

DISPOSITIONAL AGREEABLENESS PREDICTS
OSTRACIZING OTHERS AT WORK

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ABSTRACT

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Ostracism is a prevalent and powerful phenomenon in people's lives, and has a great impact on people's psychological well-being. Whereas most research on ostracism focuses on the target (people who are being ostracized), this study focused on the source (people who ostracize others). The purpose is to investigate the relationship between dispositional agreeableness and the likelihood of ostracizing others in the workplace. A 14-item workplace ostracism scale (WOSP) was created to measure workers' likelihood of ostracizing coworkers. One-hundred and sixty-two undergraduate students from Michigan State University with work experience involving interaction with coworkers completed the Big Five Inventory (including agreeableness), the WOSP, and other demographic and workplace background measures. An exploratory factor analysis yielded two different factors of the WOSP: inclusion and exclusion. Multiple regression analysis showed that agreeableness positively predicted workplace inclusion and negatively predicted workplace exclusion, as expected. Also, participants reported ostracizing coworkers more in workplaces with a norm that is tolerable of ostracism. This implies that by promoting an inclusive workplace norm, managers can reduce the prevalence of ostracism. The WOSP shows promise as a measurement tool to advance the understanding of dispositional and environmental factors on ostracizing others at work.

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Introduction

Ostracism is a prevalent and powerful phenomenon in people's lives (Williams, 2001, 2009). It is the phenomenon of being ignored and excluded by others during interaction. Ostracism has a great impact on people's psychological health. Targets of ostracism experience an immediate threat to four basic needs: need to belong, need for control, self-esteem, and meaningful existence (Williams, 2009). The workplace is a common place where ostracism happens. For example, according to a survey involving 262 full-time workers, two-thirds of the participants received the silent treatment (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). In recent years, researchers have begun investigating workplace ostracism, and their initial attempts suggested that ostracism has detrimental effects on aspects of employees' well-being and behavior (i.e., job performance, work engagement, job stress, etc.) (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008; Leung, Wu, Chen, & Young, 2011; Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011).

Despite the fact that ostracism is both ubiquitous and powerful, it is surprising that researchers have not examined the phenomenon from the perspective of those doing the ostracizing (i.e., the source), with a few exceptions (e.g., Wesselmann, Wirth, Pryor, Reeder, & Williams, 2012; Wittenbaum, Shulman, & Braz, 2010). An examination of workplace ostracism from the source perspective is important because only when people know the causes of ostracizing, can they train their employees and prevent workplace ostracism. This paper will examine a predictor of ostracizing others: dispositional agreeableness.

Chapter 1 Ostracism and Agreeableness

Ostracism at Work

Most of the research and theory development about ostracism concerns the psychological consequences of being ostracized (i.e., the target perspective). Many studies have investigated the effects of being ostracized using the cyber ball paradigm (Williams, 2001). The cyber ball paradigm usually involves two virtual computer-generated players (the sources of ostracism) intentionally excluding the lone participant (the target of ostracism) during the online ball-toss game. In the ostracism condition, the online program was designed so that the participant would not get the ball in a ball-tossing game after an initial period of inclusion. In the inclusion condition, most experiments let the participants receive the ball a third of the time in a three-person group. Then, the researcher investigates the psychological effects of being ostracized. Through the cyber-ball paradigm, scholars gain much insight about the reactions from the targets of ostracism. Williams (2001) found that ostracism has “powerful and fairly consistent effects” (p. 140): Without verbal communication, participants had more negative emotions and feelings when ostracized compared to when they were included. People who were excluded in the game reported high aversive impact, which includes negative mood, threatened needs, negative sense of belonging, and perceptions of low group cohesiveness. Typically, the participants experience a lower level of positive mood, sense of belonging, self-esteem, meaningful existence, and control after being excluded in the cyber-ball game (Ruggieri, Bendixen, Gabriel, & Alsaker, 2013a, 2013b; Sebastian, Blakemore, & Charman, 2009). Although the cyber-ball paradigm gives the experimenters ways to manipulate the quantity and quality of ostracism (Wesselmann & Williams, 2013), it prohibits investigations about the sources’ behavior and the antecedents of ostracism – about which we know little.

Like the laboratory experimentation, research on workplace ostracism focuses on the target perspective. Workplace ostracism happens when an individual or a group (the source) ignores or excludes another organizational member (the target) (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013). It includes actions such as avoiding conversations and eye contact, refusing to interact with the ostracized person, exclusion, silent treatment, and so on (Leung et al., 2011). Workplace ostracism has detrimental effects on workers and organizational performance. For example, Hitlan and Noel (2009) investigated the effects of workplace exclusion on counterproductive workplace behavior (CWB), showing that supervision exclusion is positively related to organizational CWB, and co-worker exclusion is positively related to interpersonal CWB. Another study done by Hitlan, Clifton, and DeSoto (2006) investigated the effects of workplace ostracism on workers' psychological well-being. Specifically, supervisor satisfaction, co-worker satisfaction, and psychological health are all negatively related to workplace exclusion. Ferris et al. (2008) found that ostracism is negatively related to belongingness, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence, which is consistent with Williams' (2001) statement. Another study done by Leung et al. (2011) found that workplace ostracism is negatively related to service performance and this relationship is mediated by work engagement. It is more subtle, covert, and implicit than other forms of detrimental behaviors, while it is still harmful to both employers and supervisors at work (Leung et al., 2011).

