Feeling Entitled to More: Ostracism Increases Dishonest Behavior

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Abstract

Five experiments tested whether ostracism increases dishonesty through increased feelings of entitlement. Compared to included and control participants, ostracized participants indicated higher levels of dishonest intentions (Experiments 1 to 3) and cheated more to take undeserved money in a behavioral task (Experiments 4 and 5). In addition, increased feelings of entitlement mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonesty (Experiments 3-5). Framing ostracism as beneficial weakened the connection between ostracism, entitlement, and dishonest behavior (Experiment 5). Together, these findings highlight the significance of entitlement in explaining when and why ostracism increases dishonest behavior and how to weaken this relationship.

Keywords: Ostracism, social exclusion, dishonest behavior, entitlement, unethical behavior

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Social connection brings various benefits that enhance physical and psychological well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Hence, human beings evolved to show hypersensitivity to ostracism because false alarms proved less costly than misses (Williams, 2007). Therefore, minimum signals of ostracism can cause intense painful feelings (e.g. Wesselmann, Cardoso, Slater, & Williams, 2012).

Because people benefit from getting along with others, ostracism can unjustifiably deprive them of benefits associated with social connection. As a result, ostracism may increase feelings of entitlement to internal and external rewards associated with benefiting oneself through dishonest actions. The first aim of the current investigation was to show that ostracism increases dishonest intentions and behaviors (Experiments 1-5). The second aim was to demonstrate that increased feelings of entitlement mediate the effect of ostracism on dishonesty (Experiments 3-5).The third aim was to identify a boundary condition to these effects. We predicted that the feelings of entitlement and inclinations to dishonesty following ostracism arise from people's perception that ostracism is detrimental to the self. Thus, framing ostracism as an experience that could benefit the self should counteract the effects of ostracism on entitlement and dishonesty. By associating ostracism with gaining benefits to the self, we predicted that ostracized people would not express higher feelings of entitlement because they may no longer perceive ostracism as detrimental. Through reducing feelings of entitlement, the relationship between ostracism and dishonesty should be weakened (Experiment 5).

Ostracism and Reward Seeking

People have a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Having sustainable social connections not only provide psychological comforts, but they also guarantee access to important resources, such as food, warmth, protection, and

information. Evolutionary psychologists have argued that ostracism meant "social death" because it blocked one's access to benefits associated with social connection, thereby threatening one's chances of survival (Case & Williams, 2004). Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that ostracism activates brain areas that are involved in experiencing physical pain (MacDonald & Leary, 2005), and causes intense social distress (Williams, 2007, 2009).

Ostracism is detrimental, thus making people sensitive to stimuli and situations that signal potential pleasures or benefits. Acquiring such rewards to the self may offset the negative impact of ostracism. For example, compared with socially accepted participants, ostracized participants demonstrate an increased desire for money, prefer tasty (but unhealthy) beverages and snacks, make risky (but potentially more profitable) financial decisions, and procrastinate longer with pleasure (but unproductive) activities such as playing video games (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; Duclos, Wan, & Jiang, in press; Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002, 2003; Zhou, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2009). Ostracized smokers, compared to their included counterparts, also report more positive attitudes toward smoking (Aydin, Pfundmair, Frey, & DeWall, 2013). Therefore, ostracized people behave in ways that bring them rewards and pleasures.

Ostracism also causes automatic emotional regulation, which increases one's accessibility of positive emotions, such as recalling more positive childhood memories and completing word stems with more positive words (DeWall et al., 2011). This finding suggests that ostracized people become attuned to emotionally rewarding information. Other work has shown that when ostracized people perceive opportunities for reconnection, they become sensitive to potential sources of social acceptance (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007; Romero-Canyas et al., 2010), which further

suggests that ostracism can increase sensitivity to rewarding stimuli. However, ostracized people behave aggressively in situations that do not involve potential acceptance and affiliation (e.g. Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001; see DeWall & Bushman, 2011). The current studies measured dishonest intentions and behaviors in the absence of opportunities for social reconnection. Hence, we predicted that ostracism would promote dishonesty.

Having increased sensitivity to stimuli and situations that bring the self rewards and pleasures may imply that ostracized people will behave dishonestly to benefit themselves. The next section offers additional justifications for why ostracism may increase dishonesty and discusses a potential mechanism underlying this relationship.

Ostracism, Entitlement, and Dishonesty

Dishonesty involves discounting the harm that such behavior causes others, and entails unfair treatment that benefits the self over others (Graham et al., 2011). Behaving dishonestly makes the system unevenly balanced to benefit those who disobey standards for honesty and to punish those who obey the same standards. Past research has shown that psychological entitlement is associated with dishonesty and immorality (e.g. Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004).

Psychological entitlement refers to a "pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others" (Campbell et al., 2004, p. 31). Entitled people display a host of interpersonal problems, including a propensity to behave aggressively, selfishly and greedily (Campbell et al., 2004). Although entitlement is commonly considered as a personality trait, feelings of entitlement can wax and wane according to situational factors. For example, a recent study showed that feelings of entitlement can be experimentally induced, with implications on judgments of time and behavior (O'Brien, Anastasio, & Bushman, 2011). We

propose that certain interpersonal experiences, such as ostracism, may also increase feelings

of entitlement, which increase the likelihood for dishonesty.

People desire equity in their relationships (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978).

However, when they experience unjustified deprivations and disadvantages, they may

use ethically questionable means to over-benefit themselves. For example, individuals

who were underpaid on an initial task were more likely to exploit other's interests to

over-benefit themselves on a subsequent task (Austin & Walster, 1975). Ostracism is an

aversive interpersonal experience that brings immediate distress and deprives people of

benefits associated with social connection (Williams, 2007, 2009). Therefore, ostracized

people may feel more entitled to benefits than others, which may motivate them to

over-benefit themselves through dishonesty as compensation.

