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Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (2020), 94, 107–131

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When and how favour rendering ameliorates workplace ostracism over time: Moderating effect of self-monitoring and mediating effect of popularity enhancement

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Despite increasing scholarly attention to workplace ostracism, victims receive little guidance regarding how to break its negative spiral over time. Drawing on a multi-motive model of rejection-related experiences and the cybernetic model of impression management, this study examines how and why ostracized employees might ameliorate workplace ostracism through impression management efforts to enhance their popularity. Specifically, an ostracized worker may employ favour rendering tactics to enhance her or his popularity, as reported by peers, which can help reduce ostracism. In addition, ostracized employees with strong self-monitoring tendencies may be more likely to employ favour rendering tactics and use them more effectively to enhance their popularity and thus reduce ostracism. Data collected from 277 employee–coworker pairs in a three-wave, time-lagged design over 2 years confirm the proposed hypotheses, tested in a two-stage moderated mediation model. These findings have theoretical implications for ostracism research, as well as practical implications to help employees and organizations overcome ostracism.

Practitioner points

- Being ostracized often prompts self-focused responses, but to reduce it, ostracized employees instead should pay attention to others and seek to help others to alter the treatment they receive from others.
- High self-monitoring employees tend to employ favour rendering tactics to increase their popularity and mitigate ostracism.
- To help ostracized employees mitigate ostracism, managers and organizations can suggest ways to increase their popularity among their peers.

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DOI:10.1111/joop.12328

Workplace ostracism is 'the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others' in the workplace (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008, p. 1348), often manifested as the silent treatment or giving the cold shoulder (Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Williams, 2007). Its detrimental effects for employees, such as lower job satisfaction, reduced job performance, higher turnover intentions, and psychological distress (e.g., Ferris *et al*., 2008; Ferris, Lian, Brown, & Morrison, 2015; Wu, Yim, Kwan, & Zhang, 2012), have been widely reported (see Howard, Cogswell, & Smith, 2020, a meta-analytic review) and prompted efforts to identify factors that might help employees cope. Individual characteristics, such as a proactive personality, strong political skills (Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013), low intrinsic work motivation (Lyu & Zhu, 2019), or stronger group identification (Xu, Huang, & Robinson, 2017), may help alleviate the destructive effects of workplace ostracism. Organization-level interventions and support also can buffer these negative impacts (Kwan, Zhang, Liu, & Lee, 2018).

Rather than focusing on negative consequences and ways to mitigate them, with this study we seek to understand whether and how ostracized employees can alter the unfavourable social environment. Prior studies show that being ostracized can motivate some people to seek to restore their sense of belonging, by engaging in behaviour to regain social acceptance, such as constructing positive impressions (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007), showing compliance (Carter-Sowell, Chen, & Williams, 2008), ingratiating with others (Romero-Canyas *et al*., 2010), working on collective tasks (Williams & Sommer, 1997), and helping others (Balliet & Ferris, 2013). However, we know of no research that examines whether such prosocial behaviours eventually lead to social acceptance and mitigate ostracism. To understand how and why ostracized employees might seek to mitigate their experience of this environmental detriment, we seek to identify the tactics they use, the mechanisms by which such tactics mitigate ostracism, and which employees are most likely to be successful in using these tactics to reduce their ostracism. We proposed a research model by integrating the multi-motive model of rejection-related experiences (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009) with the cybernetic model of impression management (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997).

The multi-motive model of rejection-related experiences (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009) suggests that rejection-related experiences evoke different motives (i.e., for reconnection, for retaliation, and for social withdrawal) that lead to distinct response behaviours. If ostracized people develop expectations of relational repair or regained relational value, they likely feel motivated to reconnect, such that they 'not only try to reestablish the relationship but will also not wish to undermine their standing further and, thus, should behave prosocially' (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009, p. 369), by working to gain 'acceptance in the eyes of other people and to promote one's relationships with them' (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009, p. 370). Based on this proposition, we propose that favour rendering, a specific ingratiation tactic by which actors offer benefits to others, without being requested to do so (Jones, 1964), is a prosocial behaviour that may help ostracized people to achieve so. Favour rendering is an affiliative and altruistic citizenship behaviour that serves an impression management function (Grant & Mayer, 2009), in that it creates positive images of being helpful, friendly, and considerate (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Favour rendering thus helps us examine the proposition derived from the multi-motive model, namely, that behaving prosocially helps people re-establish their relationships and regain acceptance. Due to the motivation for social reconnection, being socially rejected can motivate people to 'repair the damaged relationship and/or seek

acceptance from other people who were not involved in the rejection' (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009, p. 373). Previous studies have reported that ostracized individuals are willing to render favour to ostracizers (Romero-Canyas *et al*., 2010), work colleagues (Balliet & Ferris, 2013), or even new interaction partners (Maner *et al*., 2007), suggesting that ostracized individuals can and will employ favour rendering to enhance their social relationships with different targets. Rendering favour to different targets can thus increase an actor's popularity (i.e., favourable social image reflecting collective perceptions of the person's social preference and social visibility in a group; Scott, 2013). Greater popularity implies more social resources and higher social status, so it should prevent an actor from being ostracized (Cullen, Fan, & Liu, 2014). In brief, we propose that ostracized employees might seek to mitigate their ostracism experiences by using favour rendering to enhance their popularity.

Yet not all ostracized employees anticipate relational repair, nor can every worker use impression management tactics effectively to construct positive images (Turnley & Bolino, 2001). For example, favour rendering might produce negative outcomes if the favour recipients feel inadequate or incompetent or if the favour is unwanted (Beehr, Bowling, & Bennett, 2010). To understand which employees are more likely to employ favour rendering tactics after being ostracized, we turn to the cybernetic model of impression management (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997), which suggests that people use impression management tactics to reduce the discrepancy between how they want to be perceived and how they are currently perceived by others. This self-regulatory process tends to succeed more among people who have stronger expectancies and skills for employing impression management tactics. To examine the individual differences phenomena, we suggest individual differences in self-monitoring – a dispositional tendency to regulate one's own behaviour to accommodate social situations (Snyder, 1974) – may determine employees' motivation and ability to rely on favour rendering to enhance their popularity and counteract their ostracism. Employees higher in self-monitoring may be more likely than their low self-monitoring counterparts to render favours after being ostracized because they expect to be able to repair their social relationships by leveraging their social adaptivity to and awareness of various social demands and requirements (see Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009, for a review). In particular, they likely can tailor their favour rendering tactics to the context and promote their popularity to reduce any experienced ostracism. In contrast, those lower in self-monitoring do not regulate their behaviours according to situational demands but instead rely on their internal attitudes and dispositions (Snyder, 1974). Their favour rendering attempts thus might produce negative consequences, because they lack the social awareness and skills needed to perform them well (Turnley & Bolino, 2001). As our conceptual model in Figure 1 reveals, we anticipate that employees high in self-monitoring (high self-monitors) are more likely than those low

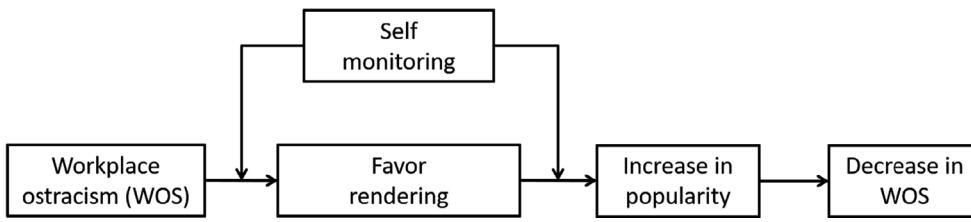

Figure 1. Conceptual model.

in self-monitoring (low self-monitors) to mitigate ostracism by working to enhance their popularity through favour rendering.