Most of the studies about workplace ostracism are survey based. The researchers usually recruit participants in various occupations and let them complete a pencil-paper questionnaire or an online survey (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan & Noel, 2009; Leung et al., 2011). Among all the studies investigating workplace ostracism, most of the studies employ the Ferris et al. (2008) workplace ostracism scale (WOS). Ferris et al. (2008) define workplace ostracism as the extent

to which a worker feels ignored or excluded by co-workers in the workplace. A sampling of the 13 WOS items includes: others ignored you at work, others at work shut you out of the conversation, you have been included in conversations at work (reverse coded), and others refuse to talk to you at work. Ferris et al. (2008) tested the coefficient alpha reliability across four samples, and the results showed that it is a reliable scale (.89, .93, .96, and .94 across all four samples). Also, they demonstrated using confirmatory factor analysis that the scale represents a single underlying factor concerning workplace ostracism. Some studies used Hitlan and Noel's (2009) revised workplace exclusion scale (WES-R) to investigate the effects of ostracism in the workplace. This scale contains 17 items spanning three subscales: one's perception of being excluded by co-workers, one's perception of being excluded by supervisors, and language-based exclusion. It shows acceptable coefficient alpha reliability (.76 for co-workers and .75 for supervisors).

To date, researchers have employed experimental and survey methods to study social ostracism from the target perspective. Research from the source perspective has varied in methodological approach so far. Sommer et al. (2001) let participants write two stories, one about a time when they were given the silent treatment and the other about a time when they gave others the silent treatment. The researchers content analyzed the responses to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and the use of ostracism. The result shows that people with low-self-esteem were more likely to use ostracism as a means to terminate the relationship than people with high self-esteem. Robinson, O'Reilly, and Wang (2013) identified purposeful and non-purposeful organizational antecedents of ostracism. Specifically, low costs of ostracism, limited alternative mechanisms, ease of oversight, and disagreement about the social norm are the four basic reasons for ostracism. Wesselmann et al. (2012) employed the cyber ball paradigm

to investigate the reason for people ostracizing others. They found that people tend to ostracize the person who is burdensome (i.e., slows down the game), but to include people who are unfairly ostracized. Williams (2001) has employed the diary method to explore ostracism from the source perspective. The Sydney Ostracism Record for Source (SOR-S) consists of 10 questions regarding the frequency and reason of ostracizing others. Participants reported their ostracizing behavior each time during a two-week period. Over the two-week period, participants reported 1.18 times per person per day that they ostracized others, the most commonly toward strangers (rather than friends) and involving social disconnection while maintaining physical presence (Williams, 2001). Zadro (2004) has done interviews with long-term targets and sources of ostracism and identified several characteristics about sources of ostracism. In these long-term situations, sources usually ignore the targets over all mediums (i.e., both over the cyberspace and physically) and think they have clear reasons to ostracize the targets. Some sources were proud of using ostracism, while others were penitent. Some sources also like using ostracism because of its effectiveness. Besides, if one is familiar with the use of ostracism, he/she would be more likely to use this strategy on others (Zadro, 2004).

To measure ostracism at work from the source perspective, one must understand what it is. Ostracism is considered to be one form of rejection, which involves perceived lower relational evaluation than people desire. Specifically, ostracism connotes extreme dissociation in which the rejecter completely ignores, avoids, or excludes the rejected individual (Williams, Forgas, & Hippel, 2005). Workplace ostracism is often more subtle, passive, and covert, compared to other forms of aggression or abuse (Leung et al., 2011). Robinson et al. (2013) proposed three unique characteristics about ostracism at work. First, motive is not necessary to ostracize. Ostracism can happen (as perceived by the target) even when the source does not notice it. And one particular

behavior may seem to be ostracism to one person, but not to another (Leung et al., 2011). Second, ostracism is partly defined by the social norm, whether it is accepted to do so under the context. Third, ostracism is often the result of acts of omission rather than commission. This makes ostracism extremely harmful to one's belongingness and creates ambiguity. Robinson et al. (2013) propose that purposeful (i.e., deliberate) ostracism is more likely to occur in the workplace when the social costs for doing so are low and the alternative mechanisms for achieving the same outcome are limited.

This paper focuses on developing a scale of Workplace Ostracism from the Source Perspective (WOSP) and examining its relationship with agreeableness. Both of the scales assessing workplace ostracism (i.e., Ferris, et al., 2008; Hitlan & Noel, 2009) focus on the target perspective (i.e. the experience of being ostracized by others). The items in these scales pertain to the avoiding (minimizing or avoiding interaction) and disengaging (not responding to the other) dimensions of social exclusion (Kerr & Levine, 2008). To maintain consistency with these scales, the scale developed in this paper keeps the content largely the same yet changes the orientation to the source perspective (i.e., the person doing the ostracizing). Like the Ferris et al. (2008) scale, the present scale is presumed to be unidimensional.

Worker Agreeableness

Considerable amount of evidence has suggested that virtually all personality measures can be categorized into five factors, the "Big Five" (Digman & Inouye, 1986; Goldberg, 1990; John & Srivastava, 1999; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999). The five factors include: (1) Extraversion, (2) Agreeableness, (3) Conscientiousness, (4) Neuroticism, and (5) Openness to experience. Agreeableness is one dimension of the Big Five that is important to maintain a good relationship with other people. Agreeable people generate positive attributions of others and

control their negative emotions during interactions. Agreeable people show signs of gentleness, cooperation and trust, and they are often described as “good-natured” people (John & Srivastava, 1999). The opposite side of agreeableness is described as irritable, jealous, negativistic, and headstrong (Digman & Inouye, 1986). Trust, straightforwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty, and tender-mindedness are the six facets of agreeableness (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991; McCrae & John, 1992). Generally speaking, agreeableness is the construct that describes people’s empathy, willing to cooperate, and kindness. Agreeable people see the best in others and generate positive attributions for other people’s behavior (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996).