Indirect evidence supports our predicted causal effect of ostracism on entitlement

and dishonesty. For example, correlational studies showed that people who experience

frequent peer victimization, compared to their non-victimized counterparts, behaved

more selfishly in a dictator game (Fetchenhauer & Huang, 2004) and were more likely

to commit moral transgressions, such as stealing a shirt from a store (Gollwitzer,

Schmitt, Schalke, Maes, & Baer, 2005). Further, ostracism often increases aggression,

such as blasting prolonged aversive noise to hurt others (e.g. Twenge et al., 2001), and

reduces empathy for others' suffering and pro-social behavior, such as keeping money

for oneself instead of donating it to help the needy (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall,

Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007). Thus, ostracism is linked to the two moral virtues that relate

most closely associated with entitlement and dishonesty, namely harm and fairness

(Graham et al., 2011). Hence, there is precedent for predicting that ostracism would

increase entitlement and dishonesty.

To be sure, ostracized people do not always behave anti-socially. In particular, offering ostracized people an immediate or possible future benefit reduces their anti-social behavior. For example, providing ostracized people with social acceptance reduces their aggression (DeWall, Twenge, Bushman, Im, & Williams, 2010; Twenge et al., 2007). Ostracized people also become helpful when doing so can earn them social benefits (Maner et al., 2007; Romero-Canyas et al., 2010). Offering ostracized people financial rewards also offsets the negative behavioral impact of ostracism (Baumeister et al., 2005). In contrast, framing ostracism as a loss to financial rewards increases the urge to retaliate, whereas framing ostracism as a gain to financial rewards reduces the urge to retaliate (van Beest & Williams, 2006). Therefore, if ostracism is perceived as an experience that is detrimental to the self, ostracized people may behave dishonestly to obtain benefits. But if ostracism is perceived as an experience that is beneficial to the self, then ostracized people may no longer behave dishonestly.

Given prior research showing a relationship between entitlement and outcomes related to disregarding fairness (Campbell et al., 2004; Zitek, Jordan, Monin, & Frederic, 2010), we predicted that increased feelings of entitlement would mediate the effect of ostracism on dishonesty. We also predicted that framing the ostracism experience as one that can help one's development would reduce feelings of entitlement among ostracized people. According to basic motivational processes of need intensification and satiation (Geen, 1995; Shah & Gardner, 2007), the drive to obtain benefits through dishonest actions should be reduced when ostracized people feel that their ostracism experience can give benefit the self. By reducing feelings of entitlement, ostracized people should behave less dishonestly.

Current Research

Five experiments tested the hypothesis that ostracism increases dishonesty, which is mediated by increased feelings of entitlement. In each experiment, participants were exposed

to an experimental manipulation of ostracism, either by recalling a past real life experience (Experiments 1 and 3), by imagining a work-related experience (Experiment 2), or by playing an online ball tossing game (Experiments 4 and 5). Next, participants completed measures aimed at assessing dishonest intentions (Experiments 1-3) and actual dishonest behavior (Experiments 4 and 5). Experiments 3-5 also examined whether increased feelings of entitlement mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonesty. Experiment 5 examined whether framing ostracism as an experience that could benefit to the self would weaken the connection between ostracism, entitlement, and dishonest behavior.

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 provided an initial test of our hypothesis that ostracism increases dishonesty.

Method

Participants and design. Fifty-eight undergraduates (23 men; mean age= 19.41; $SD=$ 1.73) participated for course credit. They were randomly assigned to the ostracism or inclusion condition.

Procedures and materials. Participants first recalled and wrote down a past experience when they were either included or ostracized (e.g. Chen, DeWall, Poon, & Chen, 2012). Afterwards, they responded to the two statements, "I was excluded in the experience" and "I was ignored in the experience" (1= *strong disagreement*; 7= *strong agreement*). The scores were averaged to check the ostracism manipulation ($r=.86, p<.001$).

Participants were then asked to imagine that they were the focal protagonist of five scenarios, and to indicate the extent to which they would behave dishonestly (1= *definitely would not*; 9= *definitely would*). The scenarios were (a) falsified resume in a job application; (b) kept the cash from a wallet lying on the street; (c) stole exam paper; (d) copied other's

essay; and (e) sold illegal drugs[1]. The scores were averaged to create a dishonest intention index (α= .73). A debriefing followed.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. Participants in the ostracism condition (M= 5.37, SD= 1.27) reported feeling more excluded and ignored than participants in the inclusion condition (M= 2.21, SD= 1.23), $F(1, 56)$= 92.45, $p<$ .001, η_p^2= .62. Therefore, the ostracism manipulation was successful.

Dishonest behavioral intention. We predicted that ostracized people would be more willing to engage in dishonest behavior in hypothetical scenarios. As expected, ostracized participants (M= 3.28, SD= 1.68) reported higher dishonest intentions than included participants (M= 2.47, SD= 1.01), $F(1, 56)$= 4.84, $p=$ .03, η_p^2= .08.

Experiment 1 provided initial support for the hypothesis that ostracism increases dishonest intentions. Consistent with prior work, ostracized participants focused on rewards that would benefit themselves with little concern for others.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2 sought to replicate and extend the findings of Experiment 1 in two ways. First, we adopted a different paradigm to induce feelings of ostracism. Second, we added a neutral control condition, which helped to compare the effect of ostracism on dishonesty with both inclusion and neutral experiences. We predicted that ostracism would increase dishonest inclinations, compare to both inclusion and neutral experiences.

Method

Participants and design. One hundred and ninety-six individuals in the United States (130 males, mean age= 28.24, SD= 8.72) completed this study for US$0.2. They were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk, which helps collect representative and reliable

data online (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Participants were randomly assigned to the ostracism, inclusion or neutral control condition.

Procedures and materials. Feelings of ostracism were induced by imagination (e.g. Filipkowski & Smyth, 2012). Participants were asked to imagine that they were a new employee of a company. By random assignment, participants in the ostracism condition imagined that they were ostracized by colleagues, whereas participants in the inclusion condition imagined being accepted by colleagues. Participants in the neutral control condition did not receive any information about their relationship status. Next, participants responded to two statements: "I feel excluded" and "I feel ignored" (1= *not at all*, 5= *extremely*). The scores were averaged to check the ostracism manipulation ($r= .83$, $p< .001$).

