Fuse and fracture? The janus face of proactive personality in ostracism

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Abstract

Despite the well identified personality-related factors that drive ostracism, the dual role that a proactive personality plays in influencing ostracism has received little scholarly attention. Drawing on social exchange and social comparison theories, we develop a social relational model of peers' reactions to a focal proactive member. Findings reveal that a focal member's proactive personality not only enhances peers' cognition-based trust in the focal person, but also triggers peers' feeling of relative deprivation. The peers' cognition-based trust, in turn, weakens—whereas the feeling of relative deprivation strengthens—peers' ostracism of the focal proactive member. The focal member's prosocial motive and proself motive further moderate these relationships. Specifically, prosocial motive strengthens the negative indirect relationship between a focal person's proactive personality and peers' ostracism through peers' cognition-based trust in the focal person. Moreover, proself motive amplifies the positive indirect relationship between a focal person's proactive personality and peers' ostracism through peers' feeling of relative deprivation.

Keywords Proactive personality · Cognition-based trust · Relative deprivation · Ostracism · Prosocial/proself motives

"Following the great to achieve greatness."; "Destruction pursues the great." (Chinese proverbs).

Ostracism is defined as "the extent to which an individual perceives that s/he is ignored or excluded by others" in the workplace (Ferris et al., 2008, p. 1348). Research on ostracism has recently begun to adopt a *trait* approach to explore additional predictors. For example, some studies suggest that personality traits such as extroversion decrease ostracism (Howard et al., 2020; Mao et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2011), but neuroticism increases it (Wu et al., 2011), Despite the focus on different traits, these findings converge on one overriding consensus: a particular personality

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trait either reduces or augments ostracism. This extant work, however, has neglected proactive personality—the tendency to seek opportunities, take initiative to challenge the status quo, and make meaningful changes to the work environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993).

We posit that *proactive personality* can both increase and decrease ostracism. On the one hand, research has shown that a proactive employee engages in helping behavior (Li et al., 2011; Sun & van Emmerik, 2015; Yang et al., 2011), organizational citizenship behavior, (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2010; Li et al., 2010), and information sharing (Gong et al., 2012). Proactive personality also begets positive social outcomes (e.g., social integration) under certain conditions (e.g., high situational judgement) (Chan, 2006a, b). Given these foregoing interpersonal benefits, proactive personality may well reduce ostracism. On the other hand, though, an employee's proactive personality may unsettle his/her peers by initiating changes and challenging the status quo, thus inducing them to feel uncomfortable (Crant, 2000). A proactive person often occupies many resources and gains public attention, engendering peers' feeling that they are disadvantaged. Peers, therefore, may ostracize the proactive person (i.e., exclude him or her from their social circle) (Bolino et al., 2010; Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004).

Although no research has directly examined this foregoing relationship, implicit evidence exists. For instance, Sun et al. (2021) found that a focal person's proactivity may lead to peers' social undermining of that person (e.g., via the focal person's gains, such as higher relative performance, and hence peers' envy), alluding to a potential positive association with ostracism. Sun and van Emmerik (2015) showed that a focal person's proactive personality leads to less helping behavior directed toward others when his/her political skills—the ability to understand and exert social influence on others to help get one's work done—are lower rather than higher. Although insightful, these studies (Chan, 2006a, b; Sun & van Emmerik, 2015; Sun et al., 2021) have yet to examine the two-sided mechanisms linking proactive personality to a negative social outcome (i.e., ostracism here). This omission produces an incomplete and imprecise model of the proactive personality-social outcome relationship. Examining whether proactive personality can both decrease and increase ostracism through different (positive and negative) mechanisms, we shift the consensus in ostracism research through considering whether a particular personality trait (i.e., proactivity) can be either positive *or* negative in ostracism.

Our overarching goal is to develop a dual-pathway model to explain the double-edged effect of proactive personality on ostracism and its associated mechanisms. Specifically, from a social exchange perspective (Cropanzano et al., 2017), proactive personality brings task-related benefits to the team. Accordingly, it engenders peers' positive expectation of and confidence in the focal person's ability at work. Such ability is referred to as "cognition-based trust"—trust grounded in task-related cognitions (i.e., reliability, competence, and ability) (Han et al., 2019; McAllister, 1995). With trust in the focal person, peers are less likely to socially exclude (i.e., ostracize) him/her. From a social comparison perspective (Festinger, 1954), though, the perception of one's own unfavorable conditions in comparison to others can trigger negative emotional and behavioral reactions (Pettigrew, 2002). In our context, the proactive member is the likely target of social comparison, as s/he is often more visible in a

team and hence captures the attention from peers (Fuller & Marler, 2009). Because teams tend to possess limited resources (e.g., promotion, supervisor support), the more resources a proactive member uses, the fewer his/her team counterparts have available (Smith et al., 2012). As such, peers will feel disadvantaged and relatively deprived, which triggers ostracism of the proactive member.

Furthermore, we examine the conditions under which proactive personality influences ostracism. Peers' reaction to a focal member's dispositional proactivity depends on how they interpret that person's proactivity—whether it is seen as prosocial or proself. *A prosocial motive* refers to an individual's desire to promote the benefits and well-being of others (Batson, 1987; De Dreu et al., 2000). *A proself motive* represents the desire to benefit oneself by claiming existing benefits and favorable outcomes (De Dreu et al., 2000). We choose prosocial and proself motives as contingencies. We do so because one's prosocial or proself motives involve social relational aspects at work; relatedly, peers' perception of the focal member's prosocial or proself motive can affect their interpretations (i.e., whether the proactive person strives to benefit oneself relative to others, De Dreu & Nauta, 2009), as well as their reactions toward the focal person (i.e., cognition-based trust and relative deprivation).

We test the above ideas in a Chinese context. Increasing uncertainty in the business environment demands employee proactivity in China (and elsewhere). So, peers in Chinese organizations are likely to welcome proactive employees who bring initiatives to meet the pressing demands of their firms. However, in general, people still value interpersonal harmony, modesty, and conformity in the Chinese culture. Proactive employees who stand out from the others (e.g., through challenging the status quo) are likely to be viewed negatively. Therefore, examining in the Chinese context when and how a person's proactive personality decreases or increases peer ostracism is appropriate and important.

Our study makes three contributions. First, we advance current understanding of the role of personality traits in ostracism. Specifically, we extend extant knowledge about ostracism, demonstrating that as a dispositional antecedent, proactive personality plays dual roles in ostracism (i.e., it can aggravate or mitigate ostracism) through two countervailing mechanisms—cognition-based trust and relative deprivation, respectively. This new insight regarding the dual role of proactive personality shifts the consensus in ostracism literature in that a particular personality trait can have both a positive and negative impact on ostracism.

Second, integrating research on proactive personality and ostracism, we shed new light on the social outcomes of proactive personality through unraveling its favorable (i.e., peers' cognition-based trust leads to reduced ostracism) and unfavorable (i.e., peers' feeling of relative deprivation increases ostracism) aspects. We thus provide a holistic and balanced perspective on the social side of proactive personality. Third, we reveal both prosocial and proself motives as boundary conditions for the relationship between proactive personality and ostracism. By so doing, we respond to a call to identify contingent factors under which proactivity (i.e., proactive personality here) manifests itself in different meaningful outcomes (e.g., Chan, 2006a, b; Crant, 2000; Thompson, 2005).

