages can be set as thresholds for participation, as well as a minimum number of completed and approved HITs.

As with any sampling technique, there are distinct positive and negatives associated with the use of MTurk for research purposes. On one hand, MTurk's all-inclusive web platform integrates a large pool of participants and a system of compensation with a suite of monitoring tools that can easily be synchronized with other web services used in data collection. On the other hand, however, MTurk samples tend to be more liberal than the general population and the heavy participation of Indian nationals has created language barrier issue that have been noted by researchers (Feitosa et al., 2015; Ross et al., 2010). Additionally, others have raised concerns about the ethical implications of exploited labor given that many HITs compensate workers for less than a dollar per HIT (Walsh, 2011).

MTurk was deemed appropriate for this particular analysis for several reasons. Since the vast majority of studies attempting primarily to compare political cynicism measures to other related constructs use convenience samples of college students, MTurk serves as a useful point of comparison for a wider demographic given resource constraints on the researcher. Second, because the purpose of the survey is a pilot study and will not necessarily yield generalizable conclusions, many issues related to the representativeness of MTurk samples are less of a concern. For example, since this study

is limited to a US population that largely uses MTurk as a secondary source of income, as opposed to the burgeoning Indian population that some have referred to as a "digital sweatshop" (Walsh, 2011).

Moreover, a number of studies have shown that participants recruited through MTurk closely mirror samples recruited through more traditional data collection methods such as (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Casler et al., 2013). As an analog to the present study, Berinsky et al. (2012) replicated several ANES measures and compared them to MTurkers recruited at various levels of compensation. Although Berinsky et al. found that MTurk samples tend to be more ideologically liberal than the general population, a number of demographic and political variables show MTurk samples to be comparable to both ANES online panels as well as face-to-face interviews.

Recruitment and Procedures

A single survey was used collect data from both populations but two procedures were used to distribute the survey and recruit participants. For the MTurk sample, a HIT was created through Amazon's MTurk web platform. Qualified MTurkers had to have at least a 95% approval rate and completed at least 500 HITs. This level of qualification control is stringent enough to ensure users genuinely engage HITs they accept and will filter out short-term accounts that may skew the 95% threshold due to user sample size. Initially, an advertisement was posted with a link to the Qualtrics survey offering compensation of 0.15 cents per completed assignment. A week after posting the HIT, that compensation offered was increased to 0.25 cents per completed assignment due to low response rates.

In the student population, participants were recruited via undergraduate courses in the Communication department on the Wake Forest campus. Several professors afforded class time for the researcher to briefly describe the survey and distribute it electronically. No extra credit or other form of compensation was given as an incentive to complete the survey.

Measures

Political cynicism. As the central variable of analysis in the present study, several different items from popular cynicism scales were included as a way to compare to the adapted and novel items attempting to tap into unexplored dimensions like morality. As a result, the study included 47 total items geared towards measuring cynicism on a 5-point Likert type scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Items replicated from other studies that are criticized in this paper include statements such as "It seems like politicians only care about themselves or special interests," (Pinkleton et al, 2012) "Politicians lose touch quickly with the public after they are elected," (Pinkleton et al, 2012), "I'm disgusted with politics," (Pinkleton and Austin, 2001) "I think quite a few politicians are crooked," (Valentino, 2001) "Politicians were more concerned with their own image than with the future of the country," (Schuck, 2013) and "One never knows what politicians really think." (McKinney and Rill, 2009).

Scales intended to make up a new cynicism scale include anchor items that explicitly measured the term in question across various levels. Respondents were asked how strongly they agree or disagree that politicians, political parties, and government are "immoral," "incompetent," and "cynical." Additional items attempted to tap into various elements thought to fall under those three categorizations. For example, incompetence

was also measured with statements such as, “Politicians make sound judgments when making political decisions,” “Political parties push bad leaders forward as candidates,” and “the government is aware of problems in our society.” Similarly, immorality was measured with items such as, “The government is dishonest to the people they supposed to serve,” and “Politics brings out the worst in people.” Though many of these questions were adapted from Dekker and Meijerink’s (2012) cynicism scale, several novel items were added such as “Only the best of us choose to run for public office,” and, “You have to be a pretty lousy person to want to go into politics.” Scales, means, and reliabilities for cynicism and the following measures will be reported in the results section. Items were all coded such that higher scores corresponded with higher levels of cynicism

Demographics. Participants in both samples were asked about their age, sex, race/ethnicity, and education level. In the Wake student sample, ages ranged from 19-21. The student survey oversampled females at 69% (N = 83). Racially and ethnically, the student pool was comparable to the Wake Forest population overall, with 81% (N = 98) self-identifying as white, 10% (N = 12) self-identifying as African-American and 6% (N = 7) identifying as Hispanic/Latina(o).

