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See Me from Behind the Screen: Workplace Ostracism in a Remote Environment

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Abstract

Workplace Ostracism is a common social phenomenon that impacts individuals of diverse backgrounds, across various industries, and cultural experiences. Literature to date highlights direct and indirect relationships of workplace ostracism, concerning the psychological and behavioral outcomes an individual may experience and the impact to organizational goals. Of existing literature, studies have focused on acts of ostracism conducted in face-to-face (F2F) environments or in F2F workplace situations. With the COVID-19 Pandemic, many companies were forced into teleworking situations, where work continues to be conducted outside of the central work office or facility (remote). With the shift in working environments, the prevalence of workplace ostracism in a remote work environment is unknown; therefore, this study examines the prevalence and associated acts of workplace ostracism in a telework environment. Through our qualitative analysis, our findings indicate that ostracism does exist within the hybrid/remote environment and varies from exclusion from virtual engagements (meetings, chats, and/or calls), through limiting learning opportunities, and little to no interaction with peers regarding shared statements of work. Implications regarding the findings of the study are discussed, in addition to practical implications, limitations, and future research opportunities.

Keywords: Workplace ostracism, telework, workgroup identification, intersectionality, minority status

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"We will all, at some point, encounter hurdles to gaining access and entry, moving up and conquering self-doubt; but on the other side is the capacity to own opportunity and tell our own story."

– Stacey Abrams

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Chapter 1: Introduction

With the COVID-19 Pandemic, many companies were forced into teleworking situations. Telework, or telecommuting, involves work being conducted outside of the central work office and/or facility (remote), where employees have no in-person contact with coworkers, but leverage technology to engage electronically (Cascio, 2000). Gallup News (2021) reported 45% of full-time United States (US) based employees are still working partly or fully remote. Of those employees working partly or fully remote, the majority preferred a future work situation allowing for hybrid work (54%), where hybrid is a blended work arrangement of on-site/off-site work, or exclusively remote work (37%) which comprises of work solely conducted off-site (Saad & Wigert, 2022).

Ladders (2021) projected that remote opportunities will continually increase through 2023 and anticipates 25% of all professional jobs in the US and Canada to be remote by year-end 2023. Such rapid growth and the societal shift, initially by mandate, suggest that more than two years into the COVID-19 Pandemic, the increase in remote work has created a new sense of normalcy amongst many US based employees. The prevalence of remote work may come with disadvantages such as employees feeling disengaged or excluded (Cascio, 2000; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden, 2008). The prevalence of Workplace Ostracism, which is the extent to which an individual perceives that they are ignored or excluded by others in the workplace (Ferris et al., 2008, p. 1348). However, the prevalence of workplace ostracism in hybrid and remote work environments is unknown; therefore, this study is intended to discover the prevalence and consequences associated with workplace ostracism in a telework environment.

To date, most studies on workplace ostracism have been conducted in face-to-face (F2F) environments or examined in F2F workplace situations highlighting notable negative consequences. Feng et al. (2019) highlight that experiencing workplace ostracism can also reduce an employee's ability to respond to job demands and impede their motivation to complete their work, negatively impacting the organization. Feng et al. (2019) also suggest that exposure to ostracism causes people to self-regulate by redirecting attention to understand the reasoning behind the perceived ostracism. This redirection of resources can reduce innovative job performance, where an employee would usually generate, promote or realize new ideas. Thompson et al. (2020) mention the negative emotions an individual experiences in short-term functions can be caused by stress from ostracism, but long term can lead to emotional exhaustion; insinuating ostracism can lead to exhaustion as a direct result of an employee feeling drained, being unable to concentrate, and/or their inability to see a positive outlook on the situation.

One reason workplace ostracism has such negative consequences is that it disrupts the basic human need to belong. Social Identity Theory proposes that self-categorization offers an individual the opportunity to "create and define a place in society" for themselves; providing an individual with an identity in a social environment (Tajfel et al., 1979, p. 59). Social identity includes characteristics of one's self-image acquired from social categories that they feel they belong to; it may also be used to characterize an individual as "similar or different" or "better or worse" than members of other groups (Tajfel et al., 1979, p. 59). Within the organization, Hogg and Terry (2000) suggest employees may obtain part of their identity from the organization or within their assigned workgroup itself.

The natural attraction of forming social bonds with individuals who may be of similar backgrounds can cause others to be labeled as an outgroup member and left out. Fiset and Bhave (2019) examined linguistic ostracism, which is exclusion based on language. With many multinational organizations and the expected rise in the number of citizens who speak more than one language within the US, multiple languages may be used within the workplace. Due to language serving as a primary method for exchanging or sharing information, being unable to understand what is being communicated can lead to one being ostracized. Regarding social groups, Howard et al. (2020) suggest employees not embedded within their workplace social support system are also likely to experience ostracism due to their inability to depend on their network to prevent mistreatment by others. Kwan et al. (2018) further highlight the prevalence of workplace ostracism amongst diverse individuals across industries and cultures within the workplace; implying that people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to be excluded.

With hybrid/remote work prevailing and the nationwide push for diversity, equity, and inclusion (Stahl, 2021), understanding how employees experience workplace ostracism in a remote environment and if experiences of workplace ostracism differ for women and racial minorities is of importance. Thus, this research seeks to understand the experiences of ostracized employees in a hybrid/remote environment and the degree to which people from different social identity groups (e.g., gender, race) are impacted more significantly than others. In doing so, this study strives to provide organizations with insights into such experiences and common acts of ostracism in order to offer suggestions

to organizations on where a more proactive approach can be taken in efforts to increase inclusivity in a remote environment.

Research Questions

Our primary focus is to (1) investigate how prevalent workplace ostracism is in a remote environment. Additionally, we will (2) investigate how employees experience workplace ostracism in a remote environment. (3) We are particularly interested in the in-depth experiences of people with minority status(es). As indicated in Figure 1, we plan to answer the question of how minority status, intersectionality, and workgroup identification relate to perceived acts of ostracism in a remote environment. More specifically, we expect the following:

H1: Telework (remote work) will be positively related to workplace ostracism, such that a greater percentage of time spent teleworking will relate to more experiences of workplace ostracism.

H2: Minority status will moderate the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, where the relationship will be stronger for individuals who identify as minorities within their workgroup compared to majority group members.

H3: Intersectionality will moderate the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, such that employees identifying with intersectional identities, or multiple minority statuses, will experience greater workplace ostracism than people with a single, or no minority status.

H4: Workgroup identification will moderate the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, such that the relationship will be weaker when workgroup identification is higher compared to lower.

Figure 1

Hypothesized Model for Telework and Workplace Ostracism Related to Social Identities
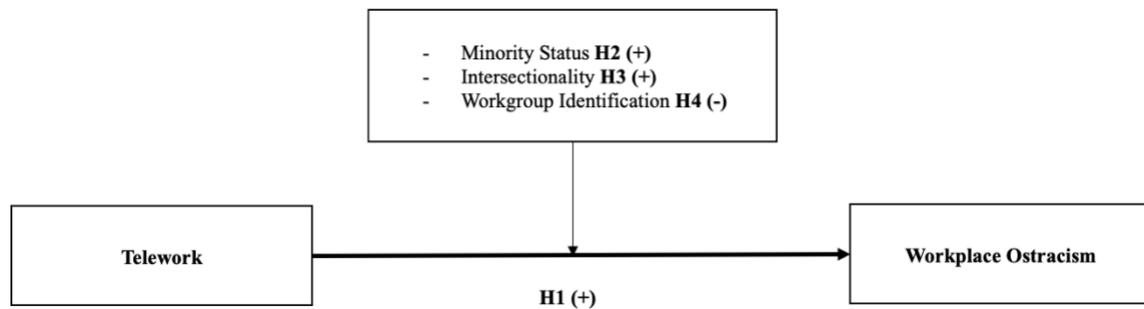
Figure 1. Hypothesized Model for Telework and Workplace Ostracism Related to Social Identities; Indicating expected relationships between the independent variable, moderators, and dependent variable.

Intended Contribution

Spilker (2021), while exploring "potential ways to predict and manage telecommuters' feelings of professional isolation", analyzed relationships for age and gender and found both social categories to be unrelated to reports of loneliness, but they did not explore certain demographic variables, such as a race (p.13). This is a critical demographic to incorporate into the study to analyze intersectionality across varying minority statuses. Per Spilker (2021), several studies have suggested that certain social identities might make employees more susceptible to feelings of loneliness. By including additional minority groups, this study will provide empirical evidence into how multiple forms of minority status, such as "double" or "triple" jeopardy (e.g., gender, race, and sexual orientation) provide insights into ostracism, which is a potential antecedent of isolation (Bedi, 2021).

This study seeks to provide a platform for diverse individuals of minority status to share their experiences with ostracism within the workplace in present times – such a study does not exist today. The study will contribute by providing a different lens into remote environments from minority perspectives based on their experiences. In doing so, we can begin to proactively provide support and training to level set expectations regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace, as well as encourage organizations to orchestrate training programs that can better equip all employees to engage with minorities more productively. As organizations and corporations begin to discuss returning from telework and/or incorporate remote work into their work culture, it is essential that we understand which employee population(s) are more susceptible to isolation, ostracism, and how those experiences take place remotely.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Telework

Terminology

The Allied Telecom Group (2018) shared that the term "telecommuting" originated from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) agency in 1972 when Jack Nilles worked remotely in support of a complex NASA Communication system. The terminology utilized to describe remote working has not been standardized to date, some studies have captured the concept of remote working as distributed work (Dourish & Bly, 1992), virtual or remote work (Nyberg et al., 2021), flexible work arrangements, and telecommuting (Rau and Hyland, 2002).

Definition

Makarius and Larson (2017) highlight telework as one's use of technology to engage virtually with others in efforts to share information, ideas, and/or to support execution from various locations (no face-to-face encounters). According to Gajendran and Harrison (2007), studies have referred to the concept of distributed work supported away from the workplace as telecommuting (Cascio, 2000). Kirkman et al. (2002) capture telework from a group perspective, defining virtual teams as individuals working across boundaries such as space, purpose, time, and organizationally to collaborate and communication via technology.

Telework Intensity

Telework or telecommuting intensity refers to the amount of time that an employee spends working away from their central work location (Spilker, 2014). Literature to date has highlighted high-intensity teleworkers as individuals who spend the

majority of their time away from their central work location, while low-intensity

teleworkers work remotely for no more than 2 days a week (Gajendran & Harrison

(2007). Findings have shown that low- and high-intensity workers have different

motivations and communication patterns when engaging in work activities. High-

Intensity teleworking employees, which Konradt et al. (2003) classify as more than 50%

of one's time spent away from the office, often find themselves seeking to balance work-

family demands. For low-intensity employees, most seek fewer interruptions while

working. Regarding communication patterns, Wiesenfeld et al. (1999) suggest that

employees with high-intensity telework may grow accustomed to relying on email and

telephone, where face-to-face communication may be considered appropriate.

Organizational Identification and Telework

Organizational Identity (OI) describes the ways in which an individual relates to

their organization in terms of their "social and psychological ties" binding an employee

to their organization (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999, p. 778). This binding has been identified as

an important aspect to the sustainment of virtual organizations as it supports the

facilitation of essential functions within the organization, such as coordination and

workgroup functions. Many of the essential functions being highlighted as traditional

tasks to ensure organizational performance. OI is also expected to serve as a motivating

factor for members to coordinate their efforts towards organizational goals through trust

and cooperation, hence Wiesenfeld et al. (1999) has argued that it is essential to help

organizations meet critical challenges and organizational goals in a telework environment

(p. 779). Highlighting the importance of electronic communication and its ability to serve

as a critical predictor of OI among teleworkers and how they connect to the organization.

For this particular workplace ostracism study, this finding is important as it shows how communication can further impact an employee's identity beyond ostracism in a telework environment.

Professional Isolation

A study conducted by Spilker (2021) found that individuals required to telework by mandate were likely to experience isolation because of relational inadequacy; this inadequacy being present when the desired level of social interaction differs from that in which the job could offer. Furthermore, Golden (2008) highlighted professional isolation as one's unmet needs for social and emotional interactions, lacking a sense of community and influential interactions, and emphasizes professional isolation as a potential barrier to telework effectiveness – thwarting one's ability to feel socially connected in the workplace. For this particular study, we anticipate ostracism to compound isolation, as ostracism is likely a more discreet act to carry out in a remote environment.

Perceived Minority Status

Westphal and Milton (2000) refer to minority as one having features, viewpoints, or beliefs that are shared by less than 50 percent of a given population. The definition allowing for an individual's perception of their minority status to change based on a given situation or social setting. Further capturing minority status as multifaceted, where an individual can identify as a minority and a majority dependent upon the characteristic or social identity. Thus, highlighting the importance and the need to examine demographic characteristics individually (Westphal & Milton, 2000).

Intersectionality

Colombia Law School credits Kimberlé Crenshaw, a distinguished professor, scholar and writer on various subjects such as civil rights and critical race theory, for the introduction of the term intersectionality in 1989 ("Columbia University", 2017; "Kimberlé Crenshaw", n.d.; Perlman, 2018). Intersectionality was intended to help explain the oppression of black women and marginalized groups. Today, the terminology is used to describe the overlapping or intersecting social identities. Intersectionality theory calls attention to individuals of various social identities and the ways in which their identities don't operate separately, but influence the ways in which the individual is to be perceived by others (Ponce de Leon & Rosette, 2022).

Studies to date have highlighted the ways in which individuals who identify with one social identity while differing on another will have immensely different evaluative outcomes (Cho et al, 2013). The evaluation of individuals with intersecting identities is done through the process of social categorization by an evaluator. Evaluators do so based on perception of what they consider to be socially meaningful. Often resorting to the placement an individual into a category based on known stereotypes tied to an identity or the ways in which they understand or expect people to stereotypically behave (Hall et al., 2019). Hall et al. (2019) further draw attention to demographics being an important factor of biases in evaluations of an individual, such that organizations and employers are increasingly recognizing multiple social identities and offering additional classification schemes in the workplace to understand their workforce diversity.

Workgroup Identification

A workgroup is defined as a bounded social identity, where members who are virtual or collocated, are interdependent and often have different roles in pursuit of shared team and/or organizational goals (Lindsay et al., 2020).Workgroup Identification describes the perception belongingness with ones workgroup, in addition to an individual's ability to internalize a group's accomplishments or failures. Often times within an organization, an employee is to identify primarily with their specific workgroup versus the entire organization, as employees are likely to relate more to group members. Relational demography focuses on responses from individuals based on perceived dissimilarities with others and also proposes effects of diversity result from perceptions of demographic differences with others. Regarding relational demography, identified demographical differences are often used during workgroup formation to categorize individuals. This categorization has been found to result in outgroup members and therefore fewer cooperative behaviors towards specific members of different social identities (Stewart & Garcia-Prieto, 2008).