With this investigation, we contribute to the extant literature in several ways. First, we suggest that ostracism is a changeable state that employees can alter through behavioural strategies, which offers a new direction for research into how ostracism experiences evolve due to employees' reactions. Second, we illustrate how employees might reduce ostracism. In addition to identifying favour rendering as a key tactic, we clarify that popularity enhancement serves as the mechanism by which favour rendering helps reduce ostracized experiences. In this sense, we uncover links among individual ostracism experiences, behaviours (i.e., favour rendering), and others' reactions (i.e., increased popularity) over time, advancing ostracism research by unpacking its social dynamics. Third, we identify which employees are more likely to render favours after being ostracized and to use these tactics to increase their popularity and reduce their ostracism. Previous studies use individual attributes, such as fear of negative evaluations (Maner *et al.*, 2007), rejection sensitivity (Romero-Canyas *et al.*, 2010), and future orientation (Balliet & Ferris, 2013), to predict who tends to engage in behaviours to regain social acceptance after being ostracized. We argue that self-monitoring can explain why some people are more likely to render favours after being ostracized, as well as why some of them use these tactics better than others in their efforts to regain social acceptance. As such, our consideration of self-monitoring accounts for individual differences in driving the overall ostracism reduction process.

Theory and hypotheses development

Ostracism and favour rendering: The moderating effect of self-monitoring

Ostracism threatens relationship stability and motivates people to address social acceptance deficits (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009). For ostracized people, regardless of the reasons for this state, the social belonging deficit represents an unconformable situation that they seek to change. As suggested by the multi-motive model (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009), ostracized people might attempt to alter their image in others' minds, shifting it from undesirable to more desirable, using various tactics. For example, they might seek to build positive images of themselves by emphasizing their positive characteristics, work accomplishments, or dedication to the team, as well as by acting pleasantly and collaboratively (Bolino, 1999; Bolino, Long, & Turnley, 2016).

But a more direct tactic to obtain others' acceptance is to grant benefits to them. Favour rendering, as a specific ingratiation tactic, can be 'employed by a person to make himself more attractive to another' (Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977, p. 134) and thereby establish or reform social connections. By offering favours for others, such as supervisors or colleagues, ostracized employees show that they care about the interaction targets' interests and are willing to contribute. The interaction targets then should view the ostracized employees as helpful, enabling them to achieve their goals. In addition, based on the norm of reciprocity, 'doing a favor for another person can induce an obligation to reciprocate' (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991, p. 620). Empirical evidence indicates that favour rendering increases the actor's interpersonal liking (Wayne, Liden, Graf, & Ferris, 1997) and centrality in a work unit (Zhang, Zheng, & Wei, 2009). Ostracized employees might establish social exchange relationships by offering an initial favour. Favour rendering, therefore, is a relevant tactic that ostracized employees can use to reconnect with others.

According to experimental research, being ostracized motivates people to ingratiate themselves with those who reject them by offering favours (Romero-Canyas *et al.*, 2010). However, not everyone is equally motivated to do so. In the cybernetic model of impression management, people are motivated to engage in impression management to alter others' perceptions only if they have 'expectancies for being able to successfully do so' (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997, p. 15). We predict such expectancies by assessing self-monitoring, which may determine who gauges social cues and uses impression management successfully (Bolino *et al.*, 2016).

As a dispositional variable, self-monitoring describes individual differences in 'self-observation and self-control guided by situational cues to social appropriateness' (Snyder, 1974, p. 526), which determine the degree to which people 'are willing and able to monitor and control their expressive behaviors and public appearances' (Fuglestad & Snyder, 2009, p. 574). The concept thus implies individual differences in behavioural regulations, based on either situational demands or internal characteristics. Gangestad and Snyder (2000) define high self-monitors as those who, 'out of a concern for the situational appropriateness of their expressive self-presentation, have come to monitor their expressive behavior and accordingly regulate their self-presentation for the sake of desired public appearances' (p. 530), whereas low self-monitors are those whose 'expressive behaviors are not controlled by deliberate attempts to appear situationally appropriate. Instead, their expressive behavior functionally reflects their own inner attitudes, emotions, and dispositions' (p. 530). Empirical evidence suggests that high self-monitors tend to be more influenced by others' expectations (e.g., Lassiter, Stone, & Weigold, 1987); tailor their behaviour and judgments to reflect situational cues (e.g., Lippa & Donaldson, 1990; Snyder & Monson, 1975; Wong & Watkins, 1996); perceive social cues more accurately (e.g., Costanzo & Archer, 1989; Funder & Harris, 1986); exhibit responsiveness to situational cues in their self-evaluations, self-attribution of emotions, and attitudinal expression (e.g., Chen, Shechter, & Chaiken, 1996; Graziano & Bryant, 1998; Jones, Brenner, & Knight, 1990); and have greater political skills in organizational settings (Ferris *et al.*, 2004) than low self-monitors.

We expect that high self-monitoring employees tend to render favours to others after being ostracized because their higher expectancies of managing impression in others' eyes bring an expectation of relational repair or regained relational value, which motivates them to reconnect with others after being rejected (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009). First, because their self-concepts are situational and malleable (Aaker, 1999), they direct their attention towards others' requests and find ways to increase their social standing. Therefore, they are willing to do favours for others to create a positive image and gain approval from the targets (Jones, 1964). Second, their subjective estimate of the likelihood of changing and controlling their image, by regulating their behaviour to meet social demands, is more positive. As Gangestad and Snyder (2000, p. 531) explain, people high in self-monitoring 'believe in the appearances they create and take stock in the fact that these appearances can and do become social realities'. In turn, they behave in socially desirable ways (Lippa, 1978), adapt to new situations effectively (Snyder, 1979), and respond flexibly across different situations (Zaccaro, Foti, & Kenny, 1991). Such social adaptivity is evident in studies of cross-cultural adjustment; high self-monitors exhibit greater self-efficacy in their interpersonal interactions and better adjustment capabilities (Harrison, Chadwick, & Scales, 1996). With their greater social awareness and willingness to adjust their performance according to the social demands, as well as their confidence in their social adaptivity, high self-monitors possess dispositional attributes that motivate them to provide help or favours to others. In an experimental setting, high self-monitors made

more contributions to a collective task after being ostracized (Bozin & Yoder, 2008), a finding that is in line with our reasoning that high self-monitors likely engage in behaviours that help them regain social acceptance.