In the MTurk population, the age ranged from 18-80 and 58% (N = 110) of the population identified as male. Racially and ethnically, the MTurk population largely mirrored the student population with 81% (N = 154) identifying as white, 9% (N = 17) identifying as African-American, and 5% (N = 10) identifying as Hispanic/Latina(o). In terms of education level, 39.8% of respondents had a bachelor’s degree and 13.6% had a graduate degree (M.A., Ph.D., J.D., etc). Only 14.1% had only a high school diploma or less.

Political ideology. Participants were asked about their political ideologies using two different types of questions. First, a feeling thermometer was presented with values between 0-100, with 0 representing a cold, negative feeling and 100 representing a warm, positive feeling. Participants were asked to rate six different targets (Obama, Democrats, Republicans, Liberals, Conservatives, and the Tea Party). Second, participants were asked about their general political leanings using a 7-item Likert-type scale ranging from strong Democrat (0) to independent (3) to strong Republican (6).

Political participation. Political participation was measured in two different ways. First, general voting patterns were measured with questions about past voting behavior (ex.. "Did you vote in the last presidential election; did you vote in the most recent congressional midterm election?") as well as future voting intention (ex. "Do you plan on voting in the next presidential election?"). Respondents were also asked which candidate they voted for in previous elections. Additionally, participation factors external to voting were assessed with a series of questions based on the scale used by Ho et al (2011). A 5-point Likert-type scale (Never, rarely, sometimes, often, all of the time) was used to measure alternate forms of political participation such as circulating a petition, working for a political campaign, fundraising for political organizations, and participating in a protest, march, or rally. Items were coded such that a higher score corresponded to higher levels of non-voting political participation.

Social cynicism. The social cynicism scale used by Pattyn et al. (2012) was used to measure participant's general levels of cynicism towards individuals outside of the context of politics. Responses to six questions were collected on a 5-point Likert-type scale using questions such as "People will tell lies to get ahead," and "Many people take

advantage of unselfish others." Items were coded such that a higher score corresponded to higher levels of social cynicism

Political information efficacy. Kaid, McKinney, and Tedescos' (2007) four-item scale was used to measure Political information efficacy (PIE). A 5-point Likert-type scale was used (strongly agree to strongly disagree) to gauge participant's level of agreement with the following statements: "If a friend asked me about politics, I feel like I would have enough information to help them make an informed decision," "I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics," "I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country," and "I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people." Items were coded such that a higher score corresponded to higher levels of PIE.

Political trust. Given the fundamental argument articulated in this analysis, many routinely cited items measuring trust were not used. Instead, participants were asked two kinds of questions. Participants were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "Politicians are reliable," followed by a series of questions explicitly asking whether participants trusted various actors and institutions in politics. Participants responded to statements such as "I trust politicians in the United States," and "I trust the United States government." Items were coded such that a higher score corresponds to a higher level of trust.

External political efficacy. As a measure of political alienation, external political efficacy (EPE) was measured with four items on a 5-point Likert-type scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) based on the scale used by Pinkleton et al. (2012). Respondents were asked to respond to statements such as "Voting gives people an

effective way to influence what the government does," and "I can't make a difference even if I participate in the electoral process." Items were recoded such that a higher score corresponds to higher levels of EPE.

Results

The process of analysis was identical for both sample groups. Initially, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify scale loadings, followed by scale creation and reliability analysis. Next, each hypothesis was tested within each sample group using bivariate and partial correlation analysis.

MTurk Sample

In terms of political demographics, the MTurk sample echoed previous research identifying those samples to be more liberal than the general population ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 2.00$). These general ideological leanings were confirmed with the feeling thermometers for Obama ($M = 49.95$, SD = 34.25), Democrats ($M = 49.38$, SD = 31.08) Liberals ($M = 49.85$, SD = 33.05), Republicans ($M = 32.41$, SD = 28.79), Conservatives ($M = 38.04$, SD = 32.76), and the Tea Party ($M = 29.90$, SD = 32.03).

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to test H1, which predicted that cynicism items would load into three factors: Perceived immorality, perceived incompetence, and perceived self-interest. The factorability of 32 adapted cynicism measures was examined using a principle component analysis with a Varimax rotation. Variables were factored if they had an Eigenvalue > 1. The items loaded onto 5 distinct components explaining a total of 65.2% of the variance. However, 46.4% of that variance was explained solely by the first factor. Moreover, items intended to measure perceived immorality and perceived incompetence loaded across several dimensions. For example, as Table II shows, although anchor items like, "The government is immoral," and "political parties are immoral" very clearly loaded onto the first factor, other anchor items like, "politicians are morally corrupt," loaded onto entirely separate dimensions. In

the case of items intended to measure perceived incompetence such as, "Politicians are not able to solve problems in society," did not fit clearly in any of the five factors identified.