Workplace Ostracism

Wang et al. (2021) captured workplace ostracism as the lack of desire to communicate verbally or acknowledge an employee, which can then convey to the employee that they are being excluded or ignored by an individual. Robinson et al. (2013) capture a group definition, as an occurrence when a group of individuals neglect to take actions to interact with another employee or member within the organization when it's socially appropriate to engage. Kwan et al. (2018) describe workplace ostracism as a

common social phenomenon that individuals of diverse backgrounds, industries and cultures experience in the workplace.

Research highlights the negative psychological and behavioral outcomes an individual is likely to experience. In many cases, ostracizing behaviors are concerning, painful and even detrimental to the targeted employees (Kwan et al., 2018). The consequences of perceived exclusion can influence a negative change in attitude toward work from employees, negatively impact job satisfaction, and lead to attrition (Ferris et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2016). Some employees may experience reduced well-being, weakened health, emotional exhaustion, and experience negative psychological and psychosocial consequences as a result (Ng et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2016). Ciarocco et al. (2001) further contributed to the phenomena, finding evidence that the perpetrators themselves may experience a loss of belonging, in addition to experiencing difficulties completing complex problems due to the effort needed to ostracize. Thus, workplace ostracism and acts of workplace ostracism, are likely to negatively impact the perpetrator and the targeted employee.

Measurement in Workplace Ostracism Research

Most studies rely on the 10-item measure of workplace ostracism developed by Ferris et al. (2008). The workplace ostracism scale was developed using a four-phase approach, which included item generation and reduction, psychometric properties of WOS, convergent and discriminant validity, and criterion-related validity. The model was developed while focusing on five categories expected to relate to ostracism, which included basic needs, well-being, attitudes, performance, and withdrawal. The result of the study was a 10-item workplace ostracism scale developed to include measures

relating to needs, depression, anxiety, job satisfaction, affective commitment, in-role behavior, deviant behaviors, turnover intentions, and job search behaviors (See Appendix A). To date, there is not a measure of workplace ostracism in remote environments and this study will adapt the WOS and test it in hybrid/remote environments.

Antecedents of Workplace Ostracism

Personality. Howard et al. (2020) utilized the victimization framework to capture antecedents of felt ostracism, examining characteristics and behaviors in addition to the roles and status of both targets and perpetrators of ostracism. While exploring ostracism and personal indicators, the study suggested "agreeable" individuals, due to their more "passive" behaviors and the idea of them being less likely to initiate conflict, are more likely to become targets than extraverted individuals who are more socially oriented (p. 580). Bedi (2021) examined affectivity, in addition to personality traits such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and proactive personalities. Observing individuals with negative affectivity, who tend to view the world in a negative light, tend to interpret ambiguous remarks and situations in a negative way and are more likely to experience higher levels of ostracism than individuals with positive affectivity. Bedi agreed with Howard et al. (2020), highlighting the negative relationship among conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and proactive personalities with workplace ostracism (p. 867). Sommer et al. (2001) found that individuals with low self-esteem are likely to ostracize individuals as a means to protect themselves, whereas individuals with high self-esteem may engage in ostracism as a means to end a relationship with peers.

Leadership. While Howard et al. (2020) examined leadership, the study suggests that abusive supervision can create a "trickle-down" effect in the organization, such that forms of mistreatment that leaders exhibit to an employee, which can also include ostracism, can be deemed as a norm within the workplace by others. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) which examines the two-way relationship between a leader and an employee, can also lead to ostracism due to perceived varying levels of fairness or treatment amongst employees. Additionally, quality of LMX can lead to the formation of in-group/out-group perceptions within the team. In terms of dark leadership, examining abusive supervision, which consists of acts of hostility such as yelling, blaming, and ostracizing (Yu et al., 2018, p. 2299), abusive supervision can also be recognized deemed as a norm, where others within the organization will consider resorting to abusive acts. Bedi (2021) concedes that workplace ostracism is positively associated with abusive supervision through acts of omission and social exclusion (p. 873).

Environment. Several environmental factors that play a key role in acts of ostracism have been explored or discussed by Robinson et al. (2013). Within an organization, where its culture is more conflict avoidant, employees may rely on more "passive and invisible" methods to express their disapproval due to limited resolutions for formal interpersonal tension (p. 212). Whereas in organizations where the authority levels are alike due to a flattened organization structure, individuals are more tempted to control or manage behaviors of peers by engaging in ostracism. In organizations where conflict resolution mechanisms are limited individuals, employees may resort to ostracism as a way to achieve the resolution they were seeking. Additionally, in stressful environments or in organizations where members are geographically dispersed, one can easily overlook

others and disregard acceptable norms, unintentionally leading a member or others within

the group to believe they are being ostracized.

Social Expectations and Judgment. Ng et al. (2020) suggest voice, or expressing

one's ideas, is the riskiest type of citizenship behavior one can engage in as others may

not agree with the suggestions and possibly consider the suggestions to be disruptive.

When an individual expresses bad ideas, certain opinions or comments, others may view

their input as "poor voice quality" (p. 5). As for social norms, Scott et al. (2013) highlight

that any threat to social order (or norms), which can include uncivil, rude or discourteous

behaviors, can lead to one being considered untrustworthy. When employees exhibit poor

voice quality or are deemed untrustworthy, the group may consider them to be uncapable

of supporting the team or shared goals as a result of their perceived incompetence or

untrustworthiness. Therefore, the individual and/or group will add the employee to their

out-group, hence engaging in ostracism (Ng et al., 2020; Scott et al., 2013). Relevant to

social expectations, Robinson et al. (2013) share that member expectations can differ as it

relates to "socially appropriate behavior", meaning members within a group or

organization may have different standards for socially accepted behaviors and can act in

such a way that unintentionally leads to ostracism (p. 214).

Intersectionality. Research findings to date have mostly been studied in F2F

working environments, examining ostracism in the workplace as it relates to linguistics,

social support, and other diverse characteristics of employees, all of which have been

identified as antecedents of ostracism. Furthermore, Howard et al. (2020) calls attention

to the significance of ostracism as it relates to different characteristics which include, but

are not limited to gender and social support; drawing attention to the evidence that

minority individuals are more likely to be targeted. In previous studies, intersectionality, such as being a minority group for both gender and race served as predictors of ethnic mistreatment and findings concluded that minorities are more susceptible to experience workplace mistreatment than their white counterparts (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Cortina et al., 2013). Secondly, Cortina et al. (2013) called attention to previous studies examining workgroup gender composition, referring to the makeup of a team and the gender representation within the group. Male-dominated workgroups, have been found to be associated with stereotyping, discrimination, and lower support levels – highlighting the ways in which individuals can be cognitively categorized and placed into ingroups or outgroups.

Outcomes of Workplace Ostracism

Feedback-seeking Behavior (FSB). Wang et al. (2021) studied the relationship between workplace ostracism and Feedback-seeking Behavior (FSB) and the mediating role of vitality. As captured, "FSB is a proactive behavior that helps individuals obtain feedback and achieve goals in the organizational context" (Wang et al., 2021, p. 1). Vitality, which examines the perceived levels of energy, both physically and psychologically, and the resources available to an employee directly impacts one's ability to engage in FSB. The findings suggested that perceived workplace ostracism, can in fact be mediated by support from the supervisor, however, due to the direct negative effect on vitality, workplace ostracism has an indirect negative effect on FSB. Thus, a response to ostracism by employees is to seek less feedback from coworkers and exert less energy in engaging.

Job Performance and Creativity. Jahanzeb et al. (2020) studied the relationship between workplace ostracism and job performance. This study examined the ways in which workplace ostracism positively related to acquiescence silence, in which employees may be hesitant to engage in discussion, comment or get involved. When employees engage in acquiescence silence, they are also likely to engage in intentional silence regarding key organizational goals and outcomes. Additionally, Feng et al. (2019) highlight that experienced workplace ostracism can also reduce an employee's ability to respond to job demands and impede their motivation to complete their work, further negatively impacting the organization. While examining the negative impact of supervisor ostracism on employee creativity, Kwan et al. (2016) similarly suggest workplace ostracism from supervisors can include a reduction of tasks resources, thereby limiting an employee's ability and/or desire to perform and as a result dampens their delivery of creative outcomes.

Self-Esteem. Some factors of workplace ostracism serve as both antecedents and outcomes, including self-esteem. Several studies have found a threat to one's self-esteem to be a result of workplace ostracism (Qian et al., 2019; Sommer et al., 2001; Wu et al., 2016). As highlighted within the Sociometer theory, an individual's relational value to others or their belief that they are worthy of being associates, strongly predicts self-evaluation and self-esteem (Ng et al., 2020). This finding is further supported when organizations implement 360-degree feedback. Peng and Zeng (2017) found stronger negative relations to self-esteem of individuals who perceived that they were being targeted by peers within their feedback assessment, whereas individuals who did not engage in 360-degree feedback were not affected in the same manner.

Lastly, organizational identification often provides employees with a sense of self-concept and identity within the workplace in support of their self-esteem. A study conducted by Wu et al. (2016) suggest workplace ostracism affects organizational identification, in part due to the psychological intertwining they experience based on a sense of belonging with their organization. Beyond the effects on self-esteem, targeted employees may also lack the desire to engage in organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as a result of the negative self-views, where OCB highlights an employee's commitment to support the organization through various actions or tasks independent of their job responsibilities (Song et al. 2021).

Burnout. Burnout is a state of exhaustion, where an individual begins to question the value of their occupation in addition to their own abilities at work. Due to increased stress and reduction of resources an individual can experience as a result of workplace ostracism, an employee can experience an imbalance between job demands and resources, increasing the likelihood of burnout (Qian et al., 2019). Jahanzeb and Fatima (2018) also found that targeted employees used avoidance coping as a mechanism to allow the initial negative emotions subside and since ostracism is viewed as a strain, this can then lead to burnout and exhaustion. Thompson et al. (2020) mention the negative emotions an individual experiences in short-term functions can be caused by stress from ostracism, but long-term can lead to emotional exhaustion; insinuating ostracism can lead to exhaustion as a direct result of an employee feeling drained, being unable to concentrate, and/or their inability to see a positive outlook on the situation.

Workgroup Identification. Although the negative responses and impacts of ostracism have been captured in many studies to date, Xu et al. (2017) identified

situations leveraging self-verification theory (Swann, 1983), where an individual may respond positively to workplace ostracism. Empirical evidence suggests the degree to which individuals identify with their workgroup can moderate the impact of workplace ostracism, where individuals may exhibit prosocial reactions to such experiences, if they have high workgroup identification (Xu et al., 2017). An ostracized employee with high workgroup identity is likely to be more engaged, helpful, and cooperative with the social norms within their environment, which also supports a decrease in any antisocial behaviors. This is often seen as a tactic to ensure members within the group recognize their value and acknowledge them accordingly as an in-group peer.

In situations where individuals are perceived to have low workgroup identity, they may engage in antisocial behaviors and withdrawal from the group. In such instances, individuals are likely to experience greater ostracism as a result (Xu et al, 2017). Such behaviors were prevalent amongst newer employees based on their psychological needs going unfulfilled, limiting their desires to engage or speak up (Wu et al., 2019).

In summary, the literature on workplace ostracism has largely focused on F2F interactions in a centralized location, such as an office space. We believe, however, that workplace ostracism may manifest itself in multifaceted ways due to the incorporation of remote work. Literature to date on remote work highlights the varying effects of telework on employees based on telework intensity, organizational and workgroup identity, in addition to whether the work arrangement was required or provided as a feasible work option. Furthermore, literature has explored professional isolation examining age and gender, but they did not explore certain demographic variables, such as a race. With literature providing empirical evidence which suggest that minorities are more

susceptible to experience workplace mistreatment than their white counterparts (Berdahl

& Moore, 2006; Cortina et al., 2013), it's important that we examine workplace ostracism

in the remote environment and the in-depth experiences of minority employees. Below,

we discuss our study of which we rely on telework findings, minority status and

intersectionality literature, workgroup identification and social identity theory literature,

and the phenomena of workplace ostracism.

Chapter 3: Method

Participants

G*Power version 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007) was utilized to conduct an a priori power analysis in efforts to assess the sample size needed for this particular study. With an estimated small effect size of .15, number of tested predictors as 2, and a total number of predictors per the proposed model of 5. This survey required the participation of at least 107 participants. The targeted sample size for individual interviews was approximately 20 to 30 individuals or until we reached theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Participants included adults (18+) employed in a large engineering firm in the Midwest. Participants must have been employed with the firm for at least four years (since January 2019 or earlier). Participants were fully employed (no part-time employment), working at least 32 hours per week. Participants could work in any department or division within the organization. Participants could identify as men, women, or gender diverse, and could be from any racial or ethnic background and sexual orientation. To participate in an individual interview, participants had to complete the survey, have the ability to work remotely at least eight hours per week, identify with at least one minority identity, and must have perceived at least one experience of ostracism within the remote workplace. The study was therefore, open to individuals with no regard to their job title, organization, or status within the organization. This allowed for entry, mid- to senior- level employees to engage, as well as employees in non-management to management or supervisory roles to participate.

The selected organization has a large employee-base (16,000+) and was chosen based on their demographics where women, racial and ethnic minorities are

underrepresented company-wide, making up less than one-third of the employee-base.

The focus of the study consisted of women and racial and ethnic minorities in comparison

to majority members. This particular firm supports employee-led Resource Groups (RGs)

in personal and professional development, promotes diversity within the company, and

aids to strengthen employees' networks. The RGs by design incorporate one identity

within each group, such that RGs include but are not limited to groups such as Black,

Hispanic, women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and

queer (LGBTIQ) – allowing for ease of access to minorities across different functional

areas or departments within the company. For the individual interviews participants were

recruited from RGs and the quantitative survey based on participants' voluntarily opting

in.

Recruitment

In efforts to implement the study, we utilized three recruitment methods, the

internet, email, and snowball sampling, as potential participants were asked to assist in

identifying other potential participants for the survey and semi-structured interviews.

LinkedIn, a social media platform, was utilized to reach the masses from varying

disciplines, programs, and organizations to provide a diverse pool of participants from the

particular company of interest. The recruitment statement (See Appendix E) was shared

with our personal networks of RG members through email for easy distribution and ease

of sharing (See Appendix C and D for informed consent form/recruitment statement).

This approach promoted the study and increased our reach to individuals who (1)

qualified to participate based on their current work-situation, (2) were likely interested in

contributing/sharing their experiences, and (3) were actively engaged in RGs.