Theory and hypotheses

Grounded in an overarching social relational lens, we drew on social exchange and social comparison theories to explicate how a focal person's proactive personality can increase or decrease peers' ostracism (depending on the situation). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), individuals' positive investments can motivate recipients' reciprocity, either attitudinally or behaviorally (Colquitt et al., 2012). This situation cultivates recipients' cognition-based trust towards the focal individual (Cropanzano et al., 2017) and, furthermore, creates favorable relationships with him/her (Colquitt et al., 2012). Cognition-based trust is grounded in a person's belief about another individual's reliability, competence, and dependability (Han et al., 2019; McAllister, 1995). Building on social exchange theory (Cropanzano et al., 2017) and the trust literature (Colquitt et al., 2007), we propose that the contributions a proactive person brings to the team and their ensuing benefits increase peers' confidence in and favorable expectations of that person and elicit peers' reciprocity by bestowing trust in the proactive person (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015). Trust, in turn, will reduce peers' ostracism of the focal proactive person.

In contrast, relative deprivation refers to the extent to which an individual perceives that s/he is disadvantaged or inferior compared with relevant others (e.g., peers) (Pettigrew, 2002). This feeling results from the comparison between the focal person and the immediate others (i.e., peers) vis-à-vis their status and resources (Jiang et al., 2014). When an individual conceives that others are depriving him/her of the resources that s/he could also receive, that person feels psychologically disadvantaged (Folger et al., 1983; Mark & Folger, 1984). In line with social comparison theory, an individual first compares himself/herself with referent others and then cognitively appraises whether s/he is disadvantaged (Zoogah, 2010). Proactive members are the likely target of this comparison, as they are often visible and hence capture peers' attention (Fuller & Marler, 2009). Peers' perceived disadvantage shapes their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses (Zoogah, 2010) and engenders their ostracism toward the focal proactive member. The association between social comparison and relative deprivation has been widely evidenced in the literature. For example, Hu et al. (2015) found that relative deprivation stems from social comparison. When an individual finds that s/he is disadvantaged after making a subjective comparative judgement, the person will feel relatively deprived. Moreover, Jiang et al. (2014) observed that coworkers in the same work unit often undertake comparisons to each other. Comparisons between what a person possesses and what his/her coworkers possess influence the focal person's feeling of relative deprivation. Furthermore, Smith et al.'s (2012) meta-analytic review suggested that social comparison is at the heart of relative deprivation, which could be triggered from the disadvantaged situation after making comparisons to others.

Next, we draw on social exchange and social comparison theories and develop a dual-pathway model to explicate why a focal individual's proactive personality can both negatively (i.e., through peers' cognition-based trust) and positively (i.e., through peers' feeling of relative deprivation) influence peers' ostracism. In doing so, we offer two contrasting perspectives to explain how the Janus-faced social sides of proactive personality unfold.

The bright side of proactive personality in ostracism

A proactive individual spearheads meaningful changes and workplace improvements from which peers can benefit. S/he identifies opportunities, generates new ideas (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Li et al., 2010), uncovers work-related issues, recognizes problematic situations, and seeks ways to resolve matters of concern (Allen et al., 2005). Proactivity does not exclusively serve one's own interests but also benefits the work unit (Thompson, 2005). Han et al. (2019) argued that a person's proactivity demonstrates his/her competence and abilities through bringing constructive changes to the work environment. Specifically, the proactive team member is apt to seek feedback to improve the team's work progress and manifest marked perseverance when facing challenges (Ashford & Black, 1996; Crant, 1995). Furthermore, s/he is eager to acquire key work information (e.g., rules, know-how, technical tips) relevant to the team to contribute effectively to the work unit (Ashford & Black, 1996). Accordingly, the proactive person's efforts in contributing to the team increase peers' positive evaluations of the focal person's ability to resolve problems and complete tasks. Based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960; Lioukas & Reuer, 2015), peers who witness the exceptional contribution from the proactive member and receive benefits from it will likely have enhanced confidence in the focal person's reliability and competence (Colquitt et al., 2007) and develop favorable expectations of him/her in terms of his/her words, behaviors, and decisions (Ferguson, & Peterson, 2015). Supporting these arguments, Ferguson and Peterson (2015) indicated that a team member's favorable contribution demonstrates his/her competence, which then triggers peers' high propensity to place cognition-based trust in this focal proactive member. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1a A focal member's proactive personality is positively related to peers' cognition-based trust.

According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and trust literature, the reciprocity and positive expectations among members can enhance their relationship quality and, simultaneously, reduce the likelihood of interpersonal hostility (Parzefall & Salin, 2010). Peers' trust in the proactive member will subsequently decrease the likelihood of ostracizing the focal proactive person for two reasons. First, with a positive view of the proactive member as a valuable contributor to the team, peers reciprocate with frequent communication and information sharing. Peers may then trust the focal proactive member's competence and knowledge for his/her contributions to the team; consequently, they develop high-quality relationships with the focal person and thus are less likely to exclude him/her socially (i.e., omit him/her from their social circle) (Parzefall & Salin, 2010; Scott et al., 2013). Second, with high confidence in the proactive member's ability and a positive expectation of his/her contribution to the team, peers will include the focal proactive person in their social circle rather than bar him/her. This is likely because being associated with the proactive member enables peers to benefit from the focal proactive member's visibility, advice, and assistance (Li et al., 2010, 2011). This assertion aligns with the following Chinese proverb: "Following the great to achieve greatness" (附驥攀鱗). Combining the reasoning behind Hypothesis 1a with the preceding arguments leads to the expectation that

a focal person's proactive personality reduces peers' ostracism of him/her through their enhanced cognition-based trust in that individual. Thus, we posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1b A focal member's proactive personality has a negative indirect relationship with peers' ostracism of the focal person through peers' enhanced cognition-based trust.

The dark side of proactive personality in ostracism

A focal person's proactive personality can also increase peers' ostracism, but through a different mechanism. According to social comparison theory, individuals tend to contrast themselves from or assimilate with a comparison target (Mussweiler et al., 2004). The relevant others (e.g., peers) in the same work environment are often the target for comparison (Festinger, 1954). The consequent disadvantaged situation through such comparison engenders peers' feeling of relative deprivation (Smith et al., 2012).

Based on social comparison theory, we argue that a focal person's proactive personality can lead to peers' feeling of relative deprivation for three reasons. First, a proactive member challenges the status quo and implements his/her initiatives (Parker & Bindl, 2017). This can result in the focal proactive person garnering more attention, visibility, and rewards, thus leading peers to feel deprived and even threatened (Jensen et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2021). Moreover, the proactive member also tries to implement initiatives assertively, even in the face of others' opposition (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Zhang et al., 2021). Such assertiveness or dominance may induce peers' feeling that they are deprived of opportunities to propose and implement their own ideas. In other words, peers will regard the proactive member as being dominant, thus causing them to feel inferior and relatively disadvantaged.

Second, a proactive individual is keen on obtaining and utilizing team resources (Yang et al., 2011). Given that work unit resources tend to be limited, the greater availability to and use of those resources by a focal proactive individual leave fewer resources for peers (Jiang et al., 2014). Consequently, peers may conceive that their own work progress could be hindered owing to their relative resource shortage. This perceived disadvantage in resource allocation conduces to their feeling of relative deprivation (Crosby, 1984). The *frog-pond effect*—which describes how a person regards him/herself in relation to a referent other—provides further support for our argument (Jiang et al., 2014). Specifically, this effect relates to how an individual perceives him/herself in relation to those around him/her (Jiang et al., 2014; McFarland & Buehler, 1995). Based on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), an individual tends to evaluate whether s/he is better or worse off relative to his/her immediate social environment (e.g., the work team). The proactive person can be seen as the "big frog in a small pond" who takes more resources, thus depriving the other "frogs." The discrepancy of resource allocation evokes peers' sense of relative deprivation.

Third, the proactive employee is voluble, frequently proposing initiatives; as such, s/he can more often gain visibility and attract his/her supervisor's attention, favor, and support (Thompson, 2005). This privilege gleaned from the supervisor may engender peers' perception that the focal member has an advantage over them, hence depriving them of what they would otherwise have been able to receive from their supervisor (Hu et al., 2015). The preceding discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a A focal member's proactive personality is positively related to peers' feeling of relative deprivation.

