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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED TOXIC LEADERSHIP
STYLES, LEADER EFFECTIVENESS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CYNICISM**

by

James M. Dobbs

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

January 2014

Dissertation Committee

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ABSTRACT

Employee cynicism within organizations has become a well-cited topic in the last several years (Caldwell, 2007; Chaloupka, 2001; Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). Within multiple industries, organizational leaders have claimed that cynicism is a factor in employee burnout, emotional exhaustion, and turnover, and that it directly and adversely affects organizational citizenship behavior, commitment, and organization effectiveness (Abraham, 2000; Anderson & Bateman, 1997; Bedeian, 2007). Despite such claims, very little empirical research has been done on the antecedents of employee cynicism, and the influence of leadership behavior on employee cynicism. This study attempted to fill gaps in the research by examining the relationship between perceived toxic leadership behaviors, leader effectiveness and organizational cynicism.

Using descriptive and inferential approaches, this study analyzed data from three separate scales: Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale, Toxic Leadership Scale, and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Data from these scales, along with demographic data from the participants, were collected through an online survey from 285 cadets enrolled in psychology and leadership courses at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO between February and May 2013.

Results suggest that a relationship exists between toxic leadership styles and cynicism in an organization. Specifically, the study found strong evidence to suggest that Academy cadets who perceive their commanding officer to have higher levels of toxicity on any of the five dimensions: abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability, tend to be more cynical about their organization. In addition, of the five toxic leadership dimensions, self-promotion was the best predictor of

organizational cynicism. Finally, contrary to expectation, study results found no evidence to suggest that effective leadership moderates the relationship between organizational cynicism and toxic leadership.

The findings in this study offer empirical evidence in a unique military context that perceived toxic leadership styles may be critical antecedents in the formation of organizational cynicism. Given the pernicious impact of cynicism, implications from this study suggest that managers and administrators of organizations should purposefully examine the leadership development, training and opportunities presented to its people in order to stem the tide of undesirable (toxic) behavior among its leadership.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my loving wife Alison who has always supported and encouraged me, and to our daughters Emmalena, Isabella, and Ali, in whom I hope I have instilled an appreciation for life-long learning, education, and love of life.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Cynics are made, not born.” —Karl Marx

Karl Marx suggested that cynicism is a learned behavior. Yet his assertion raises a number of questions. If cynicism is in fact learned, who is the teacher and how is it taught or caught? Can cynicism be mitigated, and if so, how and by whom? Also, can the opposite trait, that of trust and belief, also be inculcated? These are not mere philosophical ruminations. The answers have practical ramifications that are worthy of empirical study, particularly in the realm of leadership and organizations. A deeper understanding of the relationship between leader behavior and cynicism would be useful to those who are concerned with leader development and organizational effectiveness.

The impact of poor leadership and cynicism is increasingly recognized as a problem in organizations (Andersson, 1996; Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). Research suggests that human capital may be an important, sustainable, competitive advantage that organizations have, as employees represent the source of courage, innovation, future leadership, and creativity (Chaleff, 2003; Johnson, 2009; Kellerman, 2008). In addition, they are the link between the organization and its stakeholders (Chaleff, 2002). More specifically, research indicates that cynical employees are more likely to challenge or speak negatively about their employer (Stanley, Meyer, & Topolnytsky, 2004). There is evidence that employee's negative comments adversely affect the customer's experience, and the bottom line (Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros, & Schlesinger, 2009). Therefore, how a follower feels about his or her institution is of importance. Given that connections have been established between

job satisfaction and performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001), the importance of fostering a positive work environment and developing human capital becomes a worthy item of focus.

Additionally, the extent of the problem of worker cynicism appears to be pervasive. Polls report that over 50% of survey respondents describe themselves as cynical at work (Hochwater, James, Johnson, & Ferris, 2004). These broad-based feelings of cynicism show little sign of decreasing as companies continue to lay off workers, outsource operations, and cut entire branches of organizations to increase revenue (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005).

The problem of follower cynicism is not limited to the workplace, but rather is endemic throughout the United States across a broad spectrum of organizations. Mistrust of institutions across multiple and diverse sectors such as academia, government, banks, big business, is more pervasive now than at any time since the era of the Great Depression (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Caldwell, 2007; Kanter & Mirvis, 1992; Kouzes & Posner, 1993). According to the National Leadership Index that surveys Americans' attitudes toward their leaders in 13 major sectors, confidence in leaders fell to the lowest point since the index was established in 2005 (Rosenthal, 2011).

Follower cynicism appears to be widespread, and it negatively impacts the organizations tainted by it. The complex relationship between perceived poor leadership and cynicism, and its effects, is worthy of additional attention and exploration.

Statement of the Problem

While numerous researchers have focused their attention on determining the role of cynicism and leadership in for-profit organizations, comparatively scant attention has

been directed to the impact of these variables in public organizations. Research on organizational effectiveness is often related to profit-loss financial performance, with limited relevance to public institutions. In comparison to the corporate sector, the US military has received less empirical attention from researchers. Although the literature rarely addresses these issues within the armed forces, understanding the problems of cynicism and leadership is particularly pertinent to the military.

Since 1973 the modern American military has been an all-volunteer force, as its members are not compelled to serve. It is also an organization completely without profit margin, and representative of an important segment of the public sector. In addition, the military has in recent years begun to recognize the profound negative effect that cynicism and toxic leadership can have on the maintenance of good order and discipline, and it has sought to increase understanding of these phenomena (Bullis & Reed, 2009; Elle, 2012; Fellman, 2012; Reed, 2004; Waring, 2009). Yet little, if any, empirical research has been conducted concerning efforts to curtail these issues within military organizations (Do & Waring, n.d.; Light, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to determine if, and to what degree, a relationship exists between toxic leadership styles, organizational cynicism, and the possible moderating influence of effectiveness. The lack of knowledge and empirical data on this subject hinders the ability to place an appropriate value on leadership in mitigating the development and spread of cynicism within an organization. Figure 1 represents a hypothesized relationship in this study.

Figure 1. Hypothesized relationship between leader toxicity and organizational cynicism.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate relationships between perceived toxic leadership, organizational cynicism, and effective leadership. Specifically this study examined and sought to identify leadership behaviors that can mitigate the development and spread of cynicism in organizations.

The following overarching research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy experience toxic leadership, and what is their current level of organizational cynicism?
2. What, if any, correlation is there between a perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?
3. Does perceived effective leadership behavior moderate the relationship between perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?

Significance of the Study

This study offered a clearer understanding of the connections between leadership and cynicism. Specifically, this research identified certain specific leadership styles that

might drive higher levels of cynicism in organizations, as well as identifying types of leadership styles and behaviors that are correlated with cynicism. This information might help leadership practitioners, scholars, and educators better understand how leadership behaviors affect organizational cynicism.

Additionally, this study bridged complementary streams of literature that connect the role of leadership to the pervasiveness of cynicism within public and private institutions, but have heretofore been investigated in isolation. By linking previously disparate literature, this research extends the understanding of these particular constructs in ways that have otherwise been ignored. In doing so, this study served to better explain another antecedent to organizational cynicism.

One of the challenges we face when studying any two constructs (e.g., leadership style and cynicism) is that knowledge surrounding each of the topics is often developed in isolation. This should be expected, as those who are studying the two topics are often in different domains or come from different backgrounds and social contexts. Each is involved in trying to develop and understand the nomological network surrounding their particular topic or area of interest, without looking at the aggregate.

The purpose of this study is to bridge those who study toxic leadership and those who study cynicism by creating a single circumstance in which these related constructs can be discussed in a synergistic way. However, in order to do this, it is important to first discuss what is known about the constructs of cynicism and destructive (toxic) leadership.

This study answered the call by researchers for a more in-depth, empirical examination of the causes of cynicism (Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997;

Cole, Brunch, & Vogel, 2006; Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1999), while also further examining the negative impact of destructive leadership (Pelletier, 2010; Reed & Bullis, 2009). The findings from this study were intended to further explore the relationship between leadership and cynicism and contribute to the literature by expanding our understanding of this widespread phenomenon.

To summarize, the results of this study have implications for the development of both leaders and organizations. Findings from this research could assist administrators, supervisors, and others in leadership roles to better understand the impact of perceptions of toxic leadership on cynicism. Applying this understanding to the training and education of leaders in corporate, government, and military organizations might ultimately serve to militate against the negative impact of cynicism on those institutions.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature suggests that there have been a number of studies conducted that investigated cynicism, leadership styles, and what constitutes an effective leader (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001; Wilkerson, Evans, & Davis, 2008). However few studies have investigated any relationship between these variables. This chapter defines organizational cynicism, distinguishes it from other constructs, and explains the theoretical frameworks that have been used to explicate the nature of cynicism. Next, a review of the seminal works on toxic leadership will be presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of existing research on leadership effectiveness, and a discussion on how it is often defined and measured.

Cynicism Literature

The term cynicism originated from ancient Greek philosophers called Cynics, who rejected all conventions designed to control men, such as religion, manners, or rules of decency, advocating instead the pursuit of virtue in a simple and non-materialistic lifestyle (Caldwell, 2007). Early research defined *cynicism* as an attitude distinguished by a “dislike for and distrust of others” (Cook & Medley, 1954, p. 418). More recent work has equated cynicism as an attitude characterized by scornful or jaded negativity, suspicion, and a general distrust of the integrity or professed motives of others (Anderson & Bateman, 1997). Defined concisely, cynicism is the condition of lost belief (Chaloupka, 1999). Lost to cynicism is belief in the possibility of a change, improvement, or betterment of current or future circumstances along with the ability to

aspire to a different state. The hurt, disappointment, and anger that follow unmet expectations and unfulfilled goals give rise to a perspective that is overwhelmingly negative. As such, cynics “agree that lying, putting on a false face, and taking advantage of others are fundamental to human character” and conclude that people are “just out for themselves” and that “such cynical attitudes about life are paralleled in attitudes about work” (Mirvis & Kanter, 1991, pp. 50-52). Thus, members who are cynical can influence an entire organization and perhaps even hinder an organization from reaching its goals. Cynicism in the workplace is emerging as a new paradigm resulting from a critical appraisal of the motives, actions, and values of an employer and is a construct worthy of further exploration (Bedian, 2007).

Defining Organizational Cynicism

Most studies defined organizational cynicism as a negative work attitude that has the potential to affect numerous organizational and individual outcomes (Abraham, 2000; Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997). Cynicism’s influence upon an organization is not extensively examined by scholars, nor is the essence of the attitude “characterized by frustration, hopelessness, and disillusionment, as well as contempt toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution” (Andersson, 1996, pp. 1397-1398).

Scholars differ in defining the origin, and therefore, the complete nature or definition of organizational cynicism. James (2005) defined organizational cynicism as “attitudes related to one’s employing organization, characterized by negative beliefs, feelings, and related behaviors in response to a history of personal and or social experiences susceptible to change by environmental influences” (p. 7). Thus, an

individual's prior history is key to unlocking the door of cynicism. Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998) described organizational cynicism as a negative attitude toward one's employing organization, comprised of the belief that the individual's organization lacks integrity, fairness, sincerity, and honesty.

These definitions are not entirely at odds. In fact, they could be said to have similarities to Abraham's (2000) suggestion that cynicism toward the organization could result from workers' perceptions of a lack of congruence between their own personal values and those of the organization. This idea of value congruence between individuals and organizations is particularly appealing for the study of cynicism and leadership because values play a central role in leading followers, and influencing organizational culture (Schein, 2006).

There is ample literature supporting the importance of value congruence between leaders and followers. For example, Lord and Brown (2001) theorized that values influence follower affect, cognition, and behavior by interacting with follower self-concepts. While Argris' (1964) seminal work on shared values and goal congruence theory emphasized the importance of promoting the integration of individual and organizational goals, and suggested that incongruence between the two may cause unintended consequences such as passivity and aggression. Such results may interfere with system (organizational) effectiveness and individual growth and satisfaction. This is in consistent with Dean and colleagues' (1998) conceptualization that cynicism is a multidimensional construct developed by a person and the organization made up of three components: beliefs, affects, and behavioral tendencies. Specifically, the cognitive dimension of organizational cynicism is the belief that organizations lack such principles

as “fairness, honesty, and sincerity” (p. 346). The affective dimension refers to the positive and negative emotional reactions individuals may feel toward an organization, and the behavioral dimension of organizational cynicism refers to the negative tendencies in the expression of strong criticisms toward the organization.

In the simplest of terms, cynicism is the feeling that develops whenever expectations do not match with reality (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). Table 1 shows the definitions of organizational cynicism in five frequently cited publications on this topic.

Table 1

Various Definitions of Organizational Cynicism in the Literature

Author	Definition
Andersson (1996)	a general and specific attitude characterized by frustration, hopelessness, and disillusionment, as well as contempt toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution (pp. 1397-1398).
Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998)	a negative attitude toward one's employing organization, comprising three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative affect toward the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviors toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect (p. 345).
Brockway, Carlson, Jones, and Bryant (2002)	an attitude, characterized by frustration and negatively valenced beliefs, resulting primarily from unmet expectations, which is capable of being directed toward the college experience in general and/or more specific facets of the college environment (p. 211).
Stanley, Meyer, and Topolnytsky (2005)	a belief of another's stated or implied motives for a decision or action (p. 436).
James (2005)	attitudes related to one's employing organization, characterized by negative beliefs, feelings, and related behaviors. Additionally, it is a response to a history of personal and/or societal experiences that are susceptible to change by environmental influences (p. 7).

For the purpose of this research, organizational cynicism is defined as "attitudes related to one's employing organization, characterized by negative beliefs, feelings, and related behaviors" (James, 2005, p. 7). Furthermore, as posited by (Dean et al., 1998), organizational cynicism may change over time, and is believed to be facilitated by certain situations and dispositions.

Organizational Cynicism and Organizational Trust

Although cynicism is closely related to the construct of trust (or distrust), cynicism has several distinguishing characteristics that are worth identifying and differentiating. First, specific forms of cynicism, such as *organizational cynicism*, are almost always based on (negative) experiences (Dean et al., 1998), whereas trust emphasizes the presence of trustworthiness and can be established without experience (i.e., swift trust, Meyerson, Weich, & Kramer, 1996). Cynicism almost always reflects an attitude derived from experience (Dean et al., 1998). Second, trust, by definition, is a belief held by an individual that the word, promise, or oral or written statement of another individual can be relied on (Stack, 1978). Trust requires vulnerability to the actions of another person or party (Dean et al., 1998; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), whereas cynicism does not. Dean and colleagues (1998) argued that one can be cynical without being vulnerable, whereas trust has no meaning in the absence of vulnerability (James, 2005). Next, trust represents a forward-focused belief or expectancy, whereas cynicism is an attitude made up of affective components (i.e., distress, hopelessness and disillusionment) as well as a belief (Andersson, 1996). Dean et al. (1998) asserted, "There is an intensely emotional aspect to cynicism that is lacking in trust" (p. 348).

Finally, Wrightman (1974) demonstrated that cynicism and trust are only weakly related, sharing 10% common variance.

