Cynics are right nine times out of ten: negative ILTs on the evaluation of leader errors

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Cynics are Right Nine Times out of Ten:

Negative ILTs on the Evaluation of Leader Errors

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of negative-typical implicit leadership theories (ILTs), a follower’s cognitive framing and expectation for leaders on average to be more tyrannical and less sensitive in their actions and traits, on a follower’s evaluation of leader error. These are based on negative experiences with actual leaders. The study also investigated the effects of cynical beliefs that people are bad and that interactions with others will end poorly, on negative-typical ILTs and on the evaluation of leader error. A sample of 221 undergraduates read a vignette filled with potential errors and were asked to identify and rate errors for severity and intentionality while imagining they were a subordinate of the team leader. Results suggest that there is a relationship between social cynicism beliefs and perceptions of tyranny for leaders in general, however there was no connection to perceptions of insensitivity. Results further suggest that followers with negative-typical ILTs are less likely to report leader errors. This study was the first to empirically investigate the role of ILTs in the evaluation of leader error and provides support that negative typical ILTs are important to consider. Theoretical contributions and future directions for research as well as practical implications are discussed.
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Cynics are Right Nine Times out of Ten: Negative ILTs on the Evaluation of Leader Error

Not all formal leaders in organizations will perfectly match a follower’s ideals of an effective leader. In fact, there has been a general rise of distrust in organizational leadership (see Alsop, 2004; Burke et al., 2007), and this distrust can occur as followers have negative interactions with their leaders and form negative expectations (Schyns & Meindl, 2005). Follower expectations are grounded in their prototypes and schemas of leaders (Lord, 1985), called implicit leadership theories (ILTs). These are the unique cognitive framings of traits that followers expect from leaders, which allow followers to form more specific beliefs about what ideal leaders act like compared to what typical leaders act like (Offerman et al., 1994). Followers often associate specific negative traits with leaders (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Bray et al., 2014) and may expect leaders to be manipulative, powerful, and self-interested. Reviews of ILT research conclude that there is a need for more empirical research considering negative-typical ILTs, because the “theory is ahead of the data” (Foti et al., 2017). Specifically, it is posited that when ideal and typical ILTs do not align, it could lead to negative implications for followers and leader-follower outcomes, because expectations are based on an average leader who fails to meet the ideal. For instance, although a follower may desire a supportive and kind leader, negative experiences with leaders lead to expectations that leaders are typically manipulative and insensitive. Negative-typical ILTs are defined by this general image of leaders as negative people who are more tyrannical and less sensitive towards followers, and an expectation for these behaviors in a typical or average leader.

ILT development is more complicated than simply observing negative leaders. Rather, followers hold different beliefs and views that influence how they interact with others and interpret the world around them (Bandura, 2005). For example, one set of beliefs known as social
cynicism consists of negative beliefs about human nature and about the manipulative nature of people and relationships (Leung et al., 2002). These beliefs are formed through exposure to negative interactional outcomes and lead to an increased salience towards negative information in attention, encoding, and recall (Leung et al., 2010). Individuals with social cynicism beliefs are more likely to perceive relationship conflict in their teams (Li et al., 2011), more likely to recall negative information about others (Chen et al., 2016), and have lower leader-member exchange (LMX) and willingness to follow leaders who do not have similar beliefs (Byza et al., 2017). Research on these beliefs is underdeveloped, and more research should be done in the context of leader-follower interactions and on the influence these beliefs have on specific information processing mechanisms such as follower ILTs. Individuals use their belief systems to make sense of future interactions (Weick, 1995) and thus it should influence leader-follower interactions, and the evaluation of leaders and events. It is important understand why pre-existing follower beliefs influence reactions to leaders, and why some followers may be more critical of leaders. Research on this topic could better our understanding of leader-follower relations and follower reactions of individuals who are more cautious about leaders and expect less from them.

There is an extensive area of research showing that follower differences, including ILTs and general beliefs, influence how followers evaluate and respond to leaders (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). One way that followers may evaluate leaders differently is in their perceptions of leader errors. It has been proposed that followers with positive beliefs of leadership may evaluate leader errors more leniently, but react more severely when they attribute cause to the leader (Schyns & Hansbrough, 2008). Leader errors are common events due to the complexity of the position and high-pressure decisions (Hunter et al., 2011), and these errors are impactful events that have implications in the workplace. For example, errors influence the objective performance of
leaders (Eubanks & Mumford, 2010) and also the way that leaders are viewed by their followers (Thoroughgood et al., 2013; Follmer et al., 2019). To fully understand the impact of leader errors, the follower must be considered an active observer and interpreter of these events (Shamir, 2007). In this way, leader error is partially a perceptual event that can be judged as inappropriate or norm-breaking (Epitropaki et al., 2020). The evaluation of leader error as norm-breaking would depend on the follower’s expectations of leaders. Investigating follower beliefs about social interaction and leadership should grant insight into why followers are more or less critical of leader errors.

This research contributes to the literature in three ways. First, by expanding ILT research, and focusing on negative-typical ILT prototypes and a potential antecedent to these negative leader beliefs. Second, by taking a follower-centric view of leader error, which assumes follower characteristics play an important role in the response to leader error and then empirically testing propositions that follower ILTs influence on the evaluation of leader errors (Schyns & Hansbrough, 2008). The emphasis on negative ILTs deviates slightly from the propositions of Schyns & Hansbrough who proposed the influence of positive-ideal ILTs on leader error evaluation. Finally, by suggesting that ILTs are an explanatory mechanism for the effects of more general social beliefs on the evaluation of leader error. Specifically, the effect of broader negative beliefs about interacting with others, their influence on two specific negative leader trait perceptions, and how these negative trait perceptions influence the evaluation of leader error. This work will help better our understanding of why certain followers with pre-existing beliefs and framings of leaders, may be more or less critical towards leaders and respond differently.
**Implicit Leadership Theories and Negative Prototypes**

ILTIs are pre-existing cognitive frameworks that followers have regarding leader traits and behavior. The ILT theory of categorization assumes that followers have expectations about leaders, which guides information processing of leader behavior to be congruent with them through attention, encoding, and recall (Lord et al., 1984; Lord, 1985). Six attribute perceptions have been empirically demonstrated to generalize across contexts and vary across individuals’ prototypes of leaders (Offerman et al., 1994; Epitropaki & Martin; 2005). These include perceptions of sensitivity, intelligence, tyranny, dynamism, masculinity, and dedication, which help explain how followers recognize leaders and then further categorize them as effective or ineffective leaders based on their behavior (Lord et al., 1984; Lord & Maher, 1990). For example, a follower may recognize an effective leader as someone who is sensitive and dedicated, and may recognize an ineffective leader as one who is tyrannical and controlling.