Our final sample for the Qualtrics survey consisted of 102 employees, recruited through LinkedIn and the personal network of other participants through snowballing. The average tenure within their current workgroup was 5.39 years ($SD = 5.94$), with a range from less than 1 year to 33 years. The average age of the participants was $M = 37.34$ ($SD = 9.61$) and the sample was 52.94% male (54 men, 48 women). Regarding sexual orientation, the sample was 4% gay/homosexual, 93% straight/heterosexual, 2% bisexual, and 1% queer. Lastly, the ethnicity of the sample was 38.24% White or Caucasian, 5.88% Asian, 48.04% Black or African American, 3.92% Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin, 2.94% Multiracial, and 0.98% Prefer Not to Say. In terms of minority status, the average number of minority social identities was $M = 1.88$ ($SD = 1.31$) with a range from no minority social identities to five. For the semi-structured interviews, Table 3.1 provides an overview of the participants (n = 20). Limited information is included in Table 3.1 to ensure anonymity.

Table 3.1 *Demographics of Semi-Structured Interview Participants*

Participant	Age	Gender Identity	Race/Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Division	Minority Status(es)
1	50s	Female	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Ethnicity, Race, Gender Identity
2	40s	Female	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Ethnicity, Race, Gender Identity
3	20s	Female	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Ethnicity, Race, Gender Identity
4	20s	Male	Caucasian/White	Homosexual	Information Technology	Age, Sexual Orientation

5	20s	Female	Caucasian/White	Heterosexual	Engineering	Gender Identity, Veteran Status
6	50s	Female	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Ethnicity, Race, Gender Identity
7	20s	Female	Caucasian/White	Heterosexual	Engineering	Gender Identity
8	20s	Female	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Ethnicity, Race, Gender Identity
9	20s	Female	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Ethnicity, Race, Gender Identity
10	30s	Female	Hispanic	Heterosexual	Program Management	Ethnicity, Gender Identity
11	50s	Male	Asian	Heterosexual	Engineering	National Origin, Race
12	30s	Female	Caucasian/White	Heterosexual	Engineering	Gender Identity
13	20s	Male	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Ethnicity, Race
14	30s	Female	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Ethnicity, Race, Gender Identity
15	60s	Female	Caucasian/White	Heterosexual	Engineering	Gender Identity
16	30s	Female	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Ethnicity, Race, Gender Identity
17	30s	Male	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Program Management	Ethnicity, Race
18	30s	Female	Caucasian/White	Heterosexual	Program Management	Gender Identity
19	40s	Female	African	Heterosexual	Engineering	National Origin, Race,

20	20s	Female	African American/Black	Heterosexual	Engineering	Gender Identity Age, Ethnicity, Gender, Race, Religion, Gender Identity

Measures

Demographics

Demographics of participants (including gender identity, race, age, sexual orientation, and tenure within their organization) were collected through the Qualtrics survey questionnaire.

Work Environment

For the hybrid/remote work environment assessment, participants were asked to provide information regarding their work environment and the extent to which they currently support work responsibilities and tasks away from their work location. Utilizing a survey adapted from Fonner and Roloff (2010), this study further expanded upon the work environment options based on the COVID-19 Pandemic and shifted teleworking options. Participants were asked to select one of two options to describe their current working environment, (1) Hybrid-based employee, such that there is a prearranged agreement to support a blend of office-based and remote-based work or (2) Remote-based employee, where their prearranged agreement consists of no required on-site time or geographical requirements. Additionally, the participants will be asked to quantify their time in hours spent working off-site to provide additional context into F2F interaction time (or lack thereof), allowing for the calculation of total hours spent teleworking.

Perceived Minority Status

Perceived minority status of participants (including ethnicity, race, national origin, age, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, and fill in for dimensions not listed) was collected and documented with survey questions. As minority status is multifaceted, individuals were provided the opportunity to highlight or identify as a minority based on their particular workgroup for the various characteristics or social identities listed (Westphal & Milton, 2000). This data point was of interest and considered as essential to the study because participants may not be perceived (or identify) as a minority overall in the organization, but they may perceive themselves as a minority in their particular workgroup.

Workgroup Identification

Furthermore, the participants engaged in self-reporting regarding their perceived group identification based on the 16-item scale that Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) developed for self-evaluation of one's social identity. The modified scale consisted of both private and identity subscale items, such as, "I feel good about the [work group] I belong to," "In general, I'm glad to be a member of the [work group] I belong to," "The [work group] I belong to is an important reflection of who I am," "The [work group] I belong to is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am", and "In general, belonging to my [work group] is an important part of my self-image". All the items were measured using seven-point Likert scale ranging 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*; α = .85; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

Workplace Ostracism

This study built upon the 10-item workplace ostracism scale developed by Ferris et al. (2008). The authors focused on five categories suspected to relate to acts of workplace ostracism, including the evaluation of one's basic needs, well-being, attitudes, performance, and withdrawal. For each item, Ferris et al. (2008) incorporated a seven-point Likert-type scale, where responses range from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). Items from the scale include modifications of items from the original scale such as, "Others have ignored you at work", "Others at work shut you out of the conversation", and "Your greetings have gone unanswered at work" (α = .93; Ferris et al., 2008).

For this study, we aim to identify forms of ostracism in the remote hybrid environment that are not captured or considered within the existing Ferris et al. (2008) scale, as such we utilized a modified scale to capture the hybrid/remote work environments. For the survey, we have modified the existing WOS for all 10-items. Items have been modified from "Others ignored you at work." To "Others failed to communicate with you directly when it was appropriate to do so.", "Others failed to copy (CC) you on emails when you should have been included.", and "When people reply to a chain of emails, your reply gets deleted.". Similarly, "You noticed others would not look at you at work." Has been modified to "Others did not reply to your direct comments to them in virtual meetings.", "Others did not reply to your direct comments to them in emails.", and "Others did not reply to your direct comments to them in chats.". For the semi-structured interviews, emergent forms of ostracism may include the ways in which technology can be utilized to engage (disengage) employees while working in various locations. Allowing for a deepened understanding and validity of the existing scale, while

also expanding the usability of the existing workplace ostracism scale into hybrid/remote environments.

Lastly, In keeping with previous studies (Ferris et al., 2015), participants' age and gender were controlled.

Design

This study was supported with a mixed-method approach of qualitative and quantitative methods as we seek to understand the hybrid/remote work environment and assess the applicability of existing workplace ostracism measure for a remote environment. The study consisted of a quantitative survey composed of items regarding telework, demographics, and workplace ostracism. Greene et al. (2005) suggest that qualitative studies are suitable for exploratory analysis and the generation of new understanding regarding existing phenomena.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide insight into the survey responses on experiences of ostracism (See Appendix B). Participants with at least one minority identity are appropriate for this study as literature to date has drawn attention to the evidence that minority individuals are more likely to be targeted. With insights from Cortina et al. (2013) examining workgroup gender composition, where male-dominated workgroups, have been found to be associated with stereotyping, discrimination, and lower support levels, it is critical to understand the viewpoints of individuals who identify with minority social groups to better understand workplace ostracism in a male-dominated organization. We plan to leverage their responses to identify common themes and/or similar experiences to develop insights into workplace ostracism experiences and behaviors exuded in a remote environment. Collectively, contributing to the existing

workplace ostracism literature and providing greater insight regarding remote work and the ways in which the participants perceive ostracism.

Procedure

Employees who opted to participate first reviewed the informed consent form which consisted of a brief summary of the study, additional information regarding risks, confidentiality, and expected participation involvement. In consenting to the study, participants responded to several questionnaire items administered online through Qualtrics, taking no more than 10 minutes in total. Participants were asked questions about their demographics, telework status, workplace ostracism, workgroup identity, and minority status. During the initial survey, participants had the opportunity to "opt-in"/express their interest in participating in a semi-structured interview and to provide contact information, which was collected and stored separately from the survey data. The survey data was linked to the interview data in anyway, as survey participants opted in, their contact information was provided separately and aggregated into a contact list format.

Following the initial survey, eligible participants who opted in were contacted via their personal email address or utilizing their preferred communication method based on the information they provided through the survey. This information was then utilized to coordinate and schedule their semi-structured interview. For the semi-structured interviews, the Zoom session was recorded and transcribed via Zoom transcription services. All recordings were done with consent from participants and all participant names were replaced with pseudonyms upon concluding the interview session once transcription was fully processed. During the interview, we looked for participants to

provide information regarding their experiences in a remote environment. Participants

were asked questions about their work experiences such as interactions with coworkers,

their perception of being avoided or ignored amongst other scenarios (i.e., not included

on email distributions, missed meeting invitations, virtual meeting inclusivity, etc.). The

interviews lasted no more than 45 minutes. This was done in support of data collection

for qualitative analysis to further detail perceived acts of ostracism and to better

understand how the participants made sense of the acts. The video and audio recordings

will be deleted at the end of the research or when we are confident that the transcripts are

complete and accurate. During the research data collection and analysis phase, data was

stored on the research team's password protected hard drives, in a limited access area

only obtainable by the research team.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Data Screening. Upon completion of the data collection, we conducted data

screening, which is the process of "cleaning" the data to ensure questionnaire responses

are valid per participant responses and sensible. The initial sample size was $N = 118$.

After reviewing the data, 11 participants were ineligible based on their responses to the

pre-screening questionnaire, reducing the eligible sample size to $N = 107$. While

reviewing the data, five additional responses were removed utilizing the listwise deletion

method based on inadequate responses to identified measures of workplace ostracism and

Workgroup Identification (Graham, 2009) –reducing the sample size to $N = 102$.

Regarding the raw data, several variables required manipulation through code and

value cleaning. Several participants provided ranges of their average number of hours

worked remotely, of which we utilized their minimum number provided, for example "8-

10 hours" was reflected as '8' . For the Workgroup Identification measure, question #4

which states, "The [workgroup] I belong to is unimportant to my sense of what kind of

person I am", required reverse-coding based on its negative orientation relative to the

other workgroup questionnaire items. Outlier data was reviewed and discussed amongst

the several committee members prior to removal for data validity purposes.

We also conducted descriptive statistics of the averages for telework hours,

minority social identities, workgroup identification, and workplace ostracism. In doing

so, we computed the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the data set to

assess the shape of the distribution, while referencing Meyers et al. (2017) regarding

levels of skewness or kurtosis as high for values +/- 1.00. The average teleworking hours

ranged from 0 to 40 hours, where the average was $M = 21.37$ ($SD = 14.27$). The average

number of minority identities participants reported ranged from 0 to 5, where the average

number of minority identities was $M = 1.90$ ($SD = 1.31$). As it relates to workgroup

identification, the range was 1.20 to 5.60, where the average was $M = 4.01$ ($SD = 0.77$).

While workplace ostracism average ranged from 0 to 4, where the average was reported

was $M = 2.14$ ($SD = 0.79$). All values of skewness and kurtosis were normal with the

exception of average number of hours worked remotely, which was outside of the

accepted range for kurtosis (-1.36).

Regression Analysis. We ran regression analysis on the data set to examine the

relationship between telework and workplace ostracism. To determine whether minority

status, intersectionality, and workgroup identification moderate the relationship between

Telework and workplace ostracism, we used Hayes' (2018) PROCESS Macro (v.4.3)

within IBM SPSS 28 on Figure 1 for simple moderation. In doing so, we assessed for

positive/negative relationships as well as the strength or significance of each relationship.

Results of PROCESS provided confirmation as to whether minority status,

intersectionality, or workgroup identification moderated the relationship between

telework and workplace ostracism.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data Gathering. During each semi-structured interview, we recorded to have an

accurate transcription of the conversation. Immediately following the interview, we took

notes to capture initial thoughts and reflect on participant responses. As highlighted by

Rouna (2005), "the purpose of data analysis is to search for important meanings, patterns,

and themes in what the researcher has heard and seen" (p. 236). As such, the memos

supported the "sense making" process as we generate meaning from the data collected.

Once each interview transcript was available, the transcriptions were reviewed and

cleaned to ensure transcriptions accurately reflected the comments and input provided

from each participant, while also removing any personally identifiable information (PII).

This process allowed us to complete minor edits for any misrecorded words in addition to

editing the format and readability of the transcripts, where necessary. This also gave us

the opportunity to further familiarize ourselves with the dataset and capture preliminary

notes in addition to the memos. Rouna (2005) also shares of various techniques used in

qualitative data analysis, for this particular study we utilized recursiveness, meaning

analyzing data throughout the data collection process to better understand the data set in

its totality and planned accordingly for upcoming sessions based on additional

information being of value by widening the study (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992).

Data Coding. For coding the data set we utilized Nvivo (2018), where we segmented the transcript by sentences or paragraphs and identified codes or tags that supported the identification of themes or patterns in the data. We utilized an a priori approach, based on previous literature publications of workplace ostracism, which included codes such as exclusion by individuals and exclusion by workgroup. However, we also leveraged an emergent approach to limit biases based on what we expected from our literature review, this allowed us to capture codes unique to workplace ostracism in hybrid and remote work environments and further contribute to the workplace ostracism literature and findings. The data was coded in a three-iteration process, where the initial pass conducted utilized a priori codes, the second pass used emergent codes, and the final pass was conducted with a combined approach, where we leveraged both a priori and emergent codes.

Theme Identification. For validity purposes, we utilized an external reviewer familiar with the literature to review the use of both the a priori and emergent codes. Following this step, the list of codes were formalized, agreed upon, and collectively we performed a consolidation of codes supporting codebook development. In doing so, we examined the codes or tags identified to find commonalities and eliminate synonyms for ease of code use while we finalized categories. To verify the codes selected, we again utilized an external reviewer. Additionally, we analyzed randomly selected interviews as a collective to ensure validity in our coding and limit biases from single-point reviews, comparable to a peer-reviewing process. In doing so, it resulted in increased confidence in our list of codes and our ability to manage variability in terms of interpretation of interview data (see Appendix F).

Upon finalizing the code listing, we identified similarities and differences between codes in efforts to form abstract categories. Categories were based on input from participant behaviors, cognitive processes, or emotions expressed in response to workplace ostracism. For codebook purposes, we also identified two or more direct quotes that exemplified codes from within the specified category criteria. Categories were then reviewed and discussed amongst two dissertation committee members to identify themes. The themes represented the expressions in data depicted in the interviews analyzed (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Reliability. As captured by Ryan and Bernard (2003), "Intercoder reliability refers to the degree to which coders agree with each other about how themes are to be applied to qualitative data". For interrater reliability (e.g., Kappa) the minimum acceptable Kappa for this study must be considered substantial. Kappa Cohen recommends the Kappa result be interpreted as values of 0.41-.60, .61-.80, 0.81-1.00 as moderate, substantial, and almost perfect agreement (McHugh, 2012). We leveraged intercoder (or interrater) reliability to ensure the themes captured were valid. For this particular exercise, an interview was selected at random, and multiple reviewers utilized the themes identified. We then calculated the rate of which the coders agreed. We iteratively reviewed and refined the categories identified until we reached a substantial Kappa (>0.70) value for each identified category, within the randomly selected script (See Table 3.2). This supported us in ensuring we identified appropriate themes and therefore can confidently report on the "thematic categories" identified and utilized (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 104).