In contrast, low self-monitors are unwilling to change their expressions to meet social demands across situations. Gangestad and Snyder (2000, p. 531) contend that they 'seem not only unwilling but also unable to carry off appearances. They live as if put-on images are falsehoods, as if only those public displays true to the privately experienced self are principled' (p. 531), such that they have 'no desire (or perhaps even ability) to construct what they perceive as false images of themselves' (p. 533). Because they behave only according to their internal attitudes and dispositions (Snyder, 1974), situational events such as being ostracized are less likely to motivate them to take reparative actions. They even might reject such options, because rendering favours to please others would conflict with their view of themselves as driven by their internal values. For example, low self-monitors respond to requests to express emotions inconsistent with their true feelings, to satisfy the situational demands, by actually reducing their work effort (Scott, Barnes, & Wagner, 2012). Also, with their close focus on their personal attributes and characteristics, ostracism may cause low self-monitors to feel disliked, which might reduce their sense of identification with a work unit or organization and undermine their willingness to help others (Wu, Liu, Kwan, & Lee, 2016). Previous studies also reported that low self-monitors are less likely to offer favours in negative social environments, such as those marked by workplace gossip (Xie, Huang, Wang, & Shen, 2019) or excessive politics (Chang, Rosen, Siemieniec, & Johnson, 2012).

Hypothesis 1. Self-monitoring moderates the association between ostracism and favour rendering, such that the association is positive for high self-monitors and negative for low self-monitors.

Favour rendering and popularity enhancement: The moderating effect of self-monitoring

Building on the proposition of the multi-motive model (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009) that prosocial reactions to rejection can help increase one's acceptance in the eyes of other people, we use popularity enhancement as the indicator and elaborate on why favour rendering can help enhance actors' popularity and identify who are more likely to achieve so. Popularity is defined as a favourable social image in the eyes of others (Scott, 2013), reflecting social preference and social visibility. Favour rendering can help enhance actors' popularity because doing favours tends to enhance interpersonal liking (Wayne *et al*., 1997). Doing favours for others also means that the actor uses personal resources to contribute to others' benefits, so it can enhance the quality of exchange relationships (Dockery & Steiner, 1990; Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012). Employees who like to do favours for others may be seen as active resource exchangers, who build and strengthen their social ties and increase their social visibility. In line with this notion, altruistic citizenship behaviour, emphasizing helping and rendering favours, contributes to social visibility in work units and 'tends to give [actors] more opportunities to interact with other people, and it may also draw more people who hear of their reputation to seek help from them' (Zhang *et al*., 2009, p. 200).

However, according to the cybernetic model of impression management (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997), successful impression management tactics must appear credible, genuine, and not controlling. People with better social skills, such as those who

engage in more self-monitoring, likely can employ favour rendering as an impression management tactic more effectively. In particular, high self-monitors notice and recall information about interaction partners (Berscheid, Graziano, Monson, & Dermer, 1976) and have the skill to tailor their behaviour and emotion expression to match the situation (Friedman & Miller-Herringer, 1991; Jones & Baumeister, 1976; Snyder, 1974). They know when it is appropriate to ingratiate themselves with others, without risking being viewed as insincere or hypocritical. Turnley and Bolino (2001) report that high self-monitors also can increase their likability by praising and rendering favours to others. In addition, Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, and Ames (2006) find that high self-monitors pay more attention to status dynamics in exchange relations, such as knowing who helps whom, and then regulate their behaviour accordingly, such as providing help to others but not asking for help from them, to promote their social status. Because high self-monitors are more skilful in performing favour rendering, they also should be more successful in enhancing their popularity by doing so. Our reasoning is consistent with evidence that employees with good political skills, such as high self-monitors (Ferris *et al*., 2004), use ingratiation tactics to obtain positive evaluations from their supervisors without making them aware of such attempts (Treadway, Ferris, Duke, Adams, & Thatcher, 2007).

In contrast, people who exhibit lower self-monitoring are less sensitive to the social environment and lack the social knowledge needed to tailor their impression management tactics (even if they wanted to do so) during interactions. They are also less able to conceal their true feelings in social situations; their feelings are usually evident in their non-verbal behaviours (Friedman & Miller-Herringer, 1991). They lack the political skills (Ferris *et al*., 2004) needed to hide their efforts when employing ingratiatory tactics to influence others (Treadway *et al*., 2007). Their ingratiation tactics, including doing favours for others, likely appear less than genuine and manipulative, which can evoke negative responses from the targets. As Turnley and Bolino (2001) show, when people low in self-monitoring engage in ingratiation, they risk being viewed as sycophantic and dislikable. Treadway *et al*. (2007) also report that employees with poorer political skills, like those low in self-monitoring (Ferris *et al*., 2004), earn negative ratings of their interpersonal performance from supervisors, who easily detect their ingratiatory attempts. Such negative social consequences may reduce the likelihood that low self-monitors employ favour rendering to enhance their popularity, because they realize that such tactics even could backfire for them and decrease their popularity.

Hypothesis 2. Self-monitoring moderates the association between favour rendering and changes in popularity, such that the association is positive for high self-monitors and negative for low self-monitors.

Enhanced popularity and reduced ostracism

As the end goal for ostracized individuals to behave prosocially is to regain social acceptance (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009), whether enhancing popularity can eventually help reduce ostracism is key for employing a prosocial tactic (i.e., favour rendering). The cybernetic model of impression management (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997) also indicates that an individual will use other's behavioural responses (i.e., reducing ostracism) to gauge whether their actions for impression management (i.e., favour rendering) are successful or not and then regulate their actions accordingly. As such, we need to examine the association between enhanced popularity and reduced ostracism to

see whether changing others' perceptions of one's popularity helps change how one was treated by others.

When employees become more popular, they enjoy increased social preference and visibility, as well as improved treatment from others. People prefer to be close to and maintain good relationships with popular others, with the expectation of sharing resources, benefitting from their popularity (Scott, 2013), stimulating self-glory (Cialdini *et al*., 1976), or increasing their own visibility and acceptance in the social group. If employees increase their popularity, their social bond with their group should strengthen too, granting them more social capital with which to improve their social exchange relationships and receive more help and less mistreatment. Scott and Judge (2009) similarly report that popular employees receive more citizenship help and suffer less interpersonal deviance than less popular employees. According to Scott, Restubog, and Zagenczyk (2013), employees with higher social exchange value (i.e., high in popularity) are less likely to be socially excluded. Cullen *et al*. (2014) provide direct evidence of a negative association between employee popularity and workplace ostracism. Thus, greater popularity should reduce ostracism, implying a negative association of increasing popularity and changes in ostracism over time.

