American Psychological Association

Journal of Experimental Psychology: General

ISSN: 0096-3445

2020, Vol. 149, No. 9, 1736–1754
http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/xge0000738

Victims, Perpetrators, or Both? The Vicious Cycle of Disrespect and Cynical Beliefs About Human Nature

Olga Stavrova
Tilburg University

Daniel Ehlebracht
University of Cologne

Kathleen D. Vohs
University of Minnesota

We tested how cynicism emerges and what maintains it. Cynicism is the tendency to believe that people are morally bankrupt and behave treacherously to maximize self-interest. Drawing on literatures on norms of respectful treatment, we proposed that being the target of disrespect gives rise to cynical views, which predisposes people to further disrespect. The end result is a vicious cycle: cynicism and disrespect fuel one another. Study 1's nationally representative survey showed that disrespect and cynicism are positively related to each other in 28 of 29 countries studied, and that cynicism's associations with disrespect were independent of (and stronger than) associations with lacking social support. Study 2 used a nationally representative longitudinal dataset, spanning 4 years. In line with the vicious cycle hypothesis, feeling disrespected and holding cynical views gave rise to each other over time. Five preregistered experiments (including 2 in the online supplemental materials) provided causal evidence. Study 3 showed that bringing to mind previous experiences of being disrespected heightened cynical beliefs subsequently. Studies 4 and 5 showed that to the extent that people endorsed cynical beliefs, others were inclined to treat them disrespectfully. Study 6's weeklong daily diary study replicated the vicious cycle pattern. Everyday experiences of disrespect elevated cynical beliefs and vice versa. Moreover, cynical individuals tended to treat others with disrespect, which in turn predicted more disrespectful treatment by others. In short, experiencing disrespect gives rise to cynicism and cynicism elicits disrespect from others, thereby reinforcing the worldview that caused these negative reactions in the first place.

Keywords: bidirectional effects, cynicism, disrespect, hostility

Supplemental materials: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/xge0000738.supp

"One dollar is a coin. Two dollars, also a coin. They're gonna try to screw you." The opening quotation is how one of the authors' fathers explained the Canadian currency system to his adult daughter on the eve of her first visit there. It is understandable that a father would be concerned about his daughter's welfare, but the statements above reflect more than that concern. They reflect cynical beliefs. Cynicism is the tendency to expect that others will engage in exploitation and deception, based on the perspective that people, at their core, are morally bankrupt and behave treacherously to maximize their self-interest (Stavrova & Ehlebracht, 2019b; Wrightsman, 1992).

Cynicism is palpable and seems to be growing. A 2015 poll of Americans found that more than three-quarters (76%) believe that, now more than ever, politics is influenced by money (Smith, 2015), and a 2014 poll found that nearly two thirds of millennials agreed that elected officials are motivated by selfishness (Miller, 2014). The current U.S. president's decision to pull out of global cooperative arrangements, such as the Paris climate agreement, has been attributed to his cynical views of human nature (Brooks, 2017). Beyond the United States, cynicism has been blamed for the rise of far right political parties in Europe (Adler, 2016) and as a driving force behind the U.K.'s decision to exit the European Union (Lees, 2016).

Cynical views are not only an unflattering portrayal of humanity, they are associated with undesirable consequences for those who hold them. Cynical tendencies worsen physical and psychological health (Chen et al., 2016; Niaura et al., 2002; Smith, 1992; Stavrova & Ehlebracht, 2019a), undermine performance (Neves, 2012), predict financial strife (Stavrova & Ehlebracht, 2016), and increase the odds of premature death (Barefoot, Dodge, Peterson, Dahlstrom, & Williams, 1989). From its essence to its outcomes, cynicism seems like a perspective that people would want to eschew, or at least not turn to lightly. Those observations raise the

This article was published Online First January 16, 2020.

Olga Stavrova, Department of Social Psychology, Tilburg University; Daniel Ehlebracht, Institute of Sociology and Social Psychology, University of Cologne; Kathleen D. Vohs, Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota.

OSF materials are at osf.io/snq34.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kathleen D. Vohs, Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, 3-150, 321 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455. E-mail: kvohs@umn.edu

question of why people adopt cynical views in the first place. The present research aimed to address how cynicism emerges and what maintains it.

Given that cynicism's defining features revolve around beliefs about others, we looked for its potential roots in the interpersonal domain. Cynical individuals[1] have rocky interpersonal lives. To the extent that people hold cynical beliefs, they experience conflict in the workplace, marital problems, and low social support (Baron et al., 2007; Kaplan, Bradley, & Ruscher, 2004; Li, Zhou, & Leung, 2011). Drawing from literatures on norms of respectful treatment (Dunning, 2017; Dunning, Anderson, Schlösser, Ehlebracht, & Fetchenhauer, 2014; Leary, Diebels, Jongman-Sereno, & Fernandez, 2015; Miller, 2001), our investigation focused on a particular type of social transgression—disrespect. We propose that being the target of disrespect gives rise to beliefs about people's nefarious nature (thus inciting cynical views), which predisposes people to further disrespect from others. The end result points to a vicious cycle: cynicism and disrespect fuel one another.

Experiencing Disrespect Could Elicit Cynical Beliefs

The importance of respectful treatment has been recognized in the social sciences for some time. Kant (1790/1987) asserted that every person deserves respect simply by virtue of being human. This type of respect has been referred to as recognition respect (Darwall, 1977; Grover, 2014; van Quaquebeke, Henrich, & Eckloff, 2007), unconditional respect (Lalljee, Laham, & Tam, 2007), categorical respect (Janoff-Bulman & Werther, 2008), or generalized respect (Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). Here, we use the term owed respect (Rogers, 2018). Owed respect originates from the Kantian view (also Miller, 2001; Rawls, 1971) and differs from earned respect, which is accorded on the basis of achievements and other socially valued talents and characteristics (Janoff-Bulman & Werther, 2008; Rogers & Ashforth, 2017). Owed respect is not contingent on one's status or achievements but rather is granted based on one's "membership in . . . the human community" (Janoff-Bulman & Werther, 2008, p. 3). Hence, every human being deserves respect and should be accorded equal moral worth (Lalljee et al., 2007). The concept of owed respect is at the heart of contemporary human rights' tenets outlining "the inherent dignity and . . . the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" (United Nations, 1948).

People are highly sensitive to interactions and instances that deny them respectful treatment (Leary et al., 2015). Given the belief that they are owed respect simply because they exist (Janoff-Bulman & Werther, 2008), disrespect is experienced as being particularly unjustified and unfair (Miller, 2001). Experiences of mistreatment are known to elicit attempts to understand why it occurred, attempts that often center on the perpetrator's moral character (Uhlmann, Pizarro, & Diermeier, 2015). For example, ethnic minorities tend to attribute social rejection to others' prejudice (Crocker & Major, 1989) and offensive behaviors in the workplace are viewed as reflecting the offender's self-interested motives (Crossley, 2009). These findings are consistent with a broader literature on attributions and motivated reasoning. For example, according to the motivated reasoning literature, people's desire to see themselves in a positive light renders them more likely to call on self-serving explanations for life outcomes (Kunda, 1990). Relatedly, the actor-observer bias contends that people tend to attribute their own negative outcomes to external causes (Jones & Nisbett, 1971; Malle, 2006); in instances of disrespect, that would include the perpetrator's moral character.

People are inductive reasoners and take social interactions as indicative not only of their interaction partner but also people in general (Dasgupta, 1988). Using specific social experiences as the basis for broad assumptions about social relationships is common (Bowlby, 1982; Corey, Troisi, & Nicksa, 2015; Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007; Fasel & Spini, 2010). With repeated experiences of disrespect, people may extrapolate their cynical beliefs about specific perpetrators' moral character to inform their views on human nature. Existing research hints at this idea. For instance, cynics' recollections of their childhood are replete with memories of parental rejection and emotional coldness (Meesters, Muris, & Esselink, 1995). As the first proposition of the vicious cycle theory, we predicted that experiencing disrespectful treatment might shake one's faith in the moral character of people in general, begetting and cementing cynical views of human nature.

Cynicism Could Elicit Experiences of Disrespect

We proposed that feeling disrespected promotes the development of cynical beliefs. At the same time, holding cynical beliefs might increase the likelihood of receiving disrespectful treatment from others. Together, those patterns would amount to support of the vicious cycle theory.

Cynicism involves distrust and suspiciousness of others' motives (Kurman, 2011; Miller, Jenkins, Kaplan, & Salonen, 1995). Actions that reflect those views violate social norms stipulating that people be accorded trust and respect until there is evidence indicating otherwise (Deutsch, 1973; Dunning et al., 2014). Hence, to the extent that cynics behave in a manner that reflects that dark view of human nature, they may trigger mistreatment by others. For example, reactions to people who behave selfishly (selfishness being a central attribute of cynicism) include disrespectful treatment such as a willingness to humiliate and insult them (Allen & Leary, 2010).

In line with this reasoning, people prone to cynicism exhibit behaviors to which others are likely to react negatively. People holding cynical beliefs exude low sociomoral traits, such as low interpersonal warmth and high conflict proneness (Hardy & Smith, 1988; Li et al., 2011), are more likely to let their anger and irritation get out of control (Haukkala, Konttinen, Laatikainen, Kawachi, & Uutela, 2010), neglect partners in their time of need (Kaplan et al., 2004), and provide less social support (Hart, 1999). These behaviors often are understood as signifying poor moral character (Haidt, 2008).

Overview of the Studies

We posited that being disrespected and endorsing cynical views may give rise to each other, resulting in a vicious cycle of escalation. Cynicism might develop as a reaction to experiences of disrespectful treatment, fueling suspicion and doubts about the goodness of others. To the extent that a cynical worldview comes

[1] For ease of discussion we use the terms *cynical individuals*, *cynical people*, or *cynics* interchangeably. The construct operates on a continuum and is measured as such in our work.

to inform people's actions, as in behaviors that convey assumptions of self-interest, corruption, and mistrust, cynics may find themselves disrespected all the more—resulting in the perpetrator becoming the victim as well.

We combined cross-national, longitudinal, experimental, and daily diary methodologies to test the proposed interrelations between cynicism and experiences of disrespect. First, we explored basic associations between cynical beliefs and experience of disrespect using nationally representative survey data from 29 countries (Study 1). We also tested the specificity of the role of disrespect by contrasting it with another negative social experience, that one lacks social support. Second, to test the reciprocal prospective associations between cynicism and disrespect, we made use of a large-scale longitudinal dataset (Study 2). This dataset allowed us to test whether a cynical view of human nature is prospectively associated with more frequent experiences of disrespect over time, as well as whether experiences of disrespect are prospectively associated with the development of cynical beliefs.

Third, five experiments (three reported in the article and two in the online supplemental materials) enabled causal conclusions about the bidirectional effects of disrespect and cynicism. Two experiments (Studies 3 and S1) tested whether experiencing disrespect gives rise to cynical beliefs. Three experiments investigated whether cynical individuals are more likely to elicit the feeling of disrespect (Study 4) and actual disrespectful treatment from others (Studies 5 and S2). Last, using a daily diary methodology, Study 6 investigated whether the perception of being treated with disrespect turns cynical individuals from victims into perpetrators of disrespect or whether cynical beliefs predict committing acts of disrespect even at baseline, jeopardizing cynical individuals' social relationships and exposing them to further disrespect.

All of the experiments were preregistered, and all of the studies were exempt from ethics review because they were secondary data analyses or deemed minimal risk. All materials, data, and computer code can be downloaded from https://osf.io/snq34/?view_only=581e49426cb54acd9fb1adfade3b5b38.

Study 1

Study 1 sought to examine basic associations between cynicism and the experience of disrespect. We used large nationally representative survey data from 29 countries (n = 53,333) that allowed us to test whether the relationship between cynicism and disrespect holds across different countries. It also gave us the possibility to conduct some initial explorations of the specificity of the proposed relationship between cynicism and disrespect by comparing disrespect's effect against the effect of another negative social experience, perceived lack of social support.