Theoretical Framework of Organizational Cynicism

Andersson (1996) suggested that violations of implied contracts are the primary determinants of employee cynicism. In her study, she proposed a theoretical framework in which psychological contract violation was related to employee cynicism. This argument was based on the theory that there are three primary determinants in the development of cynicism: the formulation of unrealistically high expectations, the experience of disappointment at failing to meet these expectations, and subsequent disillusionment (p. 1404). Rousseau (as cited in Andersson, 1996) suggested that contracts are a critical feature of modern-day businesses in that they serve as an important link between individuals and organizations. Accordingly, factors in the workplace that might generate perceptions of contract violations, and thereby facilitate the formation of cynical attitudes, were grouped into three broad categories: business environment characteristics (e.g., high executive employment, layoffs, unjustified corporate profits, corporate social responsibility), organizational characteristics (e.g., poor communication, limited voice expression, discourteous treatment, managerial incompetency), and job and role characteristics (e.g., ambiguity, conflict, work overload). She stated, “employees expect their employer to fulfill specific obligations in return for their loyalty and hard work, and when these expectations are not met, negative attitudes and behaviors result” (p. 1,404). Thus, the psychological contract is a powerful, employee-created mechanism that drives job performance, attitude, and affect; it is an agreement workers form with their organization regarding what is expected and what will be delivered in return

(Rousseau, 1995). Consequently, the area of contract violations was viewed as a useful conceptual framework for identifying predictors and outcomes of employee cynicism (Andersson, 1996).

Since her 1996 conceptual article of cynicism in organizations, Andersson has not published any articles incorporating psychological contracts as a predictor of cynicism. However, two other studies have since addressed the linkage between psychological contracts and cynicism (Johnson & O’Leary, 2003; Pate, Martin, & Staines, 2000). In these articles the authors proposed a model in which psychological contract breach leads to psychological contract violation and psychological contract violation, in turn, leads to increased organizational cynicism.

Consequences of Cynicism

With regard to consequences of cynicism, research has shown that cynicism has important *negative* ramifications, contributing to substantial costs for both organizations and individuals resulting from increases in stress, emotional exhaustion, burnout, job tension, job satisfaction, and turnover (Abraham, 2000; Bedian, 2007; James, 2005; Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003, Ozler & Atalay, 2010). It also reduces citizenship behavior, productivity, commitment, and organizational identity (Andersson & Batement, 1997; Bedian, 2007; Mirvis & Kanter, 1989). In essence, cynicism can undermine leaders, institutions, and the practices they support (Goldfarb, 1991).

Given the pernicious impact of organizational cynicism, it is surprising that a close examination of the literature in this area reveals little empirical research or rigorous inquiry on organizational cynicism and its relationship to leadership styles or behaviors. This is especially notable, given that as Bass (1990) stated, “leadership is often regarded

as the single most critical factor in the success or failure of institutions” (p. 8). The majority of studies have focused on the consequences and effects of cynical employees in business models conducted in the private sector, and typically presented very specific antecedents for study (e.g. workforce reduction, layoffs, organizational performance, and executive compensation; Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Brandes, Castro, James, Martinez, Matherly, Ferris & Hochwater, 2007). These studies are largely silent on the role a leader’s behavior might have in influencing organizational cynicism of their followers.

Toxic Leadership Literature

Research in the area of leadership has traditionally focused on the positive and constructive aspects of leaders (Kellerman, 2004). However, recent abuses of authority in a range of organizations—business, politics, and the military—have revived interest in the dark side of leadership (Conger, 1990). In recent years, scholarly publications have used a variety of constructs to describe these dark or destructive forms of leadership: abusive (Tepper, 2000), tyrannical (Ashforth, 1994), unethical or bad (Kellerman, 2004), and toxic (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Pelletier, 2009; Reed, 2004; Whicker, 1996). Although these terms are used differently by different authors, they are often used to describe the same phenomenon: interpersonal influences and downward hostility by those in positions of authority that negatively affect followers and ultimately undermine the best interest of the organization. For example, Lipman-Blumen (2005) maintained that leaders are considered toxic when they “engage in numerous *destructive behaviors* and exhibit certain dysfunctional personal characteristics” (p. 18), whereas Reed (2004) stated that a single specific behavior does not necessarily cause toxic leadership, rather it is the

“cumulative effect of demotivational behavior on unit morale and climate over time that tells the tale” (p. 67).

Defining Toxic Leadership

Attempts to define toxic leadership are numerous, and vary from study to study. For example, Einarsen, Aaslad, & Skogstad (2007) propose that destructive leadership should account for destructive behavior aimed at both subordinates and at the organization. With that in mind, they suggested the following all-inclusive definition of destructive leadership: “the systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates” (p. 208). Thus, Einarsen and colleagues focused their definition on the receivers or victims of the toxicity.

Taking a slightly different vantage point, Schmidt’s (2008) research systematically attempted to bring some comprehensive understanding to the topic of toxic leadership by defining what toxic leadership is and is not, while developing and evaluating a new measure he called the Toxic Leadership Scale. His research concluded that toxic leadership is a much broader construct than abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000). Toxic leadership is a multidimensional construct that includes elements of abusive supervision along with narcissism, authoritarianism, self-promotion, and unpredictability. Whicker (1996) stated “toxic leaders may be of one of several types, but all toxic leaders share three defining characteristics: deep-seated inadequacy, selfish values, and deceptiveness” (p. 53). Scholars Kusy and Holloway (2009) summed up the literature aptly, addressing both the leader and the follower, cause and effect, saying that

toxic personality is “anyone who demonstrates a pattern of counterproductive work behaviors that debilitate individuals, teams, and even organizations over the long term” (p. 4). The underlying tenet to toxic leadership is that it is “viewed as a detractor from motivation, alignment, and commitment to organizational goals that serve as the hallmark of good leadership” (Reed & Bullis, 2009, p. 6).

Although there are obvious similarities among these concepts, researchers have yet to adopt a common definition or conceptual framework of toxic leadership. Thus, Reed’s (2004) claim that “toxic leadership, like leadership in general, is more easily described than defined, but terms like self-aggrandizing, petty, abusive, indifferent to unit climate, and interpersonally malicious seem to capture the concept” (p. 71). Table 2 shows the definitions of toxic leadership in frequently cited publications on this topic.

Table 2

Various Definitions of Toxic (Destructive) Leadership in the Literature

Author	Definition
Whicker (1996)	maladjusted, malcontent, and often malevolent, even malicious. They succeed by tearing others down....With a deep-seated but well disguised sense of personal inadequacy, a focus on selfish values, and a cleverness at deception, these leaders are very toxic, indeed (p. 12).
Lipman-Blumen (2005)	leaders who engage in numerous destructive behavior and who exhibit certain dysfunctional personal characteristics. To count as toxic, these behaviors and qualities of character must inflict some reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and their organizations. The intent to harm others or to enhance the self at the expense of others distinguishes seriously toxic leaders from the careless or unintentional toxic leaders, who also cause negative effects (p. 18).
Reed (2004)	Three key elements of the toxic leader syndrome are: 1. An apparent lack of concern for the wellbeing of subordinates 2. A personality or interpersonal technique that negatively affects organizational climate 3. A conviction by subordinates that the leader is motivated primarily by self-interest (p. 67).
Schmidt (2008)	narcissistic, self-promoters who engage in an unpredictable pattern of abusive and authoritarian supervision (p. 57)
Tepper (2000)	subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact (p. 178).

Building on Schmidt's (2008) research, this dissertation proposes that toxic leaders are “narcissistic, self-promoters who engage in an unpredictable pattern of abusive and authoritarian supervision” (p. 57).

Prevalence of Toxic Leadership

Although many issues of definition and terminology have yet to be resolved, several sources suggest that destructive or toxic leadership is a common occurrence in organizations (Einarsen, et al., 2007). A recent study found that 94% of survey respondents ($N = 404$) reported having worked with someone toxic in their career, with 64% reported currently working with someone they would describe as having a toxic personality (Kusy & Holloway, 2009). More to the point, as many as three-quarters of employed adults reported ($N = 5,266$) that their bosses are the most stressful parts of their jobs (Hogan, 2007). Similarly, research conducted in the military has found that more than 80% of Army officers and sergeants “had directly observed a toxic leader in the last year and that about 20 percent of the respondents said that they had worked directly for one” (Jaffe, 2011, p. 1). Another survey found that 61% of mid-grade officers ($n = 167$) in the Army considered leaving their profession because of the way they were treated by their supervisor (Reed & Olsen, 2010). Correspondingly, according to Light (2012), the U.S. Navy has a systemic problem in the ranks and, “needs to make adjustments in priority, policy, training, and personnel processes in order to stem the tide of personal misconduct by leaders” (p. 137).

Toxic Leadership Outcomes

With regard to consequences of toxicity in organizations, the literature is just as extensive. The appeal of destructive behaviors as a research target lies in its potential to influence numerous individual and organizational outcomes. Specifically, harmful leadership behaviors have been found to negatively affect subordinates’ job satisfaction levels (Reed & Bullis, 2009), organizational commitment (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon,

2002) and create an erosion of trust (Ashforth, 1997). Additionally, abusive supervision has been positively related to subordinates' intentions to leave their jobs (Tepper, 2000). Furthermore, subordinates of abusive supervisors show higher levels of anxiety, burnout, depression, and work-family conflict (Rost, 1991; Tepper, 2000), as well as diminished self-efficacy and more frequent health complaints (Duffy et al., 2002; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Lauterbach & Weiner, 1996) that could lead to deteriorations in performance and morale. In a military context, studies have shown that abused subordinates perform fewer organizational citizenship behaviors—activities conducted by workers that were beyond the scope of the job that provided an additive benefit to the organization—compared to their nonabused counterparts (Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). These findings reflect Reed's (2004) research among military members that toxic leaders are anathema to the health of units, undermine confidence levels, and erode unit cohesion and esprit de corps.

Lastly, based on national research using interviews and surveys, it has been stated that “toxic people thrive only in a toxic system” (Kusy & Holloway, 2009) where organizational leaders enable toxic behavior through lack of attention to and ignorance of the problem (Reed & Olsen, 2010). Like organizational cynicism, toxic leadership has emerged as a phenomenon of concern and a topic of discussion and research.

Leadership Effectiveness Literature

Similar to toxic leadership, the definition and measure of a leader's effectiveness has differed from one study to another, often reflecting a researcher's philosophy and implicit assumptions surrounding leadership (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; Yukl, 2006). As such, the choice of what constitutes leadership effectiveness and

how it is defined has been somewhat arbitrary, and a matter of contention among scholars and practitioners (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994).

Scholars concur in defining what leadership is not, that is, debunking long-held myths about effective leadership. Yukl and Lepsinger (2004) pointed to what they define as modern “myths of leadership” (p. 3). This includes the “myth of leaders and managers” (p. 9), as well as several other views enumerated by the authors, which they believe lead to ineffective (at worst) or misguided (at best) leadership. Specifically, they argue against three common ideals: that of the heroic leader, the born leader and the celebrity leader (p. 4). Although the authors posit individual arguments and historic examples against each leadership myth, the connecting thread of fallacy is the notion that success or failure of an institution or venture is dependent solely upon the actions, decisions, or personality of a single monarchical leader. Indeed, Yukl and Lepsinger contended that failures are often a result of leaders (or outsiders) believing one or more of these myths, and thus assuming that only one person can affect the outcome of a given situation (p. 6). The authors instead advocated a more balanced approach that includes delegation, mentorship, and guidance of subordinates: “If people depend entirely on top management to identify emerging problems or threats to recognize promising opportunities, it may not be possible to make a timely, successful response” (p. 9).

If simple identification of a “born leader” is not the answer to defining effective leadership, then what is? There is no simple answer to the question of how to evaluate leadership effectiveness (Yukl, 2006). Neither is there a dearth of scholarly research attempting to define effective leadership. In an early study, Hogan, Curphy, and Hogan (1994), summarized the literature on leadership effectiveness and organized it in terms of

five categories. In the first category, *effectiveness* is evaluated in terms of the actual performance of the team or organizational unit. The second category involves using subordinates, peers, or supervisors to evaluate leadership effectiveness. In a third category, the leadership potential of strangers is evaluated based on performance in interviews, simulations, assessment centers, or leaderless group discussions. The fourth category attempts to measure leadership effectiveness using self-ratings or self-evaluations. The last category proposes that effectiveness is defined by the low end of the continuum. By evaluating persons whose careers are in jeopardy or whose leadership positions have derailed, one can define effective leadership by doing the opposite.

In a more recent study, Hogan and Hogan (2001) focused on just the first two categories of effectiveness stated in the 1994 study. They proposed one of four types of measurements: organizational performance for which the leader is responsible, superiors' ratings of the leader's performance, peer ratings, and the followers' perceptions of a leader's performance. According to their study an effective leader would command a high achieving group with respect to objective organizational goals, and the perceptions of three groups of people (superiors, peers, and followers) would be favorable. The Hogan and Hogan study is silent with respect to derailed leaders, self-evaluation, and the performance of strangers in simulations, perhaps abandoning those elements as effective measures of leadership.

In a treatise similar to the 2001 Hogan and Hogan study, Yukl and Lepsinger (2004) likewise suggested that a leader's effectiveness can be best measured by four major factors: efficiency, process reliability, adaptation and innovation, and human relations and resources (p. 14). As Yukl (1999) noted, some of these measurements

appear to be mutually exclusive. Yukl expanded upon the category of human relations, and contended that leading people is not the same as managing them: *leaders* focus on change and the long term, whereas *managers* are focused on stability and the short term (p. 37). Ultimately, it is a combination of these two approaches (the amount of each determined by the given organization and the current operational environment) that will allow a leader to approach problems in a balanced and effective manner (Yukl, 1999; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004).

Yet another set of scholars, Bass and Riggio (2006) discussed and enlarged Yukl's ideas, citing them several times in *Transformational Leadership* (2006). Indeed it seems as if their thoughts of leadership fit with those of Yukl. "Transformational leaders," Bass and Riggio expounded, "help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization" (p. 3). Therefore, it is not surprising that research has found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and desirable organizational outcomes (Bass & Avolio, 1994), and that transformational leadership has consistently claimed to be more effective than other leadership styles (Bass & Stogdill, 1990).

Like Yukl (1999), Bass and Riggio (2006) focused not so much on how a leader's specific actions and decisions affect an organization, but rather on his interaction with, and guidance and grooming of subordinates:

Organizational culture and leadership interacts with each other. Leaders create and reinforce norms and behaviors within the culture. The norms develop because of what leaders stress as important, how they deal with crises, the way they provide role models, and whom they attract to join them in their organization. (p. 100)

Yukl (1999), Bass and Riggio (2006) and perhaps even Hogan and Hogan (2001) agree that the effect leaders have is measured not only by their individual accomplishments or personality, but by the impact they have on the direction and motivation of their employees. In other words, effectiveness is best measured from the bottom *up*, not the top down as was the conventional wisdom regarding CEO leadership in the 1970s and 1980s (Klein, Dansereau, & Hall, 1994, Yukl, 1999; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004).