More recently, Junker and Van Dick (2014) proposed a specific framework of ILT prototypes and distinguish between norm (ideal vs. typical) and valence (positive, neutral, and negative) dimensions. In essence, followers have different prototypes of how a leader should be versus how leaders are on average, as well as prototypes that reflect good or bad traits.

Junker and Van Dick (2014) also note that research often considers only ideal leader prototypes, and focuses on positive traits. This may be because negative ILTs are not as common, and many followers have an idealistic view of leaders as positive and heroic figures (Meindl, 1985). However, Offerman et al. (1994) showed that followers do report differences in their idea of ideal leaders compared to typical leaders, such that typical leaders are often seen as more tyrannical. Furthermore, research suggests that there are two specific negative attributes, tyranny and insensitivity (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Bray et al., 2014), that are particularly
important in how followers respond to leaders and evaluate their leaders. For example, Junker et al., (2011) show that when leader behavior was perceived as tyrannical and insensitive, but followers had ideals of sensitive leaders, there were decreases in follower commitment, job satisfaction, and well-being. When leader behavior matches the opposing traits of a followers ideals, this is referred to as matching onto a counter-ideal, which is essentially a label of “ineffective or bad leader”, and negatively impacts a follower’s identification and satisfaction with their leader (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2014). Because tyranny and insensitivity perceptions are consistently considered negative and are more likely to be perceptions of typical leaders, they are the focus of this study.

In general, ILTs remain stable over time (Offerman et al., 1994; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004) and a follower develops prototypes gradually as they observe and interact with leaders (Schyns & Meindl, 2005). However, there is limited research investigating how the individual differences and life experiences of followers themselves may influence the development of their ILTs. For example, Keller (1999) showed that a follower’s Big Five personality traits led to similar ideal traits in a leader, such as follower agreeableness and leader sensitivity, and ideal leader traits mirrored trait perceptions of parents, such that tyrannical parents were associated with tyrannical ideals in leaders. Building on this idea, Bray et al. (2014) used latent profile analysis to suggest that how followers view themselves as a leader (self-leadership views), are often similar to their ideal leader prototypes. Interestingly, some followers do endorse negative traits in leaders, and these negative ideals are partially explained by negative self-leadership perceptions. Finally, Keller (2003) has proposed that follower attachment styles may be related to typical ILT prototypes, such that secure attachment styles lead to beliefs that leaders are more sensitive, whereas anxious or avoidant attachment styles lead to beliefs that leaders are
insensitive and tyrannical, stemming from a follower’s inability to form healthy relationships.

Although prior research mostly focuses on the development of ideal prototypes, it can be generalized that ILTs are influenced by follower differences and life experiences. One way to investigate other antecedents of ILTs is to look at characteristics that would influence the relationship quality between a follower and leader or influence information processing. Similar to the argument for attachment styles, differences in general beliefs that influence the quality of interactions with leaders will influence those interactions and lead to expectations as they will use their beliefs to make sense of the environment around them (Weick, 1995). One characteristic that may impact leader-follower interactions and information processing in this way is a follower’s social cynicism beliefs.

The Effect of Social Cynicism Beliefs on ILTs

Social cynicism is a stable set of general beliefs that human nature is inherently bad (Leung et al., 2002) and specifically includes beliefs that interactions with people and social institutions will be negative. It is important to distinguish between social cynicism and trait cynicism. Whereas the latter is an individual’s tendency to be self-critical (Graham, 1993), the former is a set of external beliefs that helps one determine what to expect from the world around them. Rather than a specific target of the beliefs (such as cynicism towards oneself or one’s organization), these beliefs are broader and can impact all social interactions. Research has shown that social cynicism beliefs influence expectations and job attitudes when interacting with others. For example, Bond et al. (2014) showed that social cynicism beliefs led to less compromising in conflict resolution and less collaboration with others due to expectations that people would take advantage of them or that it would end poorly, as well as lower job satisfaction overall. In addition, a cross-cultural survey study revealed that social cynicism did
not lead to less social interactions overall, but rather it impacted interpersonal functioning such as empathy and perspective taking in a negative way (Joshanloo et al., 2010). Finally, through a series of seven cross-sectional and longitudinal survey studies, Chen et al. (2016) show that social cynicism is stable over time, forms through interaction with others, and leads to a negative evaluation of life events and people. These findings suggest that social cynicism beliefs play a role in the expectations and quality of social interactions and relationships.

The influence of social cynicism on interactions and sensemaking can be explained further through a cognitive perspective. Social cynicism beliefs lead to biases toward negative information in interpersonal interactions. For example, Li et al. (2011) found that team members with social cynicism beliefs paid more attention to and recalled information that confirmed their expectations for relationship conflict. Social cynicism also leads to a more attuned perception of negative traits in other people (Chen et al., 2016). Overall, social cynicism beliefs influence information processing and are likely to color the perceptions of social interactions in a negative light. In a similar way, followers with social cynicism beliefs may focus on negative information in leaders and evaluate them more negatively. Byza et al. (2017) showed that incongruence between a leader and follower’s level of social cynicism beliefs led to lower leader-member exchange quality (LMX) and decreased follower likelihood of OCBs towards their leader. The findings suggest that cynical beliefs have a negative influence on how follower’s perceive, interact with, and evaluate their leaders. Since social cynicism beliefs have an influence on the salience of negative information and expectations of social interaction, it is more likely that a cynical follower will have generally poor expectations of leaders and recall tyrannical and insensitive behavior when thinking of their typical leaders. The focus is on these two types of behavior because they have been associated with negative perceptions of leaders in previous
research (Bray et al., 2014). Furthermore, they are primarily social in nature and are gathered through information about the leader’s ability to form relationships. Unlike perceptions of leader intelligence or dedication, tyranny and sensitivity perceptions require some form of social interaction, either directly with the leader, or observed, so that the follower can decide whether the individual is acting empathetically or manipulatively with others.

H1: Social cynicism will be related (a) positively to tyranny perceptions of typical leaders and (b) negatively to sensitivity perceptions of typical leaders.