Table 3.2

Interrater Reliability Exercise for Random Transcript

Category	# of rows where both raters applied it	Total # of rows where any rater applied it	Kappa Value %
Group-based Exclusion	3	4	0.75
Individual-based Exclusion	1	1	1.00
Limiting Learning Opportunities	4	4	1.00
Work Setting Barriers	5	7	0.71
Action-based Response	1	1	1.00

Note. The transcript selected did not result in coding for the following categories: Lack of Leadership Support, Emotion-based Response, or Preferred Solitude.

Paradigms and Ethics

Participation in this study was voluntary and participants could choose to withdraw their consent at any time. The survey was made available and open to individuals who met the criteria of the study. The distribution of the survey or request for participation was be done online through social media forums, as such, participants were not expected to feel pressure to participate. Informed consent was required to participate in this study, individuals who accessed the survey link were first given the informed consent form through the recruitment posting; through which their continuation to access

the Qualtrics survey confirmed their acknowledgement and consent to the use of their

data. Participants also had the option to contact the survey administrator to ask questions

prior to consenting through the informed consent form information and accessing the

questionnaire.

In terms of confidentiality, as it relates to the data collection process or

publication of direct quotes from participants, we did everything to protect the privacy of

participants, including but not limited to removing names and any references made to the

participant's company, organization, and/or program. No specific demographic

information was shared for sample sizes smaller than five for a particular demographic

(e.g., black men).

Other concerns regarding harm or other ethical issues were mitigated by the

administration method of the survey. Individuals that encountered severe acts of

ostracism that may find the survey triggering in nature could exit the survey or

withdrawal from the semi-structured interview. Furthermore, participants who completed

the quantitative study could voluntarily opt in (versus the ability to opt out) for a semi-

structured interview of which individuals were selected based on their perceived minority

status and intersecting social identities. All participants were protected through the ethical

considerations mentioned herein. Additionally, no additional resources were required so

the expectation was that participants would not be put in harm's way to participate or

provide input.

Chapter 4: Results

This study sought to understand the experiences of ostracized employees in a remote environment and the degree to which people from different social identity groups (e.g., gender, race) are impacted more significantly than others. As such, we (1) investigated the prevalence of workplace ostracism is in a remote environment. We also (2) investigated how employees experience workplace ostracism in a remote environment. Lastly, (3) we were particularly interested in the in-depth experiences of people with minority status(es). In order to do so, we collected quantitative data through Qualtrics, where participants answered questions regarding their telework status, work group identification, workplace ostracism, and demographics. We examined the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, in addition to examining the three moderating effects (minority status, intersectionality, and workgroup identification) to further understand the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism. For the second portion of the study, we collected qualitative data through semi-structures interviews, which were recorded and transcribed utilizing Zoom and analyzed utilizing NVivo (2018). The quantitative findings are described below, followed by the qualitative results.

Quantitative Findings

Table 4.1: Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among study variables

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Tenure	5.353	5.918	(.085)					
2. Telework	22.000	13.990	(.063)	(.056)				
3. Minority Status	.853	.356	(.111)	.028	.025			
4. Minority Social identities	1.882	1.292	(.195)*	.133	.608**	.046		

5. Workgroup Identification	4.01	.780	.017	(.077) (.080) (.154) (.080)		
6. Workplace Ostracism	2.219	.714	(.041)	(.103) (.112) (.159) .014 (.128)		

Note. Reliability estimates are on the diagonal. N = 102 ** Correlation was significant at

the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation was significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One. Hypothesis 1 stated that telework (remote work) will be

positively related to workplace ostracism, such that a greater percentage of time spent

teleworking will relate to more experiences of workplace ostracism. We conducted a

simple linear regression to examine telework as a predictor of workplace ostracism. The

model overall was statistically insignificant ($R^2 = .001$; $F(1,100) = 1.107$, $p > .05$) and

indicated that telework was negatively related to workplace ostracism ($\beta = -.103$, $p >$

.05), explaining a very minimal proportion of variance. The results did not support our

initial and focal hypothesis of a significant, positive relationship between telework and

workplace ostracism. As shown in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Linear Regression for Telework predicting Workplace Ostracism

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	β	*SE*	β	*t*	*p*
(Constant)	2.334	.132		17.660	<.001
Telework	(.005)	.005	(.103)	(1.032)	.305

Hypothesis Two. Hypothesis 2 examined the moderating effect of minority status

as it pertains to the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, where we

expected the relationship to be stronger for individuals who identify as minorities within

their workgroup compared to majority group members. To examine whether minority

status moderated the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism we used

Hayes' (2018) PROCESS Macro (v.4.3) within IBM SPSS 28 while controlling for

gender and age. The model containing telework, minority status, and the interaction

explained an insignificant portion of the variance in workplace ostracism (R^2 = .0731;

$F(5,96)$ = 1,5132, p > .05). Telework was negatively related to workplace ostracism (β =

-.0041, p > .05) and this model explained a minimal proportion of the variance above the

model with only the main effects (ΔR^2 = .0020; $\Delta F(1, 96)$ = 0.2057, p = .6512).

Therefore, minority status does not moderate the relationship between telework and

workplace ostracism. As shown in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Linear Regression for Telework predicting Workplace Ostracism with Minority Status Moderation

	Unstandardized Coefficients			
Model	β	*SE*	*t*	*p*
(Constant)	1.759	.223	7.886	<.001
Telework	(.004)	.005	(.813)	.419
Minority Status	(.320)	.203	(1.574)	.119

      Hypothesis Three. Hypothesis 3 states that intersectionality will moderate the

relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, such that employees identifying

with intersectional identities, or multiple minority statuses, will experience greater

workplace ostracism than people with a single, or no minority status. . To examine

whether multiple minority statuses/intersectionality moderated the relationship between

telework and workplace ostracism we used Hayes' (2018) PROCESS Macro (v.4.3)

within IBM SPSS 28 while controlling for age and gender. The model containing

telework, total number of minority statuses, and the interaction explained an insignificant

portion of the variance in workplace ostracism (R^2 = .0859; $F(5,96)$ = 1.8033, p > .05).

Telework was negatively related to workplace ostracism (β = -.0031, p > .05) and this

model explained a minimal proportion of the variance above the model with only the

main effects (ΔR^2 = 0.045; $\Delta F(1, 96)$ = .4679, p = .4956). Therefore, minority social

identities does not moderate the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism.

As shown in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Linear Regression for Telework predicting Workplace Ostracism with

Multiple Minority Statuses Moderation

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			
	β	SE	t	p
(Constant)	1.772	.220	8.044	<.001
Telework	(.003)	.005	(.606)	.546
Multiple Minority Status	(.110)	.056	(1.972)	.052

Hypothesis Four. Lastly, for hypothesis 4, we hypothesized that workgroup

identification would moderate the relationship between telework and workplace

ostracism, such that the relationship will be weaker when workgroup identification is

higher compared to lower. To examine whether workgroup identity moderated the

relationship between telework and workplace ostracism we used Hayes' (2018)

PROCESS Macro (v.4.3) within IBM SPSS 28 while controlling for age and gender. The

model containing telework, workgroup identification and the interaction explained an

insignificant portion of the variance in workplace ostracism (R^2 = .2164; $F(5,96)$ =

0.9433, p > .05). Telework was negatively related to workplace ostracism (β = -.0046, p

>.05) and this model explained an insignificant proportion of the variance above the

model with only the main effects (ΔR^2 = .0004; $\Delta F(1, 96)$ = 0.0389, p = .8440).

Therefore, workgroup identification does not moderate the relationship between telework

and workplace ostracism. As shown in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5: Linear Regression for Telework predicting Workplace Ostracism with

Workgroup Identification Moderation

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	p
	β	*SE*		
(Constant)	1.833	.222	8.270	<.001
Telework	(.005)	.005	(.897)	.372
Workgroup Identification	.008	.096	.088	.930

Question Two

      The total number of participants (n = 102) averaged 2.21 on a scale of 1 *(never)* to

7 *(always)* (*SD* = .71). As a collective, over the sample size utilized, ostracism was rarely

perceived. The Cronbach's Alpha was .886, please see Table 4.6 for more information on the mean, standard deviation, reliability, and correlation. According to Meyers et al. (2017), typically +/- 1.00 is regarded as a high level of skewness or kurtosis. All items were skewed to the right, while items #3 and #8 through #11 are considered to have high levels of skewness. As it relates to Kurtosis, all items were within normal range with the exception of items #3 and #8 through #11. The most common acts of ostracism perceived were item #1 (Others failed to communicate with you directly when it was appropriate to do so) and item #2 (Others failed to copy (CC) you on emails when you should have been included. While the least common acts were item #3 (When people reply to a chain of emails, your reply gets deleted) and item #4 (Others did not reply to your direct comments to them in virtual meetings).

Table 4.6 Correlations Among Workplace Ostracism in the Remote Environment Scale Items

Item	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	3.06	1.209	.558											
2	2.87	1.087	.631**	.501										
3	1.69	.856	.334**	.318**	.506									
4	1.96	.954	.363**	.234*	.373**	.619								
5	2.28	1.084	.470**	.485**	.428**	.624**	.617							
6	2.04	.984	.389**	.264**	.461**	.550**	.537**	.566						
7	2.21	1.047	.421**	.406**	.415**	.415**	.515**	.425**	.583					
8	1.96	1.033	.121	.225*	.154	.390**	.284**	.177	.273**	.524				
9	2.13	1.240	.081	.130	.215*	.272**	.245*	.174	.254**	.722**	.451			
10	2.17	1.195	.466**	.306**	.245*	.492**	.330**	.390**	.376**	.495**	.427**	.684		
11	2.04	1.043	.430**	.363**	.402**	.380**	.270**	.481**	.392**	.479**	.402**	.718**	.707	
12	2.23	1.071	.479**	.365**	.467**	.494**	.422**	.414**	.453**	.500**	.485**	.744**	.808**	.783

Note. Reliability estimates are on the diagonal. N = 102 ** Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation was significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Qualitative Findings

Theme 1: Exclusion in the Hybrid Environment

The first theme we identified was Exclusion in the Hybrid Environment, which includes acts of exclusion displayed by remote-based and in-office based employees in a hybrid environment. While telecommuting, acts of exclusion, both intentional and unintentional, were displayed by employees in varying work environments. Within our interviews with participants, this theme occurred throughout, such that in-office employees exhibited ostracizing behaviors towards remote employees, in-office employees exhibited ostracizing behaviors toward other in-office employees through remote-based events, remote-based employees exhibited ostracizing behaviors towards in-office and remote-based employees.

Group-based Exclusion. Group-based exclusion captures the lack of desire to communicate verbally or acknowledge an employee by their respective workgroup or peers. Group-based exclusion, was commonly done in an intentional manner, but there were several instances, where it was believed that the group-based exclusion was unintentional by participants. In some cases, the perceived unintentional ostracism that occur was thought to be based on habitual communication with certain individuals; Such habitual communication seemed frequent when individuals, other than the participant, were known for completing certain tasking or fulfilling certain responsibilities, in other cases it was simply perceived as an oversight by peers or their entire workgroup.

For Anne, an African American woman in her 50s, her experiences amongst and encounters with her team have continued to be unpleasant. After nearly four years as a member within her workgroup, Anne, has experienced no change in ostracizing behavior from her peers. She shared of her experiences prior to COVID-19, stating

> "For example, when I would walk in, you know, in the morning and say, "Good
> morning!" or anything…I mean literally…No one would turn around and speak to
> me….but then I noticed…oh, when the next person or people come in after me…
> you know it's like cheers… they walk in, "Oh, hey! How's it going? And you?"
> you know…And I kind of caught on….[recalling to myself] Okay. Well, they just
> don't speak and respond to me. So, you know, it… it got to be very odd and very
> weird".

Such ostracizing behavior, which existed prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic continues today for Anne. Anne, now working as a fully remote employee on the same team, she shared "It hasn't [affected my ability to work with my workgroup] because there is literally no communication with anyone in my workgroup other than the one Technical Lead".

Kim, an African American woman in her 40s, recalled her experience while highlighting the ways in which Microsoft Outlook Calendars was one tool or method utilized to withhold information. She shared,

> "So there has been a number of behaviors from hiding Outlook calendars, where
> peoples' calendars aren't open. They purposefully hide their meetings to make
> sure you're not aware of those meetings and you can't even ask a question,
> because they've hidden the information on their calendars". She recalled

additional instances, of perceived secretive behaviors by peers, mentioning, "It

was like it was supposed to be a secret…I was just kind of floored because I'm

like…you know what… I'm supposed to be a part of these conversations, so that

we can improve and align…".

Nicole, an African American woman in her mid-20s, shared of a very similar

experience to Kim, as it relates to noticing Microsoft Outlook Calendars, but also Skype

statuses of her peers. While sharing of how she's perceived various acts of exclusion by

her group, she stated,

"I guess, for the majority of the people on the team, we all are part of one project,

but then there's maybe 2 or 3 people who aren't on that project, so they don't

always have to be at those meetings. But then, whenever I notice that majority of

those team members are in that meeting and then the other folks, you know,

obviously they're not in a meeting… but I'm still not in that meeting, then it

makes me wonder… "Okay, you know, Why do I keep getting left off? You

know, is this something that I should know about? You know is this is something

that's going to help me in the long run?"".

Nicole, who has only been on her engineering team for nearly a year, further shared that

she still feels like she's new to the team. The lack of team or peer-to-peer engagement on

the team has evidently hindered her ability to (1) connect with her peers, (2) learn her job

and associating tasking, and (3) get further acclimated with her organization and

workgroup. Nicole further shared,

"I guess…as far as me adjusting to being on this team, it definitely has hindered

that feeling of, "okay, I'm a part of the team… Now, I have a general sense of

what I'm doing, and, you know, everything is inclusive". And so, for example,

I've been on this team for almost a year now, but I still feel like I'm new, even

though I'm not. So, that's kind of how it feels, like, for me…"

Individual-based Exclusion. Individual-based exclusion captures the lack of

desire to communicate verbally or acknowledge an employee by a member of their

respective workgroup or a single individual within their organization. Individual-based

exclusion, appeared in more than 50% of the interviews, whether done intentionally or

unintentionally, and in some cases was also observed by not only the targeted employee,

but by other peers, workgroup members, or direct leadership.

Jill, a Caucasian woman in her 20s, shared it's been "anything and everything", of

which she's been left out of, but she continually shared of the assumption she makes

when it happens, which is to assume good intent and individuals aren't acting

maliciously. She shared of the casual conversations in which she's usually informed of

exclusion by others, mentioning,

> "I'm usually informed that I was excluded. A team member, or even the person
>
> who did it… It's like, "Hey I went to this meeting. You should have been there
>
> with me", or "Hey, I sent this out and forgot to include you".