Once peers perceive that they have been disadvantaged in comparison to the focal proactive person, they will respond in an unfriendly way through socially excluding the focal person (Mark & Folger, 1984). The disadvantaged situation engendered from their comparison triggers peers' uncomfortable feeling. To mitigate this discomfort, peers socially exclude the focal person; this is because such action constitutes negative reciprocity that can prevent the focal person from obtaining potential resources and support from peers. The following Chinese proverb aligns with this sentiment: "Destruction pursues the great" (木秀于林, 風必摧之). Peers will conceivably isolate the focal member and interact with him/her discourteously as well (Ferris et al., 2008, 2015). Supporting our arguments, Hu et al. (2015) and Jensen et al. (2014) found that the foregoing unfavorable situation can stimulate discontent, which triggers negative behavioral reactions toward the target possessing greater benefits or resources.

Combining the rationale behind Hypothesis 2a and the above reasoning, we expect an indirect relationship between a focal person's proactive personality and peer ostracism. Specifically, a proactive focal member will likely garner increased visibility, attention, and resources, thus inducing peers to feel relatively deprived. As a consequence, they socially exclude the proactive person (Jensen et al., 2014). Therefore, we offer the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2b A focal person's proactive personality has a positive indirect relationship with peers' ostracism of the focal person through peers' feeling of relative deprivation.

Prosocial motive and proself motive as moderators

The proactive member's motives play an important role in conditioning peers' interpretation of and reaction to the focal person's proactivity (Eissa & Lester, 2018). A proactive member with a high prosocial motive emphasizes the collective interest of the group (Van Lange et al., 1998). In this case, his/her ideas are more genuinely geared toward benefiting the entire team. Peers gaining from the prosocial-oriented proactive member will reciprocate through having high confidence in this proactive member (Beersma & De Dreu, 1999). Meanwhile, peers will be more willing to develop and maintain high-quality relationships with this focal member. Therefore, they will be less likely to exclude the focal proactive individual socially. Though

no research has directly examined our presupposition, implicit evidence exists. For example, Bolino and Grant (2016) have found that an individual seeking feedback (i.e., an indication of proactivity) with altruistic purposes is more likely to build higher quality relationships and receive more social recognition from peers.

In comparison, a proactive person with a low prosocial motive cares less about collective interests (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004). With a low prosocial motive, his/her proactivity does not benefit peers markedly and may even serve as an impediment to the team (Parker & Bindl, 2017). This situation is particularly vexing when the focal proactive member's initiatives impede peers' work progress and thus hamper their goal achievement. Hence, peers will view the focal proactive member as officious and nettlesome rather than trustworthy. Even when his/her proactivity does indeed benefit the team, peers may still react less favorably. This is because such proactivity associated with a low prosocial motive conceivably will not be regarded as undertaken truly for the team's sake.

In contrast, we expect that a proself motive weakens the proactive personality-peer cognition-based trust relationship. A proactive member with a proself motive prioritizes his/her own interests in undertaking initiatives and pursuing goals (De Dreu et al., 2000). With concerns for the self, peers are less likely to regard the focal member's proactivity as highly dependable, reliable, and desirable, as their interest is not of sincere concern to the proactive person. Although the initiatives from the focal proactive member with a proself motive may still benefit peers to some extent, peers perceive less gain in the presence of the focal member's proself motive. In a similar vein, peers' witnessing a focal member's self-oriented proactivity will lead to reduced favorable expectations of his/her contribution to the entire team (Beersma & De Dreu, 1999), thus leading to lower cognition-based trust in the focal member. The aforementioned arguments lead to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a A focal member's prosocial motive moderates the positive relationship between the focal person's proactive personality and peers' cognition-based trust in the person, such that the relationship is stronger when his/her prosocial motive is higher.

Hypothesis 3b A focal member's proself motive moderates the positive relationship between the focal person's proactive personality and peers' cognition-based trust in the focal person, such that the relationship is weaker when his/her proself motive is higher.

A proactive member with a prosocial motive tends to take a sincere interest in the team's mission. Indeed, s/he might even subordinate his/her own interest to benefit the entire team through promoting and implementing initiatives (Grant, 2008). Specifically, a proactive prosocial person seizes opportunity for constructive changes, takes charge to resolve issues that hamper team progress, and perseveres until making changes to the environment (Bolino et al., 2010). Despite the resources this person may utilize, peers in the same work group believe that they can also benefit from the focal person's prosocial-oriented proactivity and thus feel less disadvantaged—or less relatively deprived.

Conversely, the proactive proself member pursues personal goals and fulfills self-needs (Beersma & De Dreu, 1999). For example, s/he proposes and implements initiatives to achieve his/her own goals or facilitate his/her own performance—regardless of the benefit to teammates (Van Lange et al., 1998). Also, s/he makes voluntary and constructive efforts mainly or only to fulfill his/her own goals and aspirations (De Dreu et al., 2000). Because this proactive person employs more resources and hence leaves fewer resources for peers, the self-serving purpose of his/her proactivity induces peers to feel even more disadvantaged and, therefore, possess an enhanced sentiment of relative deprivation. Therefore, we offer the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a A focal member's prosocial motive moderates the positive relationship between the focal person's proactive personality and peers' feeling of relative deprivation, such that the relationship is weaker when his/her prosocial motive is higher.

Hypothesis 4b A focal member's proself motive moderates the positive relationship between the focal person's proactive personality and peers' feeling of relative deprivation, such that the relationship is stronger when his/her proself motive is higher.

Overview of dual-pathway model

Thus far, we have hypothesized the mediating roles of peers' cognition-based trust and feeling of relative deprivation in the relationship between a focal person's proactive personality and peers' ostracism of the focal person. Additionally, we have posited the moderating roles of prosocial and proself motives at the first stage of the mediation model. Integrating these relationships, we propose a moderated mediation model (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). Specifically, we posit that the indirect relationship between proactive personality and peers' ostracism of the proactive peer is conditional on the focal person's prosocial and proself motives (i.e., a first-stage moderated mediation model, as depicted in Fig. 1).

In particular, we expect that a high (vs. low) prosocial motive will strengthen (vs. weaken) and a high (vs. low) proself motive will weaken (vs. strengthen) the negative indirect relationship between proactive personality and peers' ostracism of the focal person through peers' cognition-based trust. Under a high prosocial motive, the proactivity of the focal person is more likely to be interpreted as benefiting others (i.e., peers). Hence, peers will have higher confidence in and have more positive expectations of the focal person and thus be less likely to ostracize him/her. Under a high proself motive, though, peers will be more likely to perceive the proactive focal person as seeking to benefit him/herself rather than peers. The person's self-interest motive will thus attenuate the positive effect of proactive personality on trust. As a result, peers will be more likely to ostracize the focal proactive member. In sum, we hypothesize the following:

Hypotheses 5a-b The negative indirect relationship between a focal member's proactive personality and peers' ostracism of the focal person through peers' cognition-based trust in the focal person is moderated by the focal person's prosocial motive
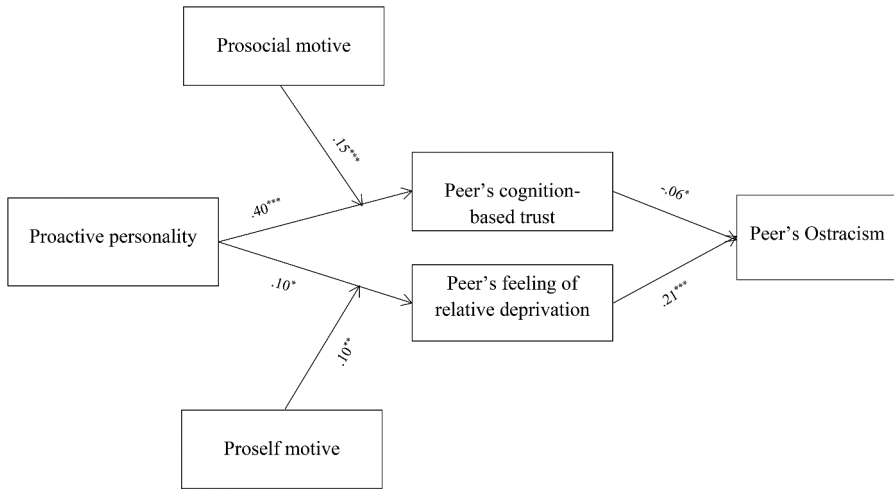
Fig. 1 Coefficients for the research model

and proself motive, such that it is (a) stronger under a higher prosocial motive but (b) weaker under a higher proself motive, respectively.