Because it has been established that leadership is less about the leader, and more about the influence they exercise on their subordinates, it follows that the subordinates' loyalty would be an excellent measure of a leader's potential effectiveness. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2001) suggested:

One of the ways in which effective leaders bridge the gap between the individual's and the organization's goals is by creating loyalty to themselves among their followers. They do this by being an influential spokesperson for their followers with higher management. These leaders have little difficulty communicating organizational goals to followers, and these followers find it easy to associate the acceptance of these goals with accomplishment of their own need satisfaction. (pp. 137-138)

According to Hersey and colleagues (2001) the key to influencing subordinates, and leading effectively is communication. Specifically, leaders act as communications intermediaries (and oftentimes translators and/or advocates) between their subordinates and superiors. Effective leaders not only communicate the decisions of higher management to followers, but also campaign passionately for their superiors' decisions. As Hersey et al. pointed out, "...if the total system is healthy and functioning well, each of its parts or subsystems is effectively interacting with the others" (p. 15). It is the job of the effective leader, then, to facilitate that interaction between layers, and ensure that no bottlenecks or breaks in communication, information flow, or understanding occur.

To properly communicate with and motivate subordinates, a leader must be able to understand, and even empathize, with them. In his seminal book, *Leadership*, Burns (1978) posited that an effective leader molds followers by gaining a deep understanding of their personal needs, and then moves those needs into *hopes and aspirations* (a far more powerful set of motivations) and finally into *expectations* (pp. 117-118). Therefore, an effective leader is one who can show subordinates that the leader's vision, plan, or idea is in their own best interest. If this can be done, the leader is removed from the equation nearly entirely; the subordinates will be self-motivated as long as the leader continues to demonstrate that in doing the work asked of them they are truly benefitting *themselves*. From a different perspective, Bass and Avolio (1994) stated that there is a distinction between effective leaders and successful leaders. According to these scholars, *successful* leaders convince their followers to follow them, whereas *effective* leaders motivate and enable their subordinates to reach shared goals.

While the literature identifies a variety of ways to define and measure leader effectiveness, research has found a positive correlation between effective leadership and positive organizational outcomes (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & Spangler, 2004). A focus on follower perceptions might well be the best indicator of effectiveness, and would also rule out the misleading performance of those organizations that excel in spite of poor leadership due to accidents of cycle or other reasons.

For this study I will use the perceptions of subordinates (i.e., followers) to evaluate leadership effectiveness. As discussed, leaders' subordinates are believed to be in the best position to assess the extent to which their leaders' performance is effective or not as they are most likely to see their leaders' on a day-to-basis (Hogan et al., 1994). As

this study focuses on the relationships between toxic leadership, organizational cynicism, and leader effectiveness between leaders' and their subordinates, the subordinates, as direct recipients of the their leaders' behavior, provide an appropriate source of information on their effectiveness.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the overall methodology employed to test key hypotheses and answer the study's research questions. The chapter begins by reviewing both the purpose of the study and the research questions. Next, the overall design of the proposed study will be described. The final sections of this chapter focus on the site and sample selection; procedures and instruments that were used to collect and analyze the data; the statistical techniques that were used to investigate the hypothesized relationships between the variables; and the data analysis procedures that were used to answer the study's research questions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between perceived leader toxicity, organizational cynicism, and leadership effectiveness. Specific focus was placed on how a follower's perception of their supervisor affects their perception of cynicism. Furthermore, this study examined and identified areas in which leadership can look to mitigate the development and subsequent spread of cynicism in organizations.

The following three research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy experience toxic leadership and what is their current level of organizational cynicism?
2. What, if any, correlation is there between a perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?
3. Does perceived effective leadership behavior moderate the relationship between perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?

Research Design

This study consisted of a quantitative approach using univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical analyses to describe the data and test the hypotheses. Ary et al. (2006) stated that quantitative research is “inquiry employing operational definitions to generate numeric data to answer predetermined hypotheses or questions” (p. 637). Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research minimizes researcher or contextual bias by limiting the framework to the analysis of objective numeric information that results from some type of formal measurement (Polit & Beck, 2008). A correlational study is appropriate because it uses deductive reasoning to generate predictions in their natural environment and does not include researcher-imposed treatments (Polit & Beck, 2008).

In order to address the research questions, this study examined the relationship between cadets and commanders at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) from the viewpoint and experiences of the cadets. Using the perceptions of the cadets as the focus, this study sought to analyze the relationship between certain types of leadership styles of Air Force Academy commanders, and how their leadership styles might have influenced the level of cynicism among the cadets. Demographics of the cadets were also examined to identify any relationships that might exist between the independent variables, moderating variable, and the dependent variable.

Figure 2 describes the conceptual framework of this study. The dependent variable in this study is the level of organizational cynicism reported by the participants that was measured by the Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale (CATCS; Brockway, Carlson, Jones, & Bryant, 2002). The independent variables in the study were the perceived toxic leadership styles of the commanders as reported by the cadets, and

measured by the scores reported on the Toxic Leadership Scale (Schmidt, 2008). The moderating variable was the perceived effective leadership styles of the commanding officers as measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1993). The underlying hypothesis is that leadership behaviors are significant variables in predicting the level of cynicism in an organization.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework for the research

Site and Sample Population

This study was conducted in a unique organizational setting: The United States Air Force Academy (referred to hereafter as the Academy or USAFA), located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The mission of the Academy is to educate, train and inspire men and women to become leaders of character, motivated to lead the United States Air Force in service to our nation (USAF Academy, 2012). The Academy is the premier officer commissioning institution for the United States Air Force, graduating approximately 1,000 new second lieutenants each year. In addition to providing a 4-year

baccalaureate education leading to a Bachelor of Science degree, the Academy seeks to develop highly effective leaders. Consequently, the Academy is often called a *leadership laboratory* (Moschgat, 2000). One of the ways in which the Academy accomplishes its mission is by creating opportunities for cadets to experience a number of leadership opportunities prior to graduation. These opportunities are found primarily in the cadet squadrons, which are part of the student body at the Academy that is known as the cadet wing. The cadet wing consists of approximately 4,000 cadets from all 50 states, the territories and several foreign countries. Cadets enter the Academy from high school, college, a military preparatory school, or the active duty military.

The 4,000-member cadet wing at the Academy is subdivided into four groups, with approximately 1,000 cadets per group. Each group is further subdivided into 10 squadrons, resulting in 40 operational squadrons. Each cadet squadron has approximately 100 cadets equally representing all four classes at the Academy. Each squadron is a self-contained organization with hierarchical structures identical to the other squadrons. In an effort to evenly distribute and control select personal characteristics across squadrons, cadets are assigned to squadrons based on a wide range of demographic variables, including gender, athletic ability, and academic aptitudes. The uniformly structured organizational units, as well as the administrative efforts to encourage internal squadron diversity, make the demographic cadet population at the Academy ideal for this study.

The class designation at the Academy is somewhat different from a traditional college. The first-year cadets, freshmen in traditional academic settings, are referred to as four degrees, fourth-class cadets, or “doolies;” sophomores are referred to as three

degrees or third-class cadets; juniors are referred to as two degrees or second-class cadets; and seniors are referred to as first-class cadets or “firsties.”

Cadets experience a different aspect of leadership each year that they attend the Academy. Freshmen perform a follower role. This is designed to enable them to learn to support the mission, chain of command, and standards, while also allowing time to master primary responsibilities, skills, and general Air Force or military knowledge. Sophomores, or three-degrees, spend a majority of their time being trained to become first-line supervisors. They are taught how to be coaches and role models for the four degrees while also preparing to take on training responsibilities in the cadet wing. Junior cadets hold positions of authority while providing supervision and training for the lower two classes. Senior cadets, or firsties, hold middle-level management roles while providing leadership, motivation, and direction for the cadet wing.

All cadet activities are supervised by Air Force officers, noncommissioned officers, and civilian government employees along with a small number of exchange officers from other branches of the military. The top-level management role in each cadet squadron is assigned to the Air Officer Commanding, or AOC. The AOCs are specially selected commissioned military officers with 12 to 16 years of active duty experience. An AOC has significant impact upon a cadet’s professional development due to the high level of exposure within their individual squadrons. Each officer selected as an AOC is required by the Air Force to complete a 1-year master’s degree program and earn a Master of Arts in Counseling and Leadership Development through the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. The goal of the program is to educate and prepare these

carefully screened officers for their complex role in developing and inspiring cadets as future Air Force officers.

As commanders of the cadet squadron, the AOCs are responsible for command authority over their cadet units (comprised of about 100 students) and are expected to train cadets in officership and military matters, advise the upper-class cadets who hold leadership positions in the unit, maintain good order and discipline, and act as role models for the future officers. The leadership structure of the Academy, as outlined, provided a ready environment to explore the relationship between perceived leadership styles and cynicism in an organization.

Since each of the forty squadrons has its own commander, there are variations in leadership styles among the squadrons. Therefore, it was important to sample as many cadets as possible at the Academy to examine the leadership style and organizational cynicism relationship at this institution. Subjects for this study were recruited from a research subject pool populated by students from psychology and leadership courses at the Academy. Voluntary participation was rewarded with an extra credit percentage point for their respective courses. Figure 3 shows a typical cadet squadron structure.

Figure 3. Organizational chart depicting the typical cadet squadron structure as of November, 2012.

Data Collection and Procedures

The data for the study were gathered through the administration of three instruments and a demographic questionnaire (found in appendices A, B, and C): Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale (CATCS), Toxic Leadership Scale (TLS), and the effectiveness scale on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). A number of the questions in the study required minor modifications to reflect the unique military terminology of the data collection site. For example, the word “college” was replaced with “Academy,” and the words “current supervisor” with “AOC” or “Commander.” Table 2 provides a summary of the instruments used in this study, and the actual survey questionnaire is included in Appendix D.

Upon final approval from the University of San Diego Institutional Review Board, and permission from officials at the United States Air Force Academy, the survey was distributed to the target audience during February-May 2013. The survey was administered electronically via the internet using the Qualtrics electronic survey platform. All recruitment of cadet participants was done through the Academy's online SONA system, and through the respective faculty assigned to the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the Academy. The Academy's SONA system allows researchers to post their studies, and participants can select from the studies posted and select a time slot to take the survey. Participation was strictly voluntary and while demographic information such as gender, race or ethnicity, and class year was collected, individual respondents were not identifiable. Consent was sought electronically, in conjunction with the survey, but prior to any survey questions being asked. If consent was denied, connection to the survey halted without providing access to any survey questions. Participants were given 1 point of extra credit towards their course as compensation for completing the survey.

Understanding that participation was voluntary and that a low response rate could affect the validity of this study, the researcher provided the respective Academy faculty, and the research subject pool coordinator, with a concise description of the study and explained, as necessary, the instruments being used in the survey. The researcher also provided the cadets' respective instructors with a recruitment power-point slide that explained the study, and directed interested subjects to the survey link in SONA. The recruitment material also reminded the cadets that the survey could be taken from their own computer, thus, indicating that no one in the cadet's Chain of Command (leadership)

would know if they took the survey or not. This feature added another layer of anonymity and autonomy in a hierarchically structured environment.

Cadets were given 10 weeks to complete the volunteer survey in the spring academic semester. Upon closeout of the survey, all the data were imported into an Excel data file, and then transferred to a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) database and stored on a password-protected computer. A multiple regression power analysis using the software package GPower (Erdfelder, Faul, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) revealed that a sample size of 285 participants would achieve 80% power to detect a medium effect size at the $p=.05$ level of statistical significance. Initially, 809 cadets were recruited from a research subject pool populated with cadets from psychology and leadership courses at the Academy. Of that number, 315 signed up for the survey and agreed to the informed consent. Of that total, 285 cadets completed the entire survey, and constituted the final sample size for this study: a participation rate of just over 35 percent from the eligible cadet subject pool.

Instrumentation

The survey was comprised of four parts, each of which is described below. Copies of the three instruments that made up the survey are included in the Appendices. The entire survey is included in Appendix D.

Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale

Organizational cynicism (OC) was measured using the Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale (CATCS) developed by Brockway, Carlson, Jones, and Bryant (2002). It consists of 18-items designed to measure student cynicism based on a number of unmet expectations. Since there does not appear to be a standardized organizational cynicism

scale, Brockway et al. (2002) created the scale to cover 4 dimensions of student cynicism including—policy, academic, social, and organizational. Sample items for organizational cynicism include “I would not recommend this place to anyone,” and “I am cynical about this place.”

Previous examination of this four factor model demonstrated a favorable internal reliability ($\alpha = .86$). Organizational Cynicism was measured on a 5-point, Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and the actual score used was derived by calculating the average of questions 4, 12, 15, and 18 from the CATCS questionnaire. Questions 12 and 18 were reverse-scored prior to computing the score. Thus, smaller scores indicate a less cynical attitude toward the organization while larger scores indicate a more cynical attitude toward the organization. The scale provided a semi-continuous dependent variable that is suitable for analysis using statistical techniques based on the general linear model.

Toxic Leadership Scale

Cadets' perceptions of their commanders' toxicity was measured using a 15-item measure developed and validated by Schmidt (2008). Using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies across military and civilian sectors to uncover the relevant factors, Schmidt's scale is composed of the following five dimensions: abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability. These five dimensions were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). Chronbach Alphas for the scale are .91 (self-promotion), .93 (abusive supervision), .92 (unpredictable leadership), .88 (narcissism), .89 (authoritarian leadership), and .90 (overall), suggesting that the instrument is reliable.

The abusive supervision (AS) dimension measures perceived intentionally hostile behaviors by the leader toward anyone in the group. Sample items include “my current supervisor publicly belittles subordinates,” and “my current supervisor reminds subordinates of their past mistakes and failures.” This variable was measured using an integer-based measurement scale (from 1 to 5) and the variable score was derived by calculating the average of questions 4 through 6 from the Toxic Leadership Scale questionnaire. As such, smaller scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has less of an abusive supervision leadership style while larger scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has more of an abusive supervision leadership style.

The authoritarian leadership (AL) dimension measures leadership behaviors that attempt to assert excessive authority and control over subordinates. Sample items for AL include “my current supervisor controls how subordinates complete their tasks” and “my current supervisor determines all decisions in the unit whether they are important or not.” A five-point Likert scale (from 1 to 5) was also be used to measure this variable. The score was derived by calculating the average of questions 13 through 15 from the Toxic Leadership Scale questionnaire. Thus, smaller scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has less of an authoritarian leadership style while larger scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has more of an authoritarian leadership style.

Narcissism (NA) refers to leadership that is driven by arrogance, self-absorption, and self-oriented actions designed to enhance the self. Sample items for narcissism include “my current supervisor has a sense of personal entitlement,” “my current

supervisor thinks he/she is more capable than others,” and “my current supervisor believes that he/she is an extraordinary person.” This variable was measured on an integer-based measurement scale with a range of 1 to 5. The score was derived by calculating the average of questions 10 through 12 from the Toxic Leadership Scale questionnaire. A smaller score indicates a perception that the commanding officer has less of a narcissistic leadership style while larger scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has more of a narcissistic leadership style.

The self-promotion (SP) dimension measures toxic leaders who advertise their accomplishments and are quick to take credit for others' work. A sample item is “my current supervisor will only offer assistance to people who can help him/her get ahead.” This variable was also measured on a measurement scale with a range of 1 to 5. The score was derived by calculating the average of questions 1 through 3 from the Toxic Leadership Scale questionnaire. Response choices on the questionnaire are coded as: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither; 4=Agree, and; 5=Strongly Agree. Thus, smaller scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has less of a self-promoting leadership style while larger scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has more of a self-promoting leadership style.