Additionally, Brenda, an African American woman in her 20s, who has been with

her current workgroup for nearly seven years, shared of her similar experience. Although

unintentional, the continuous secondhand communication can cause frustration for her at

times. Although a Hybrid-based employee, Brenda spends majority of her days in-office,

where her desk is collocated with her respective team members. Reminiscing during our

interview, she shared,

"I feel like there have been meetings that have been held and then after the fact I get an email saying, "Hey, do this, this, and that, based off of the meeting". [She continued reflecting]… why wasn't I invited to the meeting when you turn around and give me all the actions and it's not like I was like out of the office or something, that's understandable, but it's like… I was sitting right next to you".

With the increased in hybrid work, Brenda's team continues to leverage hybrid/remote-based meetings. Unfortunately, the use WebEx in some cases, limits the need for on-site conference rooms, meaning, exclusion from meetings in support of hybrid or remote employees, has now made it "easier" to exclude individuals regardless of remote or on-site attendance.

Lastly, Nicole, a Caucasian woman in her 40s working in Program Management, shared of her experience. She expressed her appreciation and desire for in person work, as she appreciates the interactions that being on-site affords her. However, she has noticed several occasions, where she perceives she's excluded in both the remote and in-office environment. She's confident that location would not change the experience she continues to have with one of her co-workers. She shared,

"I mean there have just been several instances where I've not been included…in information sharing that I need to have been. Um, part of that is due to, like, my job being a new position. So, people kind of being unaware of, like, where I fall and then there's also still some gray areas of who's managing what...So, there's a manager, who… I think… I think… will like typically, try and…I'm trying to think of a nice way to put it. I don't know, he will try to make the work seem like it's his work, I guess, is the best way to say it".

Nicole has continued to escalate her concerns regarding the exclusion, but even after

sharing her concerns directly with her manager, whom supported her in efforts address it;

it has not led to any improved interactions nor increased engagement or inclusivity for

Nicole regarding her statement of work.

Limited Learning Experiences. Limited Learning Experiences (LLE) highlights

an employee's ability (inability) to learn or perform their statement of work based on a

lack of interactions with a peer or their workgroup. Some of the learning opportunities

shared by participants were scheduled formal trainings, while the majority were identified

as On-The-Job (OTJ) training. Another form of LLE was through information

withholding, which was prevalent amongst newer members within their organizations.

Regardless of time on the job, many individuals who spoke of their LLE, insinuated

partial causations of the LLE was the constant work pressures from targeted or expected

schedule and cost accruals, in addition to simply wanting to complete a particular task or

project ahead of schedule. Though several acts of the LLE were deemed unintentional by

nature, there were mentions of perceived ostracism done in an intentional manner to limit

learning experiences.

Sun, an Asian man in his 50s, also shared of his experience as a hybrid-based

employee, who is still fairly new to his organization and workgroup, shared

 "I think the preference is to have somebody who either knows the system, the

hardware, and all the processes that go with it… or there's somebody, you

know…I guess somebody who's been here longer probably [who] would have had

an easier time". He classified it as a trade-off throughout his organization,

although, the sentiment was shared by other participants. Sun shared, "It's a trade-

off between getting things done quicker rather than trying to… I guess…increase the number of people with knowledge or more distributed skills".

Renee, an African American woman in her 20s, who has been a member of her current team for nearly two years, joined a workgroup where many individuals have been placed for more than ten years. She shared,

> "I have a coworker, he's very knowledge –knows how to do absolutely everything. So, when new people are brought onto the team, instead of maybe taking the time to share that task or create a learning environment with someone who's new on the team, who maybe doesn't have that knowledge… He would just do it himself instead".

Nicole within engineering, as previously mentioned, is still fairly new on her team (< 1 year), similar to Renee, she's also reflected on the potential learning opportunities she has not been afforded as of yet, mentioning,

> "So, it's kind of interesting just how our organization works. And so, we work with other engineers. And so, I guess kind of like… the output of what they do…will result in more work for us. And so, whenever they're not really doing stuff, we kind of don't really have a lot to do. And so, I do notice that, you know, I'm not really given a task a lot or all the time to work through the day. And so, usually I just end up, you know, doing some training on my own, or reading some materials on my own. Just so I can, you know, continue to learn in this role, but there have been quite a few tasks I feel like I could have been tasked with, but just wasn't given the opportunity to do. So, I'm not really sure why it ended up like that… but yeah.

I know a part of it is deadlines…and so, I was thinking that it could be possibly

due to the fact that ,you know, we're trying to meet this deadline. So, they want to

give it to someone who's done it before, just so we can get it completed, and you

know, sent on to the next person, but then the other part is like, "Oh, but it would

be a great learning opportunity if I were given that task and I can work it so that

whenever, you know, that person is gone later, then I'll know how to do it".

Betty, a member of her organization for nearly five months, shared of her

experiences while attempting to come up to speed with her current team. In efforts to

ensure she was able to get up to speed within her new group, she connected with multiple

individuals to ensure from a logistical perspective, she had access to the various meetings

(virtual or in-person) and other engagements necessary to learn her new job and execute

well based on her statement of work. She shared,

"I've actually asked the question just regarding, you know, meetings. So, just

being new trying to get more acclimated, I've asked the question, just, you know,

regarding meetings that may be helpful to get me up to speed and better get

acclimated to the work itself on the program. Only to be told, you know, that I'll

get back to you…and then the next day I'm in a meeting and it comes up that

maybe several folks met and discussed a hot topic and I was not included in that

meeting. Although, prior to that, the individual that actually scheduled the

meeting or facilitated the meeting, I had a conversation with them just regarding

the nature of the work itself and requested to be notified of any meetings or of our

activities that align to the type of work that I support". Thus, limiting Betty's

learning experience by limiting the number of forums she had access to in order to

successfully familiarize herself with her teams' work.

Anne also shared of her experience as a newer engineer to her organization, while

required to write up a work specification for a particular customer, she shared of her

experience stating,

"I asked for a template, for guidelines, and I was told, you know, "Nope,

just…you know…just do it. Just do it…just do it… just do it…" and I, you know,

I was very confused – didn't know where to go, had no idea what the direction

was … spend an exorbitant amount of time trying to read and look at other things,

and just ended up, after what I think, was a very long time pulling something

together and I handed it off to the Technical Lead after I asked multiple times…

this company is so old…this can't be the first time you know that we need to

write up a document like that".

In Anne's case, she was adamant about receiving additional instruction by way of

utilizing an example of a previous document, but received the directive to continually

complete the tasks without direction from her TLE or guidance based on previous

documentation – of which the documentation did exist, but it was simply being withheld.

Work Setting Barriers. Lastly, within the exclusionary behavior, work-setting

barriers proven to aid workplace ostracism extensively. Work Setting Barriers, describes

the barriers individuals encountered based on their work location relative to another

individual or their particular workgroup. In some cases, this theme was highlighted by

remote employees while attempting to interact with in-office employees; other times, it

was encountered by in-office employees seeking to interact or engage with remote-based

employees. To our surprise, remote-based employees attempting to connect with other

remote-based peers also encountered barriers or expressed a lack of interest to

communicate with others in a subconscious manner.

In general, Jake, a remote-based employee, shared of his experience since

transitioning to a fully remote position in July of 2022, sharing that he was comfortable in

both work settings, remote and in-office, but preferred being in-office. Although, the

relationships amongst Jake and his peers and the workgroup overall is great, he

specifically called attention to the lack of interaction, "you don't get the small talk, you

don't get to form, you know, relationships…deeper than just work".

Cameron, an employee who has experienced 100% on-site work and now operates

in a hybrid position, shared of preferences around in-office work based on work setting

barriers he's encountered. When reflecting on whether hybrid work has supported or

hindered his working relationships, he stated,

"I think because I had to be more intentional. It's actually… at least initially, it

enabled my working relationships because we had to reach out, we had to figure out how

to communicate differently. And I think just that nonrecurring act of "figure out how to

redefine our working relationships" probably drove a little bit of improvement. I would

say, as time has gone on, however, I think if you're not a person who is able to sustain

things well… it can inhibit some of the working relationships. And while I don't think it's

been a big issue for me, I do see some of the relationships getting a little bit…I would say

less effective than when we were seeing people in the office on a daily basis. So again,

probably on me to put in the work there, but it started off really strong and acted as an

enabler and I think it's…over time… where I haven't put in the work, it's become an inhibitor."

Highlighting his preference for in-office engagement, as he believes his communication is most effective when done F2F, but also, the lack of interaction and the ways in which it can deteriorate relationships with peers or others through the virtual barriers. Blessing, an African woman in her 40s working within engineering, shared similar preferences based on desired communication methods and the increased effectivity of having F2F or in-person discussions. She reflected on her experience as an employee who previously worked 100% remote, stating, "I have to compare to the fact that we were just being a 100% at home. I think that hindered my relationship with my peers. So, now that I'm working at least twice a week in the office. It actually supported… yes, supported the relationship with my peers and just more effective communication".

Sophie experienced communication barriers while working remotely and while in-office. For her organization, she was requested to return to the office in Third Quarter of 2022, guidance from her leadership was left open and provided flexibility for the individual members to decide which days they deemed most appropriate for working onsite for three days each week, as requested. However, she shared,

> "before [the directive] it was like, whenever, you know, like…if you want to come, come, if you don't want to come, just stay at home. So, even if I went in the office, trying to work with people, oftentimes people were not even in the office. So, it was really hard to get a hold of people face-to-face. So, I had to like, do like hybrid, you know, like just find ways to still connect with them".

Brenda also shared of the communication barriers and varying levels of interaction amongst her team, while considering the dynamics of her workgroup,

"I would say we all generally get along you know some people get along better than others, and others you kind of just never see…So, you don't really have a relationship with them because they're in a different building. There's you know, the ones that sit in my immediate area we all get along pretty well, but the ones I basically can't see because of the wall…I don't really talk to".

Susan, a Caucasian woman in her 30s within engineering working in a hybrid manner, felt as though individuals that worked onsite weren't inclusive of individuals working remotely. She recalled an instance, where she received delayed notice of an action that required her immediate attention, sharing the following,

"I was notified at a later date and that there was an action that was being asked of the management team and it was a pretty quick deadline, and I asked why we weren't notified about it earlier… to which I was given the response that, "there was an in-person conversation, that you had not been informed about".

Sun, a hybrid-based employee, who works remotely 2-3 days a week, shared of the work setting barriers he's encountered within his current team, stating:

"Sometimes people do tend to scribble on whiteboards when you're not there and it's hard to kind of join that conversation…". Sun understood the implications as a result of members working together in different settings and reasoned with his peers. Further sharing, "I think it's more convenient and it's a way… a natural thing to do. If you have a couple of people in the room and, you know, it's easier to demonstrate [something]. It's very hard to do…to include people on the Webex

in that kind of discussion. And, uh yeah, I don't think it's deliberately done. It's

just kind of more easy".

Theme 2: Lack of Leadership Support

Our second theme centers around a lack of leadership support, referring to the

lack of leadership oversight or support aided to individuals or ostracized workgroup

through lack of action, treating the ostracism as a casual matter, or simply ignoring the

concerns escalated. Majority of instances shared by participants were directly

communicated with their immediate leadership/supervisor and very few actions were

taken to address the concerns or behaviors. There was one instance where, direct

leadership supported an employee regarding an activity they wished to be involve in,

where a senior leader within the organization did not – meaning the employee could not

participate in the engagement or meeting.

Jill shared of her experience with senior leadership, where she received the

support and backing of her leadership, but was still excluded from the engagement,

stating the following:

> "I've even had a situation where it would have been more efficient and more
>
> effective for me to be there, but I didn't have the right title. So, I voiced it, my
>
> manager agreed, my director agreed, but it wasn't the style of the VP. So, at that
>
> point…you do what you can… to prepare who you can, and you kind of just go
>
> with it. It's unfortunate, but it's not worth the battle sometimes, so as long as I
>
> voice that concern and my manager is like, "Yup valid", I feel fine."

In Kim's case, she lacked leadership support, mentioning the experience she had

while attempting to gain clarity on her particular statement of work, sharing,

> "You get no expectations or details from your leadership. Okay. So that puts you
>
> at a disadvantage… because you don't know what is good or bad, or what is
>
> exceeds, or what is, you know going to be exceeds, as appropriate for your
>
> tasking or how you going to be rated".

In this case, the lack of clarity on Kim's statement of work and expectations regarding

performance, in addition to encounters of intentional ostracism, which prevented her

from fully understanding what was expected of her as a member on her team, she then

had to navigate her position with little input or guidance from leadership, exacerbating

the experience of professional isolation or being "left in the dark" as shared by Kim.

Though, several experienced a lack of leadership support, there were instances

where participants, who experienced workplace ostracism themselves, were cognizant

and intentional about ensuring others were included in certain tasking, meetings, or other

team engagements. In regards to the hybrid-based work, Susan stressed wanting to see

how others were doing. She shared,

> "I'm more comfortable working in the office is face-to-face interaction during
>
> one-on-one meetings, because we don't use cameras frequently, and as a manager
>
> I find it helpful to have one-on-one conversations, especially with employees who
>
> are newer to the organization". Jill, as an employee, who is comfortable speaking
>
> up shared, "I know a lot of people do not feel comfortable, if they are excluded.
>
> They feel as though it was intentional and they just stay out of it. I always,
>
> regardless of if I'm acting as the manager or just as a teammate, I always try to
>
> tell them, you know…Come to me and let me help".

Theme 3: Responses to Perceived Exclusion.

Responses to Perceived Exclusion describes the responses of targeted employees who perceived intentional or unintentional acts of workplace ostracism. The participant's shared of emotion-driven responses, action-based responses, and others spoke to their preference of solitude based on perceived ostracism. As literature has highlighted, some employees may experience reduced well-being, weakened health, emotional exhaustion, and experience negative psychological and psychosocial consequences as a result of workplace ostracism (Ng et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2016).

Emotion-driven Responses. Within our interviews with participants, emotion-driven responses occurred when the employee responded through expressed or repressed emotion. In such experiences, participants expressed anxiety, confusion, disappointment, frustration, hope, and sometimes painful hurt as they processed and made sense of the perceived experiences.

Susan shared regarding her experience, "I was frustrated and I express my frustration that I would have appreciated to be included, you know, even though I was not in the office that day". Kim, described her experience as she reflected on the remote work being more comfortable, stating,

> "the exclusion is not as pervasive. You don't feel it as much when you're outside of the office. If I'm in the office, I'm kind of stuck in my cube and stuff is going on around me, but I don't know what's going on and it kind of builds a certain level of anxiety to be sitting there, and all this kind of stuff is going on around you and you don't quite know if you're supposed to be involved or not and so… it can feel very isolating".

While, Anne described the emotion she felt early on in the workday, stating,

"I don't have to physically be in that environment, to be very honest with you,

when COVID first hit and we had team meetings at 7 o'clock [am] twice a week. I

mean there were times where I would be sick in my stomach, even just to log on

to the meeting".