We further expect that a high (vs. low) prosocial motive will decrease (vs. increase) and a high (vs. low) proself motive will augment (vs. reduce) the positive indirect relationship between a focal person's proactive personality and peers' ostracism of the focal person through peers' feeling of relative deprivation. Similar to the argument above, under a high prosocial motive, peers will perceive the proactive person as being other-oriented. Hence, peers getting benefits from such proactivity will be less likely to feel inferior or deprived and, further, less likely to ostracize the focal person. Under a high proself motive, however, peers may view the proactive person as being self-interest oriented and thus interpret the focal person's proactivity as self-focused. Thus, they will feel more disadvantaged and deprived, thus leading to negative reactions toward this focal person. In sum, we hypothesize the following:

Hypotheses 5c-d The positive indirect relationship between a focal member's proactive personality and peers' ostracism of the focal person through peers' feeling of relative deprivation is moderated by the focal person's prosocial motive and proself motive, such that it is (c) stronger under a higher proself motive but (d) weaker under a higher prosocial motive, respectively.

Method

Participants and procedure

We collected three-wave field data (with a two-month interval) in nursing teams from four hospitals in China in 2021. Before sending the questionnaire, we interviewed four

nursing teams from the focal hospitals and learned that nurses were an appropriate sample for our research. First, proactive personality is common in nursing teams. We learned from the interviews that to monitor a patient's health condition, nurses often tried to develop a better sense of what should be improved in daily patient services, what should be changed to enhance efficiency, and how to handle an emergent case. This information indicated that a nurse was encouraged to make meaningful changes or small adaptations in the daily work in response to unexpected cases. Although the head nurse made the final decision, the nurses still had a certain level of discretion over the daily work and thus could proactively implement their ideas to make their work smoother and more efficient. Second, interpersonal ostracism was manifest in nursing teams. We learned from the interviews that a proactive nurse was often in the spotlight. We deduced that this situation might have twofold consequences. First, the nurse with high proactive personality may gain desirable social relationships with others; alternatively, though, the focal proactive nurse may receive others' negative comments and alienation. Taken together, the hospital was hence an apt context for our study.

We informed all participants that the data would be kept confidential and used only for academic research purposes. They responded to the electronic surveys independently and sent them back to the researchers directly. There were two surveys: a self-rated one and a peer-rated one. The surveys were printed with special codes to match the two questionnaires. Prior to our survey, we assigned a unique code to each participant's name on the roster. In the *self-rated* questionnaires, we asked them to provide their names. In the *peer-rated* questionnaires, we asked them to rate each peer according to a given peer's name provided on the questionnaire. After the survey was completed, we matched all the names with their unique codes. In other words, the name and the code were uniquely matched. The file containing the special codes to match each person was deleted after matching to ensure anonymity. We sent electronic questionnaires to 1,200 nurses in 158 nursing teams and obtained complete responses from 1,072 nurses in 132 teams.

We asked each participant to rate his/her proactive personality and provide demographic characteristics[1] at Time (1) Adopting a round robin design—inviting groups of participants whose members were both raters and ratees (Warner et al., 1979)—we asked each participant to rate his/her perceived prosocial motive and proself motive of each peer in Time 1 and his/her cognition-based trust in and feeling of relative deprivation toward each peer in Time (2) In Time 3, we asked each nurse to rate his/her experienced ostracism received from each of his/her peers. Fifty-two out of 59 teams (an 88.13% response rate) responded in hospital A; 16 out of 17 teams (a 94.11% response rate) in hospital B; 50 out of 59 teams (an 84.74% response rate) in hospital C; and 14 out of 23 teams (a 60.87% response rate) in hospital D. The average age of participants was 34.22 years. Only two nurses were male. The average work tenure in the current nursing team was 9.69 years, and the average education was at the undergraduate level.

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[1] To check if there was any demographic difference in the participants across the four hospitals, we conducted an analysis by comparing the means of age, education, and work tenure using one-way ANOVA. Results of the comparison showed that there was no significant demographic difference across the four hospitals.

Measures

Proactive personality (self-rating). Each member rated his/her proactive personality with the ten-item scale from Seibert et al. (1999). A sample item was, "If I see something I don't like, I fix it" (1=*strongly disagree* to 7=*strongly agree*). Cronbach's α was 0.95.

Peers' cognition-based trust (peer-rating). Peers' cognition-based trust was measured using McAllister's (1995) five-item scale. Each member rated his/her trust in each peer. A sample item was, "Given this peer's (peer's name) track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her competence and preparation for the job" (1=*strongly disagree* to 7=*strongly agree*). Cronbach's α was 0.93.

Peers' feeling of relative deprivation (peer-rating). Peers' feeling of relative deprivation was assessed with a four-item scale from Tougas et al. (2005)[2]. Each member rated the level of relative deprivation in reference to each peer. A sample item was, "In comparison with this peer (peer's name), I am more often in a disadvantaged situation in certain activities" (1=*not at all* to 7=*absolutely*). Cronbach's α was 0.90.

Prosocial motive (peer-rating). Each member rated his/her perceived prosocial motive of each peer based on an adaptation of Beersma and De Dreu's (2002) two-item scale. One sample item was, "I observe that this peer (peer's name) tries to bring many benefits to our team as he/she could" (1=*strongly agree* to 7=*strongly disagree*). Cronbach's α was 0.97.

Proself motive (peer-rating). Each member assessed his/her perceived proself motive of each peer using an adapted version of Beersma and De Dreu's (2002) three-item scale. A sample item was, "I observe that this peer (peer's name) tries to get many desirable outcomes for him/herself" (1=*strongly agree* to 7=*strongly disagree*). Cronbach's α was 0.92.

Peers' ostracism (self-rating). We assessed peer ostracism using a ten-item scale from Ferris et al. (2008). Sample items were, "This peer (peer's name) ignores me at work," and "This peer (peer's name) at work treats me as if I wasn't there" (1=*never* to 7=*always*). Cronbach's α was 0.94.

Control variables. Following previous research (e.g., Scott et al., 2013), we controlled for demographic variables (i.e., age, education, and work tenure in the team). Education included six levels (1 = "*middle school*," 2 = "*high school*," 3 = "*junior college*," 4 = "*undergraduate*," 5 = "*Master's*," 6 = "*Ph.D.*"). We controlled for age because older people are more experienced and mature and thus may be more likely to earn trust than younger counterparts (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). We controlled for education because it affects a person's knowledge, skills, and ability, as well as status, resources, and rewards at work—which impact others' trust and feelings of relative deprivation (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009). We controlled for work tenure in the team because a longer working relationship in a team should effectuate the quality of social relationships (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). We also controlled for team size. We did so because it is a structural property of a team that can influence the quality of

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[2] There are other scales assessing relative deprivation. All of them pertain to a comparison with the focal person's past condition or expected condition rather than a comparison with peers. The scale we adopted in this research is the only one that captures the comparison with peers.

intra-team interactions and social relationships among members (Gong et al., 2013). Because we had only two male nurses (out of 1,072), we did not control for gender. However, we conducted a supplementary test by including it as a control; the results were substantively similar. We also controlled for peers' envy (Li et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2021) to rule out its potential influence in the relationships between proactive personality and ostracism. We adopted the nine-item scale from Cohen-Charash and Mueller (2007) with a round robin design. A sample item was, "I feel envious toward this peer (peer's name)." Cronbach's α was 0.95. We also controlled for peers' average proactive personality to partial out the potential influence induced by the difference between the focal member's and his/her peer's proactive personality.