Studies have shown that agreeable people tend to deal with conflict constructively and show empathy toward others. Therefore, agreeableness is likely to reduce the possibility of ostracizing others. For example, agreeableness is negatively related to the occurrence of work-family conflicts (Bruck, 2003). It also influences employees’ service performance in academic settings, meaning that agreeable people are more likely to support others (Simon, 1998). Graziano et al. (1996) found that agreeable people tend to choose negotiation and disengagement tactics rather than power assertion tactics when facing conflicts. Besides, Graziano, Habashi, Sheese, and Tobin (2007) found that high agreeableness predicts pro-social behaviors. Jensen-Campbell, Gleason, Adams, and Malcolm (2003) investigated agreeableness among children and adolescents, and discovered that agreeable children are good at maintaining personal relationships with other children and more likely to use constructive tactics in coping with conflicts than those low in agreeableness. Agreeableness also moderates affective responses and choices of tactics during conflict; Agreeable people tend to trust and negotiate with people to solve conflicts (Gadke, 2012; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001; Komarraju, Dollinger, &

Lovell, 2012). Female students who are low in agreeableness are likely to suppress their expressions to cope with conflicts (Witte, 2001). Buss (1992) demonstrated that during conflict situations, partners with low agreeableness are significantly more likely to use the silent treatment, which is a form of ostracism, than those with high agreeableness. It is clear that people with low agreeableness may be likely to use ostracism as the tactic to cope with interpersonal conflict.

Not only does agreeableness influence behaviors, it also influences people's perception about interpersonal interactions, and thus influences people's behavioral intentions, such as the intention to ostracize others. For example, agreeableness was found to be positively related with social skills, empathy, and trust for girls (Sneed, 2002). Attribution style is also related to agreeableness. Agreeableness lowers people's prejudice against overweight women; High agreeableness participants express more liking toward the target (an overweight woman) (Bruce Graham, 2008). Agreeableness also facilitates the emergence of team-helping norms; Teams' minimum agreeableness has a direct positive relationship with helping-norm emergence, associated with other-oriented values, and personal-helping beliefs (Raver, Ehrhart, & Chadwick, 2012).

A few studies have directly examined the relationship between agreeableness and ostracism. Wu et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between dispositional antecedents and workplace ostracism. The data collected from 268 subordinates and 106 corresponding supervisors in China suggested that extraversion and agreeableness are significant negatively related to being ostracized at work. Hitlan and Noel (2009) demonstrated that workers who have higher agreeableness are less likely to be ostracized by co-workers and supervisors. These studies show that those high in agreeableness are less likely to be targets of ostracism. In a

laboratory setting, Wittenbaum (2012) composed three-person groups to have members either high or low in agreeableness. One of the members was uninformed about important information related to the group task and thus was a likely target of ostracism. She hypothesized that high agreeable group compositions would include the uninformed group member more than low agreeable group compositions, and group agreeableness would reduce the need threat and mood loss for uninformed members. However, the result showed the uninformed member was equally included between high and low agreeable groups. But the groups' high agreeableness did reduce the threat to belongingness and mood loss compared to low agreeable groups. It is possible that the high experimental demand to ostracize the uninformed member left little room for the group's agreeableness composition to moderate it.

The aim of the present study is to develop a reliable measurement of ostracizing others at work that will demonstrate enough variability to covary with agreeableness. High agreeableness is associated with empathic social relations and lower incidence of being ostracized at work. Therefore, I hypothesize that agreeableness also predicts being the source of ostracizing others at work. I propose the following hypothesis.

H1: The more agreeable workers are, the less likely they will ostracize others.

Chapter 2 Method

Participants

Participants were 163 undergraduate students from the Department of Communication Participant Pool at Michigan State University who volunteered in exchange for credit in their communication course. Students with work experience involving interaction with coworkers were eligible to participate. One participant indicated that he had no work experience, so his data were eliminated from further analysis. Among the remaining 162 participants, most of them were female (62.3%), Caucasian (81.5%), and subordinates in the workplace (82.1%). The average age of the participants was 20.48 ($SD = 1.87$). Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants		
Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Age (years)		
18	18	11.1
19	30	18.5
20	42	25.9
21	35	21.6
22	25	15.4
23 and above	12	7.4
Sex		
Male	61	37.7
Female	101	62.3
Race		
Caucasian/White	132	83.0
African American	11	6.9
Asian American	10	6.3
Hispanic American	4	2.5
Other	2	1.3
Rank		
freshmen	35	21.6
sophomore	33	20.4
junior	45	27.8
senior	49	30.2
Status		
Supervisor	29	17.9
Subordinates	133	82.1
<i>Note. N=162</i>		

Measures

Agreeableness. Participants completed the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by John and Srivastava (1999) to measure workers' agreeableness (See Section I in Appendix A). The

BFI is used to measure the Big-Five personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. The BFI has demonstrated high reliability and validity across different studies (John & Srivastava, 1999; Soto & John, 2009). Samples of the subscale of agreeableness are “I am considerate and kind to everyone” and “I like to cooperate with others.” The agreeableness subscale contains nine items covering two facets: altruism and compliance. Participants rated their agreement with each item from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). After reverse coding four items, scores were averaged across the nine items with higher scores representing more agreeableness.