Leader Error

ILTs and social cynicism beliefs are likely to have an impact in most interactions with leaders and help a follower make sense of their environment, especially when the information is ambiguous because it leaves more space for the follower to interpret the nature of the events using their own pre-existing beliefs. To an observer, leader error is an ambiguous event where the intended outcome is unknown, and a follower’s perceptions of the event may not align with the leader’s intention. In this way, leader errors are a special case of leader transgressions, which are behaviors that are evaluated as inappropriate with respect to follower norms and expectations (Epitropaki et al., 2020). Transgressions can be intentional or unintentional, but the defining feature is that there is a violation of trust in the leader’s ability or in the leader-follower relationship (Kim et al., 2004), and followers evaluate errors based on perceived violations of competence or relationship-based expectations. Although errors are unintentional by nature (Hunter et al. 2011), they can be viewed as events that vary in severity, novelty (new and unexpected), and the extent to which they disrupt the leader-follower relationship (Morgeson et al., 2015; Epitropaki et al., 2020). For example, Thoroughgood et al. (2013) showed that for followers with high competence expectations based on the fit between leader gender and the
masculine nature of the task, errors were more damaging to perceptions of task and relationship competence, and subsequently lower ratings of leader effectiveness.

Other research on this topic has addressed the influence of positive ILTs in the evaluation of leader error and the influence of leader errors on follower perceptions of leaders. Schyns and Hansbrough (2008) proposed that to the extent followers have a romantic prototype of leaders, they will attribute cause to the leader more leniently, but react more severely when they do think the leader is at fault. Specifically, they state followers have cognitive biases in the attribution and evaluation of leader error. Subsequently, Follmer et al. (2019) conducted an experimental vignette study to show that negative reactions to leader errors are explained by attributions of cause to the leader rather than to external factors. Specifically, relationship errors led to lower liking and willingness to follow, and this was partially explained by perceptions that the leader was at fault. Since leader errors have an impact on perceptions of leader effectiveness (Thoroughgood et al., 2013) and ratings of leaders (Follmer et al., 2019), it is important to directly and empirically test the propositions made by Schyns and Hansbrough (2008) to show how ILTs influence the evaluation of leader errors.

Negative ILTs and the Evaluation of Leader Error

ILTs are a framework for beliefs and expectations that help followers make sense of ambiguous events such as leader errors. According to social cognitive theory (SCT), individuals reflect on observations and interactions with others, and this contributes to their interpretation of future events (Bandura, 2005). ILTs are not direct reports of leader behavior, rather they aid interpretation through a reliance on prototypes, leading to differences in attention, recall, and evaluation of leader behavior (Lord & Maher, 1990). The effect of ILTs on evaluations of leader behaviors is explained by shifts in information processing, even when there is only ambiguous
information available (Eden & Leviatan, 1975; Lord, 1985). For example, Foti and Lord (1982) investigated behavioral accuracy and attention towards leaders who fit follower prototypes of an effective leader. They found that more attention was paid to behaviors that matched the prototype, and recall of behaviors was more accurate when behavior was consistent with the prototype. ILTs can be expected to impact two different cognitive processes. The first process is that ILTs will guide a follower’s attention to information regarding leader behavior that is consistent with their prototypes and expectations. Followers with negative-typical ILTs are more likely to attend to the negative information or perceive leader behavior in a way consistent with their negative beliefs of leaders. Thus, an increased salience of negative information will lead to follower differences in the identification of leader error such that negative-typical ILTs will lead to more identification of errors.

**H2:** (a) Tyranny perceptions of leaders in general will be positively related to the identification of leader error and (b) sensitivity perceptions of leaders in general will be negatively related to identification of leader error.

The second cognitive process impacted by ILTs concerns the expectations built around leader attributes. Early studies on ILTs show that once an individual is recognized as a leader, their behavior is evaluated based on associated traits (Rush et al., 1981). Leader errors and their consequences are not consistent with followers who hold a positive image of leaders (Meindl, 1985;). This violation of expectations is why it has been proposed that followers are more lenient in attributing blame to leaders for their errors, but more likely to view errors as severe events if the leader is blamed (Schyns & Hansbrough, 2008). In contrast, leader errors are more consistent with the expectations of followers with negative ILTs. Followers evaluate leader behavior more critically when there is a novel violation of task or relationship competence (Epitropaki et al.,
2020). Given that followers with negative ILTs should expect leader errors, they will evaluate errors less critically because they do not violate any expectations. In other words, leader errors are not norm-breaking events because these followers already have low competence expectations for their leaders. Researchers have identified that leader errors can be evaluated as more or less severe, because they differentially impact ratings of leader performance and the perceived outcomes of the error may differ (Eubanks & Mumford, 2010; Schyns & Hansbrough, 2008). Thus, negative ILTs will influence the evaluation of error severity, leading to lower perceived severity.

**H3:** (a) *Tyranny perceptions of leaders in general will be negatively related to perceived error severity* and (b) *sensitivity perceptions of leaders in general will be positively related to perceived error severity.*

Essentially the same arguments can be made for the effects of more general social beliefs on the evaluation of leader error. Li et al., (2011) found that even though social cynicism beliefs lead to an increased awareness of relationship conflict, they also have a buffering effect, nullifying the negative effects of relationship conflict on job satisfaction. This was because relationship conflict was expected, and thus it had less negative implications for the individuals experiencing it. Social cynicism beliefs also lead to a similar bias towards negative information in an individual’s interactions such as increased attention to negative events and a negative recall bias (Leung et al., 2010; Chen et al. 2016). Thus, social cynicism is another system of beliefs that should influence followers’ expectations for negative traits in leaders, low leader competence, and more frequent errors. That is, followers with social cynicism beliefs should be more attuned to negative information and have reduced error severity because they expect these errors and thus are not as shocked or disrupted by the errors. The hypothesized model can be seen in Figure 1.
It can be argued that social cynicism beliefs precede negative ILTs. Both social cynicism beliefs and ILTs form through gradual exposure to negative events and interactions (Chen et al., 2016; Schyns & Meindl, 2005). There is a potential counterargument that negative ILTs form early based on a child’s exposure to parental leadership (Keller, 1999; Liu et al., 2012) and that the strong social cues of leaders could have a great influence on social beliefs. Since they are proposed to develop around the same time it may be impossible to truly know which comes first, or if they have a reciprocal influence on each other. However social cynicism beliefs are broader and refer to all human interaction, thus they are more general than leader specific beliefs based on ILTs. It is important to draw connections to possible antecedents of ILTs other than parental traits or self traits since they do not alone explain the formation of negative ILTs (Bray et al., 2014). Social cognitive theory would suggest that individuals who have more negative interactions with others and perceive more negativity in others overall will use these experiences as a sensemaking process in the future (Bandura, 2005). Beliefs about leader traits and behavior are a subset of this larger set of social beliefs. Hence, any effect that social cynicism beliefs would have on the perception of leader outcomes such as errors, would be explained through the influence they have on ILTs. Through the influence on sensitivity and tyranny perceptions, individual world beliefs about social interaction will influence the evaluation of leader errors through similar attentional biases and a lack of competence and relationship violations.