Analytic strategy

We tested the hypotheses using Mplus 8.5 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Because members were nested within teams, following prior research (e.g., Schaubroeck et al., 2017), we adopted the Mplus syntax "Cluster = team ID" and "Type = Complex" to account for non-independence (Bauer et al., 2006; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). We centered (using z-scores) the predictor and moderators before entering them into the analyses of the moderating relationships.

Regarding peers' trust, feeling of relative deprivation, prosocial motive, and proself motive, each focal nurse was rated by all of his/her peers. Before aggregating those variables to the individual (i.e., the focal nurse) level, we examined the degree of inter-rater agreement (r_{wg}) and intra-class correlation coefficients (i.e., ICC[1], the proportion of between-peer variance in the total variance and ICC[2], the reliability of the mean of peers). The indices for trust (r_{wg} = 0.89, ICC (1) = 0.17, ICC (2) = 0.54), relative deprivation (r_{wg} = 0.93, ICC (1) = 0.23, ICC (2) = 0.59), prosocial motive (r_{wg} = 0.90, ICC (1) = 0.16, ICC (2) = 0.52), and proself motive (r_{wg} = 0.89, ICC (1) = 0.22, ICC (2) = 0.56) supported aggregation. We tested the conditional indirect effects in Hypotheses 5a-5d using the Monte Carlo resampling method (Bauer et al., 2006), per Preacher and Selig (2012). We utilized 20,000 resampling for each confidence interval.

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis

We conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses for proactive personality, the peer's cognition-based trust, the peer's feeling of relative deprivation, prosocial motive, proself motive, and ostracism. Results indicated that the six-factor model (χ^2 = 989.15, df = 415, p < .001, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.05) provided a better fit to the data than alternative models: five-factor models when combining cognition-based trust and prosocial motive into one factor ($\Delta\chi^2$ = 368.21, Δdf = 5, p < .001; CFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.09) or when combining feeling of relative deprivation and proself motive into one factor ($\Delta\chi^2$ = 217.24, Δdf = 5, p < .001; CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.09).

Hypothesis testing

Shown in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics for the study variables. Presented in Table 2 are the regression analyses for the main and moderating relationships[3]. As depicted in Table 2, proactive personality was positively related to peers' cognition-based trust ($b=0.40$, SE$=0.04$, $p<.001$, in Model 2) and peers' feeling of relative deprivation ($b=0.10$, SE$=0.04$, $p=.031$, in Model 5). Thus, Hypotheses 1a and 2a were supported. Hypotheses 1b and 2b proposed mediating relationships of peers' cognition-based trust and feeling of relative deprivation, respectively, in the relationship between proactive personality and ostracism. There was a significant negative indirect relationship between proactive personality and ostracism ($b=-0.09$, SE$=0.04$, $p=.001$; 95% confidence interval (CI) $=$ [-0.16, -0.02]) through peers' cognition-based trust. There was a significant positive indirect relationship between proactive personality and ostracism ($b=0.08$, SE$=0.02$, $p<.001$; 95% CI $=$ [0.02, 0.14]) through peers' relative deprivation. Hence, Hypotheses 1b and 2b were supported.

We tested the moderating role of prosocial and proself motives in Hypotheses 3 and 4. As shown in Model 3 in Table 2, the interaction of proactive personality and prosocial motive was positively related to the peer's cognition-based trust ($b=0.15$, SE$=0.05$, $p=.001$). The interaction of proactive personality and proself motive, however, was not significant ($b=-0.04$, SE$=0.03$, $p=.138$). So, Hypothesis 3a was supported but not Hypothesis 3b. To illustrate graphically the moderating relationship of Hypothesis 3a, we adopted the Johnson-Neyman (J-N) technique (Johnson & Fay, 1950) to plot the significance band. Different from the conventional simple slope tests which show only several points identified, the J-N technique reveals confidence bands and thus significance regions fairly readily. In Fig. 2 (for Hypothesis 3a), the horizontal axis represents the prosocial motive (i.e., the moderator) within three SDs of its mean. Because the moderator was standardized, the three SDs of the mean range were [-3.00, 3.00]. On the vertical axis are the corresponding values of the simple slope relating proactive personality (i.e., the predictor) to peers' cognition-based trust (i.e., the dependent variable in this specific relationship). The confidence region is shaded in light gray. For any values of the prosocial motive, if the corresponding confidence region (i.e., the gray area) did not cross over zero, the relationship between proactive personality and peers' cognition-based trust would be significantly different from zero, and thus the relationship would be significant in this specific band—and vice versa. In Fig. 2, we portray the region of significance for the simple slopes at the fully observed centered range of prosocial motive [-2.98, 2.99]. The relationship was positive for the value range of [-0.68, 2.99]. The relationship was not significant for the value range of [-2.98, -0.68].

Regarding Hypothesis 4, as shown in Model 6 in Table 2, the interaction of proactive personality and prosocial motive was not significant ($b=-0.05$, SE$=0.05$, $p=.254$). The interaction of proactive personality and proself motive, though, was

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[3] We did not hypothesize the direct relationship between proactive personality and ostracism. Given the countervailing pathways in our theory, the direct relationship is equivocal and depends on which path is stronger.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Proactive personality	3.57	0.52	(0.95)										
2 Peer's cognition-based trust	4.20	1.04	0.38***	(0.93)									
3 Peer's feeling of relative deprivation	4.08	1.14	0.07*	−0.03	(0.90)								
4 Prosocial motive	5.37	1.10	0.67***	0.32***	0.03	(0.97)							
5 Proself motive	4.13	1.54	−0.07*	0.07	0.11*	0.10*	(0.92)						
6 Ostracism	2.32	1.39	−0.25***	−0.08*	0.15**	−0.43***	0.12*	(0.94)					
7 Age	34.22	6.44	−0.09*	−0.19**	0.07	−0.02	−0.14**	0.03					
8 Education	3.79	0.43	0.04	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.04	−0.02	0.13				
9 Work tenure in the team	9.69	7.03	−0.07*	−0.09*	0.03	−0.04	−0.06	0.09*	0.73***	0.10*			
10 Team size	8.12	5.25	0.02	−0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01	−0.06	0.14**	0.02		
11 Envy	3.89	1.30	0.04	−0.06	0.17**	−0.05	0.11*	0.13*	0.14**	0.11*	0.16**	0.04	(0.95)
12 Peers' average proactive personality	3.57	0.42	0.44***	0.14**	−0.02	0.34***	−0.10*	−0.18**	−0.06	0.02	−0.02	0.05	−0.03

Notes $N=1{,}072$ individuals from 132 teams (Listwise deletion)

* $p<.05$

** $p<.01$

*** $p<.001$ (Two-tailed tests)

[4]The correlation value was high. Normally, older employees have longer work tenure. To examine whether there was a multicollinearity issue, we first considered the VIF values in the regression. We found that VIF values for age and tenure were 2.28 and 2.17, respectively, suggesting no significant multicollinearity issue. Because multicollinearity potentially affects regression estimates for the variables involved, we then checked this possibility by excluding age or tenure or both and found that the results were similar to the current ones, and our hypotheses held.