Ostracism at work. The 14-item WOSP tested the frequency of ostracism in the workplace from the source perspective (See Section IV in Appendix A). Participants were asked to think about the one job they had that involved the most interaction with coworkers. Keeping that job in mind, they answered the ostracism questions with respect to how they treat difficult coworkers (who are hard to work with or disliked). Sample items include: “I give the silent treatment to a difficult coworker” and “There is a difficult coworker who I try to avoid.” Participants identified the frequency of occurrence of each item on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 7, (*always*).

Workplace background. Although all participants had work experience involving interaction with coworkers, questions about their workplace experiences focused on their “chosen job” – the one job (either past or present) in which they had the most interaction with coworkers. Participants described that job in an open-ended question along with their role, length of time in the job, number of employees, and team size (See Section II in Appendix A). Keeping that chosen job in mind, participants completed the WOSP and two other scales. Pearce and Gregersen’s (1991) 8-item workplace interdependence and independence scale was used to

assess the degree to which participants rely on or work separately from coworkers in their chosen job (See Section III in Appendix A). Finally, a 7-item ostracism norm at work scale assessed participants' perceptions of whether most coworkers in their chosen job ostracize or include others at work (See Section V in Appendix A). After reverse coding and averaging items, the higher their score, the stronger the norm to ostracize others in their workplace.

Control variables. The workers' other personality traits from the BFI (i.e., extroversion, openness to experience, neuroticism, and conscientiousness), social desirability, and demographic variables (i.e., age, sex, rank in college, and status: subordinates/supervisors) were controlled statistically. These variables have potential effects on workers' likelihood of ostracism (Buss, 1992; Horton, 1995; Rank, Nelson, Allen, & Xu, 2009; Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001). Workers' sex was coded with male as "0" and female as "1". Workers' status was coded with subordinates as "0", and supervisors as "1." Participants' race and rank in college were also asked in the questionnaire (See Section VII in Appendix A). Additionally, I employed the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MC-SDS) (See Section VI in Appendix A) to assess participants' response bias concerning social desirability (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). Controlling participants' social desirability could help to improve the precision of the measurement. The MC-SDS has demonstrated good reliability and validity across different studies (Andrews & Meyer, 2003; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).

Procedure

Students were recruited to participate in a web survey through the Department of Communication Participant Pool. The web survey (placed on Qualtrics) began with a consent page that indicated the study's purpose (i.e., to examine workplace attitudes and behavior) and assured participants of their anonymity. Participants completed the demographic and background

questions, BFI, WOSP, workplace interdependence and independence scale, ostracism norm at work scale, and MC-SDS, knowing that they could skip items without penalty if they felt uncomfortable answering them. At the end of the survey, students linked to a separate survey on Qualtrics to enter their identifying information (for obtaining class credit).

Chapter 3 Results

WOSP Reliability and Validity

Fourteen items of the WOSP scale tested the tendency to ostracize others in the workplace. I expected that these items would form a single factor. Instead, a factor analysis (EFA) using principal components and varimax rotation yielded two different factors: exclusion and inclusion. The Eigenvalues for each are 4.6 and 2.6, respectively. Each sub-scale has seven items with the seven items intended for reverse scoring compromising the inclusion items. A sample of the exclusion items is: “I give the silent treatment to a difficult coworker” and “I avoid making eye contact with difficult coworkers.” A sample of the inclusion items is: “I try to make difficult coworkers feel included” and “I invite difficult coworkers to a social activity.” Summary statistics and factor loadings for each questionnaire item are displayed in Table 2. Within each subscale, no item had a low item-total correlation. Therefore, I retained all seven items for each subscale. The items within each subscale were averaged together to form a reliable composite measure for workplace exclusion ($\alpha = .89$), and workplace inclusion ($\alpha = .75$).

Table 2

The WOSP Scale Items, Factor Loadings from a Varimax-Rotated Principal Components Factor Analysis, and Summary Statistics

Questionnaire Items	Exclusion	Inclusion	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i> ^a
There are difficult coworkers who I ignore.	.827	-.158	3.22	1.70	0.76
I give the silent treatment to a difficult coworker.	.821	-.093	2.70	1.59	0.75
There is a difficult coworker who I try to avoid.	.807	-.091	3.52	1.74	0.73
There are difficult coworkers who I leave out of a conversation.	.780	-.031	3.33	1.58	0.69
I avoid making eye contact with difficult coworkers.	.752	-.155	3.06	1.68	0.68
I interact with difficult coworkers only when it is required.	.711	.062	4.01	1.69	0.59
I withhold information from a difficult coworker.	.697	-.122	2.75	1.52	0.61
I make sure difficult coworkers are up to date with current workplace activities.	-.094	.741	4.70	1.36	0.57
I try to make difficult coworkers feel included.	-.204	.708	4.34	1.37	0.63
I reply to greetings from difficult coworkers.	-.050	.707	5.74	1.30	0.49
I am willing to answer questions from difficult coworkers.	-.001	.689	5.70	1.31	0.47
I inform difficult coworkers about ongoing conversations.	-.009	.618	4.04	1.52	0.42
I choose discussion topics in which difficult coworkers can participate.	-.077	.533	4.12	1.48	0.41
I invite difficult coworkers to a social activity.	-.056	.456	3.33	1.66	0.35

Note. Boldface is used to indicate significant factor loading.