The unpredictability (UN) dimension measures leaders who act in ways that are not easily predictable, and that may keep subordinates afraid and watchful. Sample items include, “my current supervisor varies in his/her degree of approachability,” and “my current supervisor expresses anger at subordinates for unknown reasons.” Unpredictability was measured on a five-point Likert scale with a range of 1 to 5. The score was derived by calculating the average of questions 7 through 9 from the Toxic

Leadership Scale questionnaire. Smaller scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has less of an unpredictable leadership style while larger scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has more of an unpredictable leadership style.

Lastly, Overall Toxic Leadership (OTL) was derived by calculating the average of questions 1 through 15 from the Toxic Leadership Scale questionnaire. Response choices on the questionnaire will be coded as: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither; 4=Agree; and 5=Strongly Agree. As such, smaller scores on the scale indicate a perception that the commanding officer has less of a toxic leadership style while larger scores indicate a perception that the commanding officer has more of a toxic leadership style. Permission was requested and granted for the use of this instrument in the research.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

Effective leadership was measured with four items (37, 40, 43, and 45) from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 1993). The effectiveness scale of the MLQ was recently shown to have strong internal reliability ratings of $\alpha=.86$ in the Kalshoven and Den Hartog (2009) study. The items in the scale address issues such as whether or not the leader is effective in meeting job-related needs, whether the leader is effective in representing the follower to higher authority, whether the leader is effective in meeting organizational requirements, and whether the leader leads a group that is effective. For all items, cadets responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale (0 = Not At All; 4 = Frequently, If Not Always). Permission was requested and granted for the use of this instrument in the research, and a copy of the instrument can be found in Appendix C.

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questions were designed by the researcher to collect demographic, legacy, and performance-related data. The demographic section asked cadets to indicate their class year, gender, race or ethnicity, whether they were on a merit list (i.e., signifying outstanding performance in academics, military performance, and physical fitness standards), and whether they have a legacy affiliation to the Academy (i.e., have any members of their immediate or extended family graduated from the Academy). To protect the confidentiality of the cadets, this demographic section of the survey did not ask for individual identification. Therefore, responses could only be grouped by class year or some other demographic identifier. The demographic questionnaire consisted of five questions. Table 3 provides details on the three instruments that made up the survey.

Table 3
Listing of Instruments

Construct	Measurement Tool	Description	Reliability and Variability
Toxic leadership	Toxic Leadership Scale	Toxic leadership is evaluated using a 15-item scale developed by Schmidt (2008). The scale suggests that toxic leadership is composed of the following five dimensions: abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability.	All items rated on a 5-point Likert scale response format, with answers ranging between 1 = <i>Strongly Disagree</i> to 5 = <i>Strongly Agree</i> . Alpha is .90
Cynicism	Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale (CATCS)	Cynicism is evaluated using the 18-item scale developed by Brockway, Carlson, Jones, and Bryant (2002).	The items are rated from 1 = <i>SD</i> to 5 = <i>SA</i> . Alpha is .86
Leadership effectiveness	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)	Perceived leadership effectiveness is evaluated using a 4-item scale developed by Bass and Avolio (1993).	The items are rated from 0 = <i>not at all</i> to 4 = <i>frequently</i> . Alpha is .86

Hypothesis Testing

Based on a review of the literature documenting toxic leadership, organizational cynicism, and leadership effectiveness the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant correlation between a perceived *self-promotion* leadership style and *organizational cynicism* among USAFA cadets.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant correlation between a perceived *abusive supervision* leadership style and *organizational cynicism* among USAFA cadets.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant correlation between a perceived *unpredictable* leadership style and *organizational cynicism* among USAFA cadets.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant correlation between a perceived *narcissistic* leadership style and *organizational cynicism* among USAFA cadets.

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant correlation between a perceived *authoritarian* leadership style and *organizational cynicism* among USAFA cadets.

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant correlation between a perceived *overall toxic* leadership style and *organizational cynicism* among USAFA cadets.

Hypothesis 7: Two or more toxic leadership styles collectively better predict organizational cynicism than any single toxic leadership style alone.

Hypothesis 8: Perceived *effective leadership* moderates the relationship between perceived *toxic leadership style* and *organizational cynicism* among USAFA cadets.

Data Analysis

Table 4 highlights the research questions and the hypotheses that were tested, and the statistical tests used to analyze the relationships between the variables. The tests referenced in Table 4 were deemed most appropriate for the sample size and the nature of the study variables (Creswell, 2008). To test the hypotheses in this research study, correlations were run using Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple linear regression analysis.

Table 4

Research Questions, Hypotheses, Variables, and Statistical Tests

Question	Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Method of Analysis
What, if any correlation is there between a perceived self-promotion leadership style and organizational cynicism?	H1: There is a correlation between a perceived self-promotion leadership style and organizational cynicism.	Self-Promotion score on Toxic Leadership Scale measured by USAFA cadets.	Organizational cynicism score on CATCS measured by the USAFA cadets.	Pearson's correlation coefficient
What, if any correlation is there between a perceived abusive supervision leadership style and organizational cynicism?	H2: There is a correlation between a perceived abusive supervision leadership style and organizational cynicism.	Abusive Supervision score on Toxic Leadership Scale measured by USAFA cadets.	Organizational cynicism score on CATCS measured by the USAFA cadets.	Pearson's correlation coefficient
What, if any correlation is there between a perceived unpredictable leadership style and organizational cynicism?	H3: There is a correlation between a perceived unpredictable leadership style and organizational cynicism.	Unpredictable Leadership score on Toxic Leadership Scale measured by USAFA cadets.	Organizational cynicism score on CATCS measured by the USAFA cadets.	Pearson's correlation coefficient
What, if any correlation is there between a perceived narcissistic leadership style and organizational cynicism?	H4: There is a correlation between a perceived narcissistic leadership style and organizational cynicism.	Narcissism score on Toxic Leadership Scale measured by USAFA cadets.	Organizational cynicism score on CATCS measured by the USAFA cadets.	Pearson's correlation coefficient
What, if any correlation is there between a perceived authoritarian leadership style and organizational cynicism?	H5: There is a correlation between a perceived authoritarian leadership style and organizational cynicism.	Authoritarian Leadership score on Toxic Leadership Scale measured by USAFA cadets.	Organizational cynicism score on CATCS measured by the USAFA cadets.	Pearson's correlation coefficient

(table continued from previous page)

Question	Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Method of Analysis
What, if any correlation is there between a perceived overall toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?	H6: There is a correlation between a perceived overall toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism.	Perceived Overall Toxic Leadership score of their commander (supervisor) on the Toxic Leadership Scale measured by USAFA cadets.	Organizational cynicism score on CATCS measured by the USAFA cadets.	Pearson's correlation coefficient
Does two or more toxic leadership styles collectively better predict organizational cynicism than any single toxic leadership style alone?	H7: Two or more toxic leadership styles collectively better predict organizational cynicism than any single toxic leadership style alone.	Perceived Overall Toxic Leadership score of their commander (supervisor) on the Toxic Leadership Scale measured by USAFA cadets. Control variables: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class Year	Organizational cynicism score on CATCS measured by the USAFA cadets.	Multiple Linear Regression
How does perceived effective leadership moderate the relationship between a perceived overall toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?	H8: Perceived effective leadership moderates the relationship between perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets.	Perceived Overall Toxic Leadership score of their commander (supervisor) on the Toxic Leadership Scale measured by USAFA cadets. Control variables: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class Year	Organizational cynicism score on CATCS measured by the USAFA cadets. Moderating variable: EL score of their commander (supervisor) on the MLQ as measured by the cadets.	Multiple Linear Regression

All data were analyzed with computer software, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19 for Windows. "The SPSS software is a powerful tool that is capable of conducting just about any type of data analysis used in the social science, the natural sciences, or in the business world (George & Mallery, 2007, p. 1). All of the hypothesis tests were two-tailed and at the $p=.05$ level of significance. The data was examined using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

First, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency reliability of the toxic leadership, organizational cynicism, and leadership effectiveness scale scores. A reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha score) of .70 or higher is considered acceptable in most research situations (Nunnally, 1978). Second, descriptive statistical analyses were performed to measure general demographic characteristics of the sample including gender, ethnicity, and years of attendance at the Academy. Research question 1 (To what extent do cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy experience toxic leadership and what is their current level of organizational cynicism?), was answered using the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum for each of the five toxic leadership style subscales, the overall toxic leadership style score, and the cynicism score.

Research question 2 (What, if any, correlation is there between a perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?) and hypotheses 1-6 were tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient. If the Pearson correlation coefficient is statistically significantly different than zero at the .05 level of significance, then the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is a correlation between a toxic leadership styles and organizational cynicism among the USAFA cadets. The strength and direction of the correlation was also reported and interpreted.

Hypothesis 7 was tested using multiple linear regression analysis. The dependent variable in the regression model was organizational cynicism. The control variables were gender, race/ethnicity, and class year (i.e., years of attendance at the Academy). The other independent variables were the five toxic leadership styles. If two or more of the toxic leadership styles were statistically significant at the $p=.05$ level of significance, then the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that combinations of toxic leadership styles better predict organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets than any single toxic leadership style alone. The equation of the model was reported and statistically significant regression coefficients were interpreted. The *R*-square for the model was also presented and interpreted.

Research question 3 (Does perceived effective leadership behavior moderate the relationship between perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?) and hypothesis 8 was tested using multiple linear regression analysis. The dependent variable in the regression model was organizational cynicism. The control variables were gender, race or ethnicity, and class year as reported by the cadets. The other independent variables were once again the five toxic leadership styles. The moderating variable was perceived effective leadership. The interaction between each of the five toxic leadership styles and perceived effective leadership was of primary importance. If any of the five interaction terms are statistically significant at the .05 level of significance, then the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that perceived effective leadership moderates the relationship between a toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets. The equation of the model was reported and statistically

significant regression coefficients were interpreted. The *R*-square for the model was also presented and interpreted.

Exploratory Analyses

Upon evaluation of the hypothesis test results, several exploratory analyses became of interest among select demographic groups in the study. In particular, independent sample *t*-tests were used to compare the average toxic leadership style scores between males and females, minorities and non-minorities, merit status, and academic class (freshmen and upper classmen). In addition, stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to address the following research question: *Which, if any combination of toxic leadership styles best predict policy cynicism?* For this analysis, the dependent variable was policy cynicism and the independent variables entered into the stepwise model selection procedure were the five toxic leadership styles. In addition, a simple linear regression analysis was performed to evaluate the relationship between policy cynicism and the overall toxic leadership style score.

Conclusion

While research exists on the existence and pervasiveness of destructive (toxic) leadership styles and cynicism in organizations, the role of effective leadership has often been left out of the examination as a potential moderating mechanism. Similarly, the empirical studies of cynicism have often shown its negative relationships with attitudes, but have not simultaneously included toxic leadership styles as an antecedent. In this study, cadets rated their commander's (i.e., supervisors) perceived leadership style, and their perceptions and opinions toward their institution. The results of this study may provide military authorities with valuable data on how their perceived leadership style

might influence organizational cynicism. The next chapter will review the sample data, provide the results of the statistical analysis, as well as present any significant differences among the different demographic groups in the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the existence of, and to what degree, a relationship exists between perceived toxic leadership, organizational cynicism, and effective leadership styles. This chapter presents the findings from this study. First, participant characteristics and descriptive findings from the study are presented. Then, results from each of the research questions and hypotheses are presented. Finally, results of a number of exploratory analyses are offered. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Participant Characteristics and Descriptive Findings

As described in the previous chapter, subject volunteers were sampled from a research pool populated by cadets from undergraduate courses at the United States Air Force Academy located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. After removing surveys with missing data, the final sample size for the study was 285 cadets ($n = 285$). Among the 285 study participants, there were 193 (67.7%) men and 92 (32.3%) women. The participants were split among five racial groups. They included 9 Hispanic/Latinos (3.2%); 10 Black/African Americans (3.5%); 1 American Indian or Alaska Native (.4%); 25 Asians (8.8%); 207 White/Caucasians (72.6%); 32 individuals that listed two or more racial groups (11.2%); and 1 nonresident foreign national/international exchange cadet (.4%). Additionally, the study volunteers included all four academic classes from the Academy: 40 were seniors (14.0%), 138 were juniors (48.4%), 28 sophomores (9.8%), 54 freshman (18.9%), and 25 (8.8%) failed to report their class. A total of 227 (79.6%) study participants reported being on a merit list, and a total of 39 (13.7%) study

participants reported having a legacy affiliation with the Academy, while 246 (86.3%) did not have any legacy affiliation.

As shown in Table 5, the sample was consistent with the demographic makeup of the current total cadet population at the Academy (per the university's admission office website). Notable exceptions included: women were slightly overrepresented (in the cadet population, women only make up about 20% of total population of cadets at the academy) and certain ethnic groups such as African American's and Hispanics were under represented.

Table 5

Participant Characteristics

Demographic characteristic	Study participants	Cadet population
Gender		
Male	67.7% (193*)	78.0%
Female	32.3% (92)	22.0%
Academic year		
Freshman	18.9% (54)	23.5%
Sophomore	9.8% (28)	23.5%
Junior	48.4% (138)	26.3%
Senior	14.0% (40)	26.5%
Ethnicity		
Native American	.4% (1)	0.9%
Asian	8.8% (25)	8.7%
African American	3.5% (10)	6.8%
Hispanic	3.2% (9)	8.6%
Two or more ethnicities	11.2% (32)	2.3%
Caucasian	72.6% (207)	72.4%

Note. * Actual number of subjects in subgroups are shown in parentheses ($n = 285$).

Reliability Analyses

Cronbach's Alpha for the Independent, Moderating and Dependent Variables

Cronbach's alpha measures how well a set of items measure a single characteristic or one-dimensional construct (Cortina, 1993). Although existing reliable instruments

were chosen for this study, Cronbach's alpha was used to test whether the Toxic Leadership, Effective Leadership, and Organizational Cynicism instruments maintained their reliability and validity in this study after adjustment and modification. All reliabilities for the construct scale scores fell above the acceptable minimum of .70 established by Nunnally (1978). Of particular note, Schmidt's (2008) 15-item scale used to measure Overall Toxic Leadership was calculated at .95. Thus, low reliability was not a limitation of the study. The results of the analysis are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Cronbach's Alpha for Study Variables

Variable	Cronbach's alpha (<i>n</i> = 285)	Number of items
Self-promotion toxic leadership style	0.89	3
Abusive supervision toxic leadership style	0.70	3
Unpredictability toxic leadership style	0.81	3
Narcissism toxic leadership style	0.88	3
Authoritarian toxic leadership style	0.92	3
Overall toxic leadership style	0.95	15
Effective leadership	0.91	4
Organizational cynicism	0.82	4
Policy cynicism	0.76	4

Research Questions and Hypotheses Test Results

Research Question 1

The first research question in this study read: To what extent do cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy experience toxic leadership, and what is their current level of organizational cynicism?

This research question was addressed by calculating the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum for each of the five toxic leadership style subscales, the overall toxic leadership style score, and the cynicism score. Table 6 shows descriptive statistics for the toxic leadership style, and organizational cynicism scores. Considering that the toxic leadership style scores had a possible range of 1 to 5, the average toxic leadership style scores were well below the midpoint of the scale of 3.0, with averages ranging from 2.10 (Self-Promotion Toxic Leadership Style), to 2.54 (Abusive Supervision Toxic Leadership Style). Thus, on average, the study participants indicated a relatively low level of toxicity among their leaders.