Method

Participants. The data were collected as part of the European Social Survey (ESS, 2012). ESS is a large-scale international survey conducted every two years since 2002 in more than 30 European countries. It tracks people's values and beliefs using a repeated cross-section design, meaning that every wave recruits new nationally representative samples in participating countries. Respondents are selected using random probability methods and the data are collected in face-to-face interviews. The data can be downloaded from https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/about/.

Because measures of disrespect were included only in wave 6 (year 2012), the present analyses used data from this wave only. The sample consisted of 53,333 individuals (M_{age} = 48.23, SD_{age} = 18.55, 45.7% male) residing in 29 countries. According to G*Power 3.1 analyses (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009), this sample is large enough to detect even small associations (r = .01) with 80% power (α = .05, two-tailed test). The list of countries and the country descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

Measures. The survey included the following three items originating in the Faith in People Scale (Rosenberg, 1956), a measure commonly used in cynicism research (e.g., Stavrova & Ehlebracht, 2019a; Wrightsman, 1964). Each item comprised two statements pitted against each other in a manner akin to a semantic differential, to which respondents registered their agreement using a scale from 0 to 10: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?", "Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?", and "Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?" We recoded the scores such that higher values indicated more cynicism and averaged hem into a scale (Cronbach's alpha = .78).

To assess feelings of disrespect, participants indicated "to what extent they feel that people treat them with respect," using a 7-point scale (0 = *not at all*, 6 = *a great deal*). We recoded this item such that higher values indicate stronger perceptions of disrespect. To measure lack of social support, participants rated the "extent they receive help and support from people they are close to when they need it" (0 = *not at all*, 6 = *completely*). We recoded the responses such that higher values indicated a stronger perceived lack of social support.

When noted, analyses controlled for major sociodemographic and economic variables: gender (1 = *male*, 0 = *female*), age (in years), education (number of years), whether the respondents belong to an ethnic minority group in their country (1 = *yes*, 2 = *no*), and household income ("Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays? 1= *Living comfortably on present income*, 2 = *Coping on present income*, 3 = *Finding it difficult on present income*, 4 = *Finding it very difficult on present income*"; recoded such that higher values correspond to a higher income[2]).

Results

Within-country correlations showed that both disrespect and a lack of social support were positively and significantly associated with cynicism in 28 out of 29 countries (Table 1; Figure 1). The associations between disrespect and cynicism ranged from r = .04 (p = .17, Kosovo) to r = .40 (p < .001, Iceland), with an average

[2] The survey also included a question asking the respondents to place themselves in one of 10 income deciles. Because 17.6% of the sample had missing values, we decided not to include it in the main analysis. Nevertheless, analyses using this measure of income produced similar results as the income measure in the main text ($\beta_{disrespect}$ = .32 and $\beta_{support}$ = .11, both ps < .001; z = 9.59, p < .001).

Table 1
Within-Country Zero-Order Correlations, Study 1

Country	N	Cynicism and disrespect	Cynicism and lack of support	Disrespect and lack of support
Albania	1,181	.129***	.095***	.179***
Belgium	1,862	.328***	.168***	.319***
Bulgaria	2,202	.157***	.145***	.357***
Switzerland	1,487	.299***	.135***	.306***
Cyprus	1,104	.186***	.092***	.199***
Czech Republic	1,899	.204***	.107***	.379***
Germany	2,947	.321***	.152***	.284***
Denmark	1,628	.312***	.178***	.273***
Estonia	2,321	.279***	.199***	.254***
Spain	1,804	.176***	.108***	.225***
Finland	2,167	.332***	.238***	.297***
France	1,893	.273***	.193***	.216***
United Kingdom	2,239	.330***	.194***	.278***
Hungary	1,955	.196***	.180***	.428***
Ireland	2,567	.274***	.172***	.410***
Israel	2,423	.149***	.119***	.343***
Iceland	736	.395***	.183***	.323***
Italy	947	.220***	.116***	.260***
Lithuania	1,970	.195***	.148***	.402***
The Netherlands	1,828	.340***	.206***	.268***
Norway	1,614	.325***	.184***	.325***
Poland	1,830	.133***	.086***	.250***
Portugal	2,090	.094***	.150***	.390***
Russian Federation	2,392	.228***	.189***	.290***
Sweden	1,836	.340***	.134***	.255***
Slovenia	1,243	.193***	.158***	.316***
Slovakia	1,819	.155***	.116***	.288***
Ukraine	2,083	.183***	.144***	.312***
Kosovo	1,266	.039	.010	.311***

*** $p < .001$.

correlation across all countries of $r = .23$ ($p < .001$). The correlation between cynicism and lack of social support varied from $r = .01$ ($p = .73$, Kosovo) and $r = .24$ ($p < .001$, Finland), with an average of $r = .15$ ($p < .001$) across all countries. Last, perceived disrespect and perceived lack of social support were positively related to each other as well (average $r = .30$, $p < .001$).

We tested whether the effect of perceived disrespect on cynicism was independent of the effect of lack of social support. To account for the nested nature of the data (individuals in different countries), we used multilevel regression analysis. Cynicism was the dependent variable and disrespect and lack of social support both were predictors. All variables were standardized before analyses so that the obtained coefficients are equivalent to standardized regression coefficients. The model included random intercept and random slopes of both disrespect and lack of social support.

Although perceptions of disrespect and lacking social support both were positively associated with cynicism ($\beta = .32$ and $\beta = .13$, respectively, both ps $< .001$), the effect of disrespect was significantly stronger than the effect of lack of social support ($z = 7.29$, $p < .001$). In the next step, we added the sociodemographic control variables. The effects of both cynicism and lack of social support remained significant ($\beta = .29$ and $\beta = .10$, both ps $< .001$, respectively). As before, disrespect was a stronger predictor of cynicism scores than lacking social support ($z = 7.81$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

A study of more than 50,000 residents of 29 countries provided initial evidence for the link between disrespect and cynicism. Disrespect and cynicism were positively and significantly related to each other in all countries but one, an effect that held even after statistically accounting for the influence of lacking social support. Additionally, whereas cynicism was positively related to perceived lack of social support (as well as disrespect), its association with feeling disrespected was significantly stronger.

Taken together, these findings suggest that disrespect may be a route to cynicism beyond and apart from other negative social experiences, such as feeling that one lacks support from others. An obvious limitation of a lack of perceived social support as a control variable is that it is more likely to be a result of an act of omission (i.e., other people not giving one a positive treatment), whereas being disrespected is more likely to be a result of an act of commission (i.e., other people giving one a negative treatment). Hence, in further studies (Study 3), we continued testing the experience of disrespect relative to other negative social experiences to address additional possible alternate explanations.

Study 2

Although Study 1 demonstrated positive associations between disrespect and cynicism, the cross-sectional nature of the data did not allow for a proper test of the vicious cycle hypothesis, which

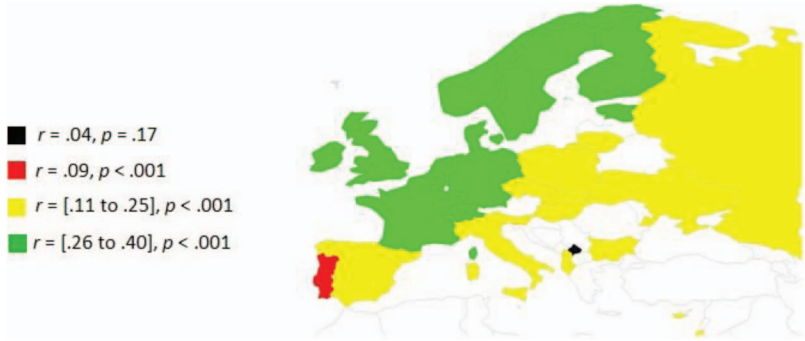

Figure 1. Zero-order correlations (*r*) between disrespect and cynicism across 29 countries, Study 1. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

states that experiencing disrespect and adopting a cynical view of human nature may reinforce each other over time. Accordingly, Study 2 used a longitudinal design spanning four years to test the hypothesized bidirectional associations between cynical beliefs and experiencing disrespect.

Method

Participants. We analyzed data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), which is a nationally representative longitudinal survey of Americans aged 50 and older (HRS, 2018). The study has been conducted since 1992, with the measures of interest included since 2006. Half of the sample completed these measures in 2006, and the other half in 2008. We combined these two subsamples to form the baseline assessment. The measures we readministered four years later (that is, in 2010 for the 2006 subsample and 2012 for the 2008 subsample). The questionnaire and data are available online (HRS, 2018).

Overall, 19,922 people (M_{age} = 65.15, SD_{age} = 11.97, 41.3% male) completed measures of cynicism or disrespect in at least one of the two waves. Of those, 14,732 people participated at T1 ($M_{age\ t1}$ = 68.84, $SD_{age\ t1}$ = 10.54, 40.7% male), 15,706 people participated at T2 ($M_{age\ t1}$ = 63.29, $SD_{age\ t1}$ = 11.31, 41.0% male), and 10,516 ($M_{age\ t1}$ = 67.55, $SD_{age\ t1}$ = 9.70, 40.1% male) completed both waves. Full maximum likelihood estimation methods were used to deal with missing values. We used the overall sample to increase the precision of the estimation of both concurrent and lagged effects. According to G*Power 3.1 analyses (Faul et al., 2009), a sample of 10,516 was large enough to detect even small effects ($r > .03$) with 80% power ($\alpha = .05$, two-tailed test).

Measures. The survey included a five-item version of the Cook-Medley cynical distrust scale (Cook & Medley, 1954; Greenglass & Julkunen, 1989; Appendix A). Its items are: "Most people will use somewhat unfair means to gain profit or an advantage rather than lose it"; "I think most people would lie to get ahead"; "I commonly wonder what hidden reasons another person may have for doing something nice for me"; "No one cares much what happens to you"; and "Most people dislike putting themselves out to help other people" (1 = *strongly disagree*; 6 = *strongly agree*; Cronbach's alpha = .79 at both baseline and follow-up).

Three items measured perceived disrespect. Participants indicated how often they are treated with less courtesy or respect than other people, threatened or harassed, and treated as if they are not smart (1 = *never*; 6 = *almost every day*; Cronbach's alpha = .71 at baseline and .72 at follow-up).

Analytic strategy. Before examining the structural relations among the variables, we tested the measurement model of cynicism and disrespect. The model yielded an appropriate fit, $\chi^2(90) = 3388.08$, $p < .001$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04. We assessed the measurement invariance of cynicism and disrespect over time by comparing the model with free factor loadings to the model in which factor loadings of the same items were constrained to be the same between T1 and T2. The differences in incremental fit indices between the free and constrained model were smaller than the usual cutoff values for model comparison (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002), as seen in Table 2. Hence, measures of cynicism and disrespect reached the level of metric measurement invariance (Little, Preacher, Selig, & Card, 2007).

To examine the reciprocal relationships between disrespect and cynicism, we conducted a cross-lagged panel analysis using the R package lavaan (Rosseel, 2012). We fit a model that specified both cross-lagged and stability (autoregressive) effects of disrespect on cynicism and cynicism on disrespect (see Figure 2). We used robust (White-Huber) standard errors. The comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR), and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) provided evidence of overall model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh, Hau, & Grayson, 2005).

Results

Descriptive information on the variables is presented in Table 3. The zero-order associations suggest that cynicism was positively associated with reports of experiencing disrespect at both T1 and T2, $r = .29$, $p < .001$.