Table 2 Regression analysis of proactive personality on cognition-based trust and relative deprivation

Variable	Peer's cognition-based trust									Peer's feeling of relative deprivation								
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P
Intercept	3.60***	0.45	<0.001	3.53***	0.42	<0.001	3.30***	0.44	<0.001	3.27***	0.58	<0.001	3.25***	0.58	<0.001	3.22***	0.59	<0.001
Control variables																		
Age	−0.04	0.01	<0.001	−0.04	0.01	<0.001	−0.04***	0.01	<0.001	0.02*	0.01	0.021	0.02*	0.01	0.020	0.02*	0.01	0.015
Education	0.06	0.07	0.389	0.03	0.07	0.649	0.01	0.07	0.842	−0.02	0.07	0.744	−0.03	0.07	0.663	0.03	0.07	0.705
Work tenure in the team	0.01	0.01	0.050	0.01*	0.00	0.010	0.01*	0.01	0.023	−0.01	0.01	0.153	−0.01	0.01	0.172	−0.01	0.01	0.203
Team size	−0.01	0.00	0.070	−0.01	0.00	0.089	−0.01	0.00	0.127	0.00	0.00	0.999	0.00	0.00	0.952	0.00	0.00	0.939
Envy	0.09	0.04	0.015	0.07	0.03	0.034	0.08*	0.03	0.013	0.14***	0.04	<0.001	0.14***	0.04	0.000	0.13**	0.04	0.001
Peers' average proactive personality	0.29	0.07	<0.001	−0.09	0.07	0.22	−0.10	0.07	0.164	−0.02	0.09	0.840	−0.11	0.09	0.233	−0.11	0.09	0.246
Main variables																		
Proactive personality				0.40***	0.04	<0.001	0.28***	0.07	<0.001				0.10*	0.04	0.031	0.10*	0.05	0.012
Prosocial motive							0.16**	0.05	0.001							−0.04	0.04	0.403
Proself motive							0.00	0.03	0.933							0.06	0.03	0.093
Proactive personality × Prosocial motive							0.15**	0.05	0.001							−0.05	0.05	0.254
Proactive personality × Proself motive							−0.04	0.03	0.138							0.10**	0.04	0.009
R²	0.07***			0.18***			0.21***			0.03*			0.06*			0.16***		
ΔR²				0.11			0.03						0.03			0.10		

Notes N=1,072 individuals from 132 teams (Listwise deletion)

* *p*<.05

** *p*<.01

*** *p*<.001 (Two-tailed tests)

significantly related to the peer's feeling of relative deprivation ($b=0.10$, SE$=0.04$, $p=.009$). Consequently, Hypothesis 4b was supported but not Hypothesis 4a. In Fig. 3 (concerning Hypothesis 4b), we portray the region of significance for the simple slopes at the fully observed centered range of proself motive [-2.98, 2.99]. The relationship was positive for the value range of [-1.87, 0.14]. The relationship was not significant for the value ranges of [-2.98, -1.87] and [0.14, 2.99].

Hypotheses 5a through 5d proposed a moderated mediation model in which prosocial and proself motives moderate the first-stage indirect relationships between proactive personality and ostracism through the peer's cognition-based trust and feeling of relative deprivation, respectively. As shown in Table 3, we calculated indirect relationships and the confidence intervals (using the Monte Carlo resampling method) at high and low values of the moderators. With a peer's cognition-based trust as the mediator, the indirect relationship with ostracism was significant under a high prosocial motive ($b=-0.05$, SE$=0.01$, $p<.001$, 95% CI $=$[-0.08, -0.01]) and a low prosocial motive ($b=-0.02$, SE$=0.00$, $p=.009$, 95% CI $=$ [-0.03, -0.01]). The difference between the high and low conditions was significant ($b=-0.03$, SE$=0.00$, $p=.001$, 95% CI $=$ [-0.05, -0.01]). Therefore, Hypothesis 5a (i.e., the conditional indirect relationship between proactive personality and ostracism through peer's cognition-based trust with prosocial motive as the moderator) was supported. The indirect relationship was significant under a high proself motive ($b=-0.03$, SE$=0.01$, $p=.010$, 95% CI $=$ [-0.05, -0.01]) and a low proself motive ($b=-0.06$, SE$=0.02$, $p<.001$, 95% CI $=$ [-0.10, -0.02]). The difference between the high and low conditions was not significant ($b=-0.03$, SE$=0.02$, $p<.060$, 95% CI $=$ [-0.05, 0.01]). So, Hypothesis 5b (i.e., the conditional indirect relationship between proactive personality and ostracism through the peer's cognition-based trust with proself motive as the moderator) was not supported.

With the peer's feeling of relative deprivation as the mediator, the indirect relationship was not significant under a high prosocial motive ($b=0.01$, SE$=0.01$, $p=.139$, 95% CI $=$ [-0.01, 0.02]) but was significant under a low prosocial motive ($b=0.03$, SE$=0.01$, $p=.007$, 95% CI $=$ [0.02, 0.05]). The difference between the high and low conditions was not significant ($b=0.02$, SE$=0.03$, $p=.478$, 95% CI $=$ [-0.01, 0.04]). Thus, Hypothesis 5c (i.e., conditional indirect relationship of proactive personality and ostracism through the peer's feeling of relative deprivation with prosocial motive as the moderator) was not supported. The indirect relationship was significant under a high proself motive ($b=0.03$, SE$=0.00$, $p<.001$, 95% CI $=$ [0.01, 0.05]) but was not significant under a low proself motive ($b=0.00$, SE$=0.01$, $p=.722$, 95% CI $=$ [-0.01, 0.01]). The difference between the high and low conditions was significant ($b=-0.03$, SE$=0.01$, $p<.001$, 95% CI $=$ [-0.05, -0.01]). Consequently, Hypothesis 5d (i.e., the conditional indirect relationship between proactive personality and ostracism through the peer's feeling of relative deprivation with proself motive as the moderator) was supported.
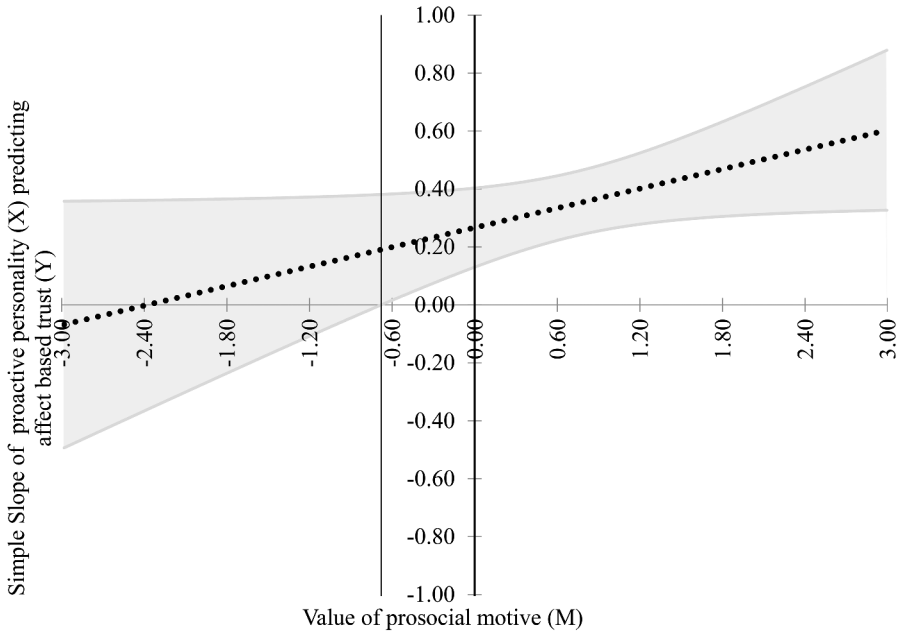
Fig. 2 Moderating role of prosocial motive on the relationship between proactive personality and peer's cognition-based trust
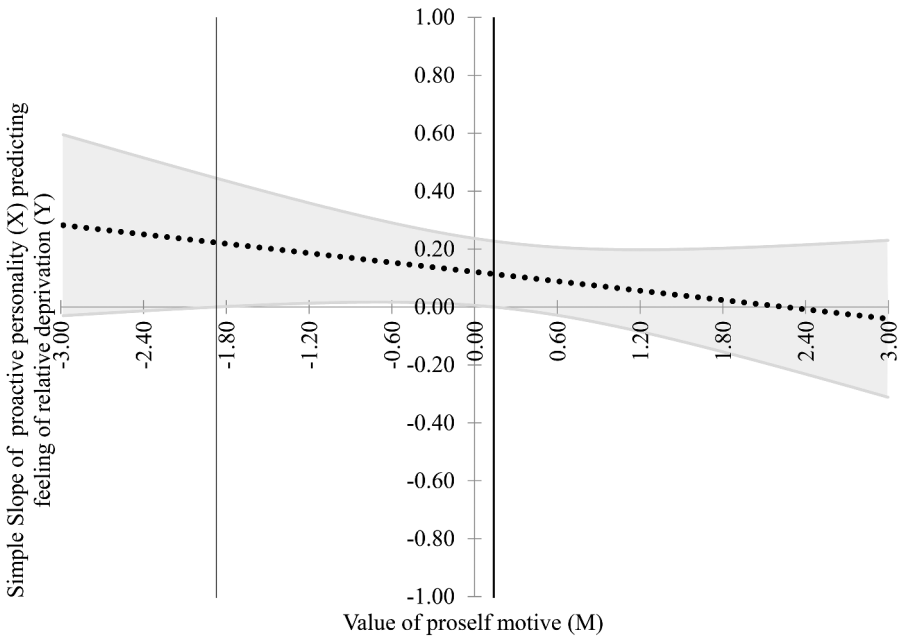