Action-based Responses. Another response to the perceived acts of exclusion,

was action-driven responses, which occurred when the employee responded by taking a

specific action after encountering acts of ostracism. This was often done through the

employee engaging in self-reflection, pondering on events, requesting to be included by

certain individuals or their workgroup, defense-mechanism, or deflecting as a course of

action.

Cameron, shared of his experience while working in a group of three on an

initiative. While the discussion regarding the initiative was worked through WebEx,

allowing for remote and in-office attendees, Cameron found himself in a situation, where

his other two team members continued to progress the initiative without extending a

virtual invitation to him. Upon notice of being excluded, by way of receiving an update

on the progress made, Cameron took the action to re-engage, he shared of his experience,

stating:

"So, I asked him if we could just revisit how they got to that proposal and they

walk me through it and I think it wasn't, you know, I still work with these people

today and there's no animosity or anything, but sometimes things are just

subconscious. And so, yeah, my reaction to it was just, "Hey, help me understand

a little bit better…kind of… how do I…I was… I was looking for way to pull

myself back into the decision-making process that seemingly already happening.

> Whether that it was value-added, I don't know, but that was my initial reaction to
>
> it."

Cameron, who has worked with the individuals for years, shared that he felt it was

unintentional. He shared that these instances of exclusion are so common, while

individuals work virtually because it's done subconsciously. He further shared his belief

that "out of sight, out of mind" is an important concept when discussing remote workers.

As exclusion is not infrequent based on his perception, yet often times, he believes it is

subconsciously done.

> For Betty, she took the action by continuously re-iterating her desire to be

included in meetings (remote via WebEx and in-person). She mentioned,

> "It was just a kind of self-awareness for me, assessment of the situation, and just
>
> speaking through the fact that, you know, I did request to be part of these
>
> engagements and you know… I wasn't part of the engagement and just thinking
>
> through, you know, did I say something?"

Betty tried to make sense of the experiences and decided to engage in self-reflection to

see if there was any reason that she can think of that caused such behaviors from her

peer(s).

> Renee also shared of self-reflection and the ways in which that allowed her to

better understanding the work dynamics with one particular peer, sharing,

> "So, it was definitely an adjustment in terms of… realizing that sometimes you
>
> don't need to be offended by how someone is…like it has nothing to do with
>
> you ,if that makes sense… Like I kind of had to learn that with a co-worker,
>
> where I was kind of taking offense to how he was acting towards me and after a

while I was like it has nothing to do with me, actually. It's just him and like his

personality in how he comes off".

Sophie developed a strategy to deal with such matters, sharing that she doesn't

take offense, because everyone is busy and often times it's easy to miss thing [including

individuals in meetings], understanding it not to be intentional. As a frequent experience

when working across workgroups or within her workgroup, she shared her tactics for

getting up to speed, mentioning the following:

> "So, first getting informed, you know, What is this? What was the meeting about?
>
> What was the purpose of it? What was addressed or what is the meeting going to
>
> be about if it's future meeting? If it fits within the scope of my work after getting
>
> more information on it, then I ask if I may be part of it…and so, then I just you
>
> know, ask whoever put the meeting together to send it to me or can I get a copy of
>
> it or what not… and then just try to be there".

Kim, shared of her experience with virtual meetings conducted via WebEx, while

working remote, stating,

> "If I get on a meeting and I say hello to people, there's silence… and I just brush
>
> by it. It's happened a couple of times. So, you know you. If you take on too much
>
> of that interaction or that thought process… you bring stress and tension on
>
> yourself for the importance or thought of importance of other individuals… that
>
> mean nothing".

 Kim, who has developed a defense mechanism to the experiences she's shared while

highlighting the importance of being mindful of her own health and overall well-being.

Preferred Solitary. Workplace Ostracism has been known as a potential antecedent of isolation (Bedi, 2021). Golden (2008) highlighted professional isolation as one's unmet needs for social and emotional interactions, lacking a sense of community and influential interactions. Through this particular study, we noticed, in some cases participants preferred solitude over potential exposure or experiences of being ostracized or simply as their personal preference solitude. Sophie shared,

> "I feel more comfortable at home because it's just quietness and loneliness and I know nobody's going to walk to my desk and like, ask me questions or anything".

Renee agreed, shedding like on her preferences,

> "It's just a lot more flexible in like what I can do like I don't have to prep a lot for the next day to get ready to go into the office. I don't have to worry about what I'm wearing or kind of like what I look like. So, it's more relaxed and more in my element".

Redbird, an African American woman in her 20s within the engineering organization, casually shared of contentment with the hybrid experience – indicating the work setting barrier provided her with a positive experience. She shared of her comfortability with the remote environment,

> "I'm more productive away from the office. When I'm in the office, there's a lot of side conversations and politics, but when I'm working remotely, I can focus on the job at hand and finish within the timeframe that I set for myself".

Chapter 5: Discussion

The current study extends workplace ostracism literature by providing insight into workplace ostracism in a remote environment. The primary focus of this study was to evaluate the relationship between telework (remote work) and workplace ostracism in a remote environment. In our literature review, we highlight telework and the significant research conducted on the negative impact of workplace ostracism on the employee(s) and the organization overall. This study further contributes to this phenomenon, insights can be found detailed below.

Workplace Ostracism

Hypothesis One: Quantitative Findings

The first question that we answer is how prevalent is workplace ostracism in the remote environment. Our goal was to measure workplace ostracism based on one's current work environment through the average number of hours worked remotely each week in relation to perceived exclusionary acts away from the central office (remotely). More specifically, we hypothesized that Telework (remote work) would be positively related to workplace ostracism, such that a greater percentage of time spent teleworking will relate to more experiences of workplace ostracism. Through our study, we found telework to be positive, yet insignificantly related to workplace ostracism.

Hypothesis Two: Quantitative Findings

For our second hypothesis, we hypothesized that minority status will moderate the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, where the relationship will be stronger for individuals who identify as minorities within their workgroup compared to majority group members. In conducting our analysis, we analyzed the data based on

individuals of no minority status in comparison to individuals with one or more minority statuses or social identities. This model proved that minority status negatively moderated the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, but was insignificant.

Hypothesis Three: Quantitative Findings

Building upon minority status, our third hypothesis stated that intersectionality would moderate the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, such that employees identifying with intersectional identities, or multiple minority statuses, will experience greater workplace ostracism than people with a single or no minority status. To conduct our analysis, we ran our regression utilizing the total number of minority identities participants identified with. In doing so, our analysis did not support this hypothesis. Though intersectional identities or multiple minority social identities negatively moderated the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, it was insignificant, in addition to explaining less of the variance than the model of hypothesis two (minority status).

Hypothesis Four: Quantitative Findings

Lastly, our fourth hypothesis, stated that workgroup identification would moderate the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism, such that the relationship will be weaker when workgroup identification is higher compared to lower. Our analysis did not support this hypothesis as workgroup identification was positive, yet insignificant as it related to moderating the relationship between telework and workplace ostracism.

Questions Two and Three: Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Through our quantitative and qualitative study, we investigated what forms of ostracism are perceived in the remote workplace. Through our quantitative study, we found that the most common act of ostracism perceived were items #1 (Others failed to communicate with you directly when it was appropriate to do so) and #2 (Others failed to copy (CC) you on emails when you should have been included. While the least common acts were item #3 (When people reply to a chain of emails, your reply gets deleted) and item #4 (Others did not reply to your direct comments to them in virtual meetings). Highlighting that the preferred acts of ostracism carried out in the remote environment are often done in a more discreet manner.

Lastly, we were interested in the in-depth experiences of people with minority status(es). In doing so, we learned that acts of ostracism shared by participants varied between group exclusion, individual exclusion, and certain acts were further classified as limited learning opportunities. Of the perceived acts, some members felt it was intentional and targeted, while others believed it to be unintentional and did their best to believe the ostracizing individual or individual(s) had good intentions.

Perceived Ostracism

Individual- or Group-based Exclusion. For individuals working away from their central work location, ostracism was experienced through a lack of invitations to WebEx (virtual) or in-person meetings applicable to their statement of work. Ostracism was also demonstrated while individuals present in the room asked individuals on-site to stay behind for further discussion once the line was disconnected, therefore excluding remote employees. It also took form via various tools from Instant Message, Mattermost, and Microsoft Outlook where participants were being left off emails or communications

regarding their work or their team's efforts. Commentary was also mentioned sharing that individuals on-site sometimes acted as if remote participants weren't on the call/in the meetings. It also took place through limiting distribution listings or blocking calendars (marking engagements private) to intentionally or unintentionally exclude individuals from participating in engagements they believe they should've been included in.

Limited Learning Opportunities. Other times there were mentions of limiting of learning opportunities (intentionally and unintentionally), this was a recurrent theme where several participants felt as if others excluded them because it was more convenient for more experienced individuals to complete certain tasking themselves than to train new hires or other members on the team. These comments were often brought up with commentary regarding schedule and cost pressures, preference of saving time by working in solitude (and therefore limiting the learning experiences of others), or based on individuals simply not wanting to interact with the new member or other members with limited experience on the team.

Work Setting Barriers. Several hybrid-based employees made mentions of work-setting barriers. While being in-office there were times they were excluded from virtual meetings, even though other team members around them were present on the calls. While others shared that being on-site served as a limitation to the number people they can interact with and also the discomfort of having candid conversations out of fear of others overhearing, such that they delayed certain discussions until they were remote. Others found it difficult to connect while on-site with individuals and in some cases, it became very time consuming as hybrid (or on-site) employees were unaware of others' locations; which led to searching for individuals on campus, whom may have been at home.

Exclusion based on hybrid-based meetings showed many facets, while working remotely some shared that the lack of camera-use made it difficult to follow discussions or engagement with in-office employees due to the use of whiteboards, difficulty hearing, or simply being ignored while conversation took place in the conference room (at the central office).

Lack of Leadership Support

30% of participants made references to leadership throughout their interviews. While discussing leadership several members perceived that the responses or engagement they received was potentially based on their hierarchical status relative to the individual or group in which they attempted to interact. Sharing the perception that engagement levels seemed to be higher amongst individuals or groups when the individual they were interacting with was higher in hierarchical status.

Several participants felt as if their leadership did not adequately provide support to them when they verbalized their concerns regarding the ostracism or mistreatment they experienced by peers. The responses they received from their leadership varied from confirming they'd resolve the conflict through conversation with the offender, to ignoring the matter entirely, and in rare cases making light of the situation in a joking manner. Of each instance of ostracism that was escalated to management, regardless of management having a conversation with the offender, the ostracizing behaviors did not change, and in some cases became more pronounced or aggressive. Lastly, when ostracizing behaviors were presented from leadership rankings towards an individual, the matter never received the attention the targeted employee believed it deserved and often went unaddressed.

Responses to Perceived Ostracism

Emotion-based Responses. Emotion-based (or driven) responses occurred when the employee responded through expressed or repressed emotion. Several participants recalled being surprised by the ostracism they initially encountered. However, majority of the participants expressed frustration or painful hurt based on the mistreatment they experienced with one or more of their peers. Participants were asked how they felt about each individual instance of perceived ostracism at the time of the act, expressing feelings of anxiety, disappointment, embarrassment, painful hurt, and hope. When participants were asked how they felt about the experience now, there was often a sense of hope for changed behavior, the desire to always assume positive intent, or they were simply emotionally detached (numb) from the situations, individuals, or group.

Action-based Responses. Action-based (driven) responses occurred when the employee responded by taking a specific action after encountering acts of ostracism. During this study, participants mostly responded in three ways, the first being by requesting to be included in the task, meeting, or activities going forward. There were rare instances when participants were continually excluded and as a result they decided to engage through self-assertion. Secondly, participants engaged in self-reflection in efforts to understand why they were targeted by an individual or group. Lastly, some participants decided to engage in deflection, so they could focus on something other than the ostracism they were experiencing; often, participants mentioned just carrying on their current task or activity to ignore the ostracizing behavior.

Telework

Telework

From the semi-structured interviews, 44% of participants were more comfortable working away from the office, 31% were comfortable in either setting (50/50), and 25% preferred the in-office environment. Through our semi-structured interviews, we were able to gather insight into the comfortability and preference of our participants' work location, of which insight is provided below.

Cost savings. The reasoning provided varied greatly, but were recurrent throughout the conversations. For individuals who preferred to work remotely one factor was the cost-efficiency of remote work, mentioning the cost-savings on fuel based on the reduced (to no) commuting time. Multiple women with younger children shared of the easier commute from home to daycare facilities, mentioning the longer commute time from the office or the ways in which they can no longer support being in the office as they previously did before their family expanded.

Timesaving. Timesaving was also mentioned by individuals who preferred the fully remote or hybrid work. Mentions of timesaving were related to reduced commute time and less preparation for in-office engagement. However, several hybrid employees shared that while working in hybrid fashion (on-site days), the office environment allows for better time management, meaning certain individuals find it easier to timebox their work shift – allowing for a complete disconnect from work earlier than working remotely. Furthermore, a recent new mom, shared of the flexibility of hybrid work (on-off time around work obligations and meetings), and the ways it allows for her to tend to her small child(ren) and be present for certain extracurricular activities, without the need to commute to/from the office to be present for school or home needs.

Preferred Solitude. A few participants mentioned the preference of remote work as an escape from in-office realities that many of the African American women (as well as other minorities) shared. Several individuals mentioned anxiety and heightened emotions were the foremost reasons for their preference of remote work. This experience was shared to some degree based on members being new to the team and a lack of familiarity with team members and others; others shared of the pervasiveness of exclusion they experienced on-site or the politics while in office, and their ability to better focus remotely as a result.

Productivity. In terms of focus and productivity, while some participants found that their ability to focus increased based on limited home distractions (television, access to food via their kitchen, or otherwise) while onsite. Others shared of their appreciation with less distractions remotely, less traffic of people, and less conversation happening around them supported their ability to truly zone into their work. Other contributing factors that participants shared that led to an increased focus in the remote environment was through listening to music, lack of focus/attention placed on their appearance or their hair, and increased comfortability knowing their work situation was shared across their team (uniformity as it relates to their team work location versus being an outlier based on location).

Communication. Communication preferences also influenced the preference for participants. Preferences for communication varied based on those who found value in more visibility with people, more informal (water cooler talk) and formal conversation, and greater insight into how individuals are feeling. Individuals felt it was more helpful to see others to better understand the individuals they work with or support. In other

words, it is sometimes easier to understand both non-work and work-related stressors or happenings based on non-verbal cues, which can often times only be observed while on-site. There were some participants who felt as if their communication improved while working remotely, as a result of the non-verbal cues being eliminated, some individuals felt at ease while communicating with others.

Practical Implications

Telework

Organizations must continue to prioritize the business needs and strategic goals in place; this includes assessing and re-assessing the workforce and its operations. As mentioned above, participants provided several reasons for their preferred work environment, organizations should consider soliciting the input of their organization when considering making adjustments to the work environment. In addition to providing resources for all workers regardless of their work environment to help support the transition process; as such a shift would require adjustments to day-to-day operations (how people go about completing their work) and methods of communication. Furthermore, individuals who are returning to the office or individuals who have adjusted to working F2F with fewer people, soft skill trainings or trainings on inclusivity may be essential to driving a positive and more inclusive work environment.