Hypothesis 3. Changes in popularity are negatively associated with changes in ostracism.

Moderated mediation model

With the preceding reasoning, we propose a two-stage moderated mediation model to depict the role of favour rendering for reducing ostracism by enhancing popularity. In it, ostracism triggers favour rendering, which the person uses to enhance her or his popularity and reduce any further ostracism; self-monitoring moderates this link between ostracism and favour rendering (first stage), as well as the link between favour rendering and changes in popularity (second stage).

We adopt a time-lagged design to test the hypotheses over 6 months, which is sufficient time to observe whether a person engages in favour rendering after being ostracized. According to Williams and Zadro (2005) and Smart-Richman and Leary (2009), reactions to rejection episodes unfold over time. As a reaction to ostracism, favour rendering is not a one-off attempt but could be a lasting action to develop and construct a positive image and shape others' reactions. Empirical studies previously have used 6 months to assess the impact of different forms of workplace aggression on employee responses (e.g., Glambek, Matthiesen, Hetland, & Einarsen, 2014; Lian, Ferris, Morrison, & Brown, 2014), so we follow this example. In addition, we extend the time lag to 18 months to gauge the association between favour rendering and changes of popularity and ostracism. This longer time lag reflects Smart-Richman and Leary (2009, p. 368) suggestion that behaviours that are instrumental for restoring belonging have long-term relationship consequences. Moreover, impression management might be tactical and serve a short-term goal or else strategic to serve a long-term goal (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Because it takes time to enhance popularity and decrease ostracism, and this goal may be less obvious to the targets of the impression management, we argue that favour rendering serves a strategic function, so we need a long time-lagged design to capture this effect. Altogether, this study features a 2-year time lag, ensuring sufficient time to capture the multistage process by which employees adopt favour rendering to enhance their popularity and reduce their ostracism.

Method

Participants and procedure

We collected three rounds of data from two large companies from the auto and machinery industries in China. Participants were technical or administrative employees. Our time-lagged design reduces the risk of common method bias (Podsakoff *et al*., 2003). At Time 1, each employee reported her or his demographics (e.g., age, gender, and organization), perceptions of workplace ostracism, and self-monitoring. Six months later, at Time 2, we measured these employees' favour rendering; at the same time, coworkers (for each employee, we randomly selected one coworker in the same work unit) rated the focal employees' popularity. Finally, one and a half years later, at Time 3, employees rated their workplace ostracism, and coworkers rated those employees' popularity again.

With the assistance of the human resource managers from the two companies, we prepared a list of 687 randomly selected employee–coworker pairs and administered separate questionnaires to both groups. The questionnaires were coded before being distributed, so we could match the employee and coworker responses. All respondents learned that the purpose of the survey was to examine human resource practices and were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Respondents placed completed surveys in sealed envelopes and returned them to a designated location in the human resource department.

In the first wave, we received 513 complete questionnaires from the 687 randomly targeted employees, for a response rate of 74.7%. Six months later, the Time 2 questionnaires were distributed to these 513 employees and their coworkers. We received responses from 421 valid employee–coworker pairs, a response rate of 82.1%. Finally, at Time 3, 18 months after the second wave, we distributed questionnaires to these 421 pairs and received 277 valid paired responses, for a response rate of 65.8%. The final sample thus consists of 277 employees and their 277 coworkers, a 40% response rate from the targeted 687 employees.

Of the 277 focal employees, 60.6% were men, and in terms of age, 37.2% were 30 years or younger, 33.9% were 31–40 years, 18.1% were 41–50 years, and 10.8% were 51 years or older. With regard to their education, 23.1% held a high school degree or less, 45.5% held a community college degree, and 31.4% held bachelor's degree or more.

Measures

The survey instrument was administered in Chinese. To ensure the equivalence of the Chinese and English versions, we used the translation–back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970). Unless otherwise noted, the measures used 5-point Likert-type scales, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Workplace ostracism

A ten-item scale developed by Ferris *et al*. (2008) was used. A sample item was, 'Others (supervisors and coworkers) avoid me at work'. The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates were .92 and .93 at Times 1 and 3, respectively.

Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring was measured with eight positively worded items from the scale developed by Snyder and Gangestad (1986): 'I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information', 'I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain others', 'I would probably make a good actor', 'In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons', 'I'm not always the person I appear to be', 'I have considered being an entertainer', 'I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a right end)', and 'I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them'. This short version has been validated previously (Allen, Weeks, & Moffitt, 2005; Scott *et al.*, 2012). The Cronbach's alpha was .86.

Favour rendering

We adapted three items from Wayne and Ferris (1990) to assess favour rendering towards supervisors and coworkers. The three items assess whether the respondents agree that they adopt the following behaviours: 'Take an interest in my immediate supervisor's or colleagues' personal life', 'Do personal favors for my supervisor or colleagues', and 'Offer to do something for my supervisor or colleagues which I am not required to do; that is, I did it as a personal favor for others'. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .84.

As a separate validation exercise for this scale, we gathered data from 109 participants (58 women, 18–49 years of age), who responded to invitations posted on both Amazon Mechanical Turk and LinkedIn, had full-time jobs, and possessed at least 2 years' work experience, though the sample ultimately reflected a wide range of job tenures. To check for convergent validity, we asked participants to complete the three items (Cronbach's alpha = .76), as well as three items of favour rendering from Kumar and Beyerlein (1991; e.g., 'Volunteer to help my supervisor in his/her work even if it means extra work for me'; Cronbach's alpha = .81). As a check for discriminant validity, we also asked respondents to complete scales for three impression management behaviours that did not entail granting favours to others: opinion conformity (i.e., expressing views and beliefs held by the interaction targets), self-promotion (i.e., pointing out one's own abilities and talent), and exemplification (i.e., going above and beyond the call of duty). Specifically, we used three items from Kumar and Beyerlein (1991) to measure opinion conformity (e.g., 'Show my supervisor or colleagues that you share his/her enthusiasm about his/her new idea even when I may not actually like it'; Cronbach's alpha = .77); four items from Bolino and Turnley (1999) to assess self-promotion (e.g., 'Talk proudly about my experience or education'; Cronbach's alpha = .83); and four items from Bolino and Turnley (1999) pertaining to exemplification (e.g., 'Stay at work late so people will know I am hard working'; Cronbach's alpha = .72). As expected, our measure of favour rendering exhibits a stronger association with the alternative measure of favour rendering (r = .74) than with the other impression management tactics (r = .15 for opinion conformity; r = .41 for self-promotion, r = .25 for exemplification), supporting convergent and discriminant validity of our used measure of favour rendering.