H4a: Negative ILTs mediate the relationship between social cynicism and identification of leader error such that higher tyranny and lower sensitivity will lead to more identification of error.

H4b: Negative ILTs mediate the relationship between social cynicism and identification of leader error such that higher tyranny and lower sensitivity will lead to lower perceived error severity.
Method

Participants

Participants were undergraduate psychology students recruited from a large university in the northeastern United States. Participants received 0.5 class credits for participating, based on university standards. The final sample consisted of 221 participants after removing concerning cases for failed attention checks or incompletion of a large part of the survey. Fifty-three cases were removed for attention and 31 were removed for incompletion. About 54% of the participants were female. 41% of the participants were Caucasian, 24% were Black or African American, 11% were Asian, 15% were Hispanic or Latino, and 8% were more than one race or other. The average age of participants was 18.74 (SD = 1.10).

Procedure

All study materials were delivered online through a Qualtrics survey link, which participants retrieved through the university research system. Participants were informed that they would be participating in an online leader perception study featuring a hypothetical team leader. They were told that they would participate in a survey, read a hypothetical workplace scenario, and then respond to some questions about the scenario. Participants were instructed to imagine that the events actually happened to them and were told that they would be asked to identify leader errors. Participants received the same version of the survey, which included measures for independent variables and covariates. The vignette followed immediately, and participants were allowed to identify errors simultaneously while reading the scenario to avoid any recall biases. Following the scenario, participants rated perceived severity and intentionality for each error that they identified. Participants were presented with their own wording of each error that they identified for these measures. After the survey, participants were thanked for their
participation and received class credit.

A scenario was created to be complex and contain errors that were open for interpretation. The scenario focused on interactions between the individual and a team leader during one event: a team conference call. There were five included errors, which were carefully considered, representing behavior directed at the individual and at other hypothetical team members. Concerns about the dual-faceted nature of two errors led to distinguishing each one into two errors, for a total of seven. For example, the included error of scolding for being late with little notice, was considered two separate errors. One being the scolding itself, the other being insufficient notice. The full scenario is provided in Appendix A with the included errors.

Prior to data collection, a pilot study was conducted to ensure that errors included by the researcher were identifiable and showed adequate variability in identification and perceived severity. Although there was no manipulation of leader error, the goal was to provide a context with multiple leader errors. One function of the pilot was to test whether the included errors allowed individuals to differentially identify them. The pilot study used a similar survey. Participants responded to the social cynicism measure, read the scenario, and rated perceived severity. Rather than allowing participants to rate the severity of the errors they identified, they were instead given each of the five errors included by the researcher and asked to rate these errors for severity. This functioned as a test of perceived severity for the included errors only. Details are discussed later on page 16, however there was support for the included errors.

Measures

*Implicit Leadership Traits.* Typical leader perceptions were measured using 17-items from the leader attributes scale (Offerman et al., 1994; Bray et al., 2014) by asking participants to “please rate how characteristic each trait is of your average leader” (7-point Likert scale from
not at all characteristic to extremely characteristic). The four attributes measured were tyranny ($\alpha = 0.80$), sensitivity ($\alpha = 0.77$), intelligence ($\alpha = 0.84$), and dedication ($\alpha = 0.85$), which were represented by three to five items each. Two examples of trait items for tyranny include “pushy” and “manipulative.” Examples of sensitivity include “supportive” and “kind”

Social Cynicism. Social cynicism was measured using 16-items from the social cynicism scale from the social axiom survey II (Leung et al., 2012). Participants rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A sample item is “Powerful people tend to exploit others.” Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was 0.82.

Identification of Leader Error. Before reading the scenario, participants were presented with a definition of leader error. While reading, participants were asked to identify specific errors made by the leader. Participants gave text responses to identify behaviors in the scenario that they considered a leader error. Participants were limited to eight responses, and were allowed to indicate that they did not observe any. Thus, scores ranged from 0 to 8. This count measure was limited based on evidence from the pilot study, participants never identified more than eight errors in the scenario, even when the limit was expanded to 10. Otherwise, participants may have felt drawn to fill in spaces (i.e., by repeating the same errors in different ways or describing general negative traits of the leader). Note this is not a true count variable.

Perceived Error Severity. A one-item measure was used to capture an individual’s perceived error severity for each error that they identified. The item was “This error was severe.” For each text response in which an error was identified, participants were presented with their own unique wording of the error and asked to rate severity on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Thus, if a participant identified four errors, they rated each of these four errors for severity.
Perceived Error Intentionality. For exploratory purposes one other item was included for each error identified by a given participant. This item captured perceived intentionality, for example, “This error was intentional.” Participants were asked to rate their agreement with this statement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Potential Covariates. Other measures were included based on their expected correlation with predictor and dependent variables. For example, social cynicism is moderately correlated with big 5 personality and pessimism (Leung et al., 2002) and these variables may also play a role in negative ILTs (Keller, 1999). Other leadership perceptions may also play a role in ILTs and evaluation of error such as trust and need for leadership. These covariates were not included in analyses due to their conceptual overlap with independent variables and high correlations. However, the covariates were measured in order to provide convergent and discriminant validity evidence, such that social cynicism should have similar correlates to past research such as trust, neuroticism, and pessimism (Singelis et al., 2003). Trust in leadership was measured using 13 items (α = 0.86) (Ferrin & Dirks, 2002; Larzelere & Huston, 1980). This measure ranged on a 7-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Big five personality measures were assessed using the 20-item Mini IPIP (Donnellan et al. 2006) including extraversion (α = 0.77), agreeableness (α = 0.77), conscientiousness (α = 0.77), neuroticism (α = 0.77), and intellect and imagination (α = 0.77). Participants rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale from does not describe me very well to describes me very well. Need for leadership was measured using the 17-item measure (α = 0.94), from de Vries, Roe, and Taillieu (2002). Participants rated specific aspects of a job that they typically require leader contributions on a 5-point Likert scale from not at all to a lot. Finally, optimism (α = 0.71) and pessimism (α = 0.80) were measured using the 4-
item scales, borrowed from (Scheier et al., 1994) Participants rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Pre-Analysis