The path model had appropriate fit, $\chi^2(90) = 3388.08$, $p < .001$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04 (see Figure 2). Examination of the cross-lagged effects showed that disrespect at baseline positively predicted cynicism four years later, controlling for cynicism at baseline ($\beta = .07$, $p < .001$). Moreover, cynicism at baseline positively predicted perceived disrespect four years later, controlling for disrespect at baseline ($\beta = .08$, $p < .001$). Both paths remained unchanged when controlling for baseline reports of age, gender (1 = male, 0 = female), ethnicity (1 = *Caucasian*, 0 = *other*), education (1 = *lower than high school*, 2 = *generational educational development degree*, 3 = *high school diploma*,

Table 2
Measurement Invariance Analyses

Model	χ^2	*df*	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Measurement model, Study 2						
Free loadings	3388.08	90	<.001	.954	.043	.039
Constrained loadings	3393.97	96	<.001	.954	.042	.040
Model difference	5.89	6	.44	.000	.001	.000
Measurement model, Study 6						
Free loadings	276.40	95	<.001	.961	.064	.037
Constrained loadings	279.16	102	<.001	.962	.061	.040
Model difference	2.76	7	.91	−.001	.003	−.003

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residuals.

4 = *some college*, and 5 = *college and above*), and income at T1 (household income in dollars, log-transformed; Figure 3).

Discussion

Study 2 tested and found evidence of reciprocal associations between perceived disrespect and cynical beliefs. At baseline, the more people felt that they had been the target of disrespect, the more cynical they were four years later. In parallel, the more cynical people were at baseline, the more often they reported being the victim of disrespect four years on. These reciprocal bidirectional effects provide first evidence of a vicious cycle of disrespect and cynicism. It should be noted though that our reliance on perceived self-reported measures of disrespect constrains the strength of our conclusions. Studies 3–5 addressed this limitation.

Study 3

The central aim of Study 3 was to test whether the link from feeling disrespected to cynical beliefs was causal in nature. Study 2 showed that initial feelings of disrespect predicted growing levels of cynicism over time. Although the longitudinal design garners confidence in the proposed processes by providing temporal patterns, the correlational nature of those data does not warrant full confidence in the proposed causal direction. Therefore, Study 3 used an experimental manipulation of disrespect.

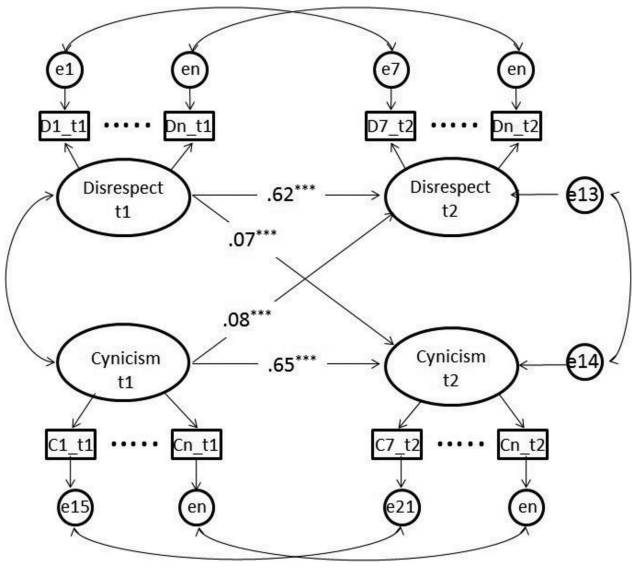

Figure 2. Reciprocal associations (standardized coefficients) between perceived disrespect and cynical beliefs, Study 2. Fit indices: $\chi^2(90) = 3388.08$, $p < .001$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04. *** $p < .001$.

Participants recalled an experience of feeling disrespected (experimental condition) versus guilty[3] (control condition) and then responded to a measure of cynicism. Just like feeling disrespected, feeling guilty is a negative experience based on social interactions (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Russell & Mehrabian, 1977). Hence, comparing feeling disrespected to feeling guilty enabled us to test whether the specific experience of disrespect (rather than any negative interpersonal experience) elicits cynical beliefs. To address the possibility that our results may be affected by demand effects (e.g., participants in the experimental condition might be more likely to guess the hypothesis and report higher cynicism scores as a result), participants completed the Perceived Awareness of the Research Hypothesis scale (Rubin, Paolini, & Crisp, 2010; Rubin, 2016).

Measures, data collection, and analyses were preregistered (https://aspredicted.org/ai7am.pdf). No part of the study deviated from the preregistered plan in any way, unless stated otherwise.

Method

Participants. To be able to detect a small-to-medium effect ($d = .40$) at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed) with 80% power, we aimed to collect at least 200 responses (G*Power 3.1, Faul et al., 2009). We recruited more than the $N = 200$ targeted sample to ensure that we would have ample power after excluding participants who failed an attention check.

A sample of 232 American adults were recruited on an electronic job-sourcing site, Prolific, in exchange for a small payment. Nine participants failed an attention check (see below) and were removed, resulting in a final sample of 223 (53.8% male, $M_{age} = 39.42$, $SD_{age} = 11.41$).

Procedure. The study had two between-subjects conditions. Participants in both conditions described an event from their lives.

[3] In an additional study (Study S1 in the online supplemental materials), participants recalled an experience of feeling bored versus disrespected. Participants reported higher cynicism after recalling the experience of being disrespected than bored.

Table 3
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the Variables, Study 2

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Cynicism T1	2.97	1.15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Disrespect T1	1.72	0.86	.285***	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Cynicism T2	2.97	1.14	.565***	.248***	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. Disrespect T2	1.70	0.89	.246***	.504***	.286***	—	—	—	—	—
5. Age T1	65.15	11.97	−.085***	−.175***	−.122***	−.164***	—	—	—	—
6. Gender	0.41	0.49	.147***	.052***	.139***	.025***	.028***	—	—	—
7. Ethnicity	0.77	0.42	−.152***	−.088***	−.161***	−.086***	.186***	.045***	—	—
8. Education	3.24	1.37	−.241***	−.038***	−.230***	−.047***	−.149***	.035***	.137***	—
9. Income T1	66251.81	267367.52	−.019*	−.010	−.024**	−.028**	−.073***	.034***	.042***	.103***

Note. Gender (1 = male, 0 = female); Ethnicity (1 = Caucasian, 0 = other).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

In the disrespect condition, participants responded to the following prompt: "Please describe in detail a time when you felt disrespected by someone else. Perhaps you felt treated with less courtesy than others, or you were slighted by someone, for example. Please, indicate where and when this happened and provide the initials of the person(s) who treated you that way, if possible." The text in the control condition was similar to the disrespect condition, in that they described a time in which they felt guilty over something that happened between them and another person.

After the essay task came manipulation check items. Participants indicated the extent to which reliving the experience they wrote about made them feel guilty and, separately, disrespected (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *a lot*).

Afterward, participants completed the cynical distrust scale (Greenglass & Julkunen, 1989), which was the dependent variable. Sample items include, "Does reliving the experience you wrote about make you think that most people would lie to get ahead?" and "Does reliving the experience you wrote about make you think that it is safer to trust nobody?" (eight items; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .85$; Appendix A). Items were averaged to form a cynicism index.

To assess whether the expected conditional differences on cynicism were not due to demand effects, participants completed the Perceived Awareness of the Research Hypothesis Scale (PARH: Rubin, 2016). The scale comprises four items. Sample item: "I knew what the researchers were investigating in this research." (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .84$).

Last, participants responded to an attention check question ("To monitor data quality, please select the middle of the scale here") and a basic demographic questionnaire.

Results

Manipulation check. Participants in the disrespect condition reported feeling more disrespected ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.99$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.83$), $t(220) = 6.34$, $p < .001$. Similarly, participants in the control condition reported feeling more guilt ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.64$) compared with participants in the experimental condition ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(221) = 14.11$, $p < .001$. The manipulation had the intended effect.

Cynicism. An independent sample *t* test showed that participants in the disrespect condition reported a higher level of cynicism ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.29$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.22$), $t(221) = 2.95$, $p = .004$, $d = .40$.

Demand effects. Rubin (2016) outlined four ways that PARH scores could be used to assess demand effects: comparing participants' responses on the PARH scale to the scale's theoretical midpoint; excluding positive outliers (+3 *SD*) on the scale; testing associations between PARH scores and the independent and the dependent variables; and including PARH as a covariate in the main hypothesis test analysis. We performed all four suggested analyses.[4]

First, participants' responses to the PARH scale did not differ from the scale midpoint (4): ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.42$), $t(222) = 1.15$, $p = .25$. Second, there were no positive outliers on PARH in our data (the maximum PARH score was 2.04 *SD* above the scale mean). Third, even though PARH showed a positive correlation with cynicism, $r = .16$, $p = .016$, it was not stronger in the experimental than in the control condition (condition x PARH interaction: $F(1, 219) = .02$, $p = .88$); also, the experimental manipulation did not affect PARH scores, $t(221) = .84$, $p = .40$. Fourth, the effect of the experimental condition on cynicism was robust when PARH scores were used as a covariate (ANCOVA: $F[1, 220] = 8.09$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .035$). Overall, these analyses suggest that the difference in cynicism scores between the experimental and control conditions cannot be attributed to demand effects.

Discussion

Study 3 built on the findings of Studies 1 and 2, which showed that cynicism and disrespect give rise to one another over time. Study 3, using an experimental design, provided causal evidence for the role of disrespect as a source of cynicism: People who had been reminded of a time when they were treated disrespectfully later reported elevated levels of cynicism compared with people reminded of a time when they felt guilty.

[4] Initially, we intended to only examine the correlation between PARH and cynicism (s. preregistration). However, this analysis cannot show whether the difference in cynicism scores between the experimental and control conditions is driven by demand effects (i.e., by PARH scores). Therefore, we eventually decided to report all the analyses suggested by Rubin (2016).

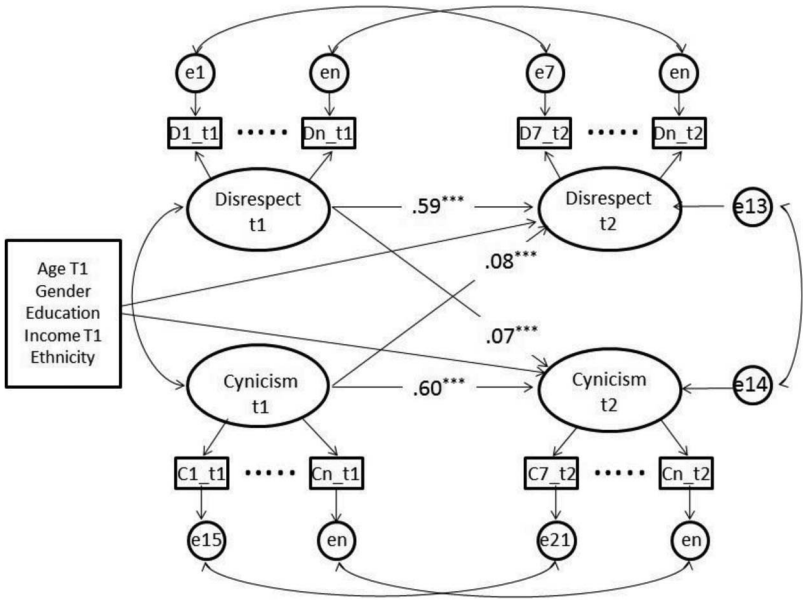

Figure 3. Reciprocal associations (standardized coefficients) between perceived disrespect and cynical beliefs, with control variables, Study 2. Fit indices: $\chi^2(160) = 5882.43$, $p < .001$, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06. *** $p < .001$.

Study 4

Preregistered Study 4 pursued three goals. First, whereas Study 3 showed that being a target of disrespect leads to cynical worldview endorsement, Study 4 tested the reverse, namely whether holding a cynical worldview increases the probability of becoming victim of disrespect. This test is central to the vicious cycle hypothesis, which proposes that being disrespected and adopting a cynical worldview mutually influence one another.