^a Correlation between scale item and subscale total minus that item.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of the main variables in this study. All of the participants had a certain amount of work experience involving interaction with coworkers. The work interdependence scale shows that participants met the criteria for having interaction with their coworkers. A one sample t-test showed that the average work interdependence of the participants ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .66$) was significantly greater than the scale mid-point of 3, $t(161) = 21.02$, $p < .001$. Participants described their “chosen job” in an open-ended question – a job in which most played a subordinate role (82.1%). A great proportion of the responses to the question described their work experience in the food services industry both on and off campus (e.g., servers in restaurants, food preparation and service in the dining hall). Other chosen jobs were in the retail industry as sales associates and cashiers and sports and education industry as teachers or coaches (e.g., teaching languages, assistant coach of students). From reading the “chosen job” descriptions, it appears that all 162 participants met the selection criteria requiring interaction with coworkers. Participants had four years of work experience, on average, about half of which was spent in their chosen job. In this job, the average workgroup size consisted of 13.5 members in a workplace with 68.5 employees, although there was a lot of variability in workgroup and workplace size.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables

	<i>N</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	Valid	Missing		
Agreeableness	159	3	3.85	0.49
Extraversion	158	4	3.61	0.66
Conscientiousness	158	4	3.69	0.48
Neuroticism	158	4	2.77	0.67
Openness	156	6	3.53	0.48
Work interdependence	162	0	4.09	0.66
Work independence	162	0	2.66	0.98
Workplace exclusion	162	0	3.23	1.27
Workplace inclusion	162	0	4.58	0.92
Ostracism norm at work	162	0	2.20	0.72
Social desirability	154	8	17.58	4.96
All work history in months	160	2	48.61	30.87
Months in chosen job	161	1	22.63	19.78
Employees in workplace	156	6	68.50	147.18
Workgroup size	160	2	13.51	21.72

Hypothesis Test

Table 4 shows the Pearson correlation coefficient between the main variables in this study. The two subscales of the WOSP are negatively correlated. Correlation analysis shows that workplace exclusion is negatively correlated with agreeableness and social desirability and positively correlated with workplace independence and workplace norms supporting ostracism. Workplace inclusion is positively correlated with agreeableness, social desirability, workplace interdependence, and workplace norms supporting ostracism. Participants' age, sex, race, rank,

and status (supervisor or subordinate) were not related to either workplace inclusion or workplace exclusion.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the more agreeable workers are, the less likely they will ostracize others. Multiple linear regressions, entering all predictors simultaneously, were used to test the hypothesis. The results showed that when controlling social desirability, other traits of the Big Five, and demographic variables (age, sex, and status), agreeableness significantly predicted workplace inclusion, $t(153) = 2.92, p < .01$, and workplace exclusion, $t(153) = -3.33, p = .001$. Table 5 and Table 6 show the results of multiple linear regressions. Therefore, it was concluded that worker agreeableness is negatively related to the likelihood of ostracizing others in the workplace and positively related to the likelihood of including others at work. Hypothesis 1 was supported. Also, the concurrent validity of the WOSP was bolstered because agreeableness scores correlate with WOSP scores as hypothesized.

Table 4

Pearson Correlation of Main Variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(1) Agreeableness	3.85	0.49										
(2) Extraversion	3.61	0.66	0.236**									
(3) Conscientiousness	3.69	0.48	0.492**	0.316**								
(4) Neuroticism	2.77	0.67	-0.359**	-0.304**	-0.37**							
(5) Openness	3.53	0.48	0.234**	0.131	0.217**	-0.089						
(6) Work interdependence	4.09	0.66	0.29**	0.202*	0.23**	0.053	0.167*					
(7) Work independence	2.66	0.98	-0.265**	-0.112	-0.189*	0.175*	-0.077	-0.348**				
(8) Workplace exclusion	3.23	1.27	-0.381**	-0.291**	-0.207**	0.26**	0.032	-0.075	0.315**			
(9) Workplace inclusion	4.58	0.92	0.317**	0.233**	0.193*	-0.088	0.189*	0.356**	-0.089	-0.226**		
(10) Workplace norm	2.21	0.72	-0.455**	-0.207**	-0.266**	0.177*	-0.089	-0.293**	0.279**	0.531**	-0.337**	
(11) Social desirability	17.58	4.96	0.466**	0.247**	0.362**	-0.352**	0.094	0.179*	-0.26**	-0.308**	0.234**	-0.407**

*.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis for Relationship Between Agreeableness and Workplace Inclusion

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Agreeableness	.558	.191	.294	2.919	.004
Social desirability	.018	.017	.099	1.053	.294
Extraversion	.196	.118	.142	1.660	.099
Conscientiousness	.021	.190	.011	.110	.912
Neuroticism	.147	.138	.108	1.067	.288
Openness	.138	.155	.072	.885	.378
Age	.034	.038	.071	.897	.371
Sex	.095	.174	.049	.546	.586
Status	-.034	.195	-.014	-.176	.861

a. Dependent Variable: workplace inclusion

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analysis for Relationship Between Agreeableness and Workplace Exclusion

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Agreeableness	-.834	.250	-.320	-3.330	.001
Social desirability	-.041	.023	-.163	-1.813	.072
Extraversion	-.339	.154	-.179	-2.196	.030
Conscientiousness	.209	.249	.077	.839	.403
Neuroticism	.180	.180	.096	.997	.321
Openness	.490	.204	.186	2.410	.017
Age	.070	.049	.108	1.417	.159
Sex	.102	.228	.039	.449	.654
Status	-.148	.256	-.044	-.577	.565

a. Dependent Variable: workplace exclusion

Chapter 4 Discussion

The aim of the study was to develop a scale of workplace ostracism from the source perspective (WOSP). I expected the scale to be unidimensional, however, two factors emerged: inclusion and exclusion. Both sub-scales have seven items and are reliable in terms of Cronbach's alpha. This suggests that the WOSP has two potential facets: one is the tendency to include coworkers and the other is to actively exclude coworkers. Although the two factors are negatively correlated, the strength of the association is not high, implying that inclusion and exclusion may occur independent of each other rather than being two ends of the same continuum.