Text responses of leader error were coded to create meaningful and comparable variables for analysis. Two different variables were created for identification of error. First, the raw count of responses from each participant, and second a count of specific leader behaviors that were identified as errors. The latter was created because participants were instructed to find specific behaviors, however it was often the case that participants identified general traits of the leader (i.e., “he was a mean person.”). At this point, that it became necessary to highlight the dual-faceted nature of two of the included errors, leading to a total of seven comparable errors. Coding the error responses ensured that perceived severity and perceived intentionality measures were more interpretable by allowing for the use of variables composed of ratings on the same seven leader errors included in the vignette.

Pilot Study

To determine whether the included errors were sufficient, the pilot study was conducted with a unique sample of 65 individuals. Table 1 presents the frequency of error identification for the five original errors as well as means and standard deviations for perceived severity. Each error was identified frequently, by about 70% of individuals. Note, two errors that were identified invariably (98%) were later considered dual-faceted and were each split into two errors which resulted in similar frequencies to the rest. These results suggest that included errors were commonly identified, but also differed in identification. Next, means and standard deviations for perceived severity were compared. Mean perceived severity was higher for some errors than others, given that the range of means varied from 3.10 to 3.63. Additionally, severity ratings
were generally high with little response variability, which may be an indication of range restriction. This may be due in part to participants having been asked to rate error severity shortly after they had been noted by instruction, increasing their salience. Finally, although participants were limited to ten error responses, the modal response of identification was five, and the highest number of errors identified by any participant was eight. This helps justify the limited measure for identification.

Results

Social Cynicism, Leader Perceptions, and Leader Error

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations between continuous variables that were included in the analyses. Hypothesis 1a and 1b predicted that social cynicism beliefs would be positively related to tyranny perceptions and negatively related to sensitivity perceptions. Initial results suggest that social cynicism is significantly related to tyranny perceptions in the hypothesized direction \((r = .24, p < .001)\). However, social cynicism was not significantly related to sensitivity perceptions, \((r = -.05, p = .457)\). A regression analysis was conducted to follow up the significant relationship between social cynicism and tyranny perceptions. Table 3 shows the results of this analysis, which suggests social cynicism is associated with significantly higher tyranny perceptions of leaders \((\beta = 0.24, SE = 0.15, p < .001)\). A regression model for social cynicism was not conducted due to the nonsignificant correlation between variables. Overall, these results provide initial support for Hypothesis 1a, but do not support Hypothesis 1b. It should be noted that tyranny and sensitivity perceptions were moderately and negatively related \((r = -.41, p < .001)\) which could be expected.

Hypothesis 2a predicted that tyranny perceptions would be positively related to the identification of leader errors and Hypothesis 2b predicted sensitivity perceptions would be
negatively related. Initial results suggest that tyranny perceptions are negatively related to error identification \( (r = -0.18, p = 0.009) \), whereas sensitivity perceptions were unrelated \( (r = 0.02, p = 0.76) \). An ordinal regression model was conducted predicting identification of leader errors from tyranny perceptions, then separately for sensitivity perceptions. Table 4 presents the results of the analyses, which suggests that tyranny perceptions were a significant predictor of identification of leader errors \( (b = -0.29, \text{SE} = 0.10, p = 0.005) \), and sensitivity perceptions were not a significant predictor of error identification \( (b = 0.12, \text{SE} = 0.14, p = 396) \). These results support a relationship in the opposite direction of Hypothesis 2a, and does not indicate support for Hypothesis 2b.

Hypothesis 3a predicted that tyranny perceptions would be negatively related to perceived error severity and Hypothesis 3b predicted sensitivity perceptions would be positively related. Simple linear regression models were conducted regressing perceived severity on tyranny perceptions and sensitivity perceptions separately. Table 5 presents the results of the analyses. Results suggest that neither tyranny \( (\beta = -0.06, \text{SE} = 0.01, p = 0.405) \), nor sensitivity \( (\beta = -0.12, \text{SE} = 0.03, p = 0.089) \), are significant predictors of perceived error severity. This indicates a clear lack of support for Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b.

**ILT as a Mediator Between Social Cynicism and Leader Error**

To further test the hypothesized model, estimates of indirect effects were conducted using the jAMM module within the statistical program jamovi (Gallucci, 2019; jamovi, 2020). Confidence intervals for the mediating effects were computed using a bias corrected bootstrapping approach with 10,000 samples, following the recommendations of Hayes and Scharkow (2013). Hypothesis 4a stated that tyranny and sensitivity perceptions mediate the relationship between social cynicism beliefs and the identification of leader errors. Table 6
shows the estimation of the indirect effects for sensitivity and tyranny perceptions simultaneously mediating the relationship between social cynicism and the identification of leader errors. Results suggest that sensitivity perceptions did not mediate the effects between social cynicism and error identification (IE = 0.01, 95% CI [-.02, .12], p = .74) and that tyranny perceptions were a marginally significant mediator of the relationship between social cynicism and error identification (IE = -0.15, 95% CI [-.35, -.03], p = .052). Closer examination of the direct effects for tyranny perceptions suggest that there is a significant relationship between social cynicism and tyranny perceptions (DE = 0.54, 95% CI [.26, .82], p < .001), and between tyranny perceptions and error identification (DE = -0.28, 95% CI [-.52, -.05], p = .02). However, there was not a significant relationship between social cynicism and error identification (ES = -0.40, 95% CI [-.85, .06], p = .09). Direct effects for sensitivity are reported in Table 7 for convenience, but are not noted here due to the lack of significance. Overall, these results provide partial and weak support for Hypothesis 4a by demonstrating the role of tyranny perceptions between social cynicism and leader error identification, however the role of sensitivity perceptions was not demonstrated. Results also strengthen support for H1a and suggesting a significant positive relationship between social cynicism and tyranny expectations. 