Second, Studies 1–3 relied on participants' self-reports of experiencing disrespect, leaving open the possibility that perhaps cynical individuals are not, in fact, being disrespected but instead perceive neutral interactions as being disrespectful. Study 4's design enabled us to measure disrespectful behavior toward cynics independent of those individuals' perceptions of having been disrespected. We presented participants with profiles of people who expressed cynical versus noncynical beliefs, and measured willingness to behave disrespectfully toward them. In doing so, this design disentangled self-reports of both the independent and dependent variables, thereby avoiding common method variance concerns.

Third, building upon existing literatures linking cynicism to antisocial behavioral tendencies (Barefoot et al., 1989; García-León et al., 2002), we tested whether cynical individuals would be especially willing to treat others disrespectfully. We expected that participants' cynicism scores would predict willingness to be disrespectful toward the other (faux) study participant. Exploratory analyses tested whether participants' own cynicism interacted with the target's cynical versus noncynical views to predict their willingness to be disrespectful toward the target.

Overall, we expected that people would be more willing to display disrespect toward a cynical (vs. noncynical) target person and, further, that cynical individuals would be more likely than others to engage in disrespectful treatment. If so, those results would provide a replication and add causal heft to the results of Study 2.

We preregistered all measures, data collection, and analyses (https://aspredicted.org/ae55p.pdf). The study did not deviate from the preregistered plan in any way.

Method

Participants. Power analyses were conducted using G*power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009). To be able to detect small-to-medium effects ($d = .40$ for comparisons between the conditions and $r = .20$ for dispositional cynicism and willingness to display disrespectful treatment correlations) with 80% power ($\alpha = .05$, two-tailed), we aimed to collect at least 200 responses. To account for potential exclusions due to the anticipation that some participants would fail the attention check question, we recruited slightly more participants than needed.

In total, 231 American adults completed the study on MTurk. Participants who participated in Study 3 were not eligible for Study 4. In the current sample, 13 failed an attention check question (the same as in Study 3), resulting in a final sample of 218 (64.4% male, $M_{age} = 35.66$, $SD_{age} = 11.27$).

Procedure. Participants imagined they worked for a large company and that a new colleague, Cory, was joining their department. Depending on condition, participants learned that their new colleague holds either cynical or noncynical beliefs.

Participants read the following instructions (noncynical condition text in parentheses):

> Imagine that you work at a large company. A new colleague—Cory—is joining your department today. You two meet and have a conversation, where you learn that Cory holds a cynical (vs. positive)

view of human nature. Cory believes that people are selfish (vs. altruistic); that most of them would (vs. would not) lie, cheat, and betray if they could somehow gain by it; and that even when people are helpful, they are still seeking some kind of personal benefit from it (vs. that people are helpful because they genuinely care about others' well-being).

Afterward, participants indicated how likely they would be to treat Cory disrespectfully on 11 items presented in a random order (sample items: treat Cory disrespectfully; make demeaning or derogatory remarks about Cory; talk down to Cory; $\alpha = .88$; 1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*; Appendix B includes the full list).

To measure participants' dispositional cynicism, we used the cynical distrust scale from Studies 2 and 3 (Greenglass & Julkunen, 1989; sample items: "It is safer to trust nobody"; "Most people inwardly dislike putting themselves out to help other people"; eight items; $\alpha = .92$, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; Appendix A). The order in which participants completed the cynical distrust scale versus the experimental component was counterbalanced. Because procedural order was unrelated to any measures in the study (all $ps > .30$), we did not consider it further. Last, participants completed demographic questions.

Results

Preregistered main analyses. Participants reported that they would be more willing to show disrespectful behaviors toward a cynical ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.99$) than a noncynical target person ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.04$), $t(216) = 3.69$, $p < .001$, $d = .50$, suggesting that holding a cynical worldview may elicit disrespectful behavioral intentions from others.

Next, we tested whether individuals who score higher on dispositional cynicism were more willing than less cynical individuals to treat the target person disrespectfully. Indeed, a look at zero-order correlations between cynical distrust scale and the willingness to treat the target person disrespectfully suggests that cynical individuals are more likely not only to be a victim but also a perpetrator of disrespect, $r = .32$, $p < .001$.

Preregistered secondary analyses. To examine whether cynical individuals' willingness to treat the target disrespectfully depended on the target being described as either holding a cynical versus a noncynical view, we conducted a moderated regression analysis with the experimental condition (1 = *cynical target*, −1 = *noncynical target*), participants' dispositional cynicism (mean centered) and their interaction term as predictors.

The main effects of dispositional cynicism and experimental conditions explained 15.8% of variance in disrespectful treatment, $F(2, 215) = 21.36$, $p < .001$. Both main effects were significant ($\beta_{condition} = .26$, $p < .001$, $\beta_{cynicism} = .33$, $p < .001$). Adding the interaction term to the model explained an additional 3.6% of the variance, $F(1, 214) = 9.64$, $p < .001$; the interaction term was significant $\beta_{condition} = -.19$, $p = .002$. As shown on Figure 4, dispositional cynicism was more strongly associated with the willingness to treat the target person disrespectfully if the target person did not endorse a cynical worldview ($\beta = .55$, $p < .001$) than when the target was a cynic ($\beta = .17$, $p = .041$).

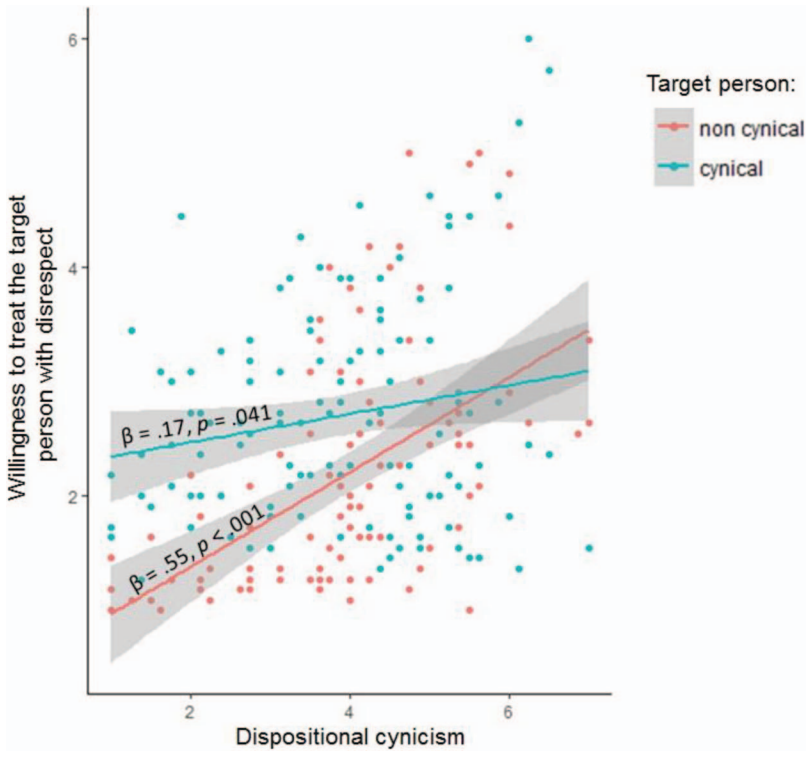

Figure 4. Effect of participants' dispositional cynicism on willingness to treat the target person with disrespect, depending on the target person's (ostensible) cynicism, Study 4. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Discussion

Studies 1 and 2 demonstrated that cynical individuals report experiencing disrespect more often than do others. Study 4 validated those findings by testing how people react and intend to treat others who express cynical (vs. noncynical) views, showing that people holding cynical views, compared with people devoid of cynicism, are more likely to elicit disrespectful behaviors by others. In addition, Study 4 showed that people with dispositional cynical tendencies are more willing to treat others—particularly noncynics—with disrespect.

The interaction between participants' cynicism and the purported cynicism of the person they were rating showed that disrespectful treatment is not restricted to cynical targets. Rather, people who hold cynical beliefs appear to be even more willing to be disrespectful toward others who are not cynical compared with fellow cynics, a finding that might shed light on how cynicism spreads within communities.

Study 5

Study 4 provided evidence that expressions of cynicism might yield disrespectful reactions from others, but it suffered from two limitations. Study 5, which was preregistered, aimed to address them. First, Study 4 measured intentions to treat cynical (vs. noncynical) others disrespectfully, leaving unanswered the question of whether actual disrespectful behavior would occur. People's reports of what they would do are not always faithful representations of their actual behavior (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007) and therefore it was important to test a behavioral outcome, which Study 5 did.

Second, Study 4's manipulation of target's cynicism could have been confounded with merely exhibiting socially inappropriate behavior. Expressing a cynical worldview upon first meeting someone might be considered rude, odd, or otherwise inappropriate, and that (rather than cynicism) could have elicited a willingness to treat that person with disrespect. In addition, Study 4 did not include a control (moderate or intermediate level of cynicism) condition and thus could not test whether being noncynical elicits less disrespect or whether being cynical elicits more disrespect (relative to intermediate avowals of cynicism). Study 5 addressed these limitations by using a behavioral measure of disrespect (using binding monetary decisions), manipulating targets' cynicism in a more straightforward and ecologically valid manner, and examining people's reactions to multiple targets espousing cynicism to various degrees.

A version of the trust game served as the context for Study 5. In it, one person in a pair (here, the participant) decides whether to send over money to another person with the understanding that the receiver would get a multiple of the amount transferred (here, triple) and can send back some or none of it to the initial player. On the basis of work arguing that the first players' decision not to send over any money in the trust game signals disrespect toward the partner (Dunning et al., 2014), we used only the first stage and thus measured whether people transferred money to the ersatz partner. The ostensible partner was portrayed as espousing different levels of cynicism, which allowed us to test the hypothesis that people would be less likely to transfer money to a player described as holding more (vs. less) cynical views of human nature.

To boost the ecological validity of the study, we used people's statements describing their beliefs about human nature as stimulus materials. A sample of 100 people described their beliefs about human nature and completed a cynicism scale. We used all 100 statements as stimuli for the main study.[5] This design had two advantages. One, by retaining all statements, we avoided the issue of stimulus selection. Two, we could examine whether the anticipated effect of targets' cynicism on participants' disrespect was driven primarily by cynical individuals being more likely to get disrespected (relative to moderately cynical people) or noncynical individuals being less likely get disrespected (relative to moderately cynical people). We achieved that by testing not only a linear but also a nonlinear (quadratic) effect of target cynicism on disrespectful behavior by participants.

Last, to provide additional support for the role of disrespect, we assessed an attitudinal measure of disrespect toward the cynical (vs. noncynical) partner. We anticipated that it would mediate the effect of target cynicism on monetary transfer decisions.

We preregistered all measures, data collection, and analyses (https://aspredicted.org/rf6s4.pdf). The study did not deviate from the preregistered plan in any way.

Method

Phase 1: Stimulus materials. For the manipulation in the trust game, we sought to provide those participants with statements about human nature that were actually produced by more versus less cynical individuals. To gather those statements, a sample of MTurk workers (N = 100, 70.0% male, M_{age} = 34.81, SD_{age} = 9.71) reported their views on human nature. Participants read the following instructions: "Are most people good, honest, and trustworthy or are they egoistic, deceitful, and evil? People differ in how they answer this question. We'd like to hear from you about your views. Please write at least three sentences (more would be great) on your views of other people." Afterward, participants completed the cynical distrust scale used in Studies 2–4 (Greenglass & Julkunen, 1989; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*, responses were averaged into a scale, α = .93). These statements served as stimuli materials for the main study.

Phase 2: Trust game.

