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Invisible at Work: An Integrated Model of Workplace Ostracism

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This article offers a review, integration, and extension of the literature relevant to ostracism in organizations. We first seek to add conceptual clarity to ostracism, by reviewing existing definitions and developing a cohesive one, identifying the key features of workplace ostracism, and distinguishing it from existing organizational constructs. Next, we develop a broad model of ostracism in organizations. This model serves to integrate the relevant findings related to ostracism in organizations and to extend our theorizing about it. We take a decidedly organizational focus, proposing organizationally relevant factors that may cause different types of ostracism, moderate the experience of ostracism at work, and moderate the reactions of targets. We hope this article will provide a good foundation for organizational scholars interested in studying ostracism by providing a framework of prior literature and directions for future study.

Keywords: *ostracism; social exclusion; psychological well-being*

Imagine standing at the water cooler, where you strike up a conversation with a coworker. He mentions in passing an important upcoming meeting, assuming you were invited. You realize at that moment you were not. Later in the week, as you approach a group in conversation, you sense that they awkwardly change the subject when you join them. You replay these events in your mind and come to realize that in the past month or so you've also not been invited to lunch like you used to be. You hadn't thought much of it until now but, taken together, you wonder if you are really being left out at work or just imagining it and you worry about why this might be happening to you.

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Being overlooked, excluded, or ignored by other individuals or groups is a common experience across all social contexts (Williams, 1997), including the workplace (Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Hitlan, Kelly, Schepman, Schneider, & Zárate, 2006). Such experiences are often labeled "ostracism" (Williams, 1997, 2001). On the surface, experiences of ostracism, particularly in a workplace context, may seem trivial. Given all the potential stressors and minor hassles one could face on a daily basis, why would simply not being invited to lunch or forgotten about on a corporate memo matter? However, past research has shown that ostracism can be a uniquely painful experience; the social pain caused by ostracism has even been likened to physical pain (Eisenberger, 2012; Riva, Wirth, & Williams, 2011). What's more, not only are such experiences extremely painful, but under some circumstances they can have an even greater negative impact than other harmful workplace behaviors such as aggression and harassment (O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009; O'Reilly, Robinson, Banki, & Berdahl, 2011; Williams & Zadro, 2001).

Given ostracism's frequency and impact, research addressing behaviors that isolate or disconnect individuals from social interaction has grown in recent decades, with increasing attention on constructs such as ostracism (Williams, 1997, 2007, 2009; Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000), social exclusion (Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002), rejection (Prinstein & Aikins, 2004), abandonment (Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993), and being "out of the loop" (Jones, Carter-Sowell, Kelly, & Williams, 2009; Jones & Kelly, 2010). We collectively refer to these experiences as ostracism. Within organizational research, ostracism as a unique experience has received relatively little attention (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008). For the most part, such behaviors have been only tangentially considered, as one or two specific behaviors included in broader measures of constructs such as interpersonal deviance, social undermining, incivility, or aggression. The lack of theoretical attention on ostracism as a unique construct may be the result of the false assumption that excluding and ignoring someone in organizations is a relatively benign or innocuous form of treatment, particularly compared to the myriad of other negative behaviors one could experience at work. However, as we highlight in our review, being ostracized at work, a place where people seek to form friendships, social connections, and inclusion with others, is anything but benign for most people.

The purpose of this article is threefold. First, we seek to add clarity to the construct of ostracism and highlight why it is important to study it as a distinct construct in organizational behavior. We review the various constructs that capture being socially excluded in one form or another and build a cohesive definition of workplace ostracism that encompasses them. This definition clarifies the nature of ostracism, highlights its core features, and explains how it is importantly distinct from other constructs reflecting harmful social behavior at work.

Second, we provide a coherent framework that houses a selective review of the existing research on ostracism that has particular relevance for organizations. A number of prior reviews have focused on specific aspects of related literatures. For example, prior theoretical articles have discussed the functionality of social exclusion (Kurzban & Leary, 2001) and responses to threats to belonging (Richman & Leary, 2009). Others have organized empirical findings in this domain, such as a review of the studies linking social exclusion and self-regulation (Blackhart, Baumeister, & Twenge, 2006) and meta-analyses of studies examining

the impact of social exclusion on mood and self-esteem (Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009) and on mood, self-esteem, thwarted needs, and behavioral responses (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009). Our review does not repeat the above articles but rather develops a broad model of workplace ostracism—including its antecedents, consequences, and moderators—that is based on an integration of relevant empirical findings thus far.