The lowest possible score for Organizational Cynicism (OC) was 1.0 and the maximum possible score was 5.0. The average OC score was 2.12, which is well below the midpoint of 3.0, indicating that on average, cadets had a relatively low level of organizational cynicism.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Self-promotion toxic leadership style ¹	2.09	.91	1.00	5.00
Abusive supervision toxic leadership style ¹	2.53	.87	1.00	4.67
Unpredictability toxic leadership style ¹	2.25	.96	1.00	5.00
Narcissism toxic leadership style ¹	2.27	1.03	1.00	5.00
Authoritarian toxic leadership style ¹	2.33	1.12	1.00	5.00
Overall toxic leadership style ¹	2.30	.87	1.00	4.87
Organizational cynicism ²	2.11	.80	1.00	5.00
Effective leadership ³	2.96	.95	0.00	4.00
Policy cynicism	3.32	.73	1.00	5.00

Note.

¹ Independent variable

² Dependent variable

³ Moderating variable

Research Question 2

The second research question used to guide this study was: What, if any, correlation is there between a perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?

The following six hypotheses were tested to determine if a relationship existed between these constructs. All hypotheses were tested using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, also referred to as Person's *r*. Pearson's correlation is considered

one of the most common measures for examining the degree of correlation between two variables (Polit & Beck, 2008). Findings were determined at the statistical significance levels of 5% ($p < .05$). If the Pearson correlation coefficient is statistically significantly different from zero at the $p=.05$ level of significance, then the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is a correlation between the five toxic leadership styles (e.g., abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability) and organizational cynicism among the USAFA cadets. Results of each research hypothesis are indicated here and a summary table of each hypothesis tested follows the discussion.

Hypothesis 1. There is a significant correlation between a perceived self-promotion leadership style and organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets.

Figure 4 is a scatter plot, which graphically depicts the relationship between the organizational cynicism score and the self-promotion toxic leadership style score. The best fit line displayed in the figure gives some indication of a positive correlation between the two variables.

Figure 4. Scatter plot of the organizational cynicism score and the self-promotion toxic leadership style score.

The correlation matrix (see Table 8) shows there was a statistically significant, strong positive correlation between the organizational cynicism score and the self-promotion toxic leadership style score, $r(283) = .39; p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is strong evidence to suggest that Academy cadets who perceive their commanding officer to have a high level of self-promotion toxic leadership style tend to be more cynical about the organization.

Table 8

Correlations Between Perceived Predictor, Moderating, and Outcome Variables

Type of toxic leadership style	Self-promotion	Abusive	Unpredictability	Narcissism	Authoritarian	Overall Toxic leadership style	Effective leadership	Organizational cynicism	Policy cynicism
Self-promotion	-	.71*	.73*	.74*	.74*	.88*	-.68*	.38*	.29*
Abusive supervision	.71*	-	.74*	.72*	.72*	.86*	-.62*	.26*	.24*
Unpredictability	.73*	.74*	-	.78*	.73*	.89*	-.68*	.26*	.26*
Narcissism	.74*	.72*	.78*	-	.76*	.90*	-.64*	.24*	.23*
Authoritarian	.74*	.72*	.73*	.76*	-	.90*	-.70*	.28*	.23*
Overall toxic leadership style	.88*	.86*	.89*	.90*	.90*	-	-.75*	.32*	.28*
Effective leadership	-.68*	-.62*	-.68*	-.64*	-.70*	-.75*	-	-.32*	-.32*
Organizational cynicism	.38*	.26*	.26*	.24*	.28*	.32*	-.32*	-	.55*
Policy cynicism	.29*	.24*	.26*	.23*	.23*	.28*	-.32*	.55*	-

Note. Entries are Pearson correlations. $N = 285$; * $p < .01$.

Hypothesis 2. There is a significant correlation between a perceived abusive supervision leadership style and organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets.

Figure 5 is a scatter plot that graphically depicts the relationship between the organizational cynicism score and the abusive supervision toxic leadership style score.

The figure gives some indication of a positive correlation between the two variables.

Figure 5. Scatter plot of the organizational cynicism score and the abusive supervision toxic leadership style score.

Table 8 shows there was a statistically significant strong positive correlation between the organizational cynicism score and the abusive supervision toxic leadership style score, $r(283) = .27$; $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis required rejection resulting in strong evidence to suggest that Academy cadets who perceive the

commanding officer to have a high level of abusive supervision toxic leadership style tend to be more cynical about the organization.

Hypothesis 3. There is a significant correlation between a perceived unpredictable leadership style and organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets.

Figure 6 is a scatter plot, which graphically depicts the relationship between the organizational cynicism score and the unpredictable toxic leadership style score. The figure gives some indication of a positive correlation between the two variables.

Figure 6. Scatter plot of the organizational cynicism score and the unpredictability toxic leadership style score.

Table 8 shows there was a statistically significant, strong positive correlation between the organizational cynicism score and the unpredictability toxic leadership style score, $r(283) = .27; p < .001$. The null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is strong evidence to suggest that Academy cadets who perceive the commanding officer to have a high level of unpredictability toxic leadership style tend to be more cynical about the organization.

Hypothesis 4. There is a significant correlation between a perceived narcissistic leadership style and organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets.

Figure 7 is a scatter plot, which graphically depicts the relationship between the organizational cynicism score and the narcissistic toxic leadership style score. The figure gives some indication of a positive correlation between the two variables.

Figure 7. Scatter plot of the organizational cynicism score and the narcissistic toxic leadership style score.

Table 8 shows there was a statistically significant, strong positive correlation between the organizational cynicism score and the narcissism toxic leadership style score, $r(283) = .25; p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected therefore providing strong evidence to suggest that Academy cadets who perceive the commanding officer to have a high level of narcissistic toxic leadership style tend to be more cynical about the organization.

Hypothesis 5. There is a significant correlation between a perceived authoritarian leadership style and organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets.

Figure 8 is a scatter plot that graphically depicts the relationship between the organizational cynicism score and the authoritarian toxic leadership style score. The figure gives some indication of a positive correlation between the two variables.

Figure 8. Scatter plot of the organizational cynicism score and the authoritarian toxic leadership style score.

Table 8 shows there was a statistically significant, strong positive correlation between the organizational cynicism score and the authoritarian toxic leadership style score, $r(283) = .28; p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is strong evidence to suggest that Academy cadets who perceive the commanding officer to have a high level of authoritarian toxic leadership style tend to be more cynical about the organization.

Hypothesis 6. There is a significant correlation between a perceived overall toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets. Figure 9 is a scatter plot, which graphically depicts the relationship between the organizational cynicism score and the overall toxic leadership style score. The figure gives some indication of a positive correlation between the two variables.

Figure 9. Scatter plot of the organizational cynicism score and the overall toxic leadership style score.

Table 8 shows there was a statistically significant, strong positive correlation between the organizational cynicism score and the overall toxic leadership style score, $r(283) = .32; p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is strong evidence to suggest that cadets who perceive the commanding officer

to have a high level of overall toxic leadership style tend to be more cynical about the organization.

Hypothesis 7. Two or more toxic leadership styles will collectively better predict organizational cynicism than any single toxic leadership style alone. A multiple regression analysis was required to test this hypothesis. Using this more sophisticated statistical method, the best set of variables to predict the dependent variable can be found. Table 9 presents the results of the stepwise multiple linear regression analysis for testing hypothesis 7.

The dependent variable was the organizational cynicism score. In the first step of the model building process the demographic control variables--gender, ethnicity (minority and non-minority), and academic class (freshman and upper classman) -- were entered into the model simultaneously. In the second step of the model building process, the five toxic leadership style scores were entered into a stepwise model selection procedure. Table 9 shows that the final model was statistically significant, $F(4, 255) = 12.9$; $p < .001$; however, none of the three demographic control variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and academic class) were statistically significant.

Of the five toxic leadership style scores, abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability, only the self-promotion toxic leadership style score was statistically significant ($p < .001$). As such, the null hypothesis was *not* rejected, and it was concluded that two or more toxic leadership styles *do not* better predict organizational cynicism than the self-promotion toxic leadership style alone. The adjusted R-Square attributed to the final model was .16, which means the control variables and the self-promotion toxic leadership style score collectively explain

16% of the total variance in organizational cynicism scores. The p -values for the other four toxic leadership scores that did not explain a statistically significant percentage of variance in the organizational cynicism scores were: abusive supervision ($p = .89$), unpredictability ($p = .41$), narcissism ($p = .58$), and authoritarian ($p = .91$).

As shown in Table 9, the equation of the model was: $OC = 1.07 + .14*Gender - .057*Minority + .21*Class + .34*SP$, where OC = the organizational cynicism score; gender = 1 for male or 2 for female; minority = 0 if Caucasian or 1 if minority, class = 0 if freshman or 1 if upper classman; SP = the self-promotion toxic leadership style score. The interpretation of the statistically significant regression coefficient is, when controlling for gender, minority status, and academic class, the average organizational cynicism score is expected to increase by .34 points for every 1-point increase in the self-promotion leadership style score.

Table 9

Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression of Organizational Cynicism and the Five Toxic Leadership Style Scores

Model ^{a, b}	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> -value
	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.07	.19			5.54	<.001
Gender ^c	.13	.09	.08		1.39	.16
Minority status ^d	-.05	.10	-.03		-.54	.58
Academic class ^e	.21	.11	.10		1.88	.06
Self-promotion toxic leadership style	.33	.05	.38		6.74	<.001

Note.

^a Dependent variable: organizational cynicism

^b *R*-square attributed to gender = .004; minority status $p < .001$; academic class .008, self promotion toxic leadership style .147, and *R*-square attributed to the final model = .16; $F(4, 255) = 12.9$; $p < .001$

^c Gender = 1 if male, 2 if female

^d Minority status = 0 if Caucasian, 1 if minority

^e Academic class = 0 if freshman, 1 if upper classman

Research Question 3

The third research question of this dissertation was: Does perceived effective leadership behavior moderate the relationship between perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism? The following hypothesis was tested to determine if a relationship exists between the independent, moderating, and dependent variables. The question and hypothesis was addressed through a multiple linear regression analysis.

Hypothesis 8. Perceived effective leadership moderates the relationship between perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism among USAFA cadets.

Hypothesis 8 was tested by performing a separate hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis for each of the six toxic leadership style scores. Specifically, regression analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between organizational cynicism (dependent variable) and perceived toxic leadership styles (independent variables) and effective leadership (moderating variable). In the first step of the model building process, the demographic variables (i.e., gender, ethnicity, and academic class) were entered as controls. The predictor variables (i.e., toxic leadership styles) were entered in step 2, and the moderating variable (effective leadership) was included in step 3. The interaction between the toxic leadership style and effective leadership was included in the final step. Significance was indicated by a significant beta weight for the interaction term or a significant increase in the variance explained (Cohen & Cohen, 2003) in the final step. The results showed that none of the interaction effects were statistically significant. The p values ranged from .22 to .81. Thus, the null hypothesis was *not* rejected, and it was concluded that effective leadership does not moderate the relationship between organizational cynicism and toxic leadership styles. Below are the models pertaining to hypotheses 8. The results of the analysis are displayed in Table 10.

Model 1:

$$E[OC] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Gender} + \beta_2 \text{ETH} + \beta_3 \text{ClassYr} + \beta_4 \text{SP} + \beta_5 \text{EL} + \beta_6 \text{SP} * \text{EL}$$

Model 2:

$$E[OC] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Gender} + \beta_2 \text{ETH} + \beta_3 \text{ClassYr} + \beta_4 \text{AS} + \beta_5 \text{EL} + \beta_6 \text{AS} * \text{EL}$$

Model 3:

$$E[OC] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Gender} + \beta_2 \text{ETH} + \beta_3 \text{ClassYr} + \beta_4 \text{UN} + \beta_5 \text{EL} + \beta_6 \text{UN} * \text{EL}$$

Model 4:

$$E[OC] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Gender} + \beta_2 \text{ETH} + \beta_3 \text{ClassYr} + \beta_4 \text{NA} + \beta_5 \text{EL} + \beta_6 \text{NA} * \text{EL}$$

Model 5:

$$E[OC] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Gender} + \beta_2 \text{ETH} + \beta_3 \text{ClassYr} + \beta_4 \text{AL} + \beta_5 \text{EL} + \beta_6 \text{AL} * \text{EL}$$

Model 6:

$$E[OC] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Gender} + \beta_2 \text{ETH} + \beta_3 \text{ClassYr} + \beta_4 \text{OTL} + \beta_5 \text{EL} + \beta_6 \text{OTL} * \text{EL}$$

Table 10

Multiple Regression Analysis: Organizational Cynicism, Toxic Leadership Styles and Interactions between the Toxic Leadership Styles and Effective Leadership

Model	$\hat{\beta}_0$	$\hat{\beta}_1$	$\hat{\beta}_2$	$\hat{\beta}_3$	$\hat{\beta}_4$	$\hat{\beta}_5$	$\hat{\beta}_6$	R^2
Model 1 (Self-Promotion)	1.78 (.00)	.12 (.20)	-.07 (.47)	.21 (.06)	.25 (.00)	-.11 (.08)	-.01 (.80)	.17
Model 2 (Abusive Supervision)	1.77 (.00)	.12 (.22)	-.09 (.37)	.22 (.05)	.11 (.10)	-.20 (.00)	-.03 (.54)	.14
Model 3 (Unpredictability)	1.73 (.00)	.12 (.21)	-.07 (.46)	.24 (.03)	.13 (.50)	-.15 (.02)	-.056 (.21)	.15
Model 4 (Narcissism)	1.84 (.00)	.11 (.27)	-.09 (.39)	.19 (.09)	.08 (.15)	-.23 (.00)	.02 (.54)	.14
Model 5 (Authoritarian)	1.81 (.00)	.12 (.22)	-.08 (.43)	.21 (.06)	.08 (.15)	-.22 (.00)	.01 (.68)	.14
Model 6 (Overall)	1.77 (.00)	.12 (.21)	-.09 (.36)	.21 (.06)	.20 (.01)	-.13 (.09)	-.02 (.64)	.15

Note. Values are slope parameters followed by p -values in parentheses. The dependent variable for each model was organizational cynicism. For model 1 (interaction between self-promotion and effective leadership) $F(1, 253) = 0.061$; $p = .81$. For model 2 (interaction between abusive supervision and effective leadership) $F(1, 253) = 0.37$; $p = .55$. For model 3 (interaction between unpredictability and effective leadership) $F(1, 253) = 1.52$; $p = .22$. For model 4 (interaction between narcissism and effective leadership) $F(1, 253) = 0.37$; $p = .55$. For model 5 (interaction between authoritarian and effective leadership) $F(1, 253) = 0.16$; $p = .69$. For model 6 (interaction between overall TL and effective leadership) $F(1, 253) = 0.22$; $p = .64$.

Exploratory Analyses

Upon evaluation of the results of the hypothesis tests, several exploratory analyses were of interest. In particular, *t*-tests were used to compare the average toxic leadership style scores between men and women, minorities and non-minorities, merit status (yes, no), and academic class (freshmen and upper classmen).