Finally, participants indicated the likelihood that they would engage in twelve work-related dishonest behaviors, such as making personal long-distance phone calls at work and overcharging customers to earn a higher bonus, on 7-point scale (1= *very unlikely*; 7= *very likely*; Piff, Stancato, Côté, Mendoza-Denton, & Keltner, 2012). The scores were averaged to index dishonest intentions ($\alpha= .94$). A debriefing followed.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. A one-way ANOVA revealed significant variation among the three experimental conditions, $F(2, 193)= 175.65$, $p< .001$, $\eta_p^2= .65$. Further, participants in the ostracism condition ($M= 4.06$, $SD= .83$) reported feeling more excluded and ignored than participants in the inclusion condition ($M= 1.45$, $SD= .63$), $F(1, 193)= 348.86$, $p< .001$, and participants in the neutral control condition ($M= 2.55$, $SD= .91$), $F(1, 193)= 115.79$, $p< .001$. Moreover, participants in the inclusion condition felt less excluded and ignored than participants in the control condition, $F(1, 193)= 62.03$, $p< .001$. Therefore, the ostracism manipulation was successful.

Dishonesty likelihood. We predicted that ostracized people would be more likely to behave dishonestly in hypothetical situations. A one-way ANOVA revealed significant variation among the three experimental conditions, $F(2, 193)= 4.69$, $p= .01$, $\eta_p^2= .05$. Further, participants in the ostracism condition ($M= 2.36$, $SD= 1.35$) reported greater likelihood of behaving dishonestly than participants in the inclusion condition ($M= 1.82$, $SD= .87$), $F(1, 193)= 7.84$, $p< .01$, and participants in the neutral control condition ($M= 1.88$, $SD= .99$), $F(1, 193)= 6.16$, $p= .01$. Dishonest likelihood did not differ among participants in the latter two conditions, $F(1, 193)= 0.10$, $p= .76$.

Experiment 2 provided additional evidence that ostracism increases dishonest intentions when compared with social inclusion and neutral experiences. Past research has shown that psychological entitlement is related to selfish and unethical behaviors (e.g. Campbell et al., 2004; Zitek et al., 2010). We propose that ostracism increases feelings of entitlement, which should mediate the effect of ostracism on dishonesty. Moreover, the experimental conditions in previous experiments not only differed in social relationship status but also in mood valence. Hence, it was desirable to replicate these findings by comparing the effect of ostracism on dishonesty with a negative control condition.

Experiment 3

Experiment 3 aimed to replicate and extend the previous findings in three ways. First, it compared the effect of ostracism on dishonesty with that of physical pain, another negative experience that was commonly served as a negative control condition in ostracism research (e.g. Duclos, Wan, & Jiang, in press; Twenge et al., 2001). Moreover, social and physical pain activate similar brain systems, which suggests commonality in how they are experienced (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Second, it tested whether ostracism increased feelings of entitlement. Third, it tested whether increased feelings of entitlement mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonesty.

Method

     Participants and design. Ninety-eight individuals in the United States (38 males, mean age= 32.71, *SD*= 12.96) completed this study for US$0.2 in Amazon's Mechanical Turk. They were randomly assigned to the ostracism or physical pain condition.

     Procedures and materials. Participants first recalled and wrote down either a past ostracism or physical pain experience (e.g. Chen, Williams, Fitness, & Newton, 2008). Next, participants responded to two statements: "I feel excluded" and "I feel ignored" (1= *not at all*, 5= *extremely*). The scores were averaged to check the ostracism manipulation (*r*= .66, *p*< .001).

     Participants then completed a self-report measure assessing their feelings of entitlement, similar to past research (c.f. Campbell et al., 2004; Zitek et al., 2010). Specifically, participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with six items (e.g. "I am entitled to gain more than others"; 1= *strong disagreement*; 7= *strong agreement*). The scores were averaged to form an entitlement index[2] (α= .91).

     Finally, participants completed a hypothetical negotiation task (e.g. Piff et al., 2012). Briefly, participants were asked to imagine they needed to negotiate a low salary with a job candidate. They were told that the candidate desired to remain in the same job for at least two years and would accept a lower salary for a verbal commitment of job stability. However, the job was certain to be eliminated in six months. There was no other suitable applicant at the moment and the applicant did not know this information. Participants were further told that they would receive an end-of-year bonus if they could negotiate the salary below a certain amount, and a failure to refill the position quickly would negatively affect their annual performance review. Participants then indicated the percentage of chance that they would tell the candidate the true information if s/he specifically asked about job security, which served as a measure of dishonest intention. A debriefing followed.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. Participants in the ostracism condition (M= 3.57, SD= 1.23) reported feeling more ignored and excluded than participants in the physical pain condition (M= 1.85, SD= 1.00), $F(1, 96)$= 58.17, $p<$ .001, η_p^2= .38. Therefore, the ostracism manipulation was successful.

Entitlement and dishonest intention. We predicted that ostracized people would have higher feelings of entitlement and dishonest intentions. As expected, participants in the ostracism condition (M= 3.17, SD= 1.48) reported higher feelings of entitlement than participants in the physical pain condition (M= 2.51, SD= 1.40), $F(1, 96)$= 5.26, p= .02, η_p^2= .05. Furthermore, participants in the ostracism condition (M= 59.77, SD= 36.44) reported a lower percentage of chance to disclose the true information than participants in the physical pain condition (M= 73.47, SD= 28.85), $F(1, 96)$= 4.29, p= .04, η_p^2= .04.

Mediation analysis. A bootstrapping mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with 5000 iterations was conducted to examine whether increased feelings of entitlement mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonest intention. The experimental condition was coded as 1 (ostracism) or 0 (physical pain). The 95% confidence interval for the indirect path coefficient excluded zero (-9.12 to -0.13), suggesting a significant indirect effect (see Figure 1). Thus, increased feelings of entitlement mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonest intention.