Thus, H1 was not supported as the items initially coded as perceived immorality and perceived incompetence loaded primarily on the first factor, with only a few loading cleanly onto the other 5 factors. Political cynicism items borrowed from criticized studies, however, faced similar issues loading cleanly onto distinctly identifiable dimensions. In a principal component analysis using a Varimax rotation, the 16 example items loaded onto three factors explaining 65.2%. The first factor accounted for 51.0% of the variance while the other two factors explained less than 8% of variance each. A similarly inconsistent loading patter presented itself with this item-group.

Despite the inability to clearly distinguish between dimensions for either set of political cynicism items, both the criticized set of cynicism questions ($M = 41.58$, $SD = 9.92$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .895$) and the newly adapted measures ($M = 73.78$, $SD = 20.74$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .954$) had very high reliabilities. H4 predicted that the newly formed cynicism scale would have a higher reliability than previous scales, represented by the example items included in the present study. While H4 was supported by the data, the difference was not as large as anticipated based on previously reviewed political cynicism scales. Overall reliabilities and correlations can be found on Table III.

Table II

Exploratory Factor Analysis – Cynicism Scale (MTurk Sample)

Survey Items	Loadings					
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Communalities
Politicians are honest.*		.635				.68
Politicians genuinely try to keep their campaign promises.*		.555	.516			.71
Politicians are focused on maximizing their own personal wealth.			.646			.62
Politicians are morally corrupt.			.601			.67
Politicians usually end up abusing authority in intentionally malicious ways.			.715			.74
Politicians have evil intentions.			.735			.73
Politicians are incompetent					.677	.68
Politicians know what people's concerns are.		.505			.457	.47
Politicians make sound judgment when making political decisions.*		.701				.72
Politicians generally have no idea what they are talking about a lot of the time.					.526	.53
Politicians are not able to solve problems in society.			.370	.369	.326	.51

Politics brings out the worst in people.			.446	.442		.52
Only the best of us choose to run for public office.*		.670				.51
You have to be a pretty lousy person to want to go into politics.					.504	.57
Politicians will lie to get ahead.		.495	.434	.450		.68
Political parties are immoral	.680					.77
The government is immoral	.726					.76
Political parties are dishonest to the people they serve	.543					.75
Government institutions are primarily focused on maximizing their own wealth	.715					.75
The government has our best interest at heart*	.603					.70
The government is dishonest to the people they are supposed to serve	.682					.76
Political parties are primarily focused on maximizing their own wealth.	.633					.66
Political Parties have our best interests at heart*		.656				.71
Political parties are incompetent					.680	.76
The government is incompetent				.529	.483	.70
Political parties clearly let us know what they stand for*	.518					.44
Political parties push bad leaders forward as candidates			.338		.378	.48

The government is not solving our problems.					.799		.76
I am cynical about government.					.696		.74
I am cynical about politicians.					.634		.63
Even if someone starts out honest, going into politics will eventually ruin them.		.439			.420		.53
I'm satisfied with the way that government works.*			.563		.516		.64
	Eigenvalue	14.86	2.03	1.47	1.43	1.07	
	% of Total Variance	46.4	6.3	4.6	4.5	3.4	
	Total Variance Explained					65.2%	

* - Reverse coded item

Note: Factor loadings were reported under multiple factors if there was less than a .05 difference

H2 predicted that the political distrust scale (M = 2.74, SD = .92, Cronbach's α = .85) would distinguish itself from the revised political cynicism scale (M = 2.32, SD = .66). A correlation analysis revealed a high, significant relationship between distrust and cynicism (r = .83, N = 80, p < .001). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted with the cynicism and distrust scale, revealing that both loaded onto the same factor. Due to the inability to adequately distinguish trust from cynicism, H2 was not supported.

H3 similarly predicted that the political alienation would load distinctly from the revised cynicism items. Though the selected alienation scale did not perform very reliably (M = 2.50, SD = .72, Cronbach's α = .68), it still demonstrated a high, significant relationship with the cynicism scale (r = .71, N = 170, p < .001). Additionally, the scale did not load onto different components during an exploratory factor analysis. Thus, H3 was not supported due to an inability to distinguish between the two constructs.

The remaining hypotheses predicted various relationships between the cynicism scale and scales constructed for social cynicism (M = 2.28, SD = .83, α = .90), political information efficacy (M = 2.70, SD = .73, α = .90), and political participation (M = 1.70, SD = .73, α = .89). H5a predicted that the cynicism scale will be more strongly correlated with social cynicism than political distrust. A correlation analysis demonstrated a lack of support for this prediction. Although the correlation between political cynicism and social cynicism was high and significant (r = .50, N = 170, p < .001), the relationship was not as strong as the previously reported correlation between political cynicism and political distrust (r = .83). H5b similarly predicted that political cynicism would be more strongly related to social cynicism than to political alienation, which was also not supported based on the previously reported results.