Additionally, the following research question was addressed: Which, if any combination of toxic leadership styles best predict policy cynicism? Stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was used to answer this research question. For each linear regression analysis, the dependent variable was the policy cynicism score. The control variables examined were the demographic and college environmental variables: gender, ethnicity, and academic class. The independent (predictor) variables entered into the regression model were the five toxic leadership styles: abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability. A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the relationship between policy cynicism and the overall toxic leadership style score.

Tables 11 and 12 show the results of the independent sample *t*- tests to compare the average toxic leadership style scores between men and women. There were no statistically significant differences in any of the toxic leadership style scores between men and women.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for the Toxic Leadership Style Scores by Gender

Variable	<u>Male</u>				<u>Female</u>			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Self-promotion	2.10	.92	1.00	5.00	2.07	0.91	1.00	4.00
Abusive supervision	2.58	.85	1.00	4.67	2.44	0.92	1.00	4.33
Unpredictable	2.27	.96	1.00	5.00	2.22	0.97	1.00	4.67
Narcissism	2.25	1.03	1.00	5.00	2.32	1.04	1.00	4.33
Authoritarian	2.35	1.13	1.00	5.00	2.28	1.09	1.00	5.00
Overall	2.31	0.87	1.00	4.87	2.27	0.89	1.00	4.13

Note. For men $n = 193$; for women $n = 92$

Table 12

Independent sample t Tests to Compare the Toxic Leadership Style Scores by Gender

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Self-promotion toxic leadership style	.22	283	.82
Abusive supervision toxic leadership style	1.24	283	.21
Unpredictability toxic leadership style	.40	283	.68
Narcissism toxic leadership style	-.55	283	.58
Authoritarian toxic leadership style	.50	283	.61
Overall toxic leadership style	.38	283	.70

Tables 13 and 14 show the results of the two-sample t-tests to compare the average toxic leadership style scores between minorities and non-minorities. On average, the minority group scored significantly higher than non-minorities on the abusive

supervision (effect size $d = .37$), narcissism ($d = .33$), and overall toxic leadership style scores ($d = .31$).

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics for the Toxic Leadership Style Scores by Ethnicity (Minority Status)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<u>Minority status</u>					
			<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>			
			Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Self-promotion	2.23	.97	1.00	5.00	2.04	.89	1.00	4.67
Abusive supervision	2.76	.88	1.00	4.67	2.44	.85	1.00	4.67
Unpredictable	2.42	.99	1.00	5.00	2.19	.95	1.00	5.00
Narcissism	2.52	1.05	1.00	5.00	2.18	1.01	1.00	5.00
Authoritarian	2.54	1.20	1.00	5.00	2.25	1.08	1.00	5.00
Overall	2.49	.91	1.00	4.67	2.22	.85	1.00	4.87

Note. Minority status: no = 207, yes = 78

Table 14

*Independent sample *t* Tests to Compare the Toxic Leadership Style Scores by Ethnicity*

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Self-promotion toxic leadership style	-1.55	283	.12
Abusive supervision toxic leadership style	-2.79	283	.00
Unpredictability toxic leadership style	-1.76	283	.07
Narcissism toxic leadership style	-2.46	283	.01
Authoritarian toxic leadership style	-1.97	283	.05
Overall toxic leadership style	-2.36	283	.01

Tables 15 and 16 show the results of the two-sample *t* tests to compare the average toxic leadership style scores between cadets who were, and were not on any type of merit list (i.e., academics, military performance, or physical fitness). The results from

the analysis indicate there were no statistically significant differences in any of the toxic leadership style scores between the two groups.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics for the Toxic Leadership Style Scores by Merit Status

Variable	<u>Merit status</u>							
	<u>Yes</u>				<u>No</u>			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Self-promotion	2.08	.88	1.00	4.67	2.13	1.04	1.00	5.00
Abusive supervision	2.55	.83	1.00	4.67	2.46	1.01	1.00	4.67
Unpredictable	2.24	.93	1.00	5.00	2.29	1.09	1.00	4.33
Narcissism	2.28	1.00	1.00	5.00	2.22	1.15	1.00	4.67
Authoritarian	2.31	1.06	1.00	5.00	2.42	1.34	1.00	5.00
Overall	2.29	.82	1.00	4.87	2.31	1.05	1.00	4.60

Note. $n = 227$ for yes response, $n = 58$ for no response presented in this table.

Table 16

Independent sample T-tests to Compare the Toxic Leadership Style Scores by Merit Status

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Self-promotion toxic leadership style	-.37	283	.70
Abusive supervision toxic leadership style	.68	283	.49
Unpredictability toxic leadership style	-.30	283	.76
Narcissism toxic leadership style	.38	283	.69
Authoritarian toxic leadership style	-.68	283	.49
Overall toxic leadership style	-.09	283	.92

Tables 17 and 18 show the results of the two-sample t tests to compare the average toxic leadership style scores between freshman and upper classman. There were no statistically significant differences in any of the toxic leadership style scores between the two groups.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics for the Toxic Leadership Style Scores by Academic Class

Variable	<u>Freshmen</u>				<u>Upperclassmen</u>			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Self-promotion	2.07	.88	1.00	5.00	2.08	.94	1.00	4.67
Abusive supervision	2.59	.91	1.00	4.67	2.51	.86	1.00	4.67
Unpredictable	2.46	.99	1.00	4.33	2.21	.98	1.00	5.00
Narcissism	2.09	1.02	1.00	4.67	2.33	1.04	1.00	5.00
Authoritarian	2.29	1.02	1.00	5.00	2.33	1.16	1.00	5.00
Overall	2.30	.84	1.00	4.60	2.29	.90	1.00	4.87

Note. Freshmen $n = 54$, Upperclassmen $n = 206$

Table 18

Independent sample t Tests to Compare the Toxic Leadership Style Scores by Academic Class

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Self-promotion toxic leadership style	-.10	258	.91
Abusive supervision toxic leadership style	.58	258	.56
Unpredictability toxic leadership style	1.64	258	.10
Narcissism toxic leadership style	-1.46	258	.14
Authoritarian toxic leadership style	-.24	258	.80
Overall toxic leadership style	.04	258	.96

Research Question 4: Policy Cynicism

Table 19 presents the results of the stepwise multiple linear regression analysis for testing the following additional research question: Which, if any combination of toxic leadership styles best predict policy cynicism? The dependent variable was the policy cynicism score. In the first step of the model building process, gender, ethnicity (minority and non-minority), and academic class (freshman and upper classman) were entered into

the model simultaneously. In the second step of the model building process, the five toxic leadership style scores were entered into a stepwise model selection procedure.

Table 19 shows that the final model was statistically significant, $F(4, 255) = 11.5$; $p < .001$. Of the three control variables, only academic class ($p < .001$) was statistically significant. Of the five toxic leadership style scores, only the unpredictability toxic leadership style score was statistically significant ($p < .001$). It was concluded that two or more toxic leadership styles do not better predict policy cynicism than the unpredictability toxic leadership style alone. The adjusted R -Square for the final model was .14, which means the control variables and the unpredictability toxic leadership style score collectively explain 14% of the total variance in policy cynicism scores.

As shown in Table 19, the equation of the model was: $PC = 2.25 + .16*Gender + -.12*Minority + .45*Class + .24*UN$, where PC = the policy cynicism score; Gender = 1 for male or 2 for female; Minority = 0 if Caucasian or 1 if minority, Class = 0 if freshman or 1 if upper classman; UN = the unpredictability toxic leadership style score. The interpretation of the statistically significant regression coefficients is, when controlling for gender, minority status, and unpredictable leadership style, the average policy cynicism score is expected to be .45 points higher for upper classman compared to freshman. When controlling for gender, minority status, and academic class, the average policy cynicism score is expected to increase by .24 points for every 1-point increase in the unpredictability toxic leadership style score.

Table 19

Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression of Policy Cynicism and the Five Toxic Leadership Style Scores

Model ^{a, b}	<u>Unstandardized coefficients</u>		<u>Standardized coefficients</u>		Sig.
	<i>B</i>	Std. error	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	
(Constant)	2.25	.18		11.92	<.001
Gender ^c	.16	.09	.10	1.72	.085
Minority status ^d	-.12	.09	-.07	-1.23	.21
Academic class ^e	.44	.10	.24	4.15	<.001
Unpredictability toxic leadership style	.24	.04	.31	5.40	<.001

Note.

^a Dependent variable: organizational cynicism

^b *R*-square attributed to the model = .14; $F(4, 255) = 11.5$; $p < .001$

^c Gender = 1 if male, 2 if female

^d Minority status = 0 if Caucasian, 1 if minority

^e Academic class = 0 if freshman, 1 if upper classman

A Pearson's correlation statistic was calculated in order to evaluate the relationship between the policy cynicism score and the overall toxic leadership style score. Figure 10 is a scatter plot, which graphically depicts the relationship between the policy cynicism score and the overall toxic leadership style score. The figure gives some indication of a positive correlation between the two variables.

Figure 10. Scatter plot of the policy cynicism score and the overall toxic leadership style score.

Table 19 shows there was a statistically significant, positive correlation between the policy cynicism score and the overall toxic leadership style score, $r(283) = .28$; $p < .001$. Therefore, it was concluded that there is strong evidence to suggest that Academy cadets who perceive the commanding officer to have a high level of overall toxic leadership style tend to be more cynical about policies within the organization.

Summary of Results

The preceding results reveal some interesting findings that add to the knowledge base of literature on the relationship between leadership styles and cynicism. Although the results of this study are not conclusive, they are valuable because they apply to one of

the premier officer commissioning institutions for the United States military, and represent an organization with the charter to educate, train, and inspire men and women to become leaders of character. The study found strong evidence to suggest that Academy cadets who perceive their commanding officer to have higher levels of toxic leadership styles on any of the five dimensions: abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability, tend to be more cynical about their organization. Of the five toxic leadership styles, self-promotion toxic leadership style was the best predictor of organizational cynicism. Regression results found no evidence to suggest effective leadership moderates the relationship between organizational cynicism and toxic leadership.

In terms of policy cynicism, on average, upper classmen reported a higher level of policy cynicism than did lower classmen. When controlling for gender, minority status, and academic class, an unpredictable leadership style was the strongest predictor of policy cynicism. There were no differences in the average levels of perceived toxic leadership styles between men and women, between cadets on a merit list and those not on a merit list, or between freshman and upper classman. On average, the minority group scored significantly higher than non-minorities on the abusive supervision, narcissism and overall toxic leadership style scores.

While this research offers significant conclusions, those conclusions demonstrate the need for further studies that will create a greater body of empirical data linking cynicism and toxic leadership and examining the correlation between leadership styles and an organization's temperament. The establishment of this relationship could be significant to the development of both leaders and followers, and could assist

administrators, supervisors, and others in leadership roles to better understand the impact of perceptions of toxic leadership on cynicism. The next chapter will discuss these findings through connections to the literature and will discuss implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that a relationship exists between perceived toxic leadership styles and organizational cynicism. In this final chapter I will present a summary of this research study that includes a statement of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, a review of the methodology, and a summary of the findings. Additionally, the limitations of this study are discussed, practical implications are suggested regarding the findings, and recommendations for additional research are provided.

Statement of the Problem

Although numerous researchers have focused their attention on determining the role of cynicism and leadership in for-profit organizations, comparatively scant attention has been directed to the impact of these variables in public organizations. Research on organizational effectiveness is often related to profit-loss financial performance, with limited relevance to public institutions. Among the not-for-profit organizations that have received little attention from researchers is the U.S. military. Although the literature rarely addresses these issues within the armed forces, understanding the problems of cynicism and leadership is particularly pertinent to the military.

Since 1973 the modern American military has been an all-volunteer force, as its members are not compelled to serve. It is also an organization completely without profit margin, and therefore, is representative of an important segment of the public sector. In addition, the military itself has in recent years begun to recognize the profound negative effect that cynicism and toxic leadership can have on the maintenance of good order and

discipline, and it has sought to increase understanding of these phenomena (Bullis & Reed, 2009; Elle, 2012; Fellman, 2012; Reed, 2004; Waring, 2009). Yet little, if any, empirical research has been conducted concerning efforts to curtail these issues within military organizations (Do & Waring, n.d.; Light, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between perceived toxic leadership, organizational cynicism, and effective leadership, as well to discern how these constructs interrelate. Specifically this study examined and sought to identify leadership behaviors that can mitigate the development and spread of cynicism in organizations. Specific focus was placed on how a follower's perception of their supervisor affected their perception of cynicism.

The following overarching research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy experience toxic leadership, and what is their current level of organizational cynicism?
2. What, if any, correlation is there between a perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?
3. Does perceived effective leadership behavior moderate the relationship between perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism?

Review of the Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach using univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical analyses to answer the research questions. The study was conducted in a unique organizational setting: The United States Air Force Academy, located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The Academy is one of five United States service

academies whose mission is to educate and train individuals to become officers and leaders in the U.S. military. The Academy is a four-year university interwoven with demanding military training. The diverse demographic cadet population at the Academy, along with the unique contractual agreement the cadets have due to post-Academy careers in the Air Force provided a useful sample to examine the relationships between perceived toxic leadership, organizational cynicism, and effective leadership. Data was gathered through the administration of a survey questionnaire consisting of three instruments and a demographic questionnaire: Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale (CATCS), Toxic Leadership Scale (TLS), and the effectiveness scale on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Once the data was collected, statistical tests were used to analyze the relationship between the variables.

Summary of the Findings

Research question one. To what extent do cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy experience toxic leadership, and what is their current level of organizational cynicism? Based on the data, the cadet sample indicated a relatively low level of toxicity among their leaders as measured using the Toxic Leadership Scale. Considering the toxic leadership scores had a possible range of 1 to 5, the average toxic leadership scores for all the styles were well below the midpoint of the scale. The averages ranged from self-promotion ($M = 2.09$, $SD = .91$), to abusive supervision ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .87$). The overall toxic leadership score was 2.30. These low levels of toxicity reported by cadets could be a reflection of the level of effort the Air Force is investing in the command screening process and the required leadership and counseling training every Air Officer Commanding must complete prior to assuming command of a cadet squadron.

In terms of organizational cynicism, this study indicated that on average, the cadets reported relatively low levels of cynicism toward the Academy ($M = 2.11$, $SD = .80$). While these levels of reported organizational cynicism results are unexpected, they are not surprising. As discussed in Chapter 2, the majority of literature on cynicism has been conducted in the private business sector (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Brandes, et al, 2007). The fact that the participants for this study were drawn from a population of cadets from a military service academy may provide some explanation. Considering that Academy cadets are full-time students with little work experience, the argument could be made that they had limited life experience, and that there are differences in the nature of cynicism felt by cadets than by full-time workers. In this sample, the participants were attending the Academy willingly. They also entered after a rigorous induction and screening process. One might expect that they are quite dedicated to the endeavor and therefore invested in the institution. It would be expected (although not assumed) that their primary focus was on school (and becoming a commissioned officer), not necessarily on their jobs as cadets. Full-time workers, however, may focus more on their jobs and careers. Therefore, cadets may feel less cynical than full-time workers because they are less committed to their organization.