Design and participants. The study used a mixed-model design where participants and stimuli represented crossed random factors (Judd, Westfall, & Kenny, 2012). Each participant was exposed to multiple stimuli and each stimulus was displayed to multiple participants. To avoid cognitive overload, each participant was shown five stimulus texts and made five decisions as to whether to trust the author of each statement. Each stimulus text was shown to 10 participants, resulting in a sample of 200 participants. A simulation analysis (using R package simr; with 1,000 simulations) showed that this sample size gives a 100% power to detect an effect of stimuli's cynicism on participants' trust of the size of OR = 1.5 (which corresponds to a small effect). As

[5] In an additional study (Study S2 in the online supplemental materials), we selected a statement by one participant whose cynicism score was above the empirical median and a statement by one participant whose score was below the median. These statements served as stimuli materials for S2's main study, resulting in a between-subjects (cynical vs. non-cynical) design. The results showed that participants were more likely to distrust a cynical than a noncynical target.

preregistered, to compensate for the possibility of having to exclude participants on the basis of failing the comprehension question, the study was completed by 250 individuals on Prolific, an online platform for study participants. Of those, 26 (10.4%) failed the trust game understanding question, resulting in a final sample of 226 (42.0% male, M_{age} = 33.30, SD_{age} = 11.44).

Procedure. Participants first read that they would make decisions affecting their payoff and that of other participants, and that 10 randomly selected participants would be paid a bonus according to their decisions after the study was complete. In the end, 10 randomly selected participants were actually paid.[6]

All participants were assigned to the role of trustors in a trust game. They were given an endowment of £1 and decided whether to transfer it to the other participant (trustee). Participants learned that if they chose to transfer, the amount would be tripled (£3.00) and given to trustees who could either give back half of the total amount (£1.50) or keep the entire sum for themselves. As a comprehension check, participants reported what would happen if they transferred £1 and their partner transferred back half of the total amount? (Response options: [a] You earn £1.5, Person 2 earns £1.5; [b] You earn £0, Person 2 earns £3; [c] You earn £0, Person 2 earns £1)

Participants then learned that they would make the decision as Person 1 five times, with respect to five different other players. They learned that the other players were part of a multistage study and, as such, earlier had shared their general view on human nature. Before making each trust decision, participants were shown statements written by the respective interaction partner. For each interaction partner, they indicated whether they transfer their £1 to him/her or keep it. These decisions served as the main dependent variable (behavioral disrespect).

Participants also responded to four items measuring disrespectful attitudes toward each interaction partner ("I don't feel much respect for [other player's initials]," "I don't think that [other player's initials] is a respectable person," "I question [other player's initials]'s ethics," and "I admire [other player's initials]" (reverse-coded); 1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*). Ratings were averaged to form an attitudinal index of disrespect (average α = .81).

Last, as a manipulation check, we assessed participants' perceptions of targets' views on human nature using two items: "What is your impression of [other player's initials]?" "This person thinks negatively of other people; thinks positively of other people" (reverse-coded); (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Ratings were averaged to form a manipulation check index (average r = .83).

Results

To assess the effect of targets' cynicism on participants' behavioral disrespect and disrespectful attitudes, we used multilevel regression (cross-classified models), with participants and stimuli as random effects. All models included random intercepts at the level of participants and stimuli. We standardized the variables before the analyses, so that the coefficients can be interpreted in terms of standard deviations.

Manipulation check. We regressed participants' judgments of targets' views on other people (manipulation check questions) on targets' cynicism scores. Based on the texts they read, participants perceived that targets who scored higher (vs. lower) on cynicism held more negative views about others (β = .54, p < .001). Hence, the manipulation was successful.

Behavioral disrespect. We regressed participants' decision to transfer money to the other player (1 = *keep*, 0 = *transfer*) on the other player's cynicism score to test whether cynicism predicts being disrespected by others. In line with predictions, participants were more likely keep the money (and hence not exhibit trust) with partners who had higher cynicism scores, OR = 2.5 (p < .001). In other words, a one standard-deviation increase in the other player's cynicism was associated with a 150% higher probability that they would receive no money in the trust game (see Figure 5). Given that the decision to withhold trust signals disrespect (Dunning et al., 2014), these findings suggest that expressing a cynical worldview can elicit behavioral disrespect from others.

Disrespectful attitudes. The same pattern emerged regarding participants' disrespectful attitudes toward the other player. More cynical targets were viewed with more disrespect, β = .34, p < .001. Expressions of disrespect toward the other player in turn were associated with a higher likelihood of deciding to keep the endowment for themselves (OR = 15.03, p < .001).

Mediation analyses. We examined whether disrespectful attitudes toward the target mediated the effect of the target's cynicism on participants' behavioral disrespect (i.e., the decision not to trust). We estimated the effect of the target's cynicism on participants' disrespectful attitudes toward them (path *a*) and the effect of participants' disrespectful attitudes on their choice of whether to trust (path *b*) in separate multilevel regression equations. We computed the indirect effect by multiplying *a* and *b* and used the Monte Carlo estimation method to calculate its confidence interval (Selig & Preacher, 2008). The indirect effect was significant (0.86, 95% CI [0.59, 1.17]), providing evidence for the mediation.

Testing nonlinear effects. To examine whether the effect of target cynicism on participants' disrespect was driven by cynical targets being more likely to elicit disrespect or noncynical targets being less likely to elicit disrespect, we tested a quadratic effect. We regressed participants' disrespectful behavior on both the linear and quadratic terms of targets' cynicism. Both effects were significant (OR_{linear} = 2.27, p < .001; $OR_{squaredr}$ = 1.45, p = .008), pointing to a nonlinear pattern. We repeated these analyses with disrespectful attitudes as the dependent variable. Again, both the linear (β = .28, p < .001) and quadratic effects (β = .14, p < .001) reached significance.

Figure 5 displays the linear and the quadratic effects. Overall, participants showed more disrespect toward more (vs. less) cynical targets. At the same time, participants differentiated more strongly between targets with high versus moderate cynicism scores than between targets with moderate versus low cynicism scores. In other words, an increase in target cynicism from low to moderate was associated with a smaller increase in disrespect than an increase in target cynicism from moderate to high.

[6] Payoff was determined based on participants' decisions in the game (for each participant, we randomly selected one decision) and the assumption that Player 2 reciprocated by transferring them half of the total amount.

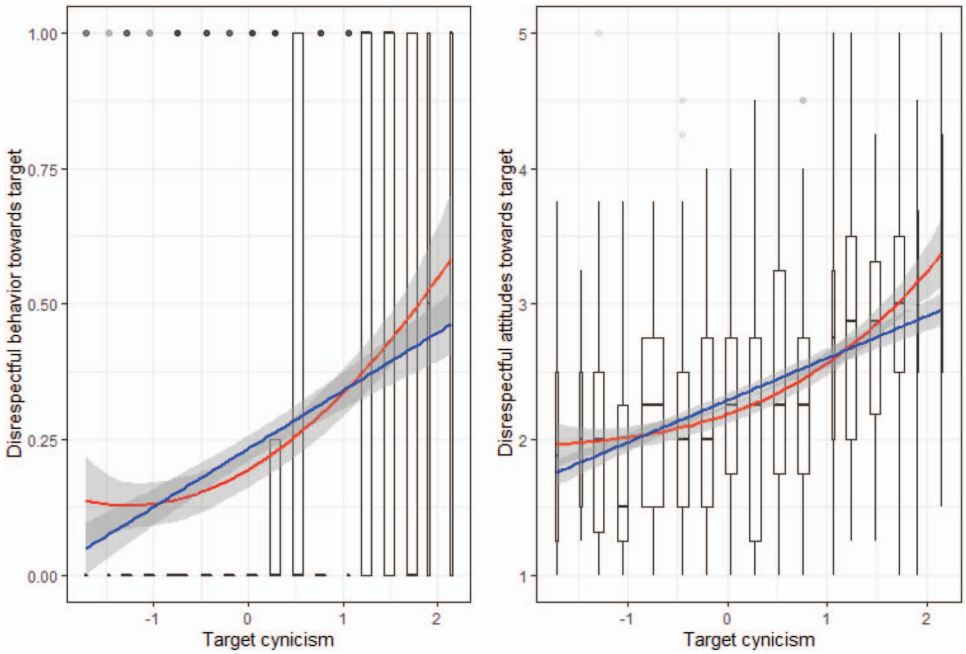

Figure 5. Linear (blue/light grey line) and quadratic (red/dark grey line) effects of targets' cynicism on participants' disrespectful behavior (left) and attitudes (right) toward the targets, Study 5. Boxes represent box plots for each value of target's cynicism. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Discussion

Study 5, which was preregistered, showed that people expressing more (vs. less) cynical views are more likely to elicit disrespectful treatment and incite disrespectful attitudes in others. Furthermore, disrespectful attitudes statistically accounted for the effect of dealing with a cynic on decisions not to trust them, as a behavioral sign of disrespect. It is interesting to note that the association between expressing cynicism and becoming target of disrespect showed a slight curvilinear pattern: Expressing strong (vs. moderate) cynical views elicited more disrespect than expressing moderately cynical (vs. noncynical) views. Overall, by using behavioral data and an ecologically valid manipulation of targets' cynicism (using statements drawn from individuals espousing a variety of views—from strongly cynical to moderate to not cynical), this study provides further support for the proposition that cynicism can fuel disrespect.

Study 6

So far, we have shown that people with higher levels of cynicism tend to experience disrespectful treatment by others, as indicated by their own perceptions (Studies 1 and 2), bringing to mind an instance of being disrespected (Study 3), others' attitudes and behavioral intentions toward them (Studies 4 and 5), and behavioral disrespect (Study 5). At the same time, higher levels of dispositional cynicism were associated with a stronger willingness to treat others disrespectfully (Study 4). Together, these observations point to the possibilities that cynical people's experiences of being disrespected render them more likely to be disrespectful toward others and that cynics are treated with disrespect because they behave disrespectfully toward others in the first place.

Study 6 sought to address these possibilities using a daily diary method that allowed us to investigate how people's social experiences on one day affected them the following day. Daily surveys measured the frequency of being both victim and perpetrator of disrespectful treatment. Individual differences in cynicism were measured during an intake survey, which took place on the day before the first daily assessment. To examine experiences of disrespect on subsequent cynicism development, cynicism was assessed again directly after the last daily assessment, seven days later.

The study design allowed us to test three key hypotheses. First, in an attempt to complement the findings from Studies 1–3 showing that perceived disrespect contributes to cynicism, we assessed changes in cynicism over time depending on people's experience of being disrespected during the seven days from the start to the end of the study.

Second, making use of the intensive longitudinal data structure, we tested whether cynical people's experience of being victims of disrespect led to them being disrespectful toward others the following day. Being the victim of negative treatment by others can result in undesirable changes in the victims' behavior, such as aggression directed at unrelated third parties (DeBono & Muraven, 2014; Lee, Kim, Bhave, & Duffy, 2016). Even minor negative behaviors, such as rudeness, can spread from one person to another in the workplace like the common cold (Foulk, Woolum, & Erez, 2016). In a similar manner, we expected that being the victim of disrespect would incite disrespectful behavior in return. We tested a longitudinal mediation model in which being a victim of disrespect on any given day mediated the relationship between cynicism scores and perpetrating disrespect the following day (Figure 6A).

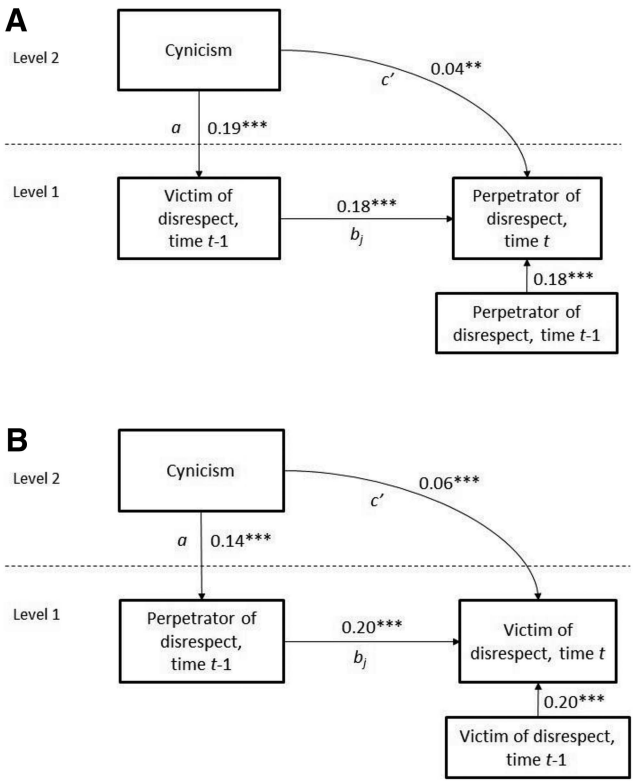

Figure 6. Mediation analysis in Study 6. b_j is a random effect, as its estimation varies across Level 2 units (persons); all effects at Level 1 are modeled as random. *** $p < .001$.