The WOSP is the first attempt to scale ostracism from the source perspective and is one of the few studies investigating ostracism from the source perspective. Early research on sources of ostracism used qualitative methods, such as the diary method and interviews (e.g., Williams, Wheeler, & Harvey, 2001; Zadro, 2004). There are few laboratory paradigms for studying the source perspective, in part because of the difficulty of naturally inducing ostracism, which is counter-normative behavior (Zadro & Gonsalkorale, 2014). For the few laboratory paradigms that exist, they tend to lack ecological validity because ostracism comes at the request of an experimenter. The WOSP provides benefits over these prior methods. First, it is easily implemented for broad populations of workers. Second, it relies on workers' recollections of actual experiences at work, potentially allowing researchers to understand natural ostracism in context. Third, the WOSP can be used in conjunction with other measures to determine the antecedents and consequences of ostracism. In sum, the WOSP promises to advance the understanding of sources of ostracism in ways that prior methods have not enabled.

Zadro and Gonsalkorale (2014) identified possible consequences of ostracizing others but did not speculate about what predicts others to ostracize. The present study showed that workers' dispositional agreeableness negatively predicts ostracizing difficult coworkers, so that the more agreeable workers are, the less likely they will ostracize their coworkers. Likewise, agreeable employees are more likely to include difficult coworkers by replying to their greetings and answering their questions. These relationships emerged when controlling for social desirability, other personality traits of the Big Five and demographic variables (age, sex). This result is consistent with prior findings that people who have low agreeableness give others the silent treatment more often and talk less than high agreeable people in dealing with conflict (Buss, 1992; Gadke, 2012; Graziano et al., 1996; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001; Komarraju et al., 2012; Witte, 2001). This study shows that people's personality predicts their ostracism behavior.

Other dispositional traits could also be the antecedents of ostracism. Table 6 showed that two other dimensions of the Big Five, openness to experience and extroversion, significantly predicted workplace exclusion. Specifically, openness positively predicted exclusion while extroversion negatively predicted exclusion. Although extraversion predicted workplace exclusion both when ignoring and controlling for other predictors, the relationship between openness and exclusion only emerged when controlling for other predictors. This latter relationship seems counterintuitive, given that people who are open to experience tend to initiate more conversations with others (Cuperman & Ickes, 2009). Therefore, one might expect to find a negative relationship between openness and excluding others. The effect of extroversion, on the other hand, seems more intuitive. People who are low in extroversion are more passive, less outgoing, and less sociable than people who are high in extroversion (McCrae & John, 1992). Therefore, extroverted people tend to seek external arousal, such as talking and listening to

people, which is the opposite of ostracism. It is curious, however, that extraversion did not predict workplace inclusion. Therefore, the specific process that relates extraversion with ostracizing or including others needs further investigation. Based on these results, it is possible that extroversion is another dispositional predictor of ostracizing others in the workplace. Compared to previous research about dispositional antecedents of being a target of ostracism, agreeableness and extraversion not only keep people from being a target of ostracism but also keep workers from ostracizing others (Wu et al., 2011).

The present study only hypothesized the influence of one personality trait on ostracism. Other personality and situational factors likely affect ostracizing others at work. Table 4 demonstrated the Pearson correlation between some main variables in the study. It showed that both workplace norms promoting ostracism and workplace independence positively predicted workplace exclusion. Alternatively, workplace norms promoting ostracism negatively predicted and workplace interdependence positively predicted workplace inclusion. Therefore, whether ostracism is normative in a given workplace and the extent to which coworkers rely on each other are important contextual factors predicting whether employees will ostracize others at work. The relation of coworker independence/interdependence and exclusion/inclusion may reflect the demands of the workplace: Performing interdependent tasks forces workers to talk with each other whereas performing independent tasks promotes ignoring others. Previous research demonstrated that norms are related to ostracism. Perceived coworker organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) norm is negatively related to being the target of ostracism at work (Ferris et al., 2008), and the stress from ostracism can be moderated by norm-based expectations about inclusion (Gerber & Wheeler, 2014). Still, most of the discussion about norms and ostracism is from the target perspective. Smith (1961) described the Japanese rural community using

ostracism as the normal way to punish members. Reciprocity is also a potential reason for ostracizing others. Glomb and Liao (2003) showed that workplace aggressiveness could happen due to being the target of aggression. This reciprocity rule could also apply to ostracism. That is, feeling ostracized at work could promote ostracizing coworkers, creating an ostracism norm at work.