Popularity

Coworkers rated employee popularity in the workplace with an eight-item scale (Scott & Judge, 2009). A sample item was, 'This employee is popular'. The Cronbach's

alpha values were .92 for the Time 1 measure and .89 for the Time 3 measure.

Control variables

We included employees' age, gender, and education as control variables. A meta-analysis has shown that women are less likely than men to experience workplace ostracism and that those with higher education report higher workplace ostracism than their lower education counterparts, with a small effect (Howard *et al.*, 2020). Age appears positively related to ingratiation, an impression management tactic similar to favour rendering (Wu *et al.*, 2012). Men tend to render favours more frequently than woman (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007). Education has been linked negatively to impression management tactics in general (Huang, Zhao, Niu, Ashford, & Lee, 2013). Regarding popularity, no prior evidence reveals significant associations of age and gender (Cullen *et al.*, 2014; Scott & Judge, 2009), but education appears positively related to employee popularity (Cullen *et al.*, 2014). Because the data came from two companies, we also created a dummy variable to control for company differences: Company A takes a dummy code of 0, and Company B equals 1.

Results

Measurement analysis

We conducted a measurement invariance test for workplace ostracism and popularity, which we measured twice. We performed this analysis using the maximum likelihood estimator and Satorra–Bentler (SB)-scaled statistics in Mplus (Estimator = MLM; Muthén & Muthén, 2012). To evaluate invariance at different stages, we use the differences in CFI (ΔCFI), noting Cheung and Rensvold's (2002, p. 251) recommendation that 'a value of ΔCFI smaller than or equal to −0.01 indicates that the null hypothesis of invariance should not be rejected'. Our findings (Table 1) indicate strong longitudinal invariance (i.e., invariance of factor loadings and intercepts) in the workplace ostracism items. However, similarly strong evidence of longitudinal invariance did not emerge for popularity, so we reviewed the items to identify those with the strongest longitudinal invariance (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016). In so doing, we identified one popularity item that lacked strong longitudinal invariance, so we specify a partial model (i.e., invariance intercepts of the other seven items).

We performed a series of confirmatory factor analyses to check the validity of the main research variables with the same estimator (MLM) in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). The hypothesized measurement model included self-monitoring (eight items), favour rendering (three items), workplace ostracism at Time 1 and Time 3 (ten items at both times), and popularity at Time 2 and Time 3 (eight items at both times). We allowed these factors to correlate. Errors of the same items assessed twice (i.e., workplace ostracism at Times 1 and 3 and popularity at Times 2 and 3) may correlate too, so that we can capture item-specific effects on responses that covary over time (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). We required the equality of factor loadings and intercepts for items assessing workplace ostracism and popularity. The proposed six-factor model fit the data well and better than alternative models (see Table 1).

Table 1. Results of confirmatory factor analysis

	SB-χ^2	*df*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	ΔCFI
Invariance test of items for workplace ostracism							
Configural invariance	323.09	159	.942	.931	.062	.046	
Weak invariance	348.09	168	.937	.929	.063	.058	−.006
Strong invariance	379.81	178	.929	.925	.065	.067	−.008
Invariance test of items for popularity							
Configural invariance	145.40	95	.976	.970	.044	.036	
Weak invariance	151.87	102	.976	.972	.043	.041	.000
Strong invariance	194.73	110	.959	.956	.053	.057	−.017
Partial strong invariance[a]	176.88	109	.968	.964	.048	.051	−.008
Measurement models							
A six-factor model	1610.30	1041	.914	.911	.045	.068	
A single-factor model[b]	5331.72	1041	.355	.330	.124	.161	
A five-factor model[c]	2248.22	1030	.817	.808	.066	.092	
A five-factor model[d]	2825.83	1031	.730	.717	.080	.144	
A five-factor model[e]	2359.50	1030	.800	.790	.069	.095	
A four-factor model[f]	3092.75	1034	.691	.677	.086	.106	

Notes. CFI = confirmatory fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; and SRMR = standardized root mean residual; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index. Weak invariance means equality of factor loadings of the same item over time. Strong invariance means equality of factor loadings and intercepts of the same item over time.

[a]Equality of item intercepts was imposed on seven of eight popularity items in this partial, strong invariance model.; [b]All items were influenced by the same factor.; [c]Time 1 workplace ostracism and self-monitoring were influenced by the same factor, and the other items were influenced by the posited factors.; [d]Favour rendering and popularity at Time 2 were influenced by the same factor, and the other items were influenced by the posited factors. The error variance for one of the favour rendering items was fixed to 0 to avoid an estimation problem.; [e]Workplace ostracism and popularity at Time 3 were influenced by the same factors, and all other items were influenced by the posited factors.; [f]Items that assessed Time 1 and Time 3 workplace ostracism shared the first factor, items that assessed favour rendering shared the second one, items that assessed the Time 1 and Time 2 popularity shared another, and self-monitoring was its own factor.

Hypotheses tests

Table 2 contains the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations of all key variables.[1]

[1] *This mean change over time arguably could result from a collective reduction of ostracism and enchantment of popularity, driven by phenomena that indicate the degree of change is greater among those who decrease their ostracism (or increase their popularity) than those who increase their ostracism (or decrease their popularity). However, if this change resulted from events within organizations, we should observe that all participants experience diminished ostracism and increased popularity, even if the degrees of change vary across individual employees. Instead, when we use subtraction to check the differences between the two measures of ostracism and popularity across time, we find that 41.5% of participants exhibit unchanged or increased levels of workplace ostracism, and 45.1% do not change or decrease their popularity. When we split those who experienced decreased and increased ostracism into two subsamples, the absolute mean decrease (*n = *154,* M = *.70,* SD = *.50) is greater than the absolute mean increase (*n = *115,* M = *.57,* SD = *.36). In a parallel check for popularity, the absolute mean increase (*n = *152,* M = *.72,* SD = *.44) is greater than the absolute mean decrease (*n = *107,* M = *.56,* SD = *.39). Thus, mean changes in workplace ostracism and popularity do not reflect a phenomenon by which all participants become less ostracized and more popular over time. We acknowledge that our analysis cannot fully rule out the potential impact of events in shaping changes in ostracism and popularity over time, but the findings do not indicate powerful events that drive positive changes for the whole sample. As such, our focus on intra-individual differences in changes in ostracism and popularity appears justified.*

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

	Correlations									
Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Time 1 measures										
1. Company										
2. Age	.08									
3. Gender	.10	.03								
4. Education	.05	.02	−.03							
5. Workplace ostracism (T1)	−.08	.03	−.13*	.06						
6. Self-monitoring (T1)	−.03	.03	−.07	.17**	.03					
Time 2 measures										
7. Favour rendering (T2)	.12	.06	−.03	−.03	.06	.05				
8. Coworker-rated popularity (T2)	.06	.09	.07	−.01	−.36**	−.10	−.05			
Time 3 measures										
9. Coworker-rated popularity (T3)	.03	.02	.02	−.02	−.12*	−.03	.08	.41**		
10. Workplace ostracism (T3)	−.03	−.02	−.07	.02	.35**	−.09	−.01	−.30**	−.32**	
Mean	0.44	2.03	0.39	2.08	2.04	2.41	2.81	3.66	3.84	1.89
S.D.	0.50	0.99	0.49	0.74	0.62	0.68	0.91	0.68	0.68	0.70

Notes. n = 277. Company A = 0; Company B = 1. Age: 30 or below = 1; 31–40 = 2; 41–50 = 3; 51 or above = 4. Male = 0; female = 1. Education: high school degree or below = 1; associate degree = 2; bachelor's degree or above = 3.
*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$.