Table III

Descriptives and correlations between key variables in MTurk sample

	Descriptives				Correlations				
Scales	M	SD	N	α	Political Distrust	Political Alienation	Political Cynicism	Political Participation	Social Cynicism
Political Information Efficacy (PIE)	2.70	.73	185	.90	.30**	-.11	.09	.25**	-.18*
Political Distrust	2.74	.92	177	.85		.57**	.83**	-.01	.32**
Political Alienation	2.50	.72	180	.68			.71**	-.21**	.47**
Political Cynicism	2.32	.66	171	.95				-.08	.50**
Political Participation	1.70	.73	177	.89					-.21**
Social Cynicism	2.28	.83	184	.90					

* - Correlation significant at the .05 level.

** - Correlation significant at the .01 level.

H6a predicted that after controlling for the effect of political alienation, political cynicism would retain a negative relationship to political participation. A bivariate correlation between cynicism and political participation reveals a negative, but non-significant effect ($r = -.07$, $N = 163$, $p > .05$). After conducting a partial correlation controlling for alienation, cynicism showed to have a slightly positive, but still non-significant effect on political participation ($r = .08$, $N = 159$, $p > .05$). Thus, H6a was not supported. H6b predicted that after controlling for political distrust, cynicism would show a significant, negative relationship with political participation. Once again, after a partial correlation was conducted controlling for distrust, there was a non-significant, if negative, relationship between cynicism and participation ($r = -.04$, $N = 74$, $p > .5$). Thus, H6b was not supported by these data.

H7 predicted that political information efficacy would be negatively correlated with political cynicism. A bivariate correlation was conducted, revealing a non-significant, if slightly positive, relationship between PIE and cynicism ($r = .09$, $N = 171$, $p > .05$). Thus, H7 was not supported. However, after controlling for political alienation in a partial correlation, political cynicism had a significant, moderately positive relationship with PIE ($r = .25$, $N = 167$, $p = .001$). This means that after accounting for a feelings of powerlessness, normlessness, estrangement, and meaninglessness in politics, people are more likely to be both cynical and be confident in their ability to gather and act upon political information they receive.

Student Population

Politically, the Wake student population was generally more conservative ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.72$), which was further supported by the political feeling thermometers for

Obama (M = 45.90, SD = 30.46), Democrats (M = 50.29, SD = 24.91), liberals (M = 47.99, SD = 25.76), Republicans (M = 50.29, SD = 26.44), conservatives (M = 46.45, SD = 25.41), and the Tea Party (M = 30.64, SD = 23.15).

Initially, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to test H1, which predicted that the cynicism items would load into three factors: Perceived immorality, perceived incompetence, and perceived self-interest. The factorability of the 32 revised cynicism items was examined using a principal components analysis with a Varimax rotation. Variables were factored if they had an Eigenvalue > 1. Revised political cynicism items loaded onto 8 distinct factors explaining a total of 67.7% of the variation. The first factor explained 28.3% of the variance with no other single factor explaining more than 10%. While some perceived morality and perceived incompetence items loaded onto the same components, they did not load consistently and were inter-mixed with other seemingly unrelated items. For instance, as displayed in Table III, anchor items such as, "Political parties are incompetent," and, "The government is incompetent," loaded cleanly onto the first factor, seemingly distinct items such as, "Political parties are primarily focused on maximizing their own wealth," and, "The government is dishonest to the people they are supposed to serve," also loaded onto the first factor. Similarly, although anchor items for perceived immorality such as, "The government/political parties are immoral," loaded very cleanly onto the second factor, theoretically related questions such as, "Politicians are morally corrupt," and, "Politicians have evil intentions," were grouped into separate factors. Thus, H1 was not supported by these data because of the inconsistent loading patterns during the exploratory factor analysis. While some anchor items loaded very

Table IV

Exploratory Factor Analysis – Cynicism Scale (Wake Sample)

Survey Items	Loadings								
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8	Communalities
Politicians are honest.*			.450				.487		.67
Politicians genuinely try to keep their campaign promises.*				.744					.68
Politicians are focused on maximizing their own personal wealth.			.773						.66
Politicians are morally corrupt.			.675						.71
Politicians usually end up abusing authority in intentionally malicious ways.			.729						.65
Politicians have evil intentions.			.561						.64
Politicians are incompetent				.467					.61
Politicians know what people's concerns are.				.674					.60
Politicians make sound judgment when making political decisions.*				.483					.57
Politicians generally have no idea what they are talking about a lot of the time.						.653			.68
Politicians are not able to solve problems in society.				.413					.59
Politics brings out the worst in people.						.622			.58