Although this study presumed that ostracism in the workplace has detrimental effects on physical and psychological health (Williams, 2001), some studies found that ostracism has potential benefits to both source and target under certain circumstances (Zadro & Gonsalkorale, 2014). Jamieson, Harkins, and Williams (2010) found that when facing need threat, ostracized individuals could outperform grouped individuals after ostracism. The participants in their study finished the cyber-ball game and then completed two eye-movement tasks. When knowing that the people who ostracized them in the cyber-ball game were also performing the eye-movement tasks, ostracized members performed better than the other grouped members trying to prove their cognitive ability (Jamieson et al., 2010). Williams and Sommer (1997) found that ostracized females in the cyber-ball game generated more ideas in the following brainstorming tasks collectively (social compensate). Ostracism could also fortify source's need for belonging and control (Zadro & Gonsalkorale, 2014; Zadro, Arriaga, & Williams, 2008). Thus, the consequences of ostracism are two-fold. While some of the time, ostracism is detrimental, it too can be beneficial for the performance and psychological needs. This also explained the motivation of people ostracizing others: Sometimes, group members have to employ ostracism as a way to punish the deviant group member and improve the group performance (Smith, 1961). Ostracism can also be beneficial in socializing newcomers or punishing deviant team members. It is widely used as a way to punish the group member who violates the work norm in

organizations (Nee, 1998). It can be seen that ostracism also has potential benefits in organizations.

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation of the present study is the use of college student employees instead of a more diverse population. Although ostracism is a prevalent behavior regardless of the jobs people are doing (Williams, 2001), potential differences may emerge due to differences between populations of workers. Several questions asking the participants about their work experience were in the questionnaire to ensure that they had sufficient experience about ostracism in the workplace. However, most of the participants described their work experience in the service industry, which makes the sample very homogeneous. The generalizability of the present study is questionable because of the sample. However, the average amount of work experience in the sample is nearly two years (22.63 months), which indicates that the sample provides an adequate test of the hypothesis. The participants in this sample can, to some degree, represent a subset of workers in organizations.

At the same time, the process of ostracism in an older population may be quite different from college students. In organizations, some employees work together for many years, even decades. In these circumstances, employees may learn how to manage relationships with difficult coworkers. Long-term ostracism is both less prevalent and more harmful than short-term ostracism (Williams, 2001). People may change their way of dealing with coworkers over time. As their experience grows, employees may use more subtle or partial ostracism to interact with difficult coworkers to save face and follow the norm (if the norm inhibits ostracism). This analysis suggests that time is an important factor to consider when studying the dynamics of workplace ostracism.

Knowing the result that agreeableness inhibits ostracism in the workplace can help managers in organizations in personnel selection and work team composition. On one hand, because workplace ostracism is negatively related to workers' well-being and performance (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006; Hitlan & Noel, 2009; Leung et al., 2011), managers should avoid selecting low agreeable people in teamwork requiring a lot of interaction and communication with each other. But they can still be very competent in jobs with little work interdependence. On the other hand, because workplace norms are related to ostracism, even if there are low agreeable workers in the team, managers still can promote inclusion work norms to suppress the likelihood of workplace ostracism. For example, managers can establish norms to greet coworkers every morning so that employees are discouraged from ostracizing coworkers. Future research can test the effect of contextual factors (such as, workplace norms, work interdependence) and help organizations to train employees not to ostracize.

It is important to note that ostracism is a prevalent behavior, and most people can justify their reasons for ostracizing others (Williams, 2001). Williams (2001) hypothesized five types of motives of ostracism: ambiguous, defensive, role-prescribed, punitive, and oblivious ostracism. Research showed that ambiguous and role-prescribed ostracism are the least harmful to targets (Nezlek et al., 2012). This is because these types of ostracism can be explained away as either not there or due to the situation (ambiguous ostracism is perceived by the targets as a misunderstanding that the source is not ostracizing and role-prescribed ostracism happens when ostracism is attributed to specific role requirements). The focus on difficult coworkers in the WOSP seems more aligned with punitive ostracism, which happens when targets are ostracized because of their fault or something they did that is not approved. This is the kind of ostracism that employees might use in organizations to improve coworker performance or socialize

coworkers. The present study shows that agreeable workers are less likely to engage in this type of workplace exclusion. However, it is not clear whether agreeableness is related to other types of ostracism that are more benign (ambiguous and role-prescribed). If workers with high agreeableness are only likely to engage in role-prescribed ostracism then their harm to targets may be limited. Future research should investigate how personality traits predict different types of ostracism.

Future research can discover more antecedents of ostracism, such as other dispositional traits and environmental/situational factors. The scale should also get tested in other samples, such as in different cultures and older workers. What we know about the structure of workplace ostracism and the consequence of it are still incomplete. More research is needed to uncover the mystery of ostracism. At present, people have only seen a small tip of the iceberg.

APPENDIX

Section I: Big Five Inventory

Directions: Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not describe you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who is talkative? Please select the number which best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement listed below. Use the following scale:

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

Strongly Neutral Strongly

Disagree Agree

I see myself as someone who...

- _____ 1. Is talkative.
- _____ 2. Tends to find fault with others.* (A)
- _____ 3. Does a thorough job.
- _____ 4. Is depressed, blue.
- _____ 5. Is original, comes up with new ideas.
- _____ 6. Is reserved.*
- _____ 7. Is helpful and unselfish with others. (A)
- _____ 8. Can be somewhat careless.*
- _____ 9. Is relaxed, handles stress well.*
- _____ 10. Is curious about many different things.
- _____ 11. Is full of energy.
- _____ 12. Starts quarrels with others.* (A)
- _____ 13. Is a reliable worker.