Fig. 3 Moderating role of proself motive on the relationship between proactive personality and peer?s feeling of relative deprivation

Table 3 Conditional indirect relationships of proactive personality and ostracism

Moderator	Mediator	Stage First β(mx)			Second β(ym.x)			Effect Indirect β(mx)* β(ym.x)			95% CI for indirect effect
		B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	
	Peer's cognition-based trust as the mediator:										
Prosocial motive	low moderator	0.28***	0.06	<0.001	−0.11***	0.02	<0.001	−0.02**	0.00	0.009	[-0.03, −0.01]
	high moderator	0.48***	0.06	<0.001	−0.11***	0.02	<0.001	−0.05**	0.01	<0.001	[-0.08, −0.01]
	difference							−0.03*	0.00	0.001	[-0.05, −0.01]
Proself motive	low moderator	0.57***	0.06	<0.001	−0.01	0.03	0.763	−0.06*	0.02	<0.001	[-0.10, −0.02]
	high moderator	0.33***	0.04	<0.001	−0.01	0.03	0.763	−0.03*	0.01	0.010	[-0.05, −0.01]
	difference							−0.03	0.02	0.060	[-0.05, 0.01]
	Peer's relative deprivation as the mediator:										
Prosocial motive	low moderator	0.16***	0.04	<0.001	0.18	0.02	<0.001	0.03*	0.01	0.007	[0.02, 0.05]
	high moderator	0.01***	0.03	0.778	0.18	0.02	<0.001	0.01	0.01	0.139	[-0.01, 0.02]
	difference							0.02	0.03	0.478	[-0.01, 0.04]
Proself motive	low moderator	−0.02	0.02	0.429	0.19***	0.02	<0.001	0.00	0.01	0.722	[-0.01, 0.01]
	high moderator	0.14***	0.05	<0.001	0.19***	0.02	<0.001	0.03***	0.00	<0.001	[0.01, 0.05]
	difference							−0.03***	0.01	<0.001	[-0.05, −0.01]

Notes N=1,072 individuals from 132 teams (Listwise deletion)

β(mx) refers to the path from proactive personality to peer's cognition-based trust/relative deprivation; β(ym.x) refers to paths from peer's cognition-based trust/relative deprivation to ostracism. CI=confidence interval

* *p*<.05

** *p*<.01

*** *p*<.001 (Two-tailed tests)

Discussion

Our study's objective was to examine how a focal employee's proactive personality influences a peer's ostracism of that focal person. We found that a focal person's proactive personality had a negative indirect relationship with ostracism from a peer through the peer's cognition-based trust. A positive indirect relationship with ostracism, though, was revealed through the peer's feeling of relative deprivation. A high (vs. low) prosocial motive strengthened (vs. weakened) the positive relationship between proactive personality and the peer's cognition-based trust. Moreover, a high (vs. low) proself motive increased (vs. decreased) the positive relationship between proactive personality and the peer's feeling of relative deprivation. We thus found partial support for the moderated mediation relationships.

Our findings echo previous research (e.g., Parker & Bindl, 2017) on the potential dark side of proactive personality and take a further step by revealing the black box through which proactive personality leads to experienced ostracism from peers. We also answered the call from Chan (2006a, b) to investigate individual-difference variables (i.e., prosocial and proself motives here) as contingent factors for proactive personality and its concomitant outcomes.

Explanations for the unsupported hypotheses

The moderating effects of proself motive in the proactive personality-cognition-based trust relationship—and of prosocial motive in the proactive personality-feeling of relative deprivation relationship—were not supported (as shown in the results for Hypotheses 3b, 4a, 5b, and 5c). Overall, proself motive seems to be more instrumental in exacerbating the downside of proactive personality (i.e., relative deprivation) than reducing its benefit (i.e., trust). However, prosocial motive is more influential in improving the benefit of proactive personality (i.e., trust) than curbing its negative impact (i.e., relative deprivation). A possible explanation is that, when considering a focal person's proactive personality and the advantages of it (i.e., contributing to the team and thus enhancing trust in the focal member), the prosocial motive tends to be increasingly situationally relevant and hence especially strongly activated in peers' minds. Accordingly, a stronger moderating effect emerges. However, proself motive is decreasingly relevant to the scenario of a positive outcome, so it is less activated and thus has a reduced influence. In contrast, concerning a focal person's proactive personality and its negative side (i.e., using resources that others would otherwise have and thus inducing peers to feel relative deprivation), the proself motive is more situationally relevant and thus increasingly strongly galvanized. The outcome is a stronger moderating effect, whereas prosocial motive is less relevant to the scenario of a negative outcome to peers and thus less activated and less influential.

Implications for theory and research

Our work offers four key contributions to theory and research. First, this study extends the nascent literature on antecedents of ostracism by examining proactive personality as one predictor. To date, the bulk of the ostracism literature has identified sev-

eral personality-related antecedents. Specifically, Howard et al. (2020) and Wu et al. (2011) have investigated the effects of the big-five personalities (e.g., extraversion) on ostracism. They found that agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion are negatively, but neuroticism is positively, related to ostracism. However, the role of proactive personality has been neglected in ostracism literature. This is regrettable, as proactive personality involves the tendency to identify opportunities presciently for additional achievements and explore further social connections that can potentially reduce ostracism. Moreover, proactive personality might also increase ostracism via triggering peers' feeling of relative deprivation. We depict a complete picture of how proactive personality—a generally positively viewed trait—can both increase and decrease workplace ostracism. As such, we offer new insight concerning a trait that can have both positive and negative sides. This novel finding could have been overlooked had we not examined proactive personality specifically. This outcome is theoretically significant in that it shifts the consensus from extant research where a trait has been regarded as being either positive or negative in ostracism.