We built a path model to examine our hypotheses. With a latent difference score modelling approach (McArdle, 2009), we created latent difference scores for popularity from Time 2 to Time 3 and workplace ostracism from Time 1 to Time 3 (see Little, Hinojosa, Paustian-Underdahl, & Zipay, 2018; Wille & De Fruyt, 2014; Wu, Wang, Parker, & Griffin, 2020, February 24, for studies using latent difference scores). The latent difference scores represent within-individual changes. Then, we used workplace ostracism at Time 1 to predict favour rendering at Time 2, which in turn predicts changes in popularity from Time 2 to Time 3, and then changes in workplace ostracism from Time 1 to Time 3. Company, age, gender, education, and self-monitoring were included to predict favour rendering and two latent change variables. Finally, we specified the interaction effect between workplace ostracism and self-monitoring at Time 1 to predict favour rendering at Time 2, as well as the interaction effect between self-monitoring at Time 1 with favour rendering at Time 2 to predict changes in popularity from Time 2 to Time 3. This model (Figure 2) fits well (SB-χ^2 = 7.69, df = 7; confirmatory fit index [CFI] = 1.00; Tucker-Lewis index [TLI] = .99; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .019, 90% confidence interval [CI] = 0.000, 0.078; standardized root mean residual [SRMR] = .012) and is better than a model in which we impose null interaction effects (SB-χ^2 = 61.32, df = 9; CFI = .78; TLI = .26; RMSEA = .145, 90% CI = 0.112, 0.180; SRMR = .039). Table 3 contains the unstandardized estimates.

Table 3 reveals a significant interaction of ostracism and self-monitoring at Time 1 on favour rendering at Time 2 (β = .56, p < .01). Figure 3 presents the interaction plot.

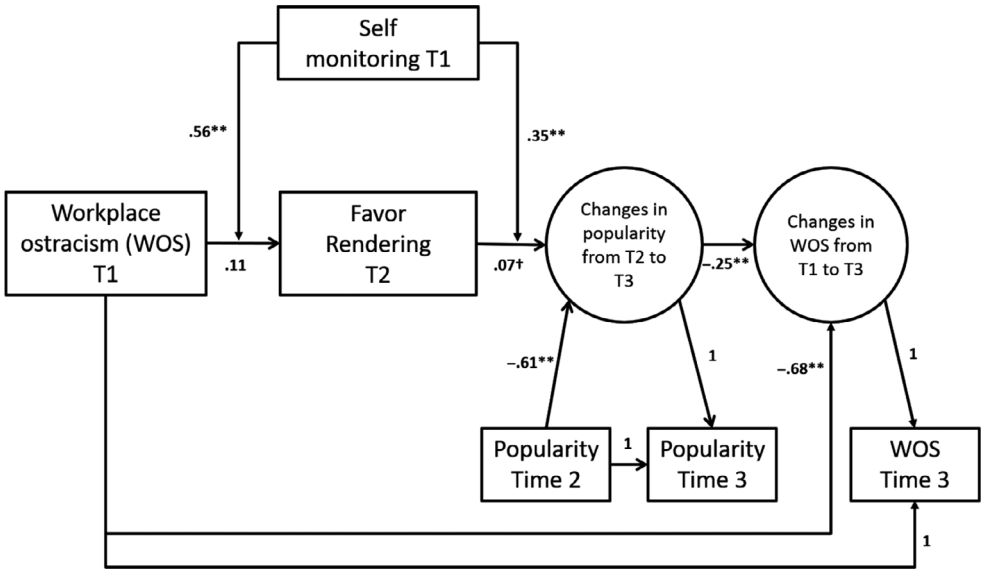

Figure 2. Research model. *Notes*. Demographic variables (company, age, gender, and education) are included in the model, but their effects are not displayed for clarity. $+p \leq .10$; $^{**}p \leq .01$.

Table 3. Unstandardized estimates (standard error) of the path model

Variables	Favour rendering (T2)	Changes in popularity (from T2 to T3)	Changes in workplace ostracism (from T1 to T3)
Company	.20 (.11)	−.03 (.07)	.02 (.08)
Age	.05 (.05)	−.03 (.04)	−.01 (.04)
Gender	−.09 (.11)	.00 (.07)	−.04 (.08)
Education	−.03 (.07)	−.03 (.05)	.01 (.05)
Workplace ostracism (WOS) (T1)	.11 (.09)	–	−.68 (.07)**
Self-monitoring (SM) (T1)	.07 (.07)	.01 (.05)	−.13 (.06)*
WOS (T1) × SM (T1)	.56 (.11)**		
Favour rendering (T2)		.07 (.04)	–
Favour rendering (T2) × SM (T1)		.34 (.05)**	–
Changes in popularity (from T2 to T3)		–	−.25 (.07)**
Coworker-rated popularity (T2)		−.58 (.05)**	−.36 (.07)**
Coworker-rated popularity (T3)		1	–
Workplace ostracism (T3)		–	1
R^2	.092	.389	.336

Notes. $n = 277$. Company A = 0; Company B = 1. Age: 30 or below = 1; 31–40 = 2; 41–50 = 3; 51 or above = 4. Male = 0; female = 1. Education: high school degree or below = 1; associate degree = 2; bachelor's degree or above = 3.
$^{*}p \leq .05$; $^{**}p \leq .01$.

When self-monitoring is high (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean), workplace ostracism at Time 1 has a positive relationship with favour rendering at Time 2 (simple slope = .49, $p < .01$). When self-monitoring is low (i.e., one standard deviation below the

mean), workplace ostracism at Time 1 reveals a negative relationship with favour rendering at Time 2 (simple slope = −.27, $p < .05$). Hypothesis 1 is supported.

We also found significant interaction effects of self-monitoring with favour rendering at Time 2 ($\beta = .34$, $p < .01$) to predict changes in popularity from Time 2 to Time 3. Figure 4 presents the interaction plot. At a high self-monitoring level, favour rendering at Time 2 exhibits a positive association (simple slope = .30, $p < .01$) with changes in

Figure 3. Interaction plot of workplace ostracism (Time 1) and self-monitoring in predicting favour rendering at Time 2.