Communication was shown to be effective (and ineffective) in both work settings, as a result organizations supporting various types of work, should consider the "why" to make current work settings for employees more effective. This can be done by evaluating all communication methods within utilized within the organization, considering which tools support dispersed work, and developing an action plan as to how existing tools can

more effectively support remote workers and allow for increased engagement for in-office discussions. Productivity also varied by work location, organizations should consider revisiting the roles currently operating in a fully remote or hybrid environment to ensure that they have the access to the tools, resources, and trainings necessary to effectively support their job duties and responsibilities.

Workplace Ostracism

Our findings have several practical implications for organizations, managers, and individual contributors. Organizations should ensure current and future diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts are SMART, which stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Organizations must consider revisiting their existing strategic plans to attract and retain diverse talent. Revisiting such plans is essential in efforts to ensure the workplace is inclusive and that individuals who join their organizations are indeed joining their organizations, to contribute, grow, and eventually lead.

When managerial or non-managerial staff become witness or become aware of acts of ostracism, there should be processes or plans in place to (1) support the escalation of the matter, (2) prepare management for intervening, (3) a thorough investigation into the matter, (4) a corrective action plan in the event that ostracizing behaviors were confirmed, and (5) support for the targeted employee, who was ostracized or perceived they were ostracized.

For example, managers can provide more support to employees in a hybrid or fully remote position, through scheduled recurring connect meetings, where the manager can inquire on the work of the employee, but also solicit input regarding team dynamics,

help needed items, or concerns the employee may have. It's essential for leaders

functioning in a hybrid or remote environment to adopt an "open door policy" meaning,

employees do not feel obligated to wait or handle toxic situations in isolation.

Furthermore, if the work setting allows, managers should consider incorporating web

cams or video into the meetings, if the employee is comfortable doing so. This will allow

managers, as several participants mentioned, to see facial expressions, gain further insight

into how an employee may be feeling regarding their work, in addition to their work

environment.

Organizations and managerial staff should also better equip team members to

quickly identify when team members may perceive they're being excluded or are actually

excluded from team engagements. Employees should consider checking distribution

listings, taking attendance in meetings, and also questioning whether all relevant parties

were (1) invited and (2) are present in the meeting. Since ostracism can happen while

targeted employees are involved in meetings or chats or being placed on projects,

consider other methods to ensure they feel included. Team members can incorporate

"around the room" time into their meetings, where each member has the opportunity to

contribute. Organizations and managerial staff should also stress the importance of

inclusiveness through formal and informal trainings with teams; In addition to

highlighting the importance of knowledge transfer, career development, and the necessity

for and of positive working relationships amongst the team.

There were several instances where participants escalated behaviors and nothing

was done by their respective leaders (team lead, management, senior management, etc.).

In instances such as this, organizations must provide other means to get employees

support. Organizations should consider providing employees with the opportunity to

escalate and report unethical behaviors to human resources, ethics, or leadership at any

level deemed appropriate to ensure the behaviors are resolved in a timely manner. Such

escalation processes should allow for both anonymous and direct reporting; having

trained staff, who are willing to do the right thing is essential to improving the working

experience of any ostracized employee.

Minorities in the Workplace

According to our results, the relationship between race and workgroup

identification was found to be significant. Minorities have lower workgroup identification

than their white counterparts. In previous studies, intersectionality, such as being a

minority group for both gender and race served as predictors of ethnic mistreatment and

findings concluded that minorities are more susceptible to experience workplace

mistreatment than their white counterparts (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Cortina et al., 2013).

With this in mind, organizations should continue to find ways to incorporate team

building activities, but also ensure that minorities within the group are being afforded the

same learning opportunities, training, and being provided clear expectations regarding

their statement of work and performance. Any signs of mistreatment or unethical

behavior should not be tolerated by teammates, leadership, or other members within the

organization. Organizations must consider the existing resources made available for

minorities and ensure any member who has been targeted by peers or their workgroup is

provided equitable opportunities elsewhere within the organization. Additionally,

members who target employees regardless of minority status, should be reprimanded for

their behaviors and observed to ensure unethical behaviors aren't continued.

Research Implications

Our primary contribution is that this dissertation study advances knowledge about workplace ostracism in the work environment, more specifically the remote work environment. Existing literature sufficiently covers workplace ostracism in central work locations, where employees are expected to engage in mostly F2F manners. Additionally, most studies rely on the 10-item measure of workplace ostracism developed by Ferris et al. (2008), which does not account for teleworking situations. Through this study, we've provided anticipated acts of ostracism, where we've found the most common acts of ostracism perceived to consist of #1 Others failed to communicate with you directly when it was appropriate to do so) and #2 (Others failed to copy (CC) you on emails when you should have been included. However, ostracism was perceived through various technologies from email communication and outlook calendars, virtual meetings, and chats (direct chats with a single teammate and group chats).

Our second contribution is that we offer insight into how employees respond to perceived acts of ostracism in the remote work environment. Our results further solidify the negative consequences workplace ostracism has on the targeted employee. As participants expressed their reduced ability to respond to job demands and the redirection of attention to understand the reasoning behind the perceived ostracism (Feng et al., 2019). Furthermore, several employees mentioned being physically sick or the mental strain they experienced, which has also been highlighted in several studies, calling attention to reduced well-being, weakened health, emotional exhaustion, and the negative psychological and psychosocial consequences as a result of being ostracized by others (Ng et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2016).

Additionally, our findings suggest that some employees prefer solitude over potential exposure to or experiences of ostracism, in addition to working in solitude as a personal preference for supporting work efforts. A study conducted by Spilker (2021) found that individuals required to telework by mandate were likely to experience isolation because of relational inadequacy. Through our study, we have evidence which insinuates that workplace ostracism may be a contributing factor that encourages or leads to preferred remote work as their long-term work arrangement.

Our third contribution is the observed connection between workplace ostracism and the negative impact on workgroup and organizational goals. Nearly all interviewed participants shared at least two instances where they were excluded from supporting their assigned statement of work. Oftentimes carried out through a lack of invitations to meetings, exclusion from relevant communication, or due to not being provided with the resources, tools, trainings, or access to materials required to complete an assigned task successfully. In doing so, such acts limited their ability to perform or support workgroup or organizational goals. Jahanzeb et al. (2020) studied the relationship between workplace ostracism and the act of acquiescence silence, where employees may be hesitant to engage in discussion, comment or get involved. This was evident throughout our study and was mentioned frequently when employees shared of their responses to the perceived acts of ostracism. In some cases, this was directly linked to what the participants considered to be delayed positive change or impactful business contributions and missed opportunities for their workgroup or organization. Lastly, similar to Wu et al. (2019), limited desires to engage or speak up was prevalent amongst newer members to their workgroup/organization.

A fourth, yet very significant, contribution is the evidence we found that suggest minorities feel less connected to their workgroups, than their white counterparts. Our findings from our quantitative analysis suggest that minority women (1) feel the least connected to their workgroup, while (2) also working the most hours away from the central office space (remote). Providing empirical evidence in support of Xu et al. (2017), which suggest that individuals of low workgroup identification may engage in antisocial behaviors and withdrawal from the group. Within the analysis, we found that white women felt the most connected to their workgroups, while minority women felt the least connected. This finding expands upon the findings of social identity theory, where findings suggest that individuals who identify with one social identity (gender identity) while differing on another (in this case race or ethnicity) may have immensely different evaluative outcomes (Cho et al, 2013).

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The study was designed to focus on one large engineering firm in the Midwest. In doing so, this particular firm's culture, values, and internal policies and procedures may influence the acts of the ostracism participants experienced. As such, the acts of workplace ostracism experienced or witnessed may vary in frequency and severity within or across other companies and in different regions across the US.

Our study focuses on the experiences of individuals based on their perceived minority status as it relates to their workgroup and intersecting social identities. As previous studies have drawn attention to minority status, for both gender and race, serving as predictors of ethnic mistreatment. In addition to findings concluding that

minorities are more susceptible to experiencing workplace mistreatment than their white

counterparts (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Cortina et al., 2013). As such, individuals

identifying with no minority status were not considered for semi-structured interviews

and generalities should not be made regarding individuals identifying no minority status.

Secondly, individuals of varying minority statuses participated in semi-structured

interviews and findings were not tailored towards specific social identities, but

representative of individuals of intersecting identities overall.

Additionally, our Qualtrics survey was inclusive of all employees whom met our

studies requirements, however, when inquiring on telework, individuals who work mostly

in-office, were required to select "Hybrid" and provide additional insight into their

remote work situation. As such, many provided varying responses such as, occasionally,

on-site full-time, based on personal needs or emergencies, and so forth, which is difficult

to quantify. As such, their telework hours were captured as zero. However, these

participants were still able to provide insight into their remote environment experience

with communication, team engagement, and workgroup identification.

Future Research

This study provides the opportunity for expansion of the examination of

workplace ostracism in the remote environment. The validity of workplace ostracism in a

remote environment scale can be further analyzed through additional studies that expand

beyond the Midwest region, in addition to more firms. This study focused on one firm,

within one of the firm's major work hubs. Understanding the dynamics of different

regions and across varying firm types would further the insights into workplace ostracism

in a remote environment and how it's experienced.

In our discussion of Workplace Ostracism, we note how individuals on-site perceived ostracism through the use of virtual technology and being "out of touch" with peers. Can acts of workplace ostracism in the F2F environment, for full-time on-site employees expand beyond the existing WOS, based on the increased use of technology and the increase in remote opportunities? If explored, the behaviors identified could potentially impact the existing Ferris et al., 2008 scale.

Additionally, our study revealed that white employees had higher workgroup identification, while minorities felt less connected to their groups. Furthermore, minority women felt the least connected to their workgroup. Though not significant, minority women also performed the most work remotely. What additional factors contribute to increased teleworking hours for minority women? Understanding the reasonings behind the preferred remote work, will further enlighten organizations' and firms' to better support minorities in the workplace.

General Conclusion

Continued assessment of the remote environment is essential to better understand the prevalence of existing phenomenon and the ways in which they are carried out in fully remote and hybrid environments. The motivation for this research began with a desire to understand the experiences of ostracized employees as the continued shift to hybrid and remote work increases. We also wanted to provide a platform for diverse individuals of varying minority statuses or social identities to share their experiences with ostracism within the workplace in present times. We further explored the phenomenon by engaging with minorities of varying experience levels, educational backgrounds, and without regard to demographics. Through part II, we further narrowed our research from

workplace ostracism in a remote environment to ultimately focusing on minorities. The

findings of this study provide both scholarly and practical implications, in addition to

offering several suggestions for future exploration.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Items

Prescreening Questions

1. Are you currently employed at (insert company name here) in (insert city, state

    name here)?

2. Have you been employed by (insert company name here) in (insert city, state name

    here) since 2019?

3. Do you currently work full-time, working on average at least 32 hours per week?

Prescreening Closing Page for Disqualified Participants

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Unfortunately, you do not

meet the current criteria to participate in this survey. If you have any questions, please

contact Quiméka Saunders at (insert phone number here) or (insert email address here).

Part One

Please respond to the questions as accurately and honestly as possible. As a reminder,

your responses are strictly confidential. No identifying information about you, your co-

workers, or your organization will be requested at any point, nor will any identifiers be

linked with any of your responses. All reporting will be based on aggregated data.

Telework Status

The term "telework" involves work being supported outside of the central work office

and/or facility (remote), where employees have no in-person contact with coworkers,

but leverage technology engage electronically (Cascio, 2000).

(1) Hybrid-based employee, I have a prearranged agreement to work ___ hours away

from the office and/or facility.

(2) Remote-based employee, I have a prearranged agreement requiring no in office

and/or facility engagement.

How many hours do you work each week, on average? _____

Based on these definitions, please indicate which you believe describes your current

working environment:

☐ Hybrid ___

☐ Remote

Perceived Minority Status (Westphal & Milton, 2000)

Minorities are individuals who possess social characteristics, such as demographic

features (e.g., race, gender), that are different from those of more than 50 percent of

the group to which they belong. The term "minority" also can be used to refer to an

individual who holds values, attitudes, and beliefs that differ from those of most others

in the organization.

Based on this definition, please indicate where you believe you hold a minority position

in your organization:

☐ Ethnicity

☐ Race

☐ National Origin, _____

☐ Age

☐ Gender Identity

☐ Religion, _____

☐ Sexual Orientation

☐ Neurodivergent, _____

☐ Other_____

Social Identity (Adapted from Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) - Workgroup

For each of the statements below, please indicate your agreement using the rating

scale below.

Please enter your workgroup name (please exclude any identifying names, e.g.,

supervisor's last name) for survey use: _____

1. I feel good about the [workgroup] I belong to.

2. In general, I'm glad to be a member of the [work group] I belong to.

3. The [workgroup] I belong to is an important reflection of who I am.

4. The [workgroup] I belong to is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I

    am".

5. In general, belonging to my [workgroup] is an important part of my self-image.

Rating Scale: Very Strongly Disagree (1) to Very Strongly Agree (6).

Workplace Ostracism in a Remote Environment (Adapted from Ferris et al.,

2008)

These questions are about your experiences in a remote work environment. For each of

the statements below, please indicate your agreement using the rating scale below.

1. Others failed to communicate with you directly when it was appropriate to do so.

2. Others failed to copy (CC) you on emails when you should have been included.

3. When people reply to a chain of emails, your reply gets deleted.

4. Others did not reply to your direct comments to them in virtual meetings.

5. Others did not reply to your direct comments to them in emails.

6. Others did not reply to your direct comments to them in chats.

7. People sometimes intentionally fail to respond to your emails.

8. Your greetings ("hello") directed towards an individual have gone unanswered when you joined a virtual meeting.

9. Your greetings ("hello") directed towards a group have gone unanswered when you joined a virtual meeting.

10. Others limited communication or did not communicate with you in virtual meetings when it was appropriate to engage.

11. Others limited communication or did not communicate with you in chats when it was appropriate to engage.

12. Others limited communication or did not communicate with you in email when it was appropriate to engage.

Rating Scale: Never (1) to Always (7), (8) Not Applicable (N/A)

Demographic Questions

What's your age? _____

What's your gender identity?

A. Man

B. Woman

C. Nonbinary

D. Other _____

What's your sexual orientation?

A. Gay

B. Lesbian

C. Straight/Heterosexual

D. Bisexual

E. Asexual

F. Pansexual

G. Other _____

What's your race/ethnicity? ("Race", 2019)

Race refers to the concept of dividing people into groups on the basis of various sets of

physical characteristics and the process of ascribing social meaning to those groups.

Ethnicity describes the culture of people in a given geographic region, including their

language, heritage, religion and customs.