Only the best of us choose to run for public office.*				.715		.57
You have to be a pretty lousy person to want to go into politics.		.681				.70
Politicians will lie to get ahead.	.650					.58
Political parties are immoral		.863				.86
The government is immoral		.854				.86
Political parties are dishonest to the people they serve		.774				.78
Government institutions are primarily focused on maximizing their own wealth			.449			.65
The government has our best interest at heart*				.767		.69
The government is dishonest to the people they are supposed to serve	.572					.64
Political parties are primarily focused on maximizing their own wealth.	.508					.72
Political Parties have our best interests at heart*				.472		.57
Political parties are incompetent	.782					.79
The government is incompetent	.796					.83
Political parties clearly let us know what they stand for*					.789	.50
Political parties push bad leaders forward as candidates	.544					.60
The government is not solving our problems.	.625					.74

I am cynical about government.		.647								.73
I am cynical about politicians.		.580								.72
Even if someone starts out honest, going into politics will eventually ruin them.						.768				.82
I'm satisfied with the way that government works.*										
	Eigenvalue	9.06	3.12	2.76	1.71	1.48	1.30	1.19	1.06	
	% of Total Variance	28.3	9.7	8.6	5.3	4.6	4.1	3.7	3.3	
	Total Variance Explained								67.7	

* - Reverse coded item

Note: Factor loadings were reported under multiple factors if there was less than a .05 difference.

cleanly onto separate dimensions, they were mixed with items that were predicted to fall into different dimension.

In order to compare this to typically used cynicism items, a second exploratory factor analysis was conducted with the criticized examples cynicism items. A principal components analysis with a Varimax rotation was used for the 16 items, which loaded onto 3 factors explaining 58.44% of the variance, with 41.44% of that variance explained by the first factor. Similar to the revised items, the example items either loaded very clearly in one factor along with items whose vocabulary and function appeared significantly different.

Very similarly to the MTurk sample, the reliabilities of both the criticized cynicism scale (M = 35.98, SD = 8.53, Cronbach's α = .88) and the revised cynicism scale (M = 60.76, SD = 14.05, Cronbach's α = .91) had surprisingly high reliabilities. Again, H4, which predicted the new cynicism scale to have a higher reliability, was supported, but not by as much as anticipated. Overall reliabilities and correlations can be found on Table V.

H2 predicted that the political distrust scale (M = 2.24, SD = .70, Cronbach's α = .83) would be distinct from the revised political cynicism scale. An exploratory factor analysis loaded both scales onto the same factor and a follow-up bivariate correlation analysis revealed a high, significant relationship between cynicism and distrust (r = .63, N = 34, $p < .001$). While the correlation is not as strong as in the MTurk sample, H2 similarly not supported by this sample group.

Table V

Descriptives and correlations between key variables in Wake sample

	Descriptives				Correlations				
Scales	M	SD	N	α	Political Distrust	Political Alienation	Political Cynicism	Political Participation	Social Cynicism
Political Information Efficacy (PIE)	2.11	.97	121	.92	-.006	.175	.094	.311**	-.108
Political Distrust	2.24	.70	102	.83		.202	.629**	-.189	-.272**
Political Alienation	2.11	.57	111	.54			.738**	-.020	.738**
Political Cynicism	1.88	.47	95	.91				.068	.629**
Political Participation	.48	.061	123	.89					.272**
Social Cynicism	2.29	.69	120	.83					

* - Correlation significant at the .05 level.

** - Correlation significant at the .01 level.

H3 similarly predicted that the political alienation scale (M = 2.11, SD = .57, Cronbach's α = .54) would load distinctly from revised cynicism items. A bivariate correlation analysis showed that there was a high, significant relationship between cynicism and alienation (r = .74, N = 94, p < .001), however, the reliability of the alienation scale is unacceptably low. In either case, H3 was not supported by these data.

H5a predicted that the cynicism scale will be more strongly correlated with social cynicism (M = 2.29, SD = .69, Cronbach's α = .83) than political distrust. A bivariate correlation analysis showed a moderate, significant relationship between social cynicism and political cynicism (r = .42, N = 94, p < .001), which was weaker than the relationship between political distrust and cynicism from the analysis for H2. Thus, H5a was not supported by these data. H5b predicted that political cynicism would correlate more strongly with social cynicism than political alienation. As show in the analysis of H3 and H5a, this was not the case. Thus, H5b was not supported by these data.

H6a predicted that after controlling for political alienation, political cynicism would have a negative relationship with political participation. First, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted between political cynicism and political participation. The result was a negative, significant relationship (r = -.23, N = 95, p < .05). A partial correlation was conducted controlling for political alienation and revealed a negative, but non-significant relationship between cynicism and political participation (r = -.12, p > .05). H6b predicted a similar negative relationship between political cynicism and political participation after controlling for political distrust. A partial correlation revealed a positive, but non-significant relationship between cynicism and political participation (r = .19, p > .05). Thus, both H6a and H6b were not supported by these data.

H7 predicted that political information efficacy (M = 2.11, SD = .97, Cronbach's α = .92) would be negatively correlated with political cynicism. A bivariate correlation analysis revealed a barely positive, but non-significant relationship between PIE and political cynicism ($r = .09$, $N = 95$, $p > .05$). Thus H7 was not supported by these data. Tables IV and V display all of the scale analyses as well as a global correlation matrix between key variables in both samples.