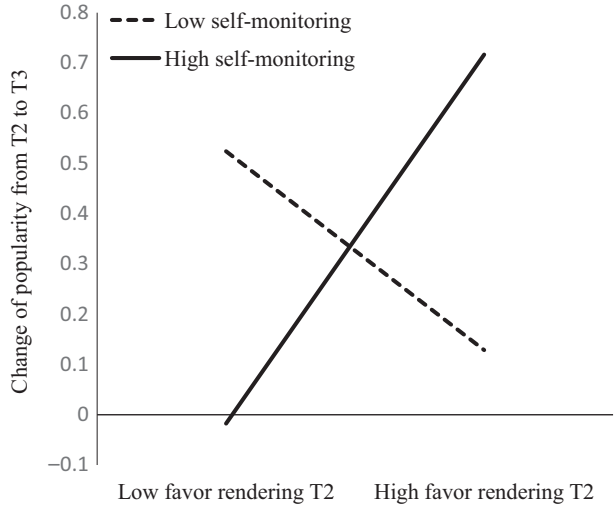

Figure 4. Interaction plot of favour rendering (Time 2) and self-monitoring in predicting changes in popularity from Time 2 to Time 3.

popularity from Time 2 to Time 3. When self-monitoring is low, favour rendering at Time 2 has a negative relationship with changes in popularity (simple slope = $-.16$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Changes in popularity from Time 2 to Time 3 negatively predict changes in workplace ostracism from Time 1 to Time 3 ($\beta = -.25, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 3. Finally, we examine the conditional mediation effect in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2012), using moderated path analysis (Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). With high self-monitoring, favour rendering at Time 2 has significant effects (conditional mediation effect = $-.04, p < .01$; 95% CI from bootstrapping analysis = $-0.06, -0.01$) in mediating the association from workplace ostracism at Time 1 to changes in workplace ostracism from Time 1 to Time 3, through increased popularity from Time 2 to Time 3. When self-monitoring is low, favour rendering at Time 2 does not have significant mediating effects (conditional mediation effect = $-.01, p = .10$; 95% CI = $-0.03, 0.00$). We obtained similar results (Table 4) when we removed all control variables from the model.

Discussion

In this study, we identify favour rendering as a tactic to reduce ostracism by increasing popularity. We find that only people high in self-monitoring tend to employ such tactics after being ostracized; they can use them well enough to enhance their popularity and thus reduce their ostracism. In contrast, employees low in self-monitoring tend not to employ such tactics after being ostracized; if they do, their favour rendering undermines their popularity. Therefore, favour rendering is not a viable option for employees low in self-monitoring.

Theoretical implications

Our study establishes workplace ostracism as a changeable state. Employees, especially high self-monitors, can take actions to alter their social acceptance among others and thus break the negative spiral of workplace ostracism. For research into workplace ostracism

Table 4. Unstandardized estimates (standard error) of the path model without control variables

Variables	Favour rendering (T2)	Changes in popularity (from T2 to T3)	Changes in workplace ostracism (from T1 to T3)
Workplace ostracism (WOS) (T1)	.11 (.08)	–	−.68 (.07)**
Self-monitoring (SM) (T1)	.07 (.07)	.01 (.05)	−.12 (.05)*
WOS (T1) × SM (T1)	.58 (.11)**		
Favour rendering (T2)		.07 (.04)	–
Favour rendering (T2) × SM (T1)		.33 (.05)**	–
Changes in popularity (from T2 to T3)		–	−.25 (.07)**
Coworker-rated popularity (T2)		−.59 (.05)**	−.36 (.07)**
Coworker-rated popularity (T3)		1	–
Workplace ostracism (T3)		–	1
R^2	.076	.386	.335

Notes. $n = 277$.
*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$.

specifically, our findings highlight that employees can take actions to influence others and reshape the social environment to reduce their ostracism experiences; a conventional approach instead conceptualizes workplace ostracism as a static, negative condition and mainly investigates ways to manage its impact (Howard *et al*., 2020). More broadly, being ostracized evokes behaviours designed to regain social acceptance, but our study adds new insights to prior research by empirically demonstrating that favour rendering can help ostracized people, if they are high self-monitors, regain social acceptance (i.e., enhanced popularity) and reduce their ostracism. In this sense, our study moves towards a dynamic view of how people react to ostracism and how their reactions then influence others' treatment, which shapes their ostracism experience. Inherently, ostracism depends on how the person is treated, so it is essential to consider both ostracized employees' and others' reactions together, to understand how the experience evolves over time.

We identify favour rendering as a prosocial tactic adopted in response to ostracism, which functions by enhancing popularity (for high self-monitors). These findings extend Cullen *et al*.'s (2014) work by indicating what employees can do to earn higher popularity and prevent ostracism. In particular, we show that favour rendering can predict increased popularity from Time 2 to Time 3 among high self-monitors, but it does not positively correlate with popularity measured at Time 2 or Time 3, in contrast with an expectation that it would as favour rendering has been positively linked to similar outcomes, such as interpersonal liking (e.g., Wayne *et al*., 1997). Perhaps this apparent inconsistency results from the difference between popularity and similar concepts at the interpersonal, dyadic level, such as interpersonal liking. Popularity is a collective perception of social preferences and social visibility in a group, so it 'is not "in the eye of the beholder," but rather is "in the eyes of the beholders," capturing the majority opinion of a collective about a given individual' (Scott, 2013, p. 163). When colleagues or supervisors report their interpersonal liking of a specific employee, they can rely on their own feelings and interactions, but if they must rate the employee's popularity in the group, they have to take a more holistic perspective. Such differences may explain why we do not observe a direct association of favour rendering with popularity. In addition, in a post hoc analysis, we included an interaction effect between favour rendering and self-monitoring to see whether it could directly predict changes in ostracism; we did not observe a significant effect. Changing others' perceptions may be an essential step for high self-monitors to alter their ostracism experiences though.

Third, our findings regarding the moderating role of self-monitoring confirm and extend previous research: Not all ostracized people engage in behaviour to regain social acceptance (Maner *et al*., 2007; Romero-Canyas *et al*., 2010; Williams & Sommer, 1997). Previous experimental studies already have established that people with less fear of negative evaluations (Maner *et al*., 2007) or higher rejection sensitivity (Romero-Canyas *et al*., 2010) are more likely to use impression management tactics. Yet the results of a meta-analytic review of workplace ostracism research (Howard et al., 2020) indicate a negative association between workplace ostracism and helping behaviours, suggesting that people tend not to help others after being ostracized. Balliet and Ferris (2013) argue that whether ostracized employees help others reflect a social dilemma; they cannot distance themselves from others if they realize helping others might enhance their social acceptance in the long run. These authors identify a negative association between ostracism and helping behaviours for people with a low future orientation but a null association for those with stronger future orientations. However, they do not clarify who might be more likely to engage in more helping or prosocial behaviours after being

ostracized. In this sense, our study contributes to investigations of individual differences by showing that self-monitoring tendencies inform people's impression management efforts, from a self-regulatory perspective (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). Empirically, we find that high self-monitors engage in favour rendering after being ostracized, whereas low self-monitors do not. In this way, we identify who is likely to help others, or not, and clarify the links between ostracism and prosocial behaviour.