Third, given cynical individuals' tendency to read unkind, malicious intent in others' actions even when there are none (Barefoot et al., 1989; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Uchino, 2008), we tested whether cynical people are, at baseline, inclined to treat others disrespectfully. If so, then others' disrespectful behavior toward cynics may follow as a consequence of their (the cynics) initially disrespectful actions. To test this possibility, we used a longitudinal mediation model in which being perpetrator of disrespect on any given day mediated the association between cynicism scores and becoming a victim of disrespect the following day (Figure 6B).

Method

Participants. American adults ($N = 536$) were recruited via MTurk in exchange for a small payment. Of these, $n = 30$ did not pass the attention check item (from Studies 4 and 5) and were not further considered. Of the 506 remaining participants, 462 completed one or more daily assessment and thus constituted our sample (52.6% male, $M_{age} = 36.43$, $SD_{age} = 11.60$). This sample size was large enough to detect even small effects ($r > .12$) with 80% power ($\alpha = .05$, two-tailed test; G*Power 3.1, Faul et al., 2009). On average, participants completed 5.55 ($SD = 1.89$) of 7 daily assessments. This study was not required to have ethics approval.

Procedure. Participants were sent an online link to each daily assessment at 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. On average, participants completed each daily survey within 3.62 ($SD = 4.76$) hours after the link was sent, with 75% of surveys completed within 4.87 hr. Surveys were closed 24 hr after the link was sent.

The day before the first daily diary assessment and directly following the last daily assessment, participants completed the 8-item cynical distrust scale, as in Studies 2 – 5 (Cook & Medley, 1954; Greenglass & Julkunen, 1989; see Appendix A). Reliabilities were high (Cronbach's alpha = .91 at intake; .93 at follow up; test–retest $r = .80$, $p < .001$).

For the daily assessments, participants reported experiences of disrespect using two items. They indicated whether, within the last 24 hr, someone treated them disrespectfully and made demeaning or derogatory remarks about them in front of others (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *a lot*). Responses were averaged to create an index of being the target of disrespect (average $r = .80$). Using similarly worded items, participants rated their own behavior to assess their disrespectful treatment of others. Ratings were averaged to form an index representing being a perpetrator of disrespect (average $r = .85$). The order of items measuring being a target and perpetrator of disrespect was fully randomized across participants and assessments.

The study included measures of constructs for research projects unrelated to the present research question. These constructs included: attitudes toward science and technology, free-will beliefs, self-control, labor valuation, greed, power, religiosity, and political ideology. The study materials can be seen at the study's OSF page (https://osf.io/snq34/).

Analytic strategy. Because daily assessments were nested within participants, we applied multilevel regression methodology. Making use of the information on daily variations in participants' experiences, we used day-to-day spillovers of being a victim to predict becoming a perpetrator of disrespect and the converse.

First, we tested whether cynicism scores would predict experiences of disrespect (replicating Studies 1, 2, 4, and 5), and whether this experience would shape participants' behavior the next day by increasing acts of disrespect toward others. Specifically, we estimated a model that assessed whether the relationship between endorsement of cynical views and perpetrating disrespect would be mediated by perceptions of being disrespected on the previous day. To accommodate the longitudinal aspect of the data and ensure temporal precedence, the mediation model statistically controlled for acts of perpetrating disrespect on the previous day (Figure 6A).

Second, we used a model to test whether cynical individuals' experience as a victim of disrespect is a result of their own disrespectful behavior on the previous day. The model assessed whether the influence of cynicism on becoming a victim of disrespect was mediated by behaving disrespectfully toward others on the prior day. To help ensure temporal precedence, the experience as victim of disrespect on the previous day was included as a control variable (Figure 6B). In other words, we tested whether displays of disrespectful behavior explain why cynical individuals are treated in a disrespectful manner by others. In both mediation models, we followed recommendations for longitudinal mediation analyses by Preacher (2015) and estimated paths *a* and *b* in a series of multilevel regression equations. All paths at Level 1 (daily experiences), including path *b,* were modeled as a random effects so that they could vary among participants.

Table 4
Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations Among the Variables, Study 6

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3
1. Cynicism, day 1	3.85	1.28	—	—	—
2. Cynicism, day 8	3.58	1.39	.80***	—	—
3. Disrespect, victim	1.50	0.92	.29***	.34***	—
4. Disrespect, perpetrator	1.42	0.84	.23***	.26***	.86***

Note. Correlations with disrespect measures are average correlations across daily surveys.
*** $p < .001$.

Results

Table 4 displays descriptive information. On average across the test week period, initial levels of cynicism predicted reports of being victims as well as perpetrators of disrespectful treatment ($r = .29$ and $r = .23$, $p < .001$, respectively).

Mediation analyses: Cynicism -> victim of disrespect -> perpetrator of disrespect (Figure 6A). Cynicism scores predicted reports of being the victim of disrespect on one day ($b = 0.19$, $p < .001$), which in turn increased the likelihood of treating others with disrespect the following day ($b = 0.18$, $p < .001$). To estimate the significance of the indirect effect, we used the Monte Carlo method (Bauer, Preacher, & Gil, 2006; Selig & Preacher, 2008). The indirect effect amounted to .03 (95% CI [0.02, 0.06]), indicating a significant mediation pattern.

Mediation analyses: Cynicism -> perpetrator of disrespect -> victim of disrespect (Figure 6B). The more that people held cynical beliefs, the more likely they were to report behaving disrespectfully toward others on a given day, ($b = 0.14$, $p < .001$), which was associated with elevated reports of receiving disrespectful treatment by others the following day ($b = 0.20$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect was estimated at .03, 95% CI [0.01, 0.05], indicating that acting as a perpetrator of disrespect mediated the effect of cynicism on experiencing disrespect from others.

Does experiencing disrespectful treatment predict change in cynicism over a week? We fit a structural equation model (SEM) in which cynicism scores at intake predicted experiences of being the victim of disrespect in the next 7 days, which in turn predicted more cynicism on Day 8 (see Figure 7). All variables were modeled as latent constructs. The model fit the data well: $\chi^2(124) = 315.82$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04.

The mode had support. Initial cynicism scores positively predicted the cumulated experiences of being a victim of disrespect over the next 7 days ($b = 0.26$, $\beta = .31$, $p < .001$), which in turn predicted greater endorsement of cynical worldview at the end of the study ($b = 0.17$, $\beta = .12$, $p = .001$). The indirect effect was $b = .04$, $p = .002$ (95% CI [.02, .07]), pointing to a significant mediation effect.

Discussion

Study 6 demonstrated that cynical people, compared with less cynical people, are both targets and perpetrators of disrespectful treatment. Does the perception of being treated with disrespect turn cynical individuals from victims into perpetrators? Yes. Mediation analyses showed that feeling like the victim of disrespect mediated the effect of cynicism on behaving disrespectfully toward others on the following day. Does behaving disrespectfully turn cynical individuals into victims of disrespect? Yes. Behaving disrespectfully toward others mediated the effect of cynicism on becoming the victim of disrespect the following day.

In brief, these results suggest that experiencing disrespect from others turns cynical individuals from victims into perpetrators of disrespect. At the same time, cynical (vs. less cynical) individuals are more likely to commit acts of disrespect in the first place,

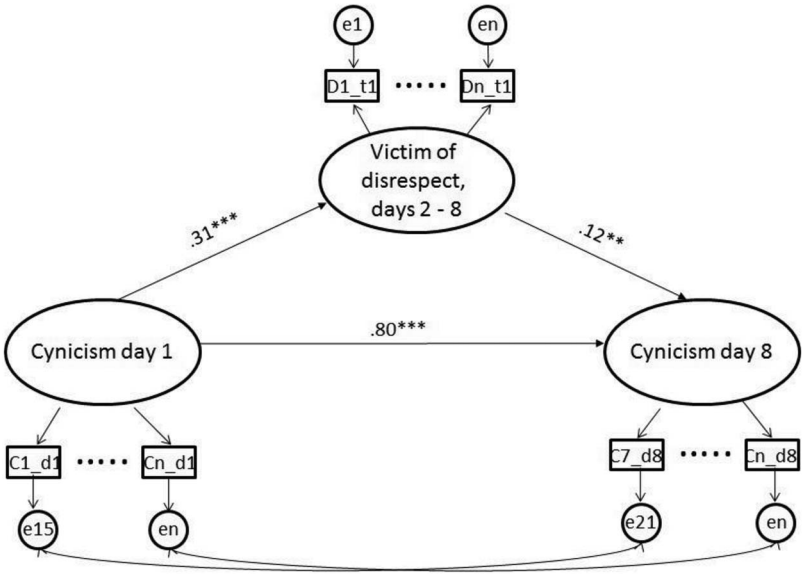

Figure 7. Mediation analysis in Study 6. Standardized path coefficients. Fit: $\chi^2(124) = 315.82$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04. Indirect effect: $b = .04$, $p = .002$ (95% CI [.02, .07]). Total effect: $b = .93$, $p < .001$ (95% CI [.83, 1.04]). ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

increasing their likelihood of being treated with disrespect by others in response.

Adding to these patterns were findings that people who reported being disrespected, totaled across the weeklong dairy period, showed a significant rise in cynicism over the course of a week, closing the vicious cycle of disrespect and cynicism.

General Discussion

Cynicism presents a risk factor for financial hardship, poor health, and premature mortality (Barefoot et al., 1989; Niaura et al., 2002; Smith, 1992; Stavrova & Ehlebracht, 2016). Although poor social relationships figure prominently among the deleterious consequences of cynicism (Hart, 1999; Hart & Hope, 2004; Kaplan et al., 2004; McCann, Russo, & Benjamin, 1997), we proposed that negative social experiences are not just a mere consequence of a cynical worldview but in fact could give rise to cynicism in the first place.

Drawing from the literature on norms of respectful treatment (Cropanzano, Goldman, & Folger, 2005; Dunning, 2017; Miller, 2001; Rousseau, 1995), we focused on a particular social experience, the experience of being disrespected. We advanced a vicious cycle hypothesis in which experiencing disrespect and adopting cynical beliefs mutually reinforce each other over time.

Because people feel that, by default, they are owed respectful treatment by others (Miller, 2001; Rawls, 1971), disrespectful treatment feels undeserved and unjustified. Consequently, it is likely attributed to the flaws in the perpetrator's moral character and by extension people in general, promoting a cynical worldview. Yet, to the extent that cynicism implies suspiciousness, distrust, and devaluation of others, endorsing a cynical view of human nature represent itself might trigger disrespect.

To examine whether the relationships between disrespect and cynicism follow the proposed vicious cycle pattern, we applied a variety of methods, using longitudinal, experimental and daily diary studies. We tested how perceived disrespect and cynicism shape each other over the course of 4 years (Study 2) and 7 days (Study 6). We tracked how cynicism affects individuals' daily experiences of disrespect. Longitudinal analyses showed that experiences of disrespect promoted a cynical worldview and that the more cynical people became the more likely they were to report further disrespect (Studies 2 and 6), attesting to the vicious cycle hypothesis. These findings were further corroborated by overall five experiments (three reported in the article and two in the online supplemental materials) showing that reminding people of previously experienced disrespect resulted in increased levels of cynicism (Studies 3 and S1) and that endorsing cynical views increases the odds of being disrespected by others (Studies 4, 5, and S2). Additionally, a large-scale survey of 53,333 individuals in 29 countries showed the links between disrespect and cynicism to be nearly culturally universal and even stronger than cynicism associations with another powerful negative social experience, lacking social support (Study 1).