A. White or Caucasian

B. Asian

C. Black or African American

D. Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin

E. Middle Eastern or North African

F. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

G. Multiracial (Select all of the above that apply)

H. Other _____

I. Prefer not to answer

How long (in years) have you worked in your current organization? ___

Part One Closing Page

Thank you for participating in this study. There is an opportunity to participate in a

semi-structured interview as the second part of the study. If you have any questions

and/or would like to volunteer your time please provide your personal email address

and contact information below to protect your confidentiality. For any immediate

inquiries, please contact Quiméka Saunders at (insert phone number here) or (insert

email address here).

Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Guide

[Introduction]

(First, the researcher will introduce themselves and thank the participants for agreeing to participate in the interview)

Hello and thank you for your willingness to participate in today's interview. Prior to kicking off the interview, I would first like to share more about the study being conducted. For this particular study, we seek to understand your experiences with inclusion and exclusion in the remote workplace. With this in mind, we are interested in learning about your experiences as an employee working in a hybrid or fully remote environment.

We have a series of questions to ask you to get to know you and your experiences. We're interested in hearing your story in as much detail as possible – considering who, what, why, when, where, and how.

As we go through, you may (or may not) find some overlap between the questions. For the purposes of analyzing the data at a later time, it is okay to repeat information when you think it is relevant to do so. When we analyze the data, we will be looking at responses to each question separately and it is therefore helpful to have all the relevant info under each question even if it is repetitive.

[Basics & Housekeeping:]

(Go over consent form, give opportunity to ask questions, provide consent reminders. Obtain verbal consent on the recording before proceeding. (~5 minutes))

- We will record and transcribe.

- We may use quotes in the presentations/publications from today's interview.

- We will describe you by your age, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc.

- As a reminder we will take out your name, organization's names, coworker names, etc.

- Any questions about the consent form?

As part of a research study, understanding more about your current work environment and work group will be beneficial. With this in mind, I am going to ask you some relevant questions for your current work situation. (~5 minutes)

- Are you a hybrid or remote employee? If hybrid, how often do you work remotely on average. (open ended)

- How long have you worked at in your current organization?

- How's your relationship with your workgroup? (e.g., do you get along or are there conflicts?)

- Would you consider yourself to be a minority within your workgroup? If yes, in what ways (e.g., ethnicity, race, national origin, age, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.)?

- Which function, department, or business unit are you a member of (e.g., finance, engineering, program management)?

- Can you please summarize the ways in which you interact with your workgroup (peers) or teammates?

As a reminder, we are not going to use real names for you, other people, or your company in reporting our results. So, please choose a pseudonym or alias of your

choice, that we will use if we were to use direct quotes from today's interview in the publication.

[Questions] (~25-30 minutes)

1. In general, are you more comfortable working away from the office or working in the office environment?

    a. What reasons contribute to you being more comfortable away from/in the office environment?

2. How has working in a hybrid environment affected your ability to work with your workgroup, if at all?

    a. Do you think it's supported or hindered your working relationships with your workgroup?

3. How has working in a remote environment affected your ability to work with your workgroup, if at all?

    a. Do you think remote work has supported or hindered your working relationships with your workgroup?

    b. Do you think hybrid work has supported or hindered your working relationships with your workgroup?

4. Have your greetings gone unanswered in emails?

    a. Do you believe this behavior is isolated to only you or is this common for other group members as well?

    b. Who are the individuals participating?

5. Have your greetings gone unanswered in chats?

a. Do you believe this behavior is isolated to only you or is this common for

other group members of a similar minority status as well?

b. Who are the individuals participating?

6. Have your greetings gone unanswered in virtual meetings?

a. Do you believe this behavior is isolated to only you or is this common for

other group members of a similar minority status as well?

b. Who are the individuals participating?

7. Have others limited their interactions with you during virtual meetings or perhaps

they treat you as if you weren't there during virtual meetings or in chats (Skype,

Mattermost)?.

a. Do you believe this behavior is isolated to only you or is this common for

other group members of a similar minority status as well?

b. Who are the individuals participating?

8. While working from home, do you believe you've ever been excluded from a task

you believe you should've been a part of?

a. What was the task?

b. What happened exactly that lead you to perceive you were being excluded?

c. What was your initial response to it?

d. How do you feel about that particular instance now?

e. Do you believe it was an isolated incident or did it happen multiple times?

f. If you've noticed it often, is it isolated to certain members or do you believe

it's the entire workgroup?

9. While working from home, do you believe you've ever been excluded from a meeting you believe you should've been a part of?

    a. What was the meeting?

    b. What happened exactly that lead you to perceive you were being excluded?

    c. What was your initial response to it?

    d. How do you feel about that particular instance now?

    e. Do you believe it was an isolated incident or did it happen multiple times?

    f. If you've noticed it often, is it isolated to certain members or do you believe it's the entire workgroup?

10. While working from home, do you believe you've ever been excluded from any other engagement you believe you should've been a part of?

    a. What was the engagement?

    b. What happened exactly that lead you to perceive you were being excluded?

    c. What was your initial response to it?

    d. How do you feel about that particular instance now?

    e. Do you believe it was an isolated incident or did it happen multiple times?

    f. If you've noticed it often, is it isolated to certain members or do you believe it's the entire workgroup?

As part of a research study, understanding the demographics of each participant will be beneficial for data analysis and reporting purposes. With this in mind, I am going to ask you some basic demographic questions. (~5-10 minutes)

- Age: (open ended)

- Gender Identity: (open ended)

- Race or Ethnicity: (open ended)

- Origin: (open ended)

- Sexual Orientation: (open ended)

- Religion: (open ended)

- Neurodiversity: (open ended)

That was the last formal question, is there anything else you would like me to know that I did not ask?

[Closing] That was our final question, concluding our interview. Thank you for your time today. We really appreciate your help with our study. I will send a follow-up email post today's discussion inquiring on if it would be OK if we followed up with you sometime in the future, if needed? Some reasons we may follow-up include clarifying the meaning of something you said or we may want your input on our results.

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form - Survey

University of Missouri–St. Louis

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Project Title: Understanding the Remote Work Environment

Principal Investigator: Quiméka Saunders,

                          Software Engineering Manager

                          Doctoral Student, UMSL

Department Name: College of Business Administration

Faculty Advisor: Bettina Casad, Ph.D.

                          Associate Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences

                          Director, Behavioral Neuroscience Program

                          Faculty Affiliate, Gender Studies Program

                          Member, Center for Neurodynamics

IRB Project Number: 2094132

1. You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research is to understand
   experiences working in a remote work environment. We also hope to answer the question of
   how social identity and group affiliation may relate to interpersonal experience among co-
   workers in a remote environment.

   - To be participate in this study, you must:

     o   Be a full-time employee, (32+ hours a week)

     o   Have the ability to work remotely

     o   Have worked for the same company since January 2019 or before, and

     o   Have a direct supervisor.

   - Due to the specific requirements of this study, we cannot include individuals who:

     o   Are required to work on-site (no option to work from home)

      o   Report directly to any member supporting the research project.

2. Your participation will involve completing a survey conducted through Qualtrics Panels in a single session.

      o   The survey is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to respond to several questionnaire items regarding your work environment, group identification, experiences in the remote workplace, and demographics.

      o   You may participate in this survey only once.

      o   You may opt in to participate in Part II of this study, which will be conducted via semi-structured interviews. To opt in, you will be given the opportunity to provide your contact information at the end of the survey. Providing your contact information will not reveal your identify nor be linked to your survey responses in any way.

3.   There are no known risks associated with this research other than the potential for mild boredom or fatigue.

4.   There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

5.   Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or withdraw your consent at any time. You may also choose to skip questions during the questionnaire. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or withdraw.

7.   We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection) that would lead to disclosure of your data as well as any other information collected by the researcher.

8. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Quiméka Saunders at (insert phone number here) or the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Bettina Casad at (insert phone number here). You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the University of Missouri–St. Louis Office of Research Compliance, at 314-516-5972 or irb@umsl.edu.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form - Semi-structured Interviews

University of Missouri–St. Louis

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Project Title: Understanding the Remote Work Environment

Principal Investigator: Quiméka Saunders,

                                        Software Engineering Manager

                                        Doctoral Student, UMSL

Department Name: College of Business Administration

Faculty Advisor: Bettina Casad, Ph.D.

                                        Associate Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences

                                        Director, Behavioral Neuroscience Program

IRB Project Number: 2094132

1. You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research is to understand
    experiences working in a remote work environment. We also hope to answer the question of
    how social identity and group affiliation may relate to interpersonal experience among co-
    workers in a remote environment.

    - To be participate in this study, you must:

        o Be a full-time employee, (32+ hours a week)

        o Have the ability to work remotely

        o Have worked for the same company since January 2019 or before, and

        o Have a direct supervisor.

    - Due to the specific requirements of this study, we cannot include individuals who:

        o Are required to work on-site (no option to work from home)

        o Report directly to any member supporting the research project.

2. Your participation will involve supporting a semi-structured interview via Zoom.

- o The interview is expected to last approximately 60 minutes. We will ask you

  questions regarding your work environment, group identification, experiences in

  the remote workplace, and demographics.

- o This interview will be audio recorded for transcription.

- o You may participate in only one semi-structured interview.

6. There is a loss of confidentiality risk associated with this research. This will be minimized by

   participants choosing a pseudonym or alias of their choice for interviewing and data

   collection purposes. After the interview is transcribed, any references to your organization,

   team, or any other names you mention will be removed from the transcripts and replace them

   with fake names to protect your privacy. Academic presentations or publications of this

   research may use some quotes from your interview, but no names or other identifying

   information will be included.

7. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

8. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or

   withdraw your consent at any time. You may also choose to skip questions during the semi-

   structured interview. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to

   participate or withdraw.

7. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will

   not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. In rare instances, a

   researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such

   as the Office for Human Research Protection) that would lead to disclosure of your data as

   well as any other information collected by the researcher.

8. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may

   call the Investigator, Quiméka Saunders at (insert phone number here) or the Faculty Advisor,

   Dr. Bettina Casad at (insert phone number here). You may also ask questions or state

concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the University of Missouri–St.

Louis Office of Research Compliance, at 314-516-5972 or irb@umsl.edu.

Appendix E: Recruitment Letter

Greetings,

There is an opportunity to participate in a research study to learn more about the remote

work environment. This study is being conducted by Quiméka Saunders, Software

Engineering Manager and Doctoral Student at the University of Missouri St. Louis. This

study is being conducted for Quiméka Saunders' dissertation and will explore how social

identity and group affiliation may relate to interpersonal experiences among co-workers

in a remote environment.

- To participate in this study, you must:

    o Be a full-time employee, (32+ hours a week)

    o Be located in the (insert city here) area (Insert company name here)

    o Have the ability to work remotely

    o Have worked for the same company since January 2019 or before, and

    o Have a direct supervisor.

- Due to the specific requirements of this study, we cannot include individuals who:

    o Are required to work on-site (no option to work from home)

    o Report directly to any member supporting the research project.

If interested, please see the attached consent form for additional information and to

access the questionnaire.

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Quiméka N. Saunders

Doctoral Student, University of Missouri St. Louis

Appendix F: Codebook

Theme	Category	Description	Examples
Exclusion	**Group-based Exclusion**	Group-based exclusion captures the lack of desire to communicate verbally or acknowledge an employee by their respective workgroup or peers.	"So, there were things that were, you know, quite obvious to me that I truly wasn't a team member" "I saw a lot of happy hour events going on with my team that I was not included in. In addition to… just small little social things with other teams that maybe I should have been a part of."
	Individual-based Exclusion	Individual-based exclusion captures the lack of desire to communicate verbally or acknowledge an employee by a member of their	"Oh, I'd rather work with Jill on this than Jack… or Jack then Jill, and you get one of the 2 when you should have had both that happened. It's human nature. This person's easier to get. I get along with this person better. So, I'm going to

		respective workgroup or a single individual within their organization.	just go to that one [person], but that's something that I do always try to pay attention to is" "the person I replaced…we did not meet that frequently at all to make a transition into the role and as far as what I'm supposed to be doing with my job so… and I don't know."
	Limiting Learning Opportunities	Limited Learning Experiences (LLE) highlights an employee's ability (inability) to learn or perform their statement of work based on a lack of interactions with a peer or their workgroup.	"Everyone on the team would get scheduled for training, you know. I would never get scheduled for training." "I kind of put out a request for help or I can do this task and kind of got no response as of yet. So yeah, like times I feel like those learning opportunities should have been

			presented when they were not…"
	Work Setting Barriers	Work Setting Barriers, describes the barriers (difficulties) or lack thereof individuals encountered based on their current work location relative to another individual or their particular workgroup.	"It has…I would say [being remote has] supported. I mean… if anything I mean we… I would say for me being outside of the office, I talked to him more… like I would… I mean, if I was there….I mean he...he hardly talked to me or…you know, I don't know, it might be strange, but I think that we communicate more now that I work remotely than when I was in office." "I know, for a fact when the virtual meeting ends conversation continues in the room. Like it's very common….Individuals will

			hang back. Have a quick tag up. I just assume that there are some I need to have been involved in. There are some that I didn't need to be involved in. But either way I just wasn't available, like it's kind of the reality of it."
Lack of Leadership Support	**Lack of Leadership Support**	The lack of leadership oversight or support for individuals or workgroups encountering ostracizing behaviors through lack of action, treating the ostracism as a casual matter, or simply ignoring the concerns escalated.	"you know I go to the manager and talk to him…Nothing happens…" "I've even had a situation where it would have been more efficient and more effective for me to be there, but I didn't have the right title. So, I voiced it, my manager agreed, my director agreed, but it wasn't the style of the VP."

Responses to Perceived Exclusion	**Emotion-based Response**	Emotion-driven responses occurred when the employee responded through expressed or repressed emotion.	"I was very angry and you know, then it turned to hurt and then it turned back to anger…and then you know it turned back to, "Why am I still here?"… to be very honest with you. "Why, why am I here?" "And it can be very, very, very demoralizing and stressful because you feel like you're not doing your job. You're not being a part…You're not…. If you're not a part of the team. It can be extremely stressful."
	Action-based Response	Action-driven responses occurred when the employee responded by taking a specific action after encountering acts of ostracism.	"I had a conversation with them just regarding the nature of the work itself and requested to be notified of any meetings or of our activities that aligns to the type of work that I support."

			"I was kind of slow to get started on the work and eventually it's like, well I need to get it done anyway, because it is what it is. So, I'd send follow up emails to ask questions about what exactly is being required of me and required of the document. So, I can put it together accurately and…you know… in a timely manner."
	Preferred Solitude	The preference of solitude over potential exposure or experiences of being ostracized or solitude as a personal preference for supporting work efforts.	"It's been easier to me because I don't have to walk into that environment." "I'm more productive away from the office. When I'm in the office there's a lot of side conversations and politics."