Hypothesis 4b stated that tyranny and sensitivity perceptions mediate the relationship between social cynicism and perceived error severity. Table 7 shows the estimation of indirect effects for sensitivity and tyranny perceptions mediating the relationship between social cynicism and perceived severity. Results suggest that neither tyranny perceptions (IE = -0.01, 95% CI [-.03, -.001], p = .08) nor sensitivity perceptions (IE = 0.001, 95% CI [-.01, .01], p = .74) mediated the relationship between social cynicism and error identification. Furthermore, the direct effect of social cynicism on perceived severity was not significant (DE = 0.01, 95% CI
Finally, the direct effects of the relationship between tyranny perceptions and perceived severity (DE = -0.03, 95% CI [-0.05, -0.01], p = .037), and between sensitivity perceptions and perceived severity are significant, (DE = -0.04, 95% CI [-0.08, -0.01], p = .013). Overall, these results do not provide support for Hypothesis 4b. These results also support Hypothesis 3b by suggesting a negative relationship between sensitivity perceptions and perceived severity.

**Exploratory Analysis on Perceived Error Intentionality**

No formal hypotheses were generated for relationships between social cynicism, tyranny, or sensitivity perceptions on perceived intentionality of leader errors. However, additional regression analyses were conducted to test the relationship between these variables and to explore the potential mediating effect of typical leader perceptions on the relationship between social cynicism and perceived intentionality of leader errors. Table 8 shows results from the regression analysis. Results suggest that social cynicism does not explain variance in perceived intentionality of leader errors (β = -0.02, p = .795). Results also suggest that neither tyranny perceptions (β = 0, p = .982) nor sensitivity perceptions (β = -0.13, p = .070), explain variance in perceived intentionality. Due to the lack of significance, follow-up mediation analyses were not conducted.

The correlations shown in Table 2 were also investigated to draw conclusions about convergent and discriminant validity. Similar to previous studies (Singelis et al., 2003), social cynicism was positively related to pessimism (r = .26, p < .001) and neuroticism (r = .29, p < .001) and negatively related to trust in leaders (r = -.37, p < .001) which is similar to the relationship between trust in others. There were also significant correlations between ILT sensitivity and tyranny perceptions with leadership covariates. Sensitivity was positively related
to trust in leaders \( (r = .30, p < .001) \) and tyranny was negatively related \( (r = -.24, p < .001) \) as would be expected. It is also interesting to note that sensitivity was positively related to need for leadership \( (r = .21, p < .001) \), whereas tyranny was not related \( (r = .03, p = .713) \) which could indicate that expectations for leaders to be sensitive indicates a higher need for leaders, whereas expectations for tyrannical leaders does not indicate a high need for leaders. Overall, the correlations support previously established relationships for social cynicism with relevant covariates are the correlations are interpretable for ILT trait perceptions as well.

**Discussion**

This study aimed to extend our understanding of negative follower ILTs, negative beliefs regarding social interaction, and follower evaluations of leader error. A connection between negative expectations for leaders and a follower’s identification of and perceived severity of leader error was proposed, and these expectations were considered as the mechanism through which general social beliefs influence the evaluation of leader errors. This research contributed to empirical investigations of negative typical ILTs and investigated leader errors as an event that may be impacted by them. Not all of the hypotheses were supported, such as the expected effects of social cynicism beliefs and negative ILTs on perceived severity of leader errors. There was support for the relationship between social cynicism and tyranny perceptions, as well as tyranny perceptions and leader error identification. Finally, the covariates provided convergent and discriminant validity that supported the nature of the construct relationships.

**Theoretical Contributions**

This research contributes to leadership theory and literature in two ways. The first theoretical contribution is in the advancement of negative ILT research. The study answers a call to attend to ILT prototypes other than positive ideals (Junker & Van Dick 2014; Foti et al., 2017).
The results show initial support for a potential antecedent of negative ILTs. Specifically, social cynicism beliefs were associated with higher tyranny perceptions of typical leaders. However, social cynicism beliefs were unrelated to perceptions of sensitivity. It could be the case that social cynicism beliefs only impact certain leader trait perceptions, namely that leaders are manipulative and domineering in their relationships. Social cynicism beliefs are described by beliefs that people are manipulative and self-interested, rather than necessarily unempathetic, so it could be due to more experiences in manipulative relationships. Social cynicism beliefs did not seem to have an effect on leader error alone and thus the mediating mechanisms could not be fully tested in this study, however the results may indicate a need for further investigation of this mediating mechanism. Results were marginally significant for the effects of social cynicism beliefs on leader error mediated through tyranny perceptions, but were not supportive of the path mediated by sensitivity perceptions. Social cynicism beliefs and tyranny perceptions should be investigated in other leader error responses such as causal attributions or willingness to follow after an error, and could be investigated in the responses to leader behavior such as relationship repair strategies.

Second, the results provide initial empirical support for the propositions set by Schyns and Hansbrough (2008), that follower ILTs influence the perception of leader error. Specifically, tyranny perceptions of typical leaders influence how likely a follower is to identify an event as leader error. This is different from the traditional ideal prototypes hypothesis, and rather shows that even one’s general expectations for leaders can influence how a follower responds to error. Tyranny perceptions were related with the identification of leader error in an unexpected direction. Instead of an attuned perception toward negative information, it seems that followers with expectations for tyrannical leaders were less likely to identify errors. It could be the case that rather than capturing differences in identification alone, these individuals did not perceive some
behaviors as severe enough to be considered an error. This would suggest that identification of leader error is confounded with error severity perceptions. That is, expectations impact the identification of error as well, such that events that are not disruptive or severe enough do not get attended to or identified (Morgeson et al., 2015). A possible explanation is that because errors are expected, these individuals are less disrupted, and don’t need to search for confirming evidence. Another potential explanation is that these followers may not view it as an error, because they view it as an intentional outcome. Although causal attributions were not tested in this study, perceived intentionality of errors did not seem to be related to negative ILTs. Finally, sensitivity perceptions did not seem to have a relationship with the identification of leader errors. This does not necessarily mean sensitivity is less important in the context of leader errors, as these perceptions may play more of a role when considered with other ILT attributes and when considering follower attributions of leader errors. Alternatively, a lack of sensitivity may be a neutral evaluation of leaders rather than specifically a negative one.