Experiment 3 provided additional evidence that ostracism increases dishonesty when compared with negative physical pain experiences. Furthermore, it demonstrated that participants who recalled a past ostracism experience reported higher feelings of entitlement than participants who recalled a past physical pain experience, which had direct consequences for their dishonesty. Although the findings of Experiments 1-3 supported our hypotheses, it was desirable to replicate these findings with an actual behavioral measure.

Experiment 4

Experiment 4 aimed to replicate and extend our initial findings in three ways. First, it adopted another manipulation of ostracism to increase the generalizability of our findings through multi-method convergence. Second, we measured actual dishonest behavior, in which participants had an opportunity to cheat by taking undeserved money. Third, we tested whether positive or negative mood would account for the effect of ostracism on dishonesty.

Method

Participants and design. Sixty-nine undergraduates from a university in Hong Kong (24 men; mean age= 20.17; *SD*= 1.69) participated for HK$50 (approximately US$6.5). Participants were randomly assigned to the ostracism or inclusion condition.

Procedures and materials. Participants first played an online ball tossing game–Cyberball (e.g. Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000). Participants were led to believe that they were playing the game with two people via the Internet to practice mental visualization skills. In fact, the total 30 tosses were controlled by the computer. By random assignment, participants received two tosses at the beginning but none afterwards (ostracism condition) or received approximately one-third of the total tosses (inclusion condition).

After the game, participants responded to two statements, "I was ignored" and "I was excluded" (1= *agree* to 5= *disagree*). Responses were averaged to check the ostracism manipulation (*r*= .93, *p*< .001).

Next, participants completed the positive (e.g. "I feel happy") and negative mood (e.g. "I feel sad") measure adopted from the Need Satisfaction Index (1= *not at all*; 5= *extremely*; Williams, 2009), and the same entitlement measure used in Experiment 3. Responses were averaged to form an index of entitlement (α= .89), positive mood (α= .88), and negative mood (α= .81) respectively.

Finally, participants proceeded to the critical task that assessed their dishonest behavior. Adopted and modified from previous research (c.f. Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008; Zhong, Bohns, & Gino, 2010), participants were asked to solve 15 anagrams, of which 8 were solvable (e.g., eorvl= lover). For the task, participants received an envelope that contained HK$30 (Approximately US$4; two HK$10 notes and five HK$2 coins). Participants worked on the anagram task on a computer, which automatically recorded their responses. Participants were told that they had 15 seconds to complete each anagram. The computer presented each anagram for 15 seconds, and moved to the next one afterwards.

To avoid potential hindsight bias or other unintended confounds, participants did not receive any solutions or feedback about their performance (c.f. Mazer et al., 2008). This anagram task was chosen because it took some time to formulate an answer, but participants could know whether their answers were correct when they had an answer. Moreover, participants were instructed that they could keep 2 dollars for themselves for each answer they were sure to be correct, and they should not take any money if they were unsure. After each trial, participants had time to take the money if they correctly solve the item, and they proceeded to the next trial when they were ready. Therefore, participants did not need to constantly keep track of their overall performance. This method created an uncertain environment about whether their responses were recorded by the computer, and whether the experimenter would (or could) check the answers. Therefore, participants had the opportunity to behave dishonestly by over-reporting the performance because they worked on the task without the presence of the experimenter, but they faced the risk of being caught and punished by the experimenter before they left the lab. This resembled a dilemma people encounter when they decide whether or not to behave dishonestly in real life.

Finally, participants received a debriefing. After the experiment, the experimenter recorded the amount of money participants took, retrieved their answers from the computer,

and checked the number of anagrams they correctly solved. Dishonest behavior was operationalized as the extra undeserved money they took (i.e. the total money they took minus the money they should have taken)[3].

Results and Discussion

Manipulation check. Ostracized participants (*M*= 2.32, *SD*= 1.15) reported feeling more ignored and excluded than included participants (*M*= 3.99, *SD*= .92), $F(1, 67)= 43.92$, $p< .001$, $\eta_p^2= .40$. Therefore, the ostracism manipulation was successful.

Positive and Negative Mood. Ostracized participants (*M*= 1.79, *SD*= .60) had a lower level of positive mood than included participants (*M*= 2.71, *SD*= .94), $F(1, 67)= 23.72$, $p< .001$, $\eta_p^2= .26$. Moreover, ostracized participants (*M*= 2.64, *SD*= .78) had a higher level of negative mood than included participants (*M*= 2.01, *SD*= .60), $F(1, 67)= 14.47$, $p< .001$, $\eta_p^2= .18$.

Entitlement and dishonest behavior. As expected, ostracized participants (*M*= 3.59, *SD*= 1.30) reported higher feelings of entitlement than included participants (*M*= 2.92, *SD*= 1.10), $F(1, 67)= 5.42$, $p< .03$, $\eta_p^2= .08$. Furthermore, ostracized participants (*M*= 5.24, *SD*= 6.38) took more undeserved money than included participants (*M*= 2.69, *SD*= 3.10), $F(1, 67)= 4.49$, $p< .04$, $\eta_p^2= .06$[4].

Did mood trigger dishonest behavior? Two bootstrapping mediation analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with 5000 iterations were conducted to examine whether positive or negative mood mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonest behavior. The experimental condition was coded as 1 (ostracism) or 0 (inclusion). The 95% confidence interval for the indirect path coefficients were -.19 to 2.65 (positive mood) and -1.65 to 1.47 (negative mood). Because the coefficients included zero, neither positive nor negative mood mediated the observed relationship.

Did entitlement trigger dishonest behavior? Another bootstrapping mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with 5000 iterations was conducted to examine whether increased feelings of entitlement mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonest behavior. The 95% confidence interval for the indirect path coefficient excluded zero (0.11 to 2.05), suggesting a significant indirect effect (see Figure 2). Thus, increased feelings of entitlement mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonest behavior. Furthermore, the 95% confidence interval for the indirect path coefficients of entitlement still excluded zero (0.06 to 2.23) when both positive and negative mood were included in the model simultaneously. Therefore, increased feelings of entitlement still significantly mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonesty after controlling for the effects of positive and negative mood.