- _____ 14. Can be tense.
- _____ 15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker.
- _____ 16. Generates a lot of enthusiasm.
- _____ 17. Has a forgiving nature. (A)
- _____ 18. Tends to be disorganized.*
- _____ 19. Worries a lot.
- _____ 20. Has an active imagination.
- _____ 21. Tends to be quiet.*
- _____ 22. Is generally trusting. (A)
- _____ 23. Tends to be lazy.*
- _____ 24. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset.*
- _____ 25. Is inventive.
- _____ 26. Has an assertive personality.
- _____ 27. Can be cold and aloof.* (A)
- _____ 28. Perseveres until the task is finished.
- _____ 29. Can be moody.
- _____ 30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences.
- _____ 31. Is sometimes shy, inhibited.*
- _____ 32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone. (A)
- _____ 33. Does things efficiently.
- _____ 34. Remains calm in tense situations.*
- _____ 35. Prefers work that is routine.*
- _____ 36. Is outgoing, sociable.

- _____ 37. Is sometimes rude to others.* (A)
- _____ 38. Makes plans and follows through with them.
- _____ 39. Gets nervous easily.
- _____ 40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas.
- _____ 41. Has few artistic interests.*
- _____ 42. Likes to cooperate with others. (A)
- _____ 43. Is easily distracted.*
- _____ 44. Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature.

An asterisk indicates that an item is reversed coded. (A) indicates an agreeableness item.

Section II: Workplace Background Questions

1. Counting all your former part- or full-time employment, for how long a period have you been employed? _____ years and _____ months
2. Think of all of the jobs you have had, both in the past and present. Of all of these jobs, identify the one where you have had the most interaction with coworkers. Describe that job, your role and the workplace, in the space below.

--

This job will be referred to as your “Chosen Job” throughout this survey. Keep this job in mind when answering the remaining questions about work.

Answer the following questions about your Chosen Job.

3. My primary role in this job is (choose one): Supervisor_____ Subordinate_____
4. Length of time in this job? _____ years and _____ months
5. Number of people employed in this workplace? _____
6. Number of people in the group of coworkers with whom you typically interact? _____

Section III: Workplace Interdependence and Independence Questions

For each of the following questions, select a number from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) that best represents your experience in your Chosen Job.

1. I work closely with others in doing my work
2. I frequently must coordinate my behavior with others.
3. My own performance is dependent on receiving accurate information from others.
4. The way I perform my job has a significant impact on others.
5. My work requires me to consult with others fairly frequently.
6. I work fairly independently of others in my work.
7. I can plan my own work with little need to coordinate with others.
8. I rarely have to obtain information from others to complete my work.

Section IV: Workplace Ostracism from the Source Perspective (WOSP) Scale

Directions: Everyone wants interaction in the workplace to go smoothly. And probably, in most cases and with most coworkers, it does. However, sometimes this doesn't happen, for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, there is too much work to do or too little time to worry about a coworker's feelings. Some coworkers can be difficult to work with. Sometimes a coworker may

just be someone you dislike. In answering the following questions, focus on how you have dealt with your more difficult coworkers in your Chosen Job. Please indicate the frequency that you perform each of the behaviors listed below by selecting a rating from 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*Always*).

1. I inform difficult coworkers about ongoing conversations.*
2. I make sure difficult coworkers are up to date with current workplace activities.*
3. I withhold information from a difficult coworker.
4. I give the silent treatment to a difficult coworker.
5. I interact with difficult coworkers only when it is required.
6. I invite difficult coworkers to a social activity.*
7. There are difficult coworkers who I ignore.
8. I try to make difficult coworkers feel included.*
9. There are difficult coworkers who I leave out of a conversation.
10. I reply to greetings from difficult coworkers.*
11. I am willing to answer questions from difficult coworkers.*
12. There is a difficult coworker who I try to avoid.
13. I avoid making eye contact with difficult coworkers.
14. I choose discussion topics in which difficult coworkers can participate.*

An asterisk indicates that an item is reversed coded.

Section V: Ostracism Norm at Work

For each of the following questions, indicate how much you agree that the behavior describes how most coworkers act in your Chosen Job by selecting a number from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

1. Withholding information from coworkers.
2. Giving the silent treatment to a coworker.
3. Inviting all coworkers to a social activity.*
4. Ignoring a coworker.
5. Making coworkers feel included.*
6. Replying to greetings from coworkers.*
7. Avoiding a coworker.

Section VI: Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale

Please read each item below, and decide whether the statement is true or false as it pertains to your personality.

1. Before voting, I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates.
2. I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.
3. It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.
4. I have never intensely disliked someone.
5. On occasion I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life.
6. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.
7. I am always careful about manner of dress.
8. My table manners are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.
9. If I could get into a movie without paying and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it.
10. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.

11. I like to gossip at times.
12. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.
13. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
14. I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.
15. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.
16. I'm always willing to admit when I make a mistake.
17. I always try to practice when I preach.
18. I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loud mouthed, obnoxious people.
19. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
20. When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it.
21. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
22. At times, I have really insisted on having things my own way.
23. There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.
24. I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrongdoings.
25. I never resent being asked to return a favor.
26. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.
27. I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car.
28. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.
29. I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off.
30. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.
31. I have never felt that I was punished without cause.
32. I sometimes think when people have a misfortune they only got what they deserved.

33. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.

Section VII: Demographic Questions

1. Age: _____

2. Sex: Male _____ Female _____

3. Race: _____

4. Rank in college (choose one):

Freshman _____ Sophomore _____ Junior _____ Senior _____

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