**Practical Implications**

Consistent with propositions made by Schyns and Hansbrough (2008), follower images of leaders do influence how followers evaluate leader error. There is something to be said about negative trait expectations of leaders and the expectations of leader errors. First, individuals who have socially cynical beliefs do seem to hold negative expectations of leaders and leader interactions. Whether social cynicism leads to negative ILTs cannot be answered through this research, however, the results suggest they are related and this has implications for how followers respond to many leader behaviors such as transgressions, errors, or abusive supervision. Furthermore, followers with negative-typical ILTs and followers with social cynicism beliefs differentially attend to ambiguous events such as leader errors. That is, these
followers actually identify fewer leader errors, which may indicate they are not attending to these events as often, or they are not considering these behaviors as severe enough to be considered errors. Lower error identification would likely have benefits and consequences. For example, followers with negative beliefs may not be overwhelmed by the negative effects of leader errors or the perception of leader violations. That is, they may give their leaders more “license to fail” (Geissner & Van Knippenberg, 2008) and be less disrupted by errors and the faults of their leaders. However, these individuals may also be unable to identify leader errors that impact themselves or others in their organization negatively, which may be problematic in the long term for conflict management, relationship repair, and repairing potentially negative outcomes of leader errors. If problems cannot be identified, they cannot be addressed.

**Limitations and Future Research Directions**

One limitation of the study is the use of only cross-sectional methods, which on their own are not sufficient to support causal claims. This is due to risks of endogeneity in the proposed model such as the potential for omitted variables that are not controlled for statistically or with random assignment to a manipulated treatment, and the risk of simultaneity in the model between independent variables, since they are collected at one time point with a common source and common method (Antonakis et al., 2010). That is, without a more causal design, it is impossible to make causal claims. Findings from this study do however indicate a need to further investigate the mediating mechanism of negative ILTs, specifically of tyranny perceptions, in follower evaluations of leader error. Future research should consider using experimental designs or use other methods to alleviate endogeneity risk to test for the effects of social cynicism and negative ILTs on follower responses to leader error.
Another potential limitation of the study is the range restriction on perceived severity and intentionality of leader errors. It appears that the full range of these variables was not fully captured, as the means were high and standard deviations were low. This is likely due to the fact that participants were rating errors that they subjectively indicated were errors, so it may have been counterintuitive for a participant to subsequently rate it as a low-severity event. This methodological concern may however provide insight into how followers respond to leader errors and how severity perceptions can be used in the future. For example, future research should control for perceived severity as a covariate to account for any variance explained by the severity of the error, rather than investigating severity as an outcome. That is, severity may be mostly determined by the nature of the error and its outcome and may be explained by the subjective identification of error itself.

Finally, the investigation of follower evaluations of leader error without the consideration of follower attributions (Schyns & Hansbrough, 2008; Follmer et al., 2019) should be met with caution. Causal attributions play a role in the evaluation of leader errors, because only when leaders are blamed for the error may it violate follower norm expectations of leader task and relationship competence. If it is perceived that situational factors are the cause of the error, there may not be any violations at all because it is not seen as controllable by the leader. Thus, perceptions of severity and intentionality of leader errors may be heavily influenced by follower attributions. Future research on leader errors that investigate follower perceptions of errors should continue to account for follower attributions of leader error. Also, social cynicism beliefs and negative ILTs may be moderators of causal attributions themselves, such that followers with negative beliefs may be more likely to internally attribute cause to the leader after a certain type of error such as task or relationship. This is another viable direction for future research.
This research provides opportunity for future research and insight into ILTs. It also provides more opportunities to advance underdeveloped areas of research in leadership theory such as leader errors and in social psychology theory in terms of social cynicism. This study has advanced the understanding of follower negative-typical ILTs by suggesting a possible antecedent, and by empirically testing propositions that ILTs play a role in the evaluation of leader errors. Future research should consider other antecedents of negative-typical ILTs from follower-centric and leader-centric perspectives. It is clear that negative ILTs have an influence on how followers perceive leader behavior and how they react to leaders, especially in ambiguous situations. Determining other follower characteristics that influence the development of negative ILTs will expand followership theory in important ways. Future research should continue to expand on typical and negative ILTs as they may be important predictors of a more general evaluation of leader behavior and outcomes rather than reactions to specific leaders.
References


leadership: Alternative wisdom for a complex world (pp. 135-55). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.


### Table 1

*Frequencies and Descriptive Statistics from Pilot Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader Error (Included)</th>
<th># Identified</th>
<th>% Identified</th>
<th>Mean Severity</th>
<th>SD Severity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scolding for lateness (error 1)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rude joke (error 2)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudely dismissing team idea’s (error 3)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yelling at another team member (error 4)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harsh criticism towards input (error 5)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 65. All percentages are based on this sample size. Severity was measured on a 4-point scale (ranging from 1-Not at all severe to 4 – Extremely severe).*
Table 2

**Correlation Matrix with Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for Continuous Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Social Cynicism</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>(.82)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ILT Sensitivity</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>-.41**</td>
<td>(.77)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ILT Tyranny</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>(.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ILT Intelligence</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>(.84)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ILT Dedication</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>-.30***</td>
<td>.64***</td>
<td>(.85)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trust in leader</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>-.37***</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>-.24***</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Need for leadership</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td>(.94)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Pessimism</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.26***</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>(.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Neuroticism</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.40***</td>
<td>(.70)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Error Severity</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>(-- )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Error Intentionality</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.35***</td>
<td>(-- )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 221. Scale reliabilities are represented on the diagonals. Perceived severity and perceived intentionality for the seven included errors, N for computing correlations is 208 and 206 respectively due to individual differences in identifying errors.*

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.
**Table 3**

*Linear Regression Model Predicting Leader Tyranny Perceptions by Social Cynicism*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>95% CI [LL, UL]</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>1.032</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>[.05, 2.01]</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cynicism</td>
<td>.539</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>[.246, .832]</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $B$ represents unstandardized regression weights. $\beta$ represents standardized regression weights. LL and UL indicate lower and upper limits of a confidence interval. All missing cases deleted listwise.
Table 4

*Ordinal regression Analyses Predicting Error Identification (Specific)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>95% CI [LL, UL]</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cynicism</td>
<td>-.45</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>[-.91, .01]</td>
<td>.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILT Tyranny</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>[-.49, -.09]</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILT Sensitivity</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>[-.16, .40]</td>
<td>.396</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. B represents unstandardized regression weights. β represents standardized regression weights. LL and UL indicate lower and upper limits of a confidence interval. All missing cases deleted listwise. Each model includes separate predictors, and was not entered hierarchically.*

* p < .05. ** p < .01.
Table 5

Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Perceived Error Severity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>95% CI [LL, UL]</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cynicism</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>[-.06, .06]</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILT Tyranny</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>[-.03, .014]</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILT Sensitivity</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>[-.06, .004]</td>
<td>-.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. B represents unstandardized regression weights. β represents standardized regression weights. LL and UL indicate lower and upper limits of a confidence interval. All missing cases deleted listwise. Each model includes separate predictors, and was not entered hierarchically.