Coupled with our previous experiments, Experiment 4 provided additional evidence that ostracism increases feelings of entitlement, which have direct consequences for dishonest behavior. Moreover, we ruled out an alternative explanation by showing that the effect of ostracism on dishonesty could not be attributed to differences in positive or negative mood following ostracism. These findings are consistent with prior findings that emotions do not account for the behavioral impact of ostracism although people could have emotional changes following ostracism (e.g. Twenge, et al., 2001; see Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009 for a meta-analysis).

Having shown why ostracism increases dishonesty, it was desirable to identify how to weaken this relationship. We proposed that ostracism increases dishonest behavior because it is perceived as detrimental to the self. Therefore, ostracized people feel more entitled to behave dishonestly to get undeserved benefits as compensation. Framing ostracism as an experience that provides benefits to the self should buffer ostracized people from feeling more entitled, because such a framing reassure them that ostracism can be beneficial and not destined to be negative. By reducing the relationship between ostracism and entitlement, we

predicted that ostracism would have a weaker or statistically unreliable relationship with dishonest behavior.

Experiment 5

Experiment 5 aimed to examine how to weaken or break the link between ostracism and dishonest behavior. Because increased feelings of entitlement represent one mechanism underlying the relationship between ostracism and dishonesty, we hypothesized that framing an ostracism experience as an opportunity to gain benefits would weaken the association between ostracism and feelings of entitlement. This diminished entitlement should, in turn, predict lower levels of dishonest behavior.

Method

Participants and design. Seventy-nine undergraduates (27 men; mean age= 20.81; SD= 1.53) participated for HK\$50 (approximately US\$6.5). They were randomly assigned to one condition in a 2 (Cyberball: inclusion vs. ostracism) by 2 (Ostracism framing: ostracism gain frame vs. ostracism loss frame) between-subject design.

Procedures and materials. Participants first completed Cyberball as in Experiment 4. By random assignment, participants experienced either ostracism or inclusion. After the game, participants responded to the manipulation check items used in Experiment 4 (r= .89, p< .001).

Next, participants were exposed to the ostracism framing manipulation. Participants read a BBC-News style article ostensibly written by a famous social psychologist concerning the impact of ostracism. By random assignment, participants read that ostracism was destined to be detrimental (ostracism loss frame condition) or that ostracism could be beneficial (ostracism gain frame condition).

For example, participants in the ostracism loss condition frame read (in part):

In Stone Age times, our ancestors had needed to depend on each other for basic survival needs such as food and shelter. Our dependency on each other continues to persist in the modern day, but in a more time relevant fashion. It is argued that too few social connections may act as a serious obstacle to personal achievement. Research has documented the negative effects which social exclusion can bring about. From suffering the pain of loneliness and isolation; to being disadvantaged academically by not being able to co-operate and learn from peers; to losing out in the job market due to a lack of social connections; these negative consequences are innumerable

In contrast, participants in the ostracism gain frame condition read (in part):

While in Stone Age times, our ancestors may have needed to depend on each other for basic survival needs such as food and shelter, nowadays we have evolved beyond such dependencies into a more autonomous people. In fact it can be argued that we have evolved so much that too many social connections may act as a serious obstacle to personal achievement. Research has documented the positive effects which social exclusion can bring about. From allowing people more autonomy and freedom to do and act as they desire; to affording people more time to plan for both their present and their future; to allowing people to save their money rather than waste it on unnecessary social events; these benefits are innumerable.

After reading the article, participants responded to three statements: "social exclusion is not necessarily negative", "social exclusion can be beneficial", and "the argument of the article is convincing" (1= *strongly disagree*; 7= *strongly agree*). The first two items were averaged to check the ostracism framing manipulation ($r= .63$, $p< .001$). The third item aimed to check whether participants rated the two articles as equally convincing. Participants also completed the same entitlement measure used in Experiment 3 and 4. The scores were averaged to form an entitlement index ($\alpha= .91$).

Finally, participants completed the same anagram task used in Experiments 4 to assess their dishonest behavior. As in that experiment, the difference between the money participants took and the money they should have taken served as a measure of dishonest behavior.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation checks. As expected, ostracized participants ($M= 1.78$, $SD= .94$) reported feeling more ignored and excluded than included participants ($M= 3.75$, $SD= 1.16$), $F(1, 77)= 69.38$, $p< .001$, $\eta_p^2= .47$. Therefore, the ostracism manipulation was successful. Moreover, participants in the ostracism gain frame condition ($M= 5.17$, $SD= 1.04$) agreed that social exclusion was not necessarily negative and could have benefits more than participants in the ostracism loss frame condition ($M= 4.10$, $SD= 1.20$), $F(1, 77)= 17.70$, $p< .001$, $\eta_p^2= .19$. Furthermore, participants in the gain frame condition ($M= 4.72$, $SD= 1.10$) and participants in the loss frame condition ($M= 4.53$, $SD= 1.11$) rated their respective article as equally convincing, $F(1, 77)= 0.60$, $p= .44$, $\eta_p^2= .01$. Therefore, the framing manipulation was successful.

Feelings of entitlement. We hypothesized that the framing that ostracism could benefit the self should reduce the feelings of entitlement following ostracism. Neither the main effect of Cyberball, $F(1, 75)= 1.20$, $p= .28$, $\eta_p^2= .02$, nor ostracism framing was significant, $F(1, 75)= 0.34$, $p= .56$, $\eta_p^2= .01$. However, an expected interaction effect emerged, $F(1, 75)= 5.38$, $p= .02$, $\eta_p^2= .07$ (see Figure 3a).

Among ostracized participants, participants in the loss frame condition ($M= 4.23$, $SD= 1.13$) reported higher feelings of entitlement than participants in the gain frame condition ($M= 3.45$, $SD= 1.51$), $F(1, 75)= 4.39$, $p< .04$. Among included participants, feelings of entitlement did not differ regardless of whether ostracism was framed as a loss ($M= 3.32$, $SD= .99$) or a gain ($M= 3.78$, $SD= .98$), $F(1, 75)= 1.45$, $p= .23$.