Fourth, most studies of workplace ostracism focus on its negative link with employees' altruistic or citizenship behaviours, using explanations based on different theories, such as organizational identification (Wu *et al.*, 2016), negative self-verification (Ferris, Lian, Brown, Pang, & Keeping, 2010), or threatened self-esteem (Peng & Zeng, 2017). By analysing low and high self-monitors separately, we show that ostracism does not always undermine prosocial behaviour; it can motivate high self-monitors to engage in more prosocial behaviour to regain social acceptance. More studies should seek other indicators of who is most likely to boost their prosocial efforts at work and their underlying mechanisms, to account for other reactions to workplace ostracism.

Finally, we find that only strong self-monitors use favour rendering effectively, to enhance their popularity and reduce their ostracism, consistent with Turnley and Bolino's (2001) finding that higher self-monitors can use impression management well to construct positive social images. Among low self-monitors, favour rendering behaviour instead can harm their popularity. Turnley and Bolino (2001) report that low self-monitors' impression management attempts largely fail because they lack the social skills needed to leverage impression management tactics well, so they risk negative social images when they employ such tactics. Noting our finding that low self-monitors tend not to use favour rendering, we speculate that after being ostracized, they only render favours occasionally, which may lead to their lack of popularity. An occasional favour might look like an insincere tactic, which could marginalize low self-monitors even further. This speculation should be examined in continued studies. Future studies can also identify those who are willing to employ impression management tactics but unable to do it well. For example, Snyder (1974, p. 529) indicated that 'although high need-for-approval individuals may be motivated to modify their expressive self-presentation in order to gain approval, they may lack the necessary self-control abilities and skills'. Whether ostracism will be deteriorated among those high in need for approval due to the lack of ability in performing impression management tactics can be a question for future studies.

Practical implications

Our investigation suggests ways to mitigate ostracism, with implications for both employees and organizations. Being ostracized often prompts self-focused responses, such as anxiety, jealousy, loneliness, depression, and low self-esteem (Leary, 1990), but to reduce it, ostracized employees must pay attention to others and seek to change others' perceptions. As we reported in our study, to reduce ostracism effectively, favour rendering can be a way for ostracized employees to regain social acceptance. That is, to improve social acceptance, it is better for ostracized employees to treat others well and offer them direct benefits. In order to achieve so, ostracized employees will need to pay attention to others' needs and find way to interact with others effectively, instead of focusing on their own feelings and distress.

Employees who display higher self-monitoring are more likely to employ favour rendering and use it well, so they can regain social acceptance. Because low self-monitors

are neither likely to employ this ingratiation tactic nor effective at it, organizations may want to focus more on helping these employees overcome their ostracism. Perceived organizational support can mitigate the negative impacts of being ostracized in terms of obtaining resources to complete tasks and creative process engagement (Kwan *et al.*, 2018), as well as on employees' organization-based self-esteem (Scott, Zagenczyk, Schippers, Purvis, & Cruz, 2014). Organizations thus should help low self-monitors protect their resources, engagement, and self-worth at work. Overall, because increasing popularity can help mitigate ostracism, organizations should seek to help those low in self-monitoring enhance their popularity.

Limitations and further research

We only consider favour rendering tactics, but employees likely use other strategies to overcome workplace ostracism. Ostracized employees might experiment with different approaches to enhance their popularity at work. According to the prototypicality effect (Scott, 2013), employees can gain popularity by embodying a group ideal, such as following norms and endorsing the values and rules of the workgroup. They also might rely on routes other than enhancing their popularity; for example, newcomers might feel ostracized because more experienced employees are annoyed with their lack of experience, so they engage in networking or information seeking to enhance their social integration (Morrison, 1993, 2002). In a more negative sense, ostracized employees might exhibit aggressive behaviour, driven by a motive for retaliation, or else social withdrawal, driven by a motive for social avoidance, which can undermine their opportunities to gain acceptance and worsen their ostracism. These examples highlight the need for more studies to offer a fuller picture of the different reactions and different trajectories of ostracism experiences over time.

Our study suggests that low self-monitors are unlikely to use favour rendering as a tactic to overcome ostracism but does not offer any predictions about what they might do to protect and restore their sense of belonging after being ostracized. Because they prefer small, homogenous social networks (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001), low self-monitors might turn to this select group to find a sense of belonging after being ostracized by members in the wider organization. They also might focus on their relationship with the organizational entity; according to Bande Vilela, Varela González, and Fernández Ferrín (2010), perceived person–organization fit (i.e., the perceived fit between personal values and those of the organization) is more predictive of job satisfaction for low self-monitors than high self-monitors. Perhaps low self-monitors feel a sense of belonging at work when they sense high person–organization fit, even if some colleagues ostracize them in interpersonal interactions. Further research might test these speculations to clarify how low self-monitors respond to ostracism.

Although we use a time-lagged design, our findings cannot confirm a causal link. In addition, though we gathered data over 2 years to capture the evolving nature of ostracism at work, the employees in our samples might have undergone processes in this period and experienced less overall ostracism over time. We acknowledge this possibility but do not regard it as a threat to the validity of our conclusions. That is, we focus on individual differences in coping with ostracism, rather than mean changes in ostracism or popularity across the sample. Moreover, we only measured employees' favour rendering at Time 2, as doing favours to others is the action expected to change one's popularity and ostracism over time. It is better to assess employees' favour rendering multiple times to capture the dynamics between employees' behaviour and changes in their popularity and

ostracism over time. Finally, we only had one coworker to report the focal employees' popularity. Although the coworker still needed to assess the focal employees' popularity based on the collective perceptions of the focal employee, having multiple colleagues to report the focal employees' popularity is a better way to capture collective perceptions.

In conclusion, this study indicates that ostracized employees can reduce their ostracism experiences by employing favour rendering to alter their treatment from others, though only if they have strong social skills and awareness of others' reactions, such that they can employ those tactics well. We also offer practical suggestions for actions that ostracized employees and organizations can take to break spirals of workplace ostracism.

Conflicts of interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contribution

Chia-Huei Wu, Ph.D. (Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Writing – original draft) Ho Kwong Kwan and Jun Liu (Resources; Writing – review & editing) Cynthia Lee (Conceptualization; Writing – review & editing).

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, Chia-Huei Wu, upon reasonable request.

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Received 21 November 2018; revised version received 9 July 2020