Research question two. What, if any, correlation is there between a perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism? As expected, this study found evidence to suggest that Academy cadets who perceive their commanding officer to have higher levels of toxic leadership styles on any of the five dimensions: abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion, and unpredictability, tend to be more cynical about their organization. These findings indicate a significant

relationship exists between perceived toxic leadership and organizational cynicism, and that followers of toxic leaders are likely to have more negative attitudes toward their organization as a whole. This finding is consistent with the Burris, Detert, and Chiaburu (2008) study that found that negative feelings towards the supervisor carried over to negative feelings towards the organization. This could be due not only to the leader being perceived as representative of the organization, but also due to the perception that the organization does not intervene to protect its personnel. Additionally, based on this analysis, regressions were conducted to determine which of the toxic styles or combination of styles best predict organizational cynicism. Of the five toxic leadership styles, self-promotion was the strongest predictor of organizational cynicism. This last finding could be attributable to several reasons. Violations of contracts have been cited as primary determinants of employee cynicism (Andersson, 1996; Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly 2003). According to this research, cynicism results from violations of specific promises to the employee, violations of generalized expectations, and/or observed violation experiences of others. From the time cadets enter the Academy they are indoctrinated with the Air Force core values, including the value of "service before self" (www.airforce.com). This value is articulated in *The Armed Forces Officer*:

Hierarchy of loyalties has several formulations in the United States Armed Forces. In the Air Force it is "service before self.".... The basic idea is that there is always something larger, more important than the individual. Service is the armed forces is not primarily about self, but rather about others—fellow citizens and fellow military members. (p. 13)

If cadets perceive their leaders acting in ways that promote their personal self interests above and beyond the interests and welfare of the units they are leading, this could be perceived as a failure of obligations and produce unmet expectations. The cynicism

literature has identified the experience of unmet expectations, and the feelings of disappointment that go along with it, as one of the primary determinants in the development of cynicism. Unmet expectations have been labeled as a direct antecedent of cynicism in organizations (Kanter & Mirvis, 1989).

Research question three. Does perceived effective leadership behavior moderate the relationship between perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism? Contrary to expectations, regression analysis concluded that effective leadership does not moderate the relationship between organizational cynicism and toxic leadership styles. This finding was a surprise given that the cadet sample indicated a relatively high level of effectiveness among their leaders as measured using the MLQ ($M = 2.96$), and that effective leadership was shown to have a significant relationship with other end result factors such as satisfaction, motivation, group performance, and positive organizational outcomes (Bass, 1990; Dionne, et al., 2004). One possible explanation for this finding is cynical cadets may be circumspect about their leader's abilities to overcome organizational problems despite how effective they may appear. This is consistent with prior research that suggests cynics care deeply about their organization and may serve as a perceptual screen for information and events, preventing employees from blindly participating in activities that deserve caution. (Abraham, 2000). This suggests that cynics may represent a voice of reason in a room clouded by groupthink and blind optimism. Cynics may play an important role in exposing the root causes of toxic leadership, thereby greatly contributing to positive organizational change efforts (Bommer et al., 2005). More research is needed on this relationship using multiple sources. For instance, leader effectiveness could be accessed through another

source (e.g., supervisor) or through more objective results (e.g., organizational performance). In this study, leader effectiveness was measured through the eyes of the cadets. Future research might complement the rating of leader effectiveness for more objective measure. However, the way effectiveness was measured in this study is consistent with a large body of work on the analysis of leaders (Hogan et al., 2007).

Exploratory analysis. T-tests were used to compare the average toxic leadership style scores between gender, race, merit, and academic class of the sample cadet population. This study found no significant differences in the average levels of perceived toxic leadership between men and women, between cadets on a merit list and those not on a merit list, or between freshman and upper classman. However, significant differences were found for race. On average, the minority group scored significantly higher than non-minorities on the abusive supervision (effect size $d = .37$), narcissism ($d = .33$), and overall toxic leadership style scores ($d = .31$). These findings are consistent with the literature that found that those in out-groups are more prone to identify toxic behavior when members of out-groups are involved in negative interpersonal exchanges (Pelletier, 2009). Additionally, the following research question was addressed: Which, if any combination of toxic leadership styles best predict policy cynicism? Based on the analysis, of the five toxic leadership styles, an unpredictable leadership style was the strongest predictor of policy cynicism. In addition, of the demographic control variables, only academic class was statistically significant ($p < .001$). These results are consistent with Brockway et al.'s (2002) findings that students' cynicism toward administrative policies may increase as they spend more time at an institution. However, it cannot be

determined from the present data whether the increase is a naturally occurring process or whether it is influenced by particular administrative policies.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study contributes to the literature on the relationship between perceived toxic leadership and organizational cynicism, and measures with sound psychometric properties were used, several limitations must be considered. The first concerns the unique sample that was chosen. Data was obtained from only one source and one institution--cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Although arguments have been made as to the costs and benefits of such a population, the generalizability of the findings may still be of a concern. It is possible that Academy cadets are in some ways not representative of the broader U.S. population of college-age youth or even similar to cadets at the other U.S. service academies (e.g., United States Military Academy, United States Naval Academy, United States Coast Guard Academy, United States Merchant Marine Academy). Furthermore, it is unknown if the leadership perceptions of the Academy cadets are representative of other members in the Air Force, or other organizations in general. Generalizing these findings within the broader military context should be approached with caution because this sample included only training units whose operations are not conducted in a combat or a high-threat environment. Further, it should be remembered that the results reported in this study were based on correlations, and as such do not verify causal directionality but simply the existence of a linear relationship.

Another limitation is related to the inherent bias in this sample of Academy cadets that makes the generalizability of the results difficult beyond other professional and

military educational settings. The restricted range of students attending the Academy has been highlighted and, although cadets came from all parts of the country, this sample consisted of undergraduate students at a very selective military institution who choose not only a college, but a military career (at least for 5 years after graduating).

Additionally, toxic leadership styles, effective leadership, and cynicism data collection were restricted to a survey assessment of the participants. These questionnaires were based solely on the cadets' perceptions. These perceptions could be influenced by a myriad of confounding variables that are beyond the control of this study. The rating of the commanders may, therefore, be biased, though it is presumed that the cadet responses on the survey reflected their honest perceptions and experiences. However, it is possible that common method variance influenced the results and that data collection at different times or through different methodologies could produce different results.

Self-selection bias may have also been a potential limitation. Survey respondents were drawn from those who volunteered to be part of a research pool, and specifically those who were enrolled in leadership and psychology courses. That raises the possibility of self-selection bias that could limit the generalizability of findings. Many of the cadets who elected to participate in the research were accomplished as evidenced by their designation as high performers (80%). Less accomplished students might be expected to report higher levels of cynicism. That suggests this research represents a conservative indication of the level of cynicism at the Academy. Cadets who were uncomfortable with the topic or the online format of the questionnaire may have chosen not to participate in the survey. While the sample in this study was a fairly good size ($n=285$) and was

generally representative of the demographic makeup of the cadet population at the Academy, participation representing 35% of the total population of interest raises the possibility of error.

Finally, this study does not consider the dynamic nature of cynicism in the workplace because neither longitudinal nor qualitative data was collected. Because data was collected at a single time, raising the possibility that data collected at another time might produce different results, it is not possible to view how the relationships between leadership style and cynicism develop over time. Thus, the relationship between these variables may be overestimated.

Despite these limitations, this study serves as a starting point in accumulating quantitative data regarding the correlation between destructive (toxic) leadership and organizational cynicism. Specifically, the findings from this study highlight that toxic leadership styles are strongly correlated with organizational cynicism, and that minorities are more prone to perceive toxic behavior than non-minorities.

Implications of the Study

The findings from this study suggest some important practical and theoretical implications for not only the United States military but also for other organizations. The most obvious implication is that it provides evidence that perceived toxic leadership is a predictor of organizational cynicism. Considering that organizational cynicism is related to decreased citizenship behavior, productivity, commitment, and organizational identity (Andersson & Batement, 1997; Bedian, 2007; Mirvis & Kanter, 1989), efforts to address antecedents of cynicism in organizations might be a productive investment. There are at least four different lines of effort suggested.

First, based on the results of this study, leader development programs would be well served to include the concept of toxic leadership as a fundamental component in their training. Three hundred and sixty-degree assessment of leader perceptions, including a comparison with self-ratings would be particularly insightful. The more awareness leaders have regarding their harmful leadership behaviors and tendencies, the sooner they can correct their deficiencies and positively affect the organization and their followers. This recommendation aligns with those made by Reed and Olsen (2010) in their discussion of the need to discuss destructive leadership practices in the military. Specifically, they recommended:

That the system of professional military education examine the use of negative examples of leadership in addition to stories of exemplary leadership that is abound in our doctrinal publications. We can learn much from negative case studies, and stories of failure can be powerful influencers of organizational culture. (p. 64)

Second, the implementation of formal mentoring programs could be especially useful in this regard. Considering that Kusy and Holloway (2009) exposted, “toxic people thrive only in a toxic system” (p. 10), a proactive approach by top-level leaders would be to volunteer their time to create opportunities for more supervisor–employee interactions. These interactions could foster important relationships and generate an organizational culture within which senior leaders ensure that intermediate-level leaders and managers engage in appropriate, healthy behaviors.

Third, because role ambiguity and unfair treatment has been shown to induce strong cynical feelings (Andersson, 1996), and that, according to this current study, unpredictability is the strongest predictor of policy cynicism, leaders should be aware of employees’ expectations regarding mutual contractual obligations. It would be beneficial

for leaders to understand that employees' perceptions of contractual relations are not always the same as the organizations, and that once violated, these contracts are not easily repaired. Leaders, especially those in the military, can diminish frustration, disillusionment, and unrealistic expectations by clearly communicating what is required of subordinates and what will be provided in return. The challenge for senior leaders in the U.S. military is to develop organizational cultures that value service members and their contributions.

Finally, based on the results of this study, it is advisable that administrators, supervisors, and others in leadership roles spend some focused time learning about toxic leadership and cynicism. More specifically, leadership training programs should focus on the highly destructive toxic leadership dimensions of *self-promotion* and *unpredictability*. As discovered in this study, each of these dimensions affects cynicism significantly. The prevalence of cynicism in the workforce could be significantly reduced by the introduction of leadership education programs for personnel in positions of authority that includes these toxic leadership dimensions. Applying an understanding of the relationship between toxic leadership and organizational cynicism to the training and education of leaders in corporate, government, and military organizations might ultimately serve to mitigate/lessen the negative impact of cynicism on those institutions.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study support further in-depth research into the link between perceived toxic leadership and organizational cynicism and suggest several areas for research possibilities. First, more research needs to be done to determine if these results were specific to this population or more generalizable to traditional (organizational)

military settings. Future research should include a much broader representation from the other branches of services within the Department of Defense (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard). For example, a replication of this study using a random sample of active duty officers and enlisted members could build on this study's results and provide a greater scope, nature, and understanding into the relationship between perceived toxic (negative) leadership behaviors and cynicism in a military context. By extending research into the link between perceived leader toxicity and organizational cynicism to a more diverse population of military personnel, the degree of applicability of this study's broader relevance would emerge.

Second, to understand fully how perceived toxicity affects organizational cynicism, and if perceived effective leadership moderates this relationship, future research should incorporate different methodologies. Future studies of toxic leadership and cynicism should examine differences in perceptions of toxic leaders based on both the leader's and the subordinate's gender or minority status. For example, conducting a qualitative study on minority cadets enrolled in the Academy could further the understanding and provide valuable insight as to why minorities rated their commanding officers higher than non-minorities on *all* the toxic leadership styles in this study. Conversely, qualitative research also could be valuable in the study of cynicism, especially in capturing richer descriptions of contextual factors and personal meanings surrounding organizational cynicism. It has been suggested that organizational cynicism is more of an ideology or perspective than an attitude (Cutler, 2000). If such is the case, does this perspective evolve from prolonged cynical attitudes, or is it a related, but separate construct? Answers to questions such as these require qualitative studies that

will allow researchers to observe and track follower attitudes and reactions, as well as observe them interacting with leaders within their organizations. Additionally, in-depth interviews with cadets may be optimal for discovery of personal meaning, whereas observation might be more effective for understanding the toxic leadership behaviors described in this study. Furthermore, it would also be beneficial to include some longitudinal components to better measure how leader and follower perception ratings for toxic leadership, effective leadership, and cynicism change over time. For example, data gathered at the end of a cadet's first and last semesters, and again several years after graduation would be an important addition to future work on the relationship between these variables. The Air Force Academy might provide an ideal setting for this research as the data could be collected fairly easily, and the setting eliminates many internal validity threats.

Although this study provides a starting point in accumulating quantitative data regarding the relationship of perceived toxic leadership and organizational cynicism, there is also a need for more consideration of the links between organization cynicism, toxic leadership, and other factors in the workplace. As the literature review suggested, there has been considerable progress in the cynicism literature since Cook and Medley (1954). However, much work remains to be done in order to facilitate the understanding of the complex relationship between leaders and followers and organizational cynicism. Andersson (1996) suggested that violations of implied contracts are the primary determinants of employee cynicism in organizations. In her initial study she identified infrequent or inadequate communication, discourteous treatment, managerial incompetency, and the use of trendy management techniques (e.g., total quality

management, reengineering) as important organizational factors that predict employee cynicism. Although Andersson's (1996) framework did not specifically identify toxic leadership behaviors as a predictor of organizational cynicism, it is expected that certain factors such as negative affectivity, equity sensitivity, and Machiavellianism might directly and significantly influence the degree of cynicism an individual experiences toward an organization. More research is needed on the cause-effect relationship of Andersson's model. In addition, this study found that when controlling for gender, race, and academic class year (i.e., organizational tenure), of the five toxic leadership styles, self-promotion was the best predictor of organization cynicism (adjusted R-square = .16, $p < .01$) and that an unpredictable leadership style was the strongest predictor of policy cynicism (adjusted R-square = .14, $p < .01$). A testable model that includes variables from each of the aforementioned categories of predictors will allow researchers to better examine the complexities of cynicism. However, tests of these variables will require that valid and reliable measures are constructed, possibly based on improvement of existing measures.

Fourth, it would be useful to determine why only one dimension (e.g., self-promotion) of the Toxic Leadership Scale (Schmidt, 2008) was shown to be predictive of organizational cynicism. Since self-promotion in leadership has been rarely studied explicitly, it would be useful to further investigate whether self-promotion is a contributing antecedent of organizational cynicism. Replication of this study with other groups (both those of similar and divergent attributes) and employing different organizational cynicism measures might show different results.

Because of the uniqueness of this sample, it is recommended that this study be replicated with a more diverse sample to further determine the relationship between cynicism and toxic leadership behaviors, doing a comparative analysis between the different branches of military (Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines), and studying this subject in industries other than the military sector (business, government, or education) would be useful. Another promising extension of this study would be to more holistically examine and evaluate empirically the organizational conditions that may enable the emergence of leader toxicity (Padilla, Hogan, Kaiser, 2007), and cynicism in organizations.

Conclusion

Cynicism might be widespread among employees in organizations (Andersson, 1996, Kanter & Mirvis, 1989), but as a construct it is inadequately understood. This study was conducted with the primary purpose of gaining a better understanding of the complex relationship between how a follower's perception of a supervisor affects organizational cynicism, and identifying some of the behaviors of toxic leaders that may predict cynicism.