Additional analyses revealed that among participants in the ostracism loss frame condition, ostracized participants reported higher feelings of entitlement than included participants, $F(1, 75)= 5.92$, $p< .02$. In contrast, among participants in the ostracism gain frame condition, the feeling of entitlement of ostracized participants did not differ from that of included participants, $F(1, 75)= 0.74$, $p= .39$.

Thus, framing ostracism as an experience that can benefit the self reduced feelings of entitlement following ostracism. In contrast, framing ostracism as beneficial or detrimental had no effect on feelings of entitlement among included people.

Dishonest behavior. We hypothesized that the framing that ostracism could benefit the self should also reduce the relationship between ostracism and dishonest behavior. A significant main effect of Cyberball was found, $F(1, 75)= 5.49$, $p= .02$, $\eta_p^2= .07$, such that ostracized participants ($M= 6.63$, $SD= 8.73$) behaved more dishonestly than included participants ($M= 3.16$, $SD= 3.62$). The main effect of ostracism framing was not significant, $F(1, 75)= 0.88$, $p= .35$, $\eta_p^2= .01$. Moreover, an expected interaction effect emerged, $F(1, 75)= 5.29$, $p= .02$, $\eta_p^2= .07$ (see Figure 3b).

Among ostracized participants, participants in the loss frame condition ($M= 9.10$, $SD= 10.08$) took more undeserved money than participants in the gain frame condition ($M= 4.29$, $SD= 6.64$), $F(1, 75)= 5.46$, $p= .02$. Among included participants, framing ostracism as a loss ($M= 2.20$, $SD= 2.50$) or a gain ($M= 4.22$, $SD= 4.39$) did not produce changes in dishonest behavior, $F(1, 75)= 0.89$, $p= .35$.

Additional analyses revealed that among participants in the loss frame condition, ostracized participants behaved more dishonestly than included participants, $F(1, 75)= 10.95$, $p< .01$. In contrast, among participants in the gain frame condition, dishonest behavior did not differ between ostracized and included participants, $F(1, 75)= 0.001$, $p= .97$.

Thus, framing ostracism as an experience that can benefit the self reduced the relationship between ostracism and dishonest behavior. The framing manipulation did not reliably influence included participants' behavior.

Mediational analysis. A bootstrapping analysis was conducted (with 5000 iterations; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to examine whether feelings of entitlement mediated the interactive effect of the ostracism experience and the ostracism framing manipulation on the undeserved money participants took. The ostracism condition was coded as 1 (ostracism) or 0 (inclusion), and the ostracism framing condition was coded as 1 (loss frame) or 0 (gain frame). The interaction term between the two independent variables was created to be the predictor, the averaged entitlement score was the mediator, and the extra undeserved money participants took was the criterion variable. The two independent variables were included as covariates in the model. The 95% confidence interval for the indirect path coefficient excluded zero (0.20 to 4.97; see Figure 4). Therefore, feelings of entitlement mediated the interactive effect of ostracism and its framing on dishonest behavior.

Experiment 5 supported our prediction that framing an ostracism experience as a means by which people could obtain benefits to the self would reduce the relationships between ostracism, entitlement, and dishonest behavior. When ostracism was framed as a detrimental experience, we observed results that mimicked the results from our previous experiments: ostracized participants felt more entitled and behaved more dishonestly than included participants. Framing ostracism as integral to one's personal development reduced ostracized participants' feelings of entitlement, which in turn reduced their dishonest behavior.

General Discussion

Why do people lie or cheat following ostracism? Ostracism causes intense pain feelings and social distresses, and deprives people of benefits, resources and opportunities

associated with social connection. Because ostracism is perceived as detrimental, ostracized people may feel more entitled to benefits more than others, which may increase their propensity to behave dishonestly to benefit the self. Offering ostracized people a perception that ostracism may be beneficial to the self may diminish their feelings of entitlement, and thereby reduce their dishonest behavior.

Five experiments provided consistent support for these hypotheses. The first goal of the present investigation was to demonstrate that ostracism increases dishonest intentions and behaviors. In five experiments, compared to included and control participants, ostracized participants reported higher levels of dishonest intentions, such as falsifying their resume; they were less likely to disclose the true information in a negotiation task to obtain undeserved advantages; and they over-reported their performance in an anagram task to obtain more undeserved money. Overall, these results supported the hypothesis that ostracism increases dishonest intentions and behaviors.

The second goal was to show that ostracism increases feelings of entitlement, which may account for the effect of ostracism on dishonesty. In Experiments 3-5, we showed that ostracism increased feelings of entitlement relative to non-ostracism, and increased feelings of entitlement mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonesty. These findings are consistent with past research showing relationships between entitlement, selfish and dishonest behavior (Campbell et al., 2004; Zitek et al., 2010). Moreover, in Experiment 4, we found that neither positive nor negative mood mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonesty, and feelings of entitlement still uniquely account for the observed effect after controlling for the effects of positive and negative mood. These results suggest that ostracism increases dishonesty because ostracized people feel more entitled (but not because of negative emotions associated with ostracism).

The third goal was to identify a way to weaken the relationship between ostracism and dishonesty. According to basic motivational processes of need intensification and satiation (Geen, 1995; Shah & Gardner, 2007), the drive to behave dishonestly to obtain benefits should be reduced when ostracized people believe that their ostracism experience can be beneficial to the self. Therefore, framing ostracism as an experience that can benefit the self should weaken the linkage between ostracism, feelings of entitlement, and dishonest behavior. Experiment 5 showed that ostracized participants who were primed with the belief that ostracism was destined to be detrimental felt more entitled and behaved more dishonestly than ostracized participants who were primed with the beliefs that ostracism can be beneficial. Furthermore, feelings of entitlement mediated the interactive effect of ostracism experience and ostracism framing on dishonest behavior. The results suggest that the role of entitlement on dishonest behavior following ostracism is dependent on people's belief about whether ostracism was destined to be detrimental or ostracism could be beneficial.