Second, previous work on proactive personality has largely focused on its positive side on *task* performance (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2005). Although more recent research has begun to examine its contingent negative side (Chan, 2006a, b; Sun et al., 2021; Sun & van Emmerik, 2015), scholars have yet to adopt multiple perspectives to examine simultaneously both the favorable and unfavorable sides and, therefore, have failed to provide a comprehensive understanding of proactive personality and social outcomes. Drawing on social exchange and social comparison theories, we revealed that a focal member's proactive personality leads to not only the peer's cognition-based trust (i.e., a positive feature), but also to the feeling of relative deprivation (i.e., a negative aspect). As a result, peers are less (through trust) or more (through relative deprivation) likely to ostracize the focal proactive member. Our efforts thus offered a more balanced and holistic understanding of the double-edged social role of proactive personality, for which Parker and Bindl (2017) have called.

Third, we focused on ostracism and extended understanding of the social consequences of proactive personality. Scholars have conducted substantial research on proactive personality and its task-related outcomes; however, minimal work has examined its social impacts. An assumption has been that proactive individuals initiate and implement work-related changes that are constructive. Whether proactive personality is exclusively favorable interpersonal relationships (cf. Sun et al., 2021) has remained opaque. Our investigation hence sheds new light on the positive and negative social side of proactive personality.

Fourth, given the mixed findings of the upside and downside of proactive personality in the literature, an intriguing issue is under what conditions others (e.g., peers) appreciate a proactive personality. Previous empiricism has considered supervisor ratings of the employee's *ability*-related attributes as potential contingencies (e.g., political skill—the capacity to understand and exert social influence on others to help achieve one's tasks/priorities, Sun & van Emmerik, 2015; or situational judgment effectiveness—the ability to make effective judgments or responses to situations, Chan, 2006a, b). *Ability* and *motivation* are two key drivers of workplace behavior (Zhou & Shalley, 2011). In this study, we advanced extant knowledge on proactive personality by considering *motivation*-related factors as boundary conditions. Spe-

cifically, we examined a focal proactive person's prosocial and proself motives and thus complemented extant work by showing the important role of the focal proactive person's motivation in shaping peers' interpretation and reactions to the focal person's proactive personality.

Managerial implications

Our findings have several practical implications. First, they underscore the need for organizations to be aware of the potential dark side of proactive personality above and beyond its previously assumed bright side. Although proactive personality has been consistently found to increase a person's job outcomes (Chan, 2006a, b; Erdogan & Bauer, 2005), managers need to be aware that peers may not appreciate it. Indeed, such proactivity may make a focal proactive individual socially excluded (i.e., ostracized). Because an individual's proactive personality is likely to trigger peers' feeling of relative deprivation and thus social exclusion of the proactive person, we suggest that managers should essay to mitigate such reactions (i.e., by helping peers see how such proactivity benefits them and their team). Managers should also be judicious about recruiting employees who are particularly proactive. Such judiciousness may help avoid the "one-versus-all" social tension and "a big frog in a small pond" phenomenon—both of which are harmful to team morale.

Moreover, managers should be attentive to the underlying motives of subordinates with high proactivity and encourage them to imbue their proactivity with a prosocial motive. Managers are advised to channel the proactive employee's initiatives and proactivity to benefit the entire team, not merely the proactive member. Furthermore, managers should emphasize to proactive employees that none of them work in a social vacuum; rather, spearheading changes requires support from relevant others (e.g., teammates) (Thompson, 2005). Managers can thus encourage proactive employees to establish strong social networks with peers and help proactive employees develop social skills to facilitate the effective utilization of their proactivity and hence increase the receptivity of their peers to such proactivity.

Furthermore, to avoid being socially excluded, proactive employees in a team are advised to adopt a diplomatic, rather than an aggressive, manner when engaging in proactive behaviors. They should seek to do something valuable or meaningful for their peers without explicitly challenging or minifying them. Specifically, the proactive team member can use social or political skills to reduce peers' unfriendly and even hostile reactions. For example, s/he can pay close attention to peers' facial expressions when questioning the status quo and adapt his/her strategy and interpersonal efforts accordingly. Also, s/he can adopt a "low-profile" when engaging in proactivity so as to help peers feel comfortable and at ease. Furthermore, the proactive team member should build social connections with influential people at work (Ferris et al., 2005). These foregoing endeavors may well help the individual demonstrate proactive behaviors and implement his/her initiatives without being ostracized.

The proactive member is also advised to communicate the prosocial side of his/her initiative. For example, the proactive member can specifically present to peers in a group meeting how exactly the initiative benefits peers' work, skillfully frame the initiative as a collective idea and effort, and share with peers whatever reward results from the initiative. Doing so can enhance peers' trust in the focal proactive person and reduce peers' feeling of relative deprivation. The favorable outcome will be reduced peer ostracism in response to the focal person's proactivity.

Limitations and directions for future research

Our research has several limitations that point to future research directions. First, we adopted a social relational perspective to examine how proactive personality increases or decreases ostracism. Scholars could apply alternative theoretical perspectives to investigate other potential mechanisms of these relationships. For example, a focal person's proactivity may trigger task conflict—clashes and disagreements among individuals regarding work procedures, practices, and progress (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). High (but not low to moderate) levels of task conflict, if not managed well, might lead to interpersonal hostility and thus ostracism. Adopting a task perspective to examine task conflict as a potential mediator seems intriguing.

Second, future research may examine other moderators from different theoretical perspectives, such as peer-perceived organizational support (POS) or supervisor support (PSS) given to the focal person. POS captures the extent to which the organization values the focal person's contributions and cares about his/her well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). PSS reflects the degree to which the supervisor prizes the focal person's contributions and is solicitous about his/her well-being (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). One the one hand, providing strong support from the organization or the supervisor to the focal member can strengthen peers' belief that the focal member is the one who deserves trust. However, giving more organizational or supervisory support to the focal member implies that less is notionally available for peers. Thus, peers perceive that they are in a disadvantaged position and may feel relatively deprived of resources. Consequently, they react to a focal member's proactivity less positively though augmented ostracism.

Third, we tested and found support for most of our hypotheses in hospitals. We expect that the hypothesized relationships would apply to *other settings*—if a minimum level of proactivity is allowed in them. For instance, Research and Development (R&D) teams—which tend to emphasize innovation—typically permit ample discretion for implementation of employee initiatives. Moreover, members of R&D teams work interdependently, but competitively. Future research, therefore, should examine how proactive personality relates to workplace ostracism in an R&D setting. Similarly, we tested our hypotheses in one specific cultural setting (i.e., China). We believe that our results should generalize to other cultures if a minimum level of proactivity is allowed in those cultures. However, cultural differences might moderate the strengths of the relationships. For instance, proactivity is less valued and even discouraged in cultures that encourage confor-

mity and cohesion (Sun & van Emmerik, 2015). Proactivity may engender less cognition-based trust in proactive individuals in such cultures, as it is viewed less positively in terms of contribution to the group. This relationship could be stronger in a western context where individual proactivity is appreciated more. In that sense, the relationship between proactivity and cognition-based trust found in our study could be even stronger in the West.

Finally, we did not control variables such as the need to belong (Kwan et al., 2022), self-monitoring (Wu et al., 2021), big-five personality (Shi et al., 2023), or relationship conflict (Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Wu et al., 2015)—all which might potentially influence workplace ostracism. We acknowledge this limitation and thus encourage future research to replicate our findings incorporating these important factors.

Conclusion

Although proactive personality benefits task performance, it can be both beneficial and detrimental socially. We revealed the double-edged influences of proactive personality on ostracism through two parallel, yet opposing, mechanisms. Proactive personality enhances peers' cognition-based trust and thus reduces peers' ostracism of the focal proactive person. It also, however, engenders peers' feelings of relative deprivation and thereby increases peers' ostracism of that individual. This insight shifts the consensus from research on traits and ostracism wherein a trait is considered either positive or negative in ostracism. We hope that our findings stimulate additional research to investigate both the positive and negative sides of proactive personality in the social realm.

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