The third purpose of this article is to go beyond the existing research by offering potential directions for future research on ostracism in organizations. We do so by adding to the model a number of directions, extensions, and variables not yet considered, which have particular relevance to ostracism in an organizational setting. Specifically, we identify organizationally relevant variables that may serve as antecedents and consequences of workplace ostracism, as well as moderators of the effects and reactions to ostracism. It is hoped that this article will provide a useful overview of past research for those interested in studying ostracism in organizations, as well as provide a road map to encourage future organizational research on this important topic.

Definition and Nature of Ostracism

We begin our examination of ostracism in organizations by clarifying the nature of ostracism. As we discuss below, we believe we need a stronger definition of workplace ostracism that can serve to guide what is included and excluded from this label, to highlight its core features, and to set it apart from other constructs in organizational behavior.

A number of constructs have focused on behaviors that fall under the rubric of ostracism. Several of these constructs capture specific behaviors and are narrowly defined by the type of exclusionary behaviors that they capture (see Table 1). For example, *linguistic ostracism* specifically reflects "any situation in which two or more people converse in a language that others around them cannot understand" (Dotan-Eliaz, Sommer, & Rubin, 2009: 364). *Social rejection* has been defined as "when one person seeks to form and maintain at least a temporary alliance or relationship with someone else and that other person says no (at least implicitly)" (Blackhart et al., 2009: 270). A final example is *organizational shunning*, "the systematic exclusion of a person who was once an included member of the group" (Anderson, 2009: 36). Despite the nuanced differences among these specific constructs, they all describe experiences in which at least one person is excluded from a social connection with another.

Other authors have recognized the value of capturing the broader array of exclusionary experiences under one construct. A broader focus adds parsimony and enables us to develop a more comprehensive theory and understanding of the phenomenon by integrating the findings across studies of different specific behaviors (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). For example, Blackhart et al. (2009: 207) use the term *social exclusion* to capture this broader construct, defining it as "one person is put into a condition of being alone or is denied social contact." Most others refer to it as ostracism, typically defining it with synonyms that reflect actions of social disengagement on another. For example, ostracism has been defined as "a general process of social rejection or exclusion" (Gruter & Masters, 1986: 150), "ignoring or excluding an individual or group by another individual or group" (Williams, 2001: ix), "the

Table 1
Ostracism and Related Constructs

Authors and Year	Construct Label	Definition
Anderson, 2009	Organizational shunning	The deliberate systematic exclusion of a person who was once included in the rites and everyday rituals that signify organizational membership.
Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009	Social exclusion	One person is put into a condition of being alone or is denied social contact.
Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009	Rejection	A refusal of social connection . . . when one person seeks to form and maintain at least a temporary alliance or relationship with someone else and that other person says no (at least implicitly).
Dotan-Eliaz, Sommer, & Rubin, 2009	Linguistic ostracism	As any situation in which two or more people converse in a language that others around them cannot understand.
Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008	Ostracism	The extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others.
Gruter & Masters, 1986	Ostracism	A general process of social rejection or exclusion.
Hitlan, Cliffton, & DeSoto, 2006	Ostracism	The exclusion, rejection, or ignoring of an individual (or group) by another individual (or group) that hinders one's ability to establish or maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, or favorable reputation within one's place of work.
Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001	Ostracism	The purposeful ignoring or shunning of an individual by others.
Williams, 2001	Ostracism	Any act or acts of ignoring or excluding of an individual or groups by an individual or group.

purposeful ignoring or shunning of an individual by others" (Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001: 229), "exclusion, rejection, or ignoring of an individual (or group) by another individual (or group) that hinders one's ability to establish or maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, or favorable reputation within one's place of work" (Hitlan, Cliffton, & DeSoto, 2006: 217), and "an individual's perception of being ignored or excluded" (Ferris et al., 2008: 1348).

Although these definitions identify some behaviors included under ostracism, there is value in having a definition that also captures and clarifies the core characteristic shared by all of these behaviors; that is, what do exclusion, shunning, ignoring, and rejecting share in common that justifies placing them under a general construct labeled "ostracism"? Identifying the core feature will help us to understand their shared antecedents and impact as well as provide the conceptual boundaries around the construct of ostracism, providing guidance about which behaviors it can include (beyond those listed) and distinguishing it from other related phenomena.[1]

With the above in mind, we offer an expanded definition of workplace ostracism that focuses on the common core features of those constructs identified in Table 1. *Workplace ostracism* is when an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do so. This definition subsumes social

rejection, social exclusion, ignoring, and shunning, as well as other behaviors that involve the omission of appropriate actions that would otherwise engage someone, such as when an individual or group fails to acknowledge, include, select, or invite another individual or group. It can subsume prior constructs, definitions of ostracism, and measures of ostracism, but also highlights the core elements of ostracism.