The present findings dovetail nicely with previous work showing relationships between ostracism and the desire for reward and pleasure (Baumeister et al., 2005; Duclos et al., in press; Twenge et al., 2002; Zhou et al., 2009). In those investigations, ostracized participants, compared to non-ostracized participants, made riskier financial decisions, showed a greater desire for money, consumed more tasty (but unhealthy) foods and beverages, and procrastinated longer with pleasurable (but unproductive) activities when they were allowed to do so. Ostracized people were also more present-oriented and less future-oriented, and demonstrated a desire for immediate pleasure (Twenge, et al., 2003). To be sure, the inclination to egocentrism and seeking immediate reward is different from the intention to behave dishonestly. People can be honest but egocentric. In daily life, people are less likely to behave dishonestly, compared with their likelihood to seek pleasures like acquiring money, consuming tasty foods, and procrastinating. However, the impact and cost of dishonesty on

individual and societal well-being exceed that of these solitary pleasure seeking behaviors. For example, various forms of financial dishonesty (e.g., insurance fraud) cost the United States over $24 billion annually (Accenture, 2003, cited in Mazar & Ariely, 2006). Thus, the present findings go beyond past findings that ostracism increases one's tendency to obtain legitimate rewards by showing that ostracism also increases dishonesty to obtain illegitimate and undeserved rewards through increased feelings of entitlement.

Behaving dishonestly may endow people with immediate rewards and pleasures. However, dishonesty may poison relationships, and result in ostracism. Although ostracized people behave pro-socially when they see prospects to reconnect with others (Maner et al., 2007), the present findings suggest that ostracized people behave dishonestly when they perceive that ostracism is detrimental and they are not given a chance to re-affiliate.

The present findings are also consistent with past research linking ostracism with irrational behavior and unintelligent thought (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002; Twenge et al., 2002). In those investigations, ostracized participants, compared to non-ostracized participants, made more irrational financial decisions and showed poorer logical reasoning performance (but easy, decision-making processes were unaffected). Dishonest behavior is irrational and illogical, insofar as transgressors often underestimate the costs of being caught and overestimate the benefits obtained. Therefore, one reason why ostracized people make irrational and illogical decisions may be they feel that they are entitled to benefits without putting forth the careful thought processes required to obtain them.

Having increased feelings of entitlement following ostracism may also have implications beyond dishonest behavior. In particular, the fact that ostracism increases entitlement may help explain why ostracism increases aggressive behavior (c.f. Campbell et al., 2004). When people experience provocation, they often behave aggressively because they believe that doing so will bring some benefits to the self, such as feeling better (Bushman,

Baumeister, & Phillips, 2001). Ostracized people may feel that they are especially entitled to benefits associated with lashing out at others, which may increase their aggression. Similarly, increased feelings of entitlement may explain why ostracism decreases pro-social behavior. Ostracized people may feel that they are more entitled to benefits than others, even those who are in immediate need. Consistent with prior entitlement and aggression research (Campbell et al., 2004; DeWall, Anderson, & Bushman, 2011), our findings suggest that entitlement functions an antecedent to aggression and a lack of prosocial behavior instead of conflating entitlement as a form of these behaviors. Entitlement may increase the likelihood of engaging in dishonest, aggressive, and selfish behaviors because people feel they deserve the rewards and pleasures that accompany such behavior. Feeling entitled helps understand *why* people partake in such behaviors, but it is not equivalent to actually engaging in the behaviors.

Crucially, Experiment 5 shows an effective way to reduce dishonest behavior that accompanies ostracism. By adopting a mindset that ostracism can aid in one's growth and development, ostracized people perceive that they can benefit from the ostracism experience and do not feel compelled to seek out benefits elsewhere. Similar to work illustrating the benefits of adopting a growth mindset in responding to setbacks (Chen et al., 2012; Kammrath & Dweck, 2006), framing an ostracism experience as an opportunity for personal advancement and progress can offset the pain of ostracism and the feeling of entitlement that drives ostracized people to behave dishonestly.

The present findings may also carry implications on the use of incarceration to punish criminals. Adults who break laws are often institutionally ostracized through incarceration. It is debatable as to whether incarceration reduces dishonest and aggressive behaviors. Labeling and diminished employment opportunity may explain why incarceration increases crimes (Pritikin, 2008). Our findings suggest that prisonsers may feel entitled to benefits and thus behave dishonestly when they return to society. We are not arguing against the use of

incarceration to reduce crimes and punish criminals. Instead, we encourage authorities to focus on education elements of incarceration. Based on our findings, prisoners who are primed that their ostracism from society can benefit themselves should reduce their likelihood to commit crimes again. This possibility awaits future research.

More broadly, this research illustrates the power of the subjective perception of ostracism experience in moderating reflective responses of ostracism. According to Williams' (2007, 2009) temporal need threat model, the reflexive responses of ostracism (e.g. immediate pain feelings) are often unmitigated. However, situational factors and individual differences influence one's reflective responses of ostracism (e.g. aggressive behavior). In particular, Van Beest and Williams (2006) found that although participants who received direct monetary compensation for their ostracism experience had higher levels of immediate distresses (reflexive responses), they had weaker urges to retaliate against the source of ostracism (reflective behavioral responses). Extending this finding that direct monetary rewards moderate the reflective behavioral responses of ostracism, our findings suggest that subjective perceptions that ostracism is detrimental or beneficial to the self may moderate these responses. In particular, ostracism causes an assortment of maladaptive behaviors, such as aggressive behavior, self-defeating behavior and irrational behavior. In line with the present findings, the effect of ostracism on these behaviors should be diminished when ostracized people believe that the ostracism experience can bring them some benefits.

Limitations and future directions

The current research provided converging evidences that ostracism increases feelings of entitlement, which increase dishonest intentions and actual dishonest behaviors. However, there were some limitations that may serve as avenues for future research.