Are cynical individuals unjust victims of disrespect or do they have a hand in eliciting disrespect from others? It seems that both might be true. The results of a week-long daily diary study provided evidence for both pathways (Study 6). Longitudinal mediation analyses showed that cynical individuals were more likely to feel like victims of disrespect and, consequently, showed a stronger propensity to behave disrespectfully toward others. At the same time, cynicism was positively associated with perpetrating disrespect at baseline, suggesting that cynical individuals' propensity to treat others with disrespect in the first place could have resulted in them being treated disrespectfully by others.

The present research has a number of strengths, such as the use of diverse and large samples and different methods, including cross-national and longitudinal surveys, experiments, incentivized economic games, and daily diaries. This combination of methods allowed us to show how cynicism and perceived disrespect mutually reinforce over time and to substantiate these findings by exploring how people treat others who have stronger (vs. weaker) cynical beliefs.

It is also important to note the present studies' limitations. Although the causal nature of the associations between cynicism and being target of disrespect was substantiated by both self-report and behavioral data (e.g., Study 5), the links between cynicism and treating others disrespectfully are based on self-reported behavior as perpetrators of disrespect. Additional work testing that link using a measure of disrespectful behavior would be welcome. Further, following existing practices (e.g., Erez et al., 2009; Sleebos, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 2007), we treated disrespect as a construct implying that a lack of respect is equivalent to disrespect. Nevertheless, it is an open question as to whether a lack of respect is psychologically similar to being disrespected, one that warrants investigation.

Whereas the present research focused on individual-level predictors of cynicism, it might be promising to explore what societal and cultural factors contribute to a cynical worldview. Given recent findings on the effect of a range of societal indicators, such as income inequality, poverty, and violent crime rates as driving forces behind the decline in social capital (Twenge, Campbell, & Carter, 2014), exploring whether these sociocultural indictors add to the development of cynical beliefs might be promising as well. Also, while the present work has focused on owed respect (as it reflects the judgment of moral character and so does cynicism), future work might consider examining the effect of earned respect, as well as other types of interpersonal mistreatment, as predictors and potential consequences of cynicism, as well.

The present findings contribute to the emerging literature on how individuals' beliefs emerge and stabilize (e.g., Milfont, Milojev, & Sibley, 2016). Our findings suggest that cynical individuals tend to see other people as lacking integrity and goodwill, and other people's behavior toward them seems to confirm the maliciousness of human nature. This pattern has been seen with other interpersonally relevant traits as well. For example, Hales, Kassner, Williams, and Graziano (2016) showed that disagreeable individuals are more likely to be ostracized, which in turn strengthens their disagreeableness. Similarly, victim justice sensitivity (sensitivity to being treated unfairly by others; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Maes, & Arbach, 2005) might stabilize after being victimized (Gollwitzer, Süssenbach, & Hannuschke, 2015) and produce antisocial behavior (Gollwitzer, Rothmund, Pfeiffer, & Ensenbach, 2009).

Endorsing cynical views might represent a defensive strategy. Cynicism and the associated negative social behaviors, such as denying others respect, might represent a preemptive strike aimed at protecting oneself from victimization. Yet, as we show, this strategy is not just doomed to fail, it can backfire: people react

negatively to signs of cynicism, tend to mistreat cynical individuals, and respond to signs of disrespect with further disrespect—which only serves to reassure cynics of their worldview.

While we have shown perceived disrespect to contribute to cynicism development, identifying situational and personality factors that could help curb the vicious cycle of disrespect and cynicism would be an important endeavor for future studies. Recent research shows that perceiving one has control over one's life is associated with decreasing levels of cynicism (Stavrova & Ehlebracht, 2018). Drawing from research on coping with peer victimization (Betts, Houston, Steer, & Gardner, 2017; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002), it may be that perceptions of personal control can prevent sliding into cynicism as a reaction to perceived disrespect.

We opened the article with observations that cynicism is on the rise. So too is disrespect. National polls suggest that more than three-quarters of Americans report having been treated disrespectfully and more than half admit to treating others disrespectfully (Williams, 2016). A survey of about 20,000 employees found that more than half of the sample reported to feel disrespected by their bosses (Porath, 2014).

From airports and airplanes (DeCelles & Norton, 2016), to the workplace (Foulk et al., 2016), to the crumbing of general civility in everyday life (Williams, 2016), people often feel that their concerns, needs, and personhood simply do not matter. Our results suggest that cynicism is born of disrespect as well as invites disrespect, thereby eliciting the very behavior that gave rise to it in the first place.

References

Adler, K. (2016). Is Europe lurching to the far right? *BBC*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36150807

Allen, A. B., & Leary, M. R. (2010). Reactions to others' selfish actions in the absence of tangible consequences. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 32,* 26–34.

Barefoot, J. C., Dodge, K. A., Peterson, B. L., Dahlstrom, W. G., & Williams, R. B., Jr. (1989). The Cook-Medley hostility scale: Item content and ability to predict survival. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 51,* 46–57. http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/00006842-198901000-00005

Baron, K. G., Smith, T. W., Butner, J., Nealey-Moore, J., Hawkins, M. W., & Uchino, B. N. (2007). Hostility, anger, and marital adjustment: Concurrent and prospective associations with psychosocial vulnerability. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 30,* 1–10. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10865-006-9086-z

Bauer, D. J., Preacher, K. J., & Gil, K. M. (2006). Conceptualizing and testing random indirect effects and moderated mediation in multilevel models: New procedures and recommendations. *Psychological Methods, 11,* 142–163. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.11.2.142

Baumeister, R. F., Stillwell, A. M., & Heatherton, T. F. (1994). Guilt: An interpersonal approach. *Psychological Bulletin, 115,* 243–267. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.115.2.243

Baumeister, R. F., Vohs, K. D., & Funder, D. C. (2007). Psychology as the science of self-reports and finger movements: Whatever happened to actual behavior? *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 2,* 396–403. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2007.00051.x

Betts, L. R., Houston, J. E., Steer, O. L., & Gardner, S. E. (2017). Adolescents' experiences of victimization: The role of attribution style and generalized trust. *Journal of School Violence, 16,* 25–48. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2015.1100117

Bowlby, J. (1982). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Brooks, D. (2017, June 2). Donald Trump poisons the world. *New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/02/opinion/donald-trump-poisons-the-world.html?emc=edit_th_20170602&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=65991292&_r=0

Chen, S. X., Lam, B. C., Wu, W. C., Ng, J. C., Buchtel, E. E., Guan, Y., & Deng, H. (2016). Do people's world views matter? The why and how. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 110,* 743–765.

Cheung, G. W., & Rensvold, R. B. (2002). Evaluating goodness-of-fit indexes for testing measurement invariance. *Structural Equation Modeling, 9,* 233–255. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15328007SEM0902_5

Cook, W. W., & Medley, D. M. (1954). Proposed hostility and Pharisaic-virtue scales for the MMPI. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 38,* 414–418. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0060667

Corey, M., Troisi, J. D., & Nicksa, S. C. (2015). Tipping the scales of justice: The influence of victimization on belief in a just world. *Social Justice Research, 28,* 509–525. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11211-015-0252-8

Crocker, J., & Major, B. (1989). Social stigma and self-esteem: The self-protective properties of stigma. *Psychological Review, 96,* 608–630. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.96.4.608

Cropanzano, R., Goldman, B., & Folger, R. (2005). Self-interest: Defining and understanding a human motive. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 26,* 985–991. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/job.353

Crossley, C. D. (2009). Emotional and behavioral reactions to social undermining: A closer look at perceived offender motives. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 108,* 14–24. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2008.06.001

Darwall, S. L. (1977). Two kinds of respect. *Ethics, 88,* 36–49. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/292054

Dasgupta, P. (1988). Trust as a commodity. In D. Gambetta (Ed.), *Trust: Making and breaking cooperative relations* (pp. 47–72). New York, NY: Basil Blackwell.

DeBono, A., & Muraven, M. (2014). Rejection perceptions: Feeling disrespected leads to greater aggression than feeling disliked. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 55,* 43–52. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2014.05.014

DeCelles, K. A., & Norton, M. I. (2016). Physical and situational inequality on airplanes predicts air rage. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 113,* 5588–5591. http://dx.doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1521727113

Deutsch, M. (1973). *The resolution of conflict: Constructive and destructive processes*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000276427301700206

Dunning, D. (2017). Normative goals and the regulation of social behavior: The case of respect. *Motivation and Emotion, 41,* 285–293. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11031-017-9616-8

Dunning, D., Anderson, J. E., Schlösser, T., Ehlebracht, D., & Fetchenhauer, D. (2014). Trust at zero acquaintance: More a matter of respect than expectation of reward. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 107,* 122–141. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0036673

Dzuka, J., & Dalbert, C. (2007). Student violence against teachers: Teachers' well-being and the belief in a just world. *European Psychologist, 12,* 253–260. http://dx.doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040.12.4.253

Erez, A., Sleebos, E., Mikulincer, M., Van Ijzendoorn, M. H., Ellemers, N., & Kroonenberg, P. M. (2009). Attachment anxiety, intra-group (dis)respect, actual efforts, and group donation. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 39,* 734–746. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.571

ESS. (2012). ESS round 6: European Social Survey Round 6 Data (2012). Data file ed. 2.0. Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Norway—Data Archive and distributor of ESS data. Retrieved from https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/download.html?r=6

Fasel, R., & Spini, D. (2010). Effects of victimization on the belief in a just world in four ex-Yugoslavian countries. *Social Justice Research, 23,* 17–36. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11211-010-0111-6

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A. G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods, 41,* 1149–1160. http://dx.doi.org/10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149

Foulk, T., Woolum, A., & Erez, A. (2016). Catching rudeness is like catching a cold: The contagion effects of low-intensity negative behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 101,* 50–67. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/apl0000037

García-León, A., Reyes, G. A., Vila, J., Pérez, N., Robles, H., & Ramos, M. M. (2002). The Aggression Questionnaire: A validation study in student samples. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology, 5,* 45–53. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1138741600005825

Gollwitzer, M., Rothmund, T., Pfeiffer, A., & Ensenbach, C. (2009). Why and when justice sensitivity leads to pro- and antisocial behavior. *Journal of Research in Personality, 43,* 999–1005. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2009.07.003

Gollwitzer, M., Süssenbach, P., & Hannuschke, M. (2015). Victimization experiences and the stabilization of victim sensitivity. *Frontiers in Psychology, 6,* 439. http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00439

Greenglass, E. R., & Julkunen, J. (1989). Construct validity and sex differences in Cook-Medley Hostility. *Personality and Individual Differences, 10,* 209–218. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(89)90206-7

Grover, S. L. (2014). Unraveling respect in organization studies. *Human Relations, 67,* 27–51. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0018726713484944

Haidt, J. (2008). Morality. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3,* 65–72. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2008.00063.x

Hales, A. H., Kassner, M. P., Williams, K. D., & Graziano, W. G. (2016). Disagreeableness as a cause and consequence of ostracism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 42,* 782–797. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167216643933

Hardy, J. D., & Smith, T. W. (1988). Cynical hostility and vulnerability to disease: Social support, life stress, and physiological response to conflict. *Health Psychology, 7,* 447–459. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.7.5.447

Hart, K. E. (1999). Cynical hostility and deficiencies in functional support: The moderating role of gender in psychosocial vulnerability to disease. *Personality and Individual Differences, 27,* 69–83. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(98)00166-4

Hart, K. E., & Hope, C. W. (2004). Cynical hostility and the psychosocial vulnerability model of disease risk: Confounding effects of neuroticism (negative affectivity) bias. *Personality and Individual Differences, 36,* 1571–1582. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2003.06.007

Haukkala, A., Konttinen, H., Laatikainen, T., Kawachi, I., & Uutela, A. (2010). Hostility, anger control, and anger expression as predictors of cardiovascular disease. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 72,* 556–562. http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0b013e3181dbab87

Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. W., & Uchino, B. N. (2008). Can hostility interfere with the health benefits of giving and receiving social support? The impact of cynical hostility on cardiovascular reactivity during social support interactions among friends. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine, 35,* 319–330. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12160-008-9041-z

HRS. (2018). *Health and Retirement Study, public use dataset*. Produced and distributed by the University of Michigan with funding from the National Institute on Aging (Grant Number NIA U01AG009740). Ann Arbor, MI.

Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6,* 1–55. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118

Janoff-Bulman, R., & Werther, A. (2008). The social psychology of respect: Implications for delegitimization and reconciliation. In T. M. J. D. F. A. Nadler (Ed.), *Social psychology of inter-group reconciliation: From violent conflict to peaceful co-existence* (pp. 145–170). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195300314.003.0008

Jones, E. E., & Nisbett, R. E. (1971). The actor and the observer: Divergent perceptions of the causes of behavior. In E. E. Jones, D. E. Kanouse, H. H. Kelley, R. E. Nisbett, E. Valins, & B. Weiner (Eds.), *Attribution: Perceiving the causes of behavior* (pp. 79–94). New York, NY: General Learning Press.

Judd, C. M., Westfall, J., & Kenny, D. A. (2012). Treating stimuli as a random factor in social psychology: A new and comprehensive solution to a pervasive but largely ignored problem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 103,* 54–69. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0028347

Kant, I. (1987). *Critique of judgment: Including the first introduction*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett. (Original work published 1790)

Kaplan, S. A., Bradley, J. C., & Ruscher, J. B. (2004). The inhibitory role of cynical disposition in the provision and receipt of social support: The case of the September 11th terrorist attacks. *Personality and Individual Differences, 37,* 1221–1232. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2003.12.006

Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., & Skinner, K. (2002). Children's coping strategies: Moderators of the effects of peer victimization? *Developmental Psychology, 38,* 267–278. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.38.2.267

Kunda, Z. (1990). The case for motivated reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin, 108,* 480–498. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.3.480

Kurman, J. (2011). What I do and what I think they would do: Social axioms and behaviour. *European Journal of Personality, 25,* 410–423. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/per.801

Lalljee, M., Laham, S. M., & Tam, T. (2007). Unconditional respect for persons: A social psychological analysis. *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation. Zeitschrift für Angewandte Organisationspsychologie, 38,* 451–464.

Leary, M. R., Diebels, K. J., Jongman-Sereno, K. P., & Fernandez, X. D. (2015). Why seemingly trivial events sometimes evoke strong emotional reactions: The role of social exchange rule violations. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 155,* 559–575. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2015.1084985

Lee, K., Kim, E., Bhave, D. P., & Duffy, M. K. (2016). Why victims of undermining at work become perpetrators of undermining: An integrative model. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 101,* 915–924. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/apl0000092

Lees, K. (2016). The smart (and cynical) politics behind Boris's Brexit decision. *Suffragio*. Retrieved from http://suffragio.org/2016/02/22/the-smart-and-cynical-politics-behind-boriss-brexit-decision/

Li, F., Zhou, F., & Leung, K. (2011). Expecting the worst: Moderating effects of social cynicism on the relationships between relationship conflict and negative affective reactions. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 26,* 339–345. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10869-010-9192-3

Little, T. D., Preacher, K. J., Selig, J. P., & Card, N. A. (2007). New developments in latent variable panel analyses of longitudinal data. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 31,* 357–365. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0165025407077757

Malle, B. F. (2006). The actor-observer asymmetry in attribution: A (surprising) meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 132,* 895–919. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.6.895

Marsh, H. W., Hau, K.-T., & Grayson, D. (2005). Goodness of fit evaluation in structural equation modeling. In A. Maydeu-Olivares & J. McCardle (Eds.), *Contemporary psychometrics: A festschrift to Roderick P. McDonald* (pp. 275–340). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

McCann, B. S., Russo, J., & Benjamin, G. A. H. (1997). Hostility, social support, and perceptions of work. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 2,* 175–185. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.2.2.175

Meesters, C., Muris, P., & Esselink, T. (1995). Hostility and perceived parental rearing behaviour. *Personality and Individual Differences, 18,* 567–570. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(94)00181-Q

Milfont, T. L., Milojev, P., & Sibley, C. G. (2016). Values stability and change in adulthood: A 3-year longitudinal study of rank-order stability and mean-level differences. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 42,* 572–588. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167216639245

Miller, D. T. (2001). Disrespect and the experience of injustice. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52,* 527–553. http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.527

Miller, J. (2014). 'Millennials' cynical about politics. *Boston Globe*. Retrieved from https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2014/04/29/millenials-cynical-about-politics-new-harvard-poll-year-olds-finds/7f6e3tRFBS2GioZvkf71XL/story.html

Miller, T. Q., Jenkins, C. D., Kaplan, G. A., & Salonen, J. T. (1995). Are all hostility scales alike? Factor structure and covariation among measures of hostility. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 25,* 1142–1168.

Neves, P. (2012). Organizational cynicism: Spillover effects on supervisor–subordinate relationships and performance. *The Leadership Quarterly, 23,* 965–976. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2012.06.006

Niaura, R., Todaro, J. F., Stroud, L., Spiro, A., III, Ward, K. D., & Weiss, S. (2002). Hostility, the metabolic syndrome, and incident coronary heart disease. *Health Psychology, 21,* 588–593. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.21.6.588

Porath, C. (2014). Half of employees don't feel respected by their bosses. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2014/11/half-of-employees-dont-feel-respected-by-their-bosses

Preacher, K. J. (2015). Advances in mediation analysis: A survey and synthesis of new developments. *Annual Review of Psychology, 66,* 825–852.

Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rogers, K. M. (2018). Do Your Employees Feel Respected? *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2018/07/do-your-employees-feel-respected

Rogers, K. M., & Ashforth, B. E. (2017). Respect in organizations: Feeling valued as 'we' and 'me'. *Journal of Management, 43,* 1578–1608. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0149206314557159

Rosenberg, M. (1956). Misanthropy and political ideology. *American Sociological Review, 21,* 690–695. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2088419

Rosseel, Y. (2012). lavaan: An R package for structural equation modeling. *Journal of Statistical Software, 48,* 1.36.

Rousseau, D. M. (1995). *Psychological contracts in organizations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rubin, M. (2016). *The Perceived Awareness of the Research Hypothesis Scale: Assessing the influence of demand characteristics*. Figshare. Retrieved from https://figshare.com/articles/The_Perceived_Awareness_of_the_Research_Hypothesis_Scale_Assessing_the_influence_of_demand_characteristics/4315778

Rubin, M., Paolini, S., & Crisp, R. J. (2010). A processing fluency explanation of bias against migrants. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 46,* 21–28. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2009.09.006

Russell, J. A., & Mehrabian, A. (1977). Evidence for a three-factor theory of emotions. *Journal of Research in Personality, 11,* 273–294. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0092-6566(77)90037-X

Schmitt, M., Gollwitzer, M., Maes, J., & Arbach, D. (2005). Justice sensitivity: Assessment and location in the personality space. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 21,* 202–211. http://dx.doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759.21.3.202

Selig, J. P., & Preacher, K. J. (2008). Monte Carlo method for assessing mediation: An interactive tool for creating confidence intervals for indirect effects [Computer software]. Retrieved from http://quantpsy.org/

Sleebos, E., Ellemers, N., & de Gilder, D. (2007). Explaining the motivational forces of (dis)Respect: How self-focused and group-focused concerns can result in the display of group-serving efforts. *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation. Zeitschrift für Angewandte Organisationspsychologie, 38,* 327–342. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11612-007-0028-1

Smith, S. (2015). *6 key takeaways about how Americans view their government*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/23/6-key-takeaways-about-how-americans-view-their-government/

Smith, T. W. (1992). Hostility and health: Current status of a psychosomatic hypothesis. *Health Psychology, 11,* 139–150. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0278-6133.11.3.139

Stavrova, O., & Ehlebracht, D. (2016). Cynical beliefs about human nature and income: Longitudinal and cross-cultural analyses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 110,* 116–132. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000050

Stavrova, O., & Ehlebracht, D. (2018). Education as an antidote to cynicism: A longitudinal investigation. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 9,* 59–69. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1948550617699255

Stavrova, O., & Ehlebracht, D. (2019a). Broken bodies, broken spirits: How poor health contributes to a cynical worldview. *European Journal of Personality, 33,* 52–71. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/per.2183

Stavrova, O., & Ehlebracht, D. (2019b). The cynical genius illusion: Exploring and debunking lay beliefs about cynicism and competence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 45,* 254–269.

Twenge, J. M., Campbell, W. K., & Carter, N. T. (2014). Declines in trust in others and confidence in institutions among American adults and late adolescents, 1972–2012. *Psychological Science, 25,* 1914–1923. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0956797614545133

Uhlmann, E. L., Pizarro, D. A., & Diermeier, D. (2015). A person-centered approach to moral judgment. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 10,* 72–81. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1745691614556679

United Nations. (1948). *Universal declaration of human rights*. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

van Quaquebeke, N., Henrich, D. C., & Eckloff, T. (2007). "Es geht mir nicht urn Toleranz, es geht mir um Respekt!" Ein konzeptioneller Rahmen zur Unterscheidung zwischen Toleranz, Akzeptanz und (zwei Arten von) Respekt ["It's not tolerance I'm asking for, it's respect!": A conceptual framework to differentiate between tolerance, acceptance and (two types of) respect]. *Gruppendynamik und Organisationsberatung, 38,* 185–200. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11612-007-0015-6

Williams, R. (2016). *The rise of incivility in America*. Retrieved from https://raywilliams.ca/the-rise-of-incivility-in-america/

Wrightsman, L. S. (1992). *Assumptions about human nature*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wrightsman, L. S., Jr. (1964). Measurement of philosophies of human nature. *Psychological Reports, 14,* 743–751. http://dx.doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1964.14.3.743

(*Appendices follow*)

Appendix A

Cynical Distrust Scale: Studies 2–6

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. I think most people would lie to get ahead.
2. Most people inwardly dislike putting themselves out to help other people.
3. Most people make friends because friends are likely to be useful to them.
4. It is safer to trust nobody.
5. No one cares much what happens to you.
6. Most people are honest chiefly through fear of being caught.
7. I commonly wonder what hidden reasons another person may have for doing something nice to me.
8. Most people will use somewhat unfair means to gain profit or an advantage rather than lose it.

Items 1, 2, 5, 7, and 8 were used in the Health and Retirement Study (HRS, 2018) and hence the current article's Study 2.

All eight items were used in Studies 3–6.

The scale originally included a ninth item, "When a man is with a woman he is usually thinking about things related to her sex," which was not included in the current studies because it lacks face-validity.

Appendix B

Willingness to Treat the Target Person Disrespectfully

In your future dealings with Cory, how likely would you be to . . .

. . . treat Cory disrespectfully?
. . . talk down to Cory?
. . . put Cory down?
. . . be condescending to Cory?
. . . insult Cory?
. . . make demeaning or derogatory remarks about Cory?
. . . belittle Cory's opinions in front of others?
. . . pay little attention to Cory's statements?
. . . show little interest in Cory's opinion?
. . . treat Cory with respect? (reverse-coded)
. . . look up to Cory? (reverse-coded)

Items were presented in a random order.

Received July 9, 2019
Revision received December 3, 2019
Accepted December 23, 2019 ■