Discussion

This study attempted to differentiate between political cynicism, political distrust, and other measures of political engagement and, in the process, develop a more workable cynicism scale for researchers. The aim was to provide both a historical and empirical basis for creating more nuanced cynicism items as well as to compare results from an American population from the handful of European studies that have conducted similar analyses.

Earlier research has been split on the potential for political cynicism to motivate political participation using existing measures of cynicism (de Vreese, 2005; Adriaansen, Praag, and de Vreese, 2012). While European studies (Dekker and Meijerink, 2012; Pattyn et al., 2012; Schyns, Nuus, and Dekker 2004; Dekker, 2006; Schyns and Nuus 2008) have found significant differentiations between trust, alienation, and cynicism variables, the present study was unable to replicate such findings in an American context.

The results of the present study seem to provide more questions than answers. Of all of the predicted relationships, only the prediction in H4 that the revised political cynicism scale would have a higher reliability was supported by both collected sample. All other analyses show non-significant results, even after controlling for variables that

were arguably conflated with cynicism in past studies. Despite the lack of support for the researcher's hypotheses, both datasets provided valuable information about cynicism, distrust, and alienation.

First, the exploratory factor analyses in both samples including both criticized example cynicism items as well as revised items did revealed an inconsistent overall pattern of factor loading that made rendering distinct dimensions of analysis difficult. In both samples, most items loaded onto a single factor that, despite explaining significant amounts of variance, did not create coherent delineations between question type (perceived immorality/perceived incompetency) or level of analysis (politician, party, government). Several items loaded at very low rates across 2 or 3 different components, resulting in no single dominant factor. In some instances, it is possible that respondents by and large equated incompetent political leadership with immoral behavior, resulting in both sets of questions loading similarly for many. These issues made the identification of adequately theorized dimensions wrought with difficulties. Based on these data, future studies would be advised to collect far more data and conduct more rigorous factor analyses before proposing scales with more clear-cut dimensionalities.

Secondly, despite the lack of clear factor loadings for cynicism scales across the board, it was surprising to find that both the criticized cynicism items included in the survey and the revised cynicism measures to have extremely high reliabilities compared to previous studies. As noted, cynicism measures have been rife with reliability issues, with many hovering between .65-.80. Even though the revised cynicism items did not load as anticipated, the fact that items measuring perceived incompetence and perceived immorality scaled so successfully with one another suggests that these items are tapping

into very similar constructs, despite their unique wording. This finding is encouraging for generating and adapting different items to be incorporated in cynicism scales in future studies.

Moreover, social cynicism and political cynicism did not correlate nearly as much as anticipated. Both H2 and H3 evaluated how closely respondent's general cynical attitudes towards people related to their cynicism towards politicians, political parties, and government. Although political cynicism and social cynicism were very predictably correlated, the strength of the relationship was far more moderate that one would anticipate. This suggests that cynicism towards people more generally doesn't necessary translate as well to the political arena as do variables like political trust and political alienation. While a more general explanation for this moderate relationship is outside of the scope of this paper, the disparity between the strength of the relationship between social cynicism and distrust/alienation speaks volumes to how conflated cynicism has become. These results may suggest that the historical arguments made in favor of such a distinction may be out of step with society's present understanding of such concepts. To use Mazella's (2007) language, cynicism may have become so vernacularized that it is beyond the point of empirical disentanglement with political distrust and political alienation.

Lastly, the overall lack of significant results comparing cynicism to political participation after controlling for alienation and trust could be interpreted in several different ways. To some, it can validate the notion that cynicism is, at best, redundant and, at worst, misleading. To others, it can serve as justification to dig deeper to understand the nuances of cynical attitudes and the scenarios under which they present

themselves in various ways. Interestingly, in the MTurk sample, there was a positive correlation between the revised cynicism scale and political information efficacy after controlling for alienation that was not included in hypotheses. After accounting for feelings of political alienation, those who express cynical attitudes are also more likely to rate their ability to collect, analyze, and synthesize political information highly. This could point towards some interesting research conducted by Swami et al. (2010; 2011) on conspiracy theories and cynicism. Those who are more cynical tend to be more likely to hold monological belief systems that lend themselves to believing conspiracy theories, which can result in higher scores on scales such as political information efficacy. Conspiracy theorists are typically very sure of the political knowledge they hold (and their ability to help inform others about the important issues facing the country) while also expressing cynical attitudes regardless of their level of level of political alienation.

Limitations

There were a number of factors that could have implicated the results of this analysis at both a methodological and substantive level. First and foremost, as indicated previously, the nature of the researchers sampling method severely restricts the generalizability of these results. Although the aim was to produce an American dataset to compare to European studies, the ability to generalize the results to the broader population, or even the broader MTurk or Wake Forest student population for that matter, is very limited.