First, we found that increased feelings of entitlement mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonesty. Other psychological processes may also mediate this relationship. In particular,

one defining aspect of ostracism is reduced feelings of meaningful existence (Williams, 2007, 2009). For example, in one study (Williams, Bernieri, Faulkner, Grahe, & Gada-Jain, 2000), one ostracized participant, Mr. Blue, stated, "I feel like I am a ghost on the floor that everyone hears, but no one can talk to" (p. 37). Having a sense of anonymity is associated with dishonesty (Diener, Fraser, Beaman, & Kelem, 1976). Because ostracism may create a sense that one's actions are carried out in relative anonymity, ostracized people may perceive that they are less likely to get caught and therefore engage in more dishonest behavior. Other possibilities are arisen from prior findings that ostracized people have an increased hostile cognition bias (DeWall, Twenge, Gitter, & Baumeister, 2009) and anger (Chow, Tiedens, & Govan, 2008). This hostile misperception and angriness may cause ostracized people to believe in "an eye for an eye," in which they may feel that they deserve more benefits than other people they perceive negatively.

Second, the current studies manipulated the presence or absence of ostracism; it is an open question as to whether partial ostracism may increase dishonest behavior. Similarly, many responses to ostracism depend on the prospect of future inclusion. For example, whether behaving pro-socially or antisocially after ostracism was determined by people's belief that the target is a potential source of affiliation or not (Maner et al., 2007). Furthermore, a little belonging restoration reduces the ostracism-aggression linkage (DeWall et al., 2010). In the current research, none of our studies offered ostracized participants a chance or prospect to reconnect with others. It is possible that a brief acceptance experience can weaken the effect of ostracism on entitlement and dishonesty. Moreover, we did not examine the potential impact of targets of dishonesty on the relationship between ostracism and dishonesty. Future research may test whether ostracized people are more likely to behave dishonestly toward people whom they perceived negatively, but are less likely to behave dishonestly (or more willing to behave honestly) toward potential targets of affiliation. In

addition to examining the impact of situational acceptance after ostracism and target of dishonesty, future research may examine whether individual differences in social acceptance can serve as a buffer. People who have richer social support networks may feel less entitled and hence less likely to behave dishonestly after ostracism. Addressing these questions can further our understanding of the connection between ostracism, entitlement, and dishonest behavior.

Third, future research may examine whether other negative experiences would also increases feelings of entitlement and dishonesty. In Experiment 3, participants who recalled an ostracism experience indicated higher feelings of entitlement and dishonest intention than participants who recalled a non-social aversive experience. In Experiment 4, entitlement still mediated the effect of ostracism on dishonesty after controlling for the effects of positive and negative mood. These results suggest that our observed effect of ostracism on entitlement and dishonesty cannot be accounted by general negative emotional feelings. We propose that increased feelings of entitlement and dishonesty following ostracism arise from the belief that ostracism is detrimental and unjustifiably deprives people's access to benefits associated with social connection and acceptance. Therefore, it is likely that negative experiences that unjustifiably deprive these benefits (e.g. unfair treatment, discrimination) may also increase entitlement and dishonesty, whereas negative experiences that do not unjustifiably deprive these benefits (e.g. self-committed personal faults and failures) may not. Future research may test this possibility.

Fourth, we did not include any measures of individual differences in the current research. Future research may examine who are more inclined to dishonest behavior following ostracism. In particular, narcissists are more prone to anti-social behavior after social rejection (Twenge & Campbell, 2003) and demonstrate high feelings of entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004). Furthermore, entity theorists who believe that relationships cannot be

improved through effects are more prone to anti-social behavior following ostracism (Chen et al., 2012). Future research may examine whether ostracized narcissists and entity theorists would feel more entitled and, in turn, behave dishonestly.

Conclusion

Ostracism is detrimental, which may motivate people to behave in ways that benefit themselves through dishonesty as compensation. To date, no research has examined the potential effect of ostracism on dishonesty, the mechanism underlying this relationship, and how this relationship can be weakened. The current findings demonstrated that ostracism increased dishonesty, which was mediated by increased feelings of entitlement. Framing ostracism as an experience that brought benefits to the self weakened the relationships between ostracism, entitlement, and dishonest behavior. Together, these findings demonstrated that ostracism increases dishonesty in general, and they identified a way to weaken this effect. When ostracized people believe that their experience can aid their growth as a person, they no longer feel entitled to benefits and thus behave less dishonestly.

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Notes

1. An independent sample of 59 undergraduates demonstrated that this measure correlated positively with an anti-social measure (Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire-Short Form; Bryant & Smith, 2001), $r= .35$, $p< .01$ and negatively correlated with a measure assessing the relevance of various moral virtues (Moral Foundation Questionnaire; Graham et al., 2011), $r= -.38$, $p< .01$. The respective correlation between this measure with each moral virtues were (a) harm, $r= -.25$, $p= .06$; (b)fairness, $r= -.40$, $p< .01$; (c) ingroup, $r= -.25$, $p= .06$; (d) authority, $r= -.20$, $p= .13$; and (e) purity, $r= -.28$, $p= .03$.

2. The six-item entitlement measure used in Experiment 3 to 5 included "I am entitled to gain more than others," "I am entitled to get more resources (e.g. money, time, or opportunities) than others," "I am entitled not to suffer too much", "I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others," "I deserve better in my life than others to compensate for my sufferings," and "I feel entitled to more of everything than others." An independent sample of 82 undergraduates demonstrated that this measure positively correlated with Campbell et al.'s (2004) Psychological Entitlement Scale ($r= .68$, $p < .001$).

3. In Experiment 4 and 5, some participants underreported their performance. Their cheating scores were treated as zero in all analyses reported because they did not take any undeserved money. Treating their scores as negative did not substantially alter the results.

4. In Experiment 4 and 5, no main effects or interaction effect on participants' performance were found. Moreover, the reported effects still hold when performance was controlled.

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Entitlement mediates the linkage between ostracism on percentage to disclose the true information (Experiment 3).

Figure 2. Entitlement mediates the linkage between ostracism on dishonest behavior (Experiment 4).

Figure 3a. The feelings of entitlement as a function of Cyberball experience and ostracism framing (Experiment 5).

Figure 3b. The extra undeserved money as a function of Cyberball experience and ostracism framing (Experiment 5).

Figure 4. Entitlement mediates the interactive effect between ostracism and its framing on dishonest behavior (Experiment 5).