* p < .05. ** p < .01.
Table 6

Test of Indirect Effects of Two ILT perceptions on the Relationship Between Social Cynicism and Leader Error Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>IE</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>95% CI [LL, UL]</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Social Cyn. → Sensitivity → Error ID</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>[-.02, .12]</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>.735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Cyn. → Tyranny → Error ID</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>[-.35, -.03]</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-1.94</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component</td>
<td>Social Cyn. → Sensitivity</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>[-.32, .13]</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-0.75</td>
<td>.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sensitivity → Error ID</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>[-.46, .23]</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>.506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Cyn. → Tyranny</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>[.26, .82]</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tyranny → Error ID</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>[-.52, -.05]</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-2.27</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Social Cyn. → Error ID</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>[-.76, .28]</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-0.98</td>
<td>.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Social Cyn. → Error ID</td>
<td>-.40</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>[-.85, .06]</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Confidence intervals computed with bias corrected bootstrapping (10,000 samples). LL and UL indicate lower and upper limits of the confidence intervals. Social Cyn. = Social Cynicism
Table 7

Test of Indirect Effects of Two ILT Perceptions on the Relationship Between Social cynicism and Perceived Error Severity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>IE</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>95% CI [LL, UL]</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Social Cyn. $\rightarrow$ Sensitivity $\rightarrow$ Error Severity</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>[-.007, .014]</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Cyn. $\rightarrow$ Tyranny $\rightarrow$ Error Severity</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>[-.032, -.001]</td>
<td>-.032</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component</td>
<td>Social Cyn. $\rightarrow$ Sensitivity</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>[-.26, .179]</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sensitivity $\rightarrow$ Error Severity</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>[-.08, -.01]</td>
<td>-.176</td>
<td>-2.48</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Cyn. $\rightarrow$ Tyranny</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>[.23, .81]</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tyranny $\rightarrow$ Error Severity</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>[-.048, -.00]</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Social Cyn. $\rightarrow$ Error Severity</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>[-.04, .06]</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>.605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Social Cyn. $\rightarrow$ Error Severity</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>[-.06, .06]</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>.954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Confidence intervals computed with bias corrected bootstrapping (10,000 samples). LL and UL indicate lower and upper limits of the confidence intervals. Social Cyn. = Social cynicism*
Table 8  

*Linear Regression Analyses Predicting Perceived Error Intentionality*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>95% CI [LL, UL]</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cynicism</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>[-.08, .06]</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILT Tyranny</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>[-.032, .031]</td>
<td>-.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILT Sensitivity</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>[-.08, .003]</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $B$ represents unstandardized regression weights. $\beta$ represents standardized regression weights. LL and UL indicate lower and upper limits of a confidence interval. All missing cases deleted listwise.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.  


Figure 1

Proposed Theoretical Model

Note. The proposed model depicting the relationships between social cynicism and negative ILT perceptions, negative ILT perceptions on leader error outcomes, and the mediating effects of ILTs.
Appendix A: Leader Error Vignette

You are a product marketing team member for a large corporation that markets the best home cleaning products to the public. Your job is to deliver creative messages about specific features and products to your intended audiences. You have worked hard on many team meetings over the past few years and have established rapport with everyone including your department leader Jason, the Senior Marketing Operations Manager. Due to your excellent performance and reputation for contributing creative ideas, Jason asked you to join a global marketing team with other managers from different areas around the world. The project would involve a diverse team with many different skills and backgrounds. Recently, Jason held the first conference call in which he intended to introduce the team members and begin brainstorming right away. The team was tasked with creating new products and strategies for marketing those products.

The conference call was scheduled during the workday. You and Jason were at the same location, so you took the call in the same conference room from Jason’s smartphone. On your way in Jason said that you were late and scolded you (7) because he wanted to debrief you before the call, however he sent you the details in an email 15 minutes ago and you were in the middle of an important meeting (1). It would have been impossible to show up at the time he wanted unless you had more notice. Before the call started, he gave you a very quick breakdown of the team and the goals of the first meeting. He told you that there would be some team members connecting from across the world in China, India, and the UK. During this time, he made a joke about how you might need to speak a little slower for the non-native English speakers because they do not really understand him all the time (2). The conference call started, and Jason introduced you to the group and gave everyone a chance to speak a little bit about themselves, their roles in the team and organization. Everyone was then asked to give some initial comments
or ideas regarding the project. One member, Amy, spoke about her idea to market products on new social media that target younger generations. You responded and said it was a good idea but addressed that the younger audience may not care for the product. Jason responded by telling Amy that she should keep her ideas to product design because that is what she was hired for, and that otherwise she may as well let others do the talking (3).

In the middle of the conference call Jason’s phone buzzed as he received a phone call. He insisted on taking it because it was a member from another team that he was leading, and they were near the final stages of the project. He answered the phone immediately (6) and began to raise his voice. He yelled “Really Tim? Don’t you know that I am in a meeting for another project right now! Why can’t you just get a hold of yourself and get the job done? I don’t have time for your problems right now (4).” Jason turned back to you and apologized for the inconvenience and then returned to the conference call and apologized to the team as well. When it was your turn to speak about your ideas you decided to present some marketing ad and logo concepts that you designed within the last month while doodling. You were able to get everyone’s email so that they could all see your designs and provide some feedback. You received a mixture of responses; some thought the designs were great while others thought there could be improvements. Jason’s responded by saying to you “anybody who has a sense of taste would stop that from going on our media pages, let’s move on for now and maybe get some fresh ideas for design next time.” (7) The rest of the meeting went smoothly. Jason let you all know that you would be expected to complete an online conflict management training course before proceeding.