Secondly, more of the items in the Qualtrics survey for both samples could have included more reverse coded items in order to more prevent respondents from responding straight down the survey with little thought or consideration. Although nearly all sets of

questions displayed in the Qualtrics survey contained at least one reverse coded item, more were likely necessary to fully guard against the possibility of lazy respondents, especially when using the MTurk service. While the quality controls built into MTurk protect against this type of behavior, it is not a fool-proof method.

Additionally, given the abstract nature of the cynicism items, it is possible that a lack of specificity and concrete scenarios affected the participant's answers. De Vrees (2012) has noted the usefulness of concrete political scenarios to ground cynicism research as it related to studying strategic versus informative news coverage and its effect on cynical attitudes. Generalities in some item wordings may unwittingly generate enthymematic responses that can throw off dimensional analyses such as the present study.

Future Research Directions

Given the high reliability of the revised cynicism scale, future studies may attempt more complex regression analyses and confirmatory factor analyses. Disentangling more deeply rooted interaction effects and covariance issues seems warranted given the findings of this study. For example, more complex structural equation models may be able to more accurately sift through the noise that appears in the partial correlations controlling for alienation and distrust.

Moreover, given the cross-sectional nature of the survey data collected, it is necessary generate more panel and experimental designs that can account for changes in attitudes over time as well as more adequately control for various factors that may be creating statistical noise in studies on cynicism. These types of studies would also help resolve the types of generalizability questions that may arise from future pilot studies that

find more significant results in their analyses. For example, Eber and Lau (1990) spoke of the concept of chronicity in the context of cynicism research. Chronicity is the tendency things at the top-of-the-mind to influence responses to non-descript questions. As the formative basis for questions distinguishing politicians, parties, and governments in the revised cynicism items in this study, this notion of chronicity may require survey items and topics to be more scenario-directs in order to filter out variances in information processing at the individual level. If pilot studies are not intended to be genearalizable, it may be useful for future designs to incorporate more specific research scenarios, which may reveal more nuanced expressions of cynical attitudes. For instance, more specific replications and extensions of research by Swami et al. on specific conspiracy theories relative to cynicism measurements.

Additionally, it may also be useful in future research to include more objective measures of political knowledge from respondents. Although measures such as political information efficacy are useful to establish the confidence that a respondent self-reports about their own political knowledge, it would be immensely useful to be able to compare actual political knowledge versus perceived political knowledge when accounting for the effects of cynical attitudes or pre-existing political ideologies.

Conclusion

Although the rich history and etymology of cynicism provides fertile ground for generating analytic distinctions between cynicism, distrust, and alienation, the revisions to cynicism scales based on perceived immorality and perceived incompetence did not generate a panacea for research on cynicism. Perhaps the "vernacularization" of cynicism over the years, decades, and centuries has melded the meaning of cynicism so deeply into our understanding of political trust and alienation that it is futile to attempt to distinguish them empirically. This analysis should not be read as a concrete answer to that proposition, but it is important to consider such possibilities when attempting to pull apart concepts that history has fused together in the public consciousness.

This replication and extension of measurement level work on political cynicism provides countervailing data to European studies conducted on the subject. More pilot are needed in America in order to design studies with sufficient complexity to arrive at more robust conclusions surrounding these questions. This study contributes to the academic conversation by providing a historical basis for new cynicism items in survey research aimed at identifying the various dimensions of the construct. While exploratory factor analysis as well as bivariate and partial correlation analysis were insufficient to replicate the findings of European researchers distinguishing cynicism from other political variables, the data collected has the potential to serve as ground work for broader and more sophisticated measurement level work on cynicism in an American context.

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Ybarra, O., Chan, E., & Park, D. (2001). Young and Old Adults' Concerns About Morality and Competence. *Motivation and Emotion*, *25*(2), 85–100. doi:10.1023/A:1010633908298

Curriculum Vitae

Jordan Michael Foley

October 23, 2014

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1834 Wake Forest Road
308 Carswell Hall
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EDUCATION:

2015 M. A. (forthcoming)

Wake Forest University

Department of Communication

Thesis: Political Cynicism: A Critical Re-assessment

Advisor: Marina Krcmar, Wake Forest University

Committee: Michael Hyde, Wake Forest University

Benjamin Warner, University of Missouri

2012 B. S.

Missouri State University, December 2012.

Major: Political Science; Minor: Communication Studies

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:

2013-Present Wake Forest University (NC)

Graduate Teaching Assistant and Assistant Debate Coach

Responsible for planning assignments, editing files, producing evidence, assisting in tournament hosting and administration, adjudicating practice debates, pre-round scouting and preparation, mentoring students, and traveling a full national tournament schedule.

Also responsible for performing teaching assistant responsibilities in the department of communication, including holding office hours to assist college students understand and synthesize course material and providing support to the professors administration of the class (grading, lecturing, etc).