The results of this study extend the research on the development of organizational cynicism (Andersson, 1996; Cole et al., 2006; Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Kim, Bateman, Gilbreath, & Andersson, 2009) and the effects of toxic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Pelletier, 2009; Reed, 2004). The current research work concludes that toxic leadership is a significant predictor of cynicism. This study also concludes that perceived effective leadership does not moderate the relationship between perceived toxic leadership style and organizational cynicism.

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APPENDIX A**Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale**

18-item Cynical Attitudes Toward College Scale (Brockway et al., 2002)

We would like to know your opinion about a variety of educational issues related to your college experience. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.

1. It takes a great deal of effort to find fun things to do here.
2. What the administration does is different from what they say they're going to do.
3. The core courses (i.e., general education requirements) here are a valuable part of my learning experience. (R)
4. I am cynical about this place.
5. The social environment here is similar to what I expected. (R)
6. The number of courses that I have to take to graduate is reasonable. (R)
7. Administrators ask for student input, but then do nothing with it.
8. Policies made by the administration cause more problems than they solve.
9. My grades here accurately reflect my abilities. (R)
10. Faculty here generally don't care enough about the needs of their students.
11. There are plenty of fun things to do on campus. (R)
12. I am proud to say I am a student at this institution. (R)
13. I am satisfied with the quality of recreational opportunities here. (R)
14. The administration here actively tries to make this a better place.
15. I would not recommend this place to anyone.
16. For many of my courses, going to class is a waste of time.
17. I receive the grades I deserve. (R)
18. I'm glad I chose to attend this college. (R)

(R) = Reverse Scored (5=strongly disagree, 1=strongly agree)

Anchors: 1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree

APPENDIX B

Toxic Leadership Scale

15-item Toxic Leadership Scale (Schmidt, 2008) ©

Please indicate your level of agreement (or disagreement) with each of the following statements based on your supervisor right now.

My current supervisor...

Self-Promotion

1. Drastically changes his/her demeanor when his/her supervisor is present
2. Will only offer assistance to people who can help him/her get ahead
3. Accepts credit for successes that do not belong to him/her

Abusive Supervision

4. Holds subordinates responsible for things outside their job descriptions
5. Publicly belittles subordinates
6. Reminds subordinates of their past mistakes and failures

Unpredictability

7. Allows his/her current mood to define the climate of the workplace
8. Expresses anger at subordinates for unknown reasons
9. Varies in his/her degree of approachability

Narcissism

10. Has a sense of personal entitlement
11. Thinks that he/she is more capable than others
12. Believes that he/she is an extraordinary person

Authoritarian Leadership

13. Controls how subordinates complete their tasks
14. Does not permit subordinates to approach goals in new ways
15. Determines all decisions in the unit whether they are important or not

All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale response format, with answers ranging between 1 = “Strongly Disagree” to 5 = “Strongly Agree.”

APPENDIX C

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

MLQ Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

Rater Form (5x-Short)

Name of Leader: _____ Date: _____

Organization ID #: _____ Leader ID #: _____

This questionnaire is to describe the leadership style of the above-mentioned individual as you perceive it. Please answer all items on this answer sheet. If an item is irrelevant, or if you are unsure or do not know the answer, leave the answer blank. Please answer this questionnaire anonymously.

IMPORTANT (necessary for processing): Which best describes you?

- ☐ I am at a higher organizational level than the person I am rating.
- ☐ The person I am rating is at my organizational level.
- ☐ I am at a lower organizational level than the person I am rating.
- ☐ I do not wish my organizational level to be known.

Forty-five descriptive statements are listed on the following pages. Judge how frequently each statement fits the person you are describing. Use the following rating scale:

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

THE PERSON I AM RATING. . .

1. Provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts..... 0 1 2 3 4
2. Re-examines critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate 0 1 2 3 4
3. Fails to interfere until problems become serious 0 1 2 3 4
4. Focuses attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards..... 0 1 2 3 4
5. Avoids getting involved when important issues arise 0 1 2 3 4
6. Talks about their most important values and beliefs 0 1 2 3 4
7. Is absent when needed 0 1 2 3 4
8. Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems..... 0 1 2 3 4
9. Talks optimistically about the future 0 1 2 3 4
10. Instills pride in me for being associated with him/her 0 1 2 3 4
11. Discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets..... 0 1 2 3 4
12. Waits for things to go wrong before taking action 0 1 2 3 4
13. Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished..... 0 1 2 3 4
14. Specifies the importance of having a strong sense of purpose..... 0 1 2 3 4
15. Spends time teaching and coaching 0 1 2 3 4

Continued =>

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
	0	1	2	3	4
16. Makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved.....	0	1	2	3	4
17. Shows that he/she is a firm believer in If it ain t broke, don t fix it.	0	1	2	3	4
18. Goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group	0	1	2	3	4
19. Treats me as an individual rather than just as a member of a group.....	0	1	2	3	4
20. Demonstrates that problems must become chronic before taking action.....	0	1	2	3	4
21. Acts in ways that builds my respect.....	0	1	2	3	4
22. Concentrates his/her full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures	0	1	2	3	4
23. Considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	0	1	2	3	4
24. Keeps track of all mistakes	0	1	2	3	4
25. Displays a sense of power and confidence	0	1	2	3	4
26. Articulates a compelling vision of the future.....	0	1	2	3	4
27. Directs my attention toward failures to meet standards.....	0	1	2	3	4
28. Avoids making decisions	0	1	2	3	4
29. Considers me as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others	0	1	2	3	4
30. Gets me to look at problems from many different angles	0	1	2	3	4
31. Helps me to develop my strengths	0	1	2	3	4
32. Suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments	0	1	2	3	4
33. Delays responding to urgent questions	0	1	2	3	4
34. Emphasizes the importance of having a collective sense of mission.....	0	1	2	3	4
35. Expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations	0	1	2	3	4
36. Expresses confidence that goals will be achieved	0	1	2	3	4
37. Is effective in meeting my job-related needs	0	1	2	3	4
38. Uses methods of leadership that are satisfying.....	0	1	2	3	4
39. Gets me to do more than I expected to do.....	0	1	2	3	4
40. Is effective in representing me to higher authority.....	0	1	2	3	4
41. Works with me in a satisfactory way.....	0	1	2	3	4
42. Heightens my desire to succeed.....	0	1	2	3	4
43. Is effective in meeting organizational requirements	0	1	2	3	4
44. Increases my willingness to try harder	0	1	2	3	4
45. Leads a group that is effective.....	0	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX D

Survey Questionnaire

Survey Control #: USAFA SCN 13-07

Expiration Date: 4 Feb 2014

Welcome, and thank you for your interest in this research.

Purpose of the research: To examine the relationship between perceived leadership behaviors and organizational cynicism.

What you will do in this research: If you participate, you will be asked a series of survey questions. The questions will be about organizational cynicism, toxic and effective leadership behaviors.

Time required: The survey should take approximately 15 minutes.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: Your response to survey questions will be completely anonymous. We will not ask you your name at any point in the survey.

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. You may withdraw by not submitting your survey responses. You may also skip any question in the survey you do not wish to answer, but continue to participate in the rest of the study.

Thank you for your time and participation, should you choose to continue.

Agreement: The nature and purpose of this research have been sufficiently explained and I agree to participate in this study. I understand I am free to withdraw at any time without incurring any penalty.

Agree to Consent Form Statement

☐ Yes, I agree

☐ No, I do not agree

0% 100%

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UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP SOPHOMORE APPLICATION

What is your class year?

Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

What is your race or ethnicity? (Choose all that apply.)

- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Two or More
- ☐ Nonresident Foreign National/International Exchange Cadet
- ☐ Other

Are you on a merit list? (Commandant's, Dean's, or Athletic)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Thank you for completing this application.
We will contact you soon.

Legacy affiliation: Have any members of your immediate or extended family graduated from the Air Force Academy?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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USAF ACADEMY LEADER BUILDING COURSE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

I would like to know your opinion about a variety of issues related to your USAFA experience. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Your responses will in no way be linked to your name

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It takes a great deal of effort to find fun things to do here.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
What the administration does is different from what they say they're going to do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The core courses (i.e., general education requirements) here are a valuable part of my learning experience.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am cynical about this place.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The social environment here is similar to what I expected.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The number of courses that I have to take to graduate is reasonable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Administrators ask for cadet input, but then do nothing with it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Policies made by the administration cause more problems than they solve.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My grades here accurately reflect my abilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Faculty here generally don't care enough about the needs of their cadets.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are plenty of fun things to do at the Academy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am proud to say I am a cadet at this institution.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am satisfied with the quality of recreational opportunities here.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The administration here actively tries to make this a better place.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would not recommend this place to anyone.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
For many of my courses, going to class is a waste of time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I receive the grades I deserve.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I'm glad I chose to attend the Air Force Academy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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LEADERSHIP STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE (FOR AIR OFFICER COMMANDING (AOC) ONLY)

For the following items, please describe the leadership style of your *Air Officer Commanding (AOC)* as you perceive it. Your responses will in no way be linked to your name. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

My Air Officer Commanding (AOC)...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
drastically changes his/her demeanor when his/her supervisor was present.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
only offers assistance only to people who can help him/her get ahead.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
accepts credit for successes that do not belong to him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
holds cadets responsible for things outside of their job descriptions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
publicly belittles cadets.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
reminds cadets of their past mistakes and failures.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
allows his/her mood to define the climate of the workplace.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
expresses anger at cadets for unknown reasons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
varies his/her degree of approachability.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
has a sense of personal entitlement.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
thinks that he/she is more capable than others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
believes that he/she is an extraordinary person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
controls how cadets complete their tasks.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
does not permit cadets to approach goals in new ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
determines all decisions in the work group, whether they are important or not.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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My Air Officer Commanding (AOC)...

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

My Air Officer Commanding (AOC)...

	Not at all	Once in awhile	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Frequently
Is effective in meeting my cadet-related needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is effective in representing me to higher authority	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is effective in meeting organizational requirements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leads a squadron that is effective	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Thank you for completing this survey!

That's it, you're done! Thank you again for taking the time to complete this survey

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between perceived leader toxicity, organizational cynicism, and leadership effectiveness. The questions you answered are comprised of scales addressing these three variables—toxicity, cynicism, and effectiveness. We are testing to see if followers' perceptions (in this case, the views of cadets) of their supervisor (in this study, AOCs) affect or impact the perception of cynicism toward their organization or institution. This research is both a correlational study to identify how views of leadership toxicity predict cynicism and effectiveness and a multivariate (many variables simultaneously) study. The multivariate aspect examines the inter-relationship of variables, specifically whether the leader's effectiveness is related to the degree of felt cynicism. Toxic leadership is a style that has five dimensions—narcissism, self-promotion, unpredictability, abusive and authoritarian supervision—all of which have negative effects on subordinates. One possible effect of toxic leadership is an increased level of individual cynicism within an organization. An organizational member is inclined to be less invested in their organization to the degree in which they are cynical. However, if a leader is seen as effective, subordinates may be less cynical given a rather positive outcome. If the results of this survey follow this predicted pattern, the findings may be useful in mitigating the development and subsequent spread of cynicism in organizations, and provide a better understanding of how perceived leadership behaviors affect organizational cynicism.

This data is being collected as part of a study of a PhD dissertation based on the researcher's design (not at the direction of the Air Force). The results will be used in the formal dissertation, and possibly in future peer-reviewed academic articles over the next few years.

The data for this study will be protected to the full extent of the law. Any results will be reported at the aggregate level. If you have any questions, feel free to contact the primary researcher, Jeff Jackson (at 719-333-9015 or jeff.jackson@usafa.edu), or the alternate researcher, James Dobbs (at 571-527-9246 or dobbsj@sandiego.edu) If you would like to speak to someone else about questions/concerns regarding this study, you can contact the USAFA Institutional Review Division at 719-333-6593.

Thank you again for your participation!

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY

MEMORANDUM FOR LT COL JAMES DOBBS

17 December 2012

FROM: HQ USAFA/A9N

SUBJECT: Protocol FAC20130014E Exempt Status

1. The HQ USAFA Institutional Review Board considered your request for exempt status for FAC20130014E - The Relationship Between Perceived Toxic Leadership Behaviors, Leader Effectiveness, and Organizational Cynicism at the 17 December 2012 meeting. Your request and any required changes were deemed exempt from IRB oversight in accordance with 32 CFR 219.101, paragraph (b)(2)(i)(ii) by the IRB. The IRB agreed that sufficient safeguards were in place to protect research participants. Please note that the USAFA Authorized Institutional Official, HQ USAFA/CV and the Surgeon General's Research Oversight & Compliance Division, AFMSA/SGE-C review all USAFA IRB actions and may amend this decision or identify additional requirements. The USAFA's DoD Assurance Number is 50046, expiration date 17 August 2014 our Federalwide Assurance number is FWA00019017, expiration date 20 June 2017.

2. If you are conducting a survey for this study you **cannot** start this study until you have approval from the Survey Program Manager. The protocol will be considered closed, but will be retained in USAFA/A9N for 3 years then sent to permanent storage. As the principal investigator on the study, the Surgeon General's Research Oversight & Compliance Division requires that you retain your data, reports, etc. for 3 years following completion of the study.

3. If any aspect of your research protocol changes, you must notify the IRB Chair or IRB Administrator immediately. We will advise you on whether additional IRB review is required.

4. Please use tracking number FAC20130014E in any correspondence regarding this protocol. If you have any questions or if I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me at 333-6593 or the IRB Chair, Col. Paul Pirog at 333-3680.

GAIL B. ROSADO
HQ USAFA IRB Administrator

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY

MEMORANDUM FOR HQ USAFA/DFBL

4 February 2013

FROM: HQ USAFA/A9A

SUBJECT: *The Relationship Between Perceived Toxic leadership Behaviors, Leader Effectiveness, and Organizational Cynicism*

1. We have received and reviewed your recent submittal of *The Relationship Between Perceived Toxic leadership Behaviors, Leader Effectiveness, and Organizational Cynicism* in accordance with *AFI 38-501 Survey Program*.

2. The following USAFA Survey Control Number (USAFA SCN) has been assigned to your instrument: **USAFA SCN13-07**. This control number expires on 4 Feb 2014. Please obtain a new SCN from HQ USAFA/A9A if you revise the current instrument in any way before this date. Additionally, if the instrument has not been revised, and you plan to administer it after the expiration date, you must request a new survey control number. The entire control number and expiration date must be centered beneath the title on the first page of your instrument.

3. Be aware that based on the Superintendent's guidance, proper approval procedures must be followed if you pursue release of any results associated with this instrument, in a public forum (e.g., journal articles, symposium proceedings). Please be advised that members of the general public may obtain these survey results via the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

4. Per *USAFA Supplement 1*, all survey materials (survey instrument, data elements, feedback measures, reports/briefings) must be maintained for a period of 3 years. Additionally, please ensure copies of all these materials are forwarded to A9A.

5. We suggest you keep this memo on file to show that this instrument has been through the proper approval process. Should you require additional assistance regarding this approval, please contact A9A at extension 333-6481.

//signed//

Nancy Bogenrief
Survey Control Officer

1st Ind, HQ USAFA/A9A

Approved / ~~Disapproved~~

CHRISTOPHER J. NELSON, Lt Col, USAF
Chief, Institutional Assessment