2014-Present Notre Dame High School (CA)

Assistant Debate Coach – Part-time

Responsible for producing evidence, editing files, attending monthly virtual meetings to lecture students on argument design and execution, pre-round scouting and preparation, traveling to national tournaments to judge and coach.

2013-2014 Montgomery Bell Academy (TN)

Assistant Debate Coach – Part-time

Responsible for producing evidence, editing files, and attending high school tournaments for pre-round scouting and preparation.

2012-2013 University of Michigan (MI)

Assistant Debate Coach – Full Time

Responsible for planning assignments, editing files, producing evidence, judging practice debates, pre-round scouting and preparation, traveling to a full national tournament schedule (10 tournaments, 5 per semester), meeting periodically with students individually and collectively for speech and research instruction.

2010-2014 (summer, June-August) Michigan National Debate Institutes (MI)

Lab Leader, 7-week seniors program

Responsible for syllabus/curriculum design, research coordination, giving both camp-wide and lab-specific lectures on a wide range of debate topics, adjudicating practice debates, and mentoring and supervising students throughout.

2012-2013 Juan Diego Catholic High School (UT)

Assistant Debate Coach – Part-time

Responsible for producing evidence, judging practice debates/speeches, and traveling to national tournaments for pre-round scouting and preparation.

2009-2012 the Westminster Schools (GA)

Assistant Debate Coach – Part-time

Responsible for editing files, producing evidence, and traveling to national tournaments for pre-round scouting and preparation.

2008-2009 (summer, June-July) Missouri State Debate Institute (MO)

Lab Leader, 3-week program

Responsible for research/evidence production and adjudicating practice debates

COMPETITIVE SUCCESS AS INTERCOLLEGIATE COACH:

2012-Present – First Round Bid Teams at the National Debate Tournament (NDT):

4 total teams in the top-16 in the end of season rankings between Michigan and Wake Forest, the maximum amount possible in two full years of coaching. So far this season (2014-15), Wake Forest has three teams ranked in the top 25 coaches' poll (two in the top 16) with a 4th team also receiving votes.

2012-Present – Teams Attending the National Debate Tournament (NDT):

6 total teams qualified to compete over two years, the maximum amount possible in two full years of coaching. Both Wake Forest and Michigan were one of only six schools each year to qualify 3rd teams to the NDT. So far this season (2014-15) Wake Forest is on pace to qualify the maximum number of teams possible to the NDT.

2012-Present – Teams Advancing to Elimination Rounds of the National Debate Tournament

Each year coaching, both first-round bid teams from Michigan and Wake Forest advanced to the elimination rounds. In both cases, one team reached the sweet 16 and one advanced to the quarterfinals.

2012-Present – Teams Attending Invitational Round Robins:

5 total teams receiving a total of 7 invites to the round robins at Kentucky (3), Pittsburgh (3), and Dartmouth (1). Currently, Wake Forest is on track to receive an invitation to the Pittsburgh Round Robin based on the latest coaches' poll rankings. At Michigan, our teams closed out finals with both invited teams winning their respective 'wheels' of competition.

2012-Present – Final Round Performances

Pittsburgh Round Robin (1st and 2nd place, finals close-out – 2013)

American Debate Association (2nd place – 2014)

University of Texas (2nd place – 2014)

Samford University (2nd place – 2014)

2012-Present – Semi-Final Round Performances

University of Kentucky (2012)

University of Missouri – Kansas City (2013)

University of Southern California (2013)

Georgia State University (2013)

Vanderbilt University (2013)

University of Georgia (2014)

University of Texas (2014)

Liberty University (2014)

DEBATE AWARDS AND HONORS:

2014 Graduate Student Representative, Dept. of Communication, Wake Forest University

2013 Selected to adjudicate the final round of the National Debate Tournament (NDT)

2009-2012 Four-time NDT elimination round participant

2009-2012 Four-time qualifier to the NDT

2011, 2012 top speaker, NDT district qualifying tournament

2010, 2011 coached back-to-back high school national champions (the Westminster Schools)

2010 First round at-large bid recipient – National Debate Tournament

2009 President, Holt V. Spicer Debate Forum – Missouri State University

2008 Student topic representative, Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA)

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS:

November 2014: National Communication Association Convention, Chicago, IL *Thinking Differently about 'Recruitment' and 'Retention': Cross-cutting Strategies to Re-brand Regional CEDA Circuits* on the panel "Enhancing the Presence of our Past(s): Promoting Regional Participation in Policy Debate," presenter

TEACHING ASSISTANT:

COM 220: Empirical Research in Communication, Dr. Ananda Mitra, Spring 2014

COM 220: Empirical Research in Communication, Dr. Ananda Mitra, Fall 2014

COM 220: Empirical Research in Communication, Dr. Michael Hazen, Spring 2015