Common to all of these behaviors is *inactions to socially engage another*. The loss of social engagement that emerges as a result of another collectively points to a significant threat to belonging. We are social beings, and thus being alone or forgotten can be extremely hurtful. It is even more so if our aloneness is the result of others' choices. We have a fundamental and innate need to belong that is critical to our well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and as a result we are predisposed to detect ostracism (Spoor & Williams, 2007). In line with this system, even seemingly minor acts of exclusion can cause one to feel ostracized when such acts would have been socially appropriate (King & Geise, 2011; Wirth, Sacco, Hugenberg, & Williams, 2010). Of importance, the fact that the social disengagement emerges from inaction, rather than action, sets it apart from most other harmful social behaviors because it uniquely takes away, rather than increases, interaction with others. Finally, we note that the inactions are socially inappropriate; that is, the meaning and experience of ostracism depend on the social context in which it occurs. We now elaborate on this definition while comparing and contrasting it to other constructs in organizational behavior that capture detrimental workplace experiences.

The Unique Nature of Ostracism

Our definition can be used to distinguish ostracism from other constructs that capture negative workplace experiences, such as bullying, harassment, interpersonal deviance, aggression, and social undermining. First, motive is not part of the definition of ostracism, and it is not necessarily intended to cause harm. Although the constructs of incivility and interpersonal deviance also do not require a motivation to cause harm, the motivation or at least an actor's awareness of causing harm is a critical element of aggression, harassment, or social undermining. As we address in the next section, although ostracism may be harmful, it may occur with no malicious intention or with no intentions of any kind (Williams, 1997).

Second, as noted above, ostracism is defined in part by what is and is not considered socially appropriate for the context in which it occurs. Thus, the social norms of a context determine the meaning and thus impact of the behavior in question. This feature is particularly important because we distinguish ostracism from everyday routine behavior in which we ignore and are ignored by many others, such as when we share sidewalks, hallways, public transportation, or other communal spaces with others. The experience of ostracism occurs only when another violates norms that suggest one should acknowledge, respond to, or include another. This feature is similar to definitions of incivility and interpersonal deviance, but quite apart from constructs such as harassment, aggression, and social undermining. An important implication of recognizing the importance of the larger social context is that what one experiences as ostracism in one context may be inconsequential in another. Moreover, when missing action is noticed, it creates a discrepancy between what happened

and what was expected or anticipated. This discrepancy creates a sense of unpredictability and contributes to an individual's threatened sense of control that often accompanies ostracism (Williams, 1997, 2001).

Finally, but most important, ostracism is distinct from all of these constructs in a critical way: It is defined by acts of omission rather than commission; that is, it results from the purposeful or inadvertent failure to act in ways that socially engage another. In other words, ostracism is the omission of positive attention from others rather than the commission of negative attention. Similar constructs, such as incivility, aggression, harassment, interpersonal deviance, and bullying, are interactional by nature, so although they may include acts of omission, they predominantly include a wide range of behaviors that actually intensify social interaction. Thus, by way of illustration, "examples of incivility include interruption, use of a condescending tone, and unprofessional terms to address someone" (Cortina & Magley, 2009: 272), which may, in turn, lead to interactive spirals of incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

The defining feature of omission has two important implications. First, it poses a greater threat to one's sense of belonging, which in turn may explain much of ostracism's psychological impact. As noted, psychologists have long recognized that humans have a fundamental and innate need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and that the result of this need has been an evolved psychological detection system that is predisposed to recognizing even the slightest hint of ostracism (Spoor & Williams, 2007). The focus of our definition on the *inactions to socially engage another* is important because it is these inactions that trigger one's recognition system and threatens one's need to belong even more so than other negative acts that have traditionally been studied in organizations such as aggression and harassment (O'Reilly et al., 2011).

Another implication of the feature of omission is that it creates ambiguity. Compared to bullying, harassment, social undermining, and incivility, ostracism is more ambiguous (Williams, 1997). Although a defining feature of incivility is ambiguity of whether it was intentionally harmful or not (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001), with ostracism there is ambiguity about not only why it happened but also, more important, whether it even happened at all. This ambiguity suggests that, given the importance of threatened belonging, one is likely to ruminate over whether it occurred, why it happened, and what it means (Wong & Weiner, 1981). Rumination is likely to fuel the impact of ostracism as it is associated with emotional distress, anxiety, anger, and sleep interference (Guastella & Moulds, 2007; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema, McBride, & Larson, 1997). In addition, ambiguity makes it more difficult to address and resolve. Confronting another individual or group about what they may have not done is more challenging than bringing forth what one knows took place or others witnessed firsthand. Moreover, those who deliberately engage in ostracism, for whatever reason, can readily deny it occurred (Williams, 2001). This makes ostracism much more difficult to cope with and respond to than incivility, aggression, harassment, bullying, and the like.

In summary, although all of these constructs share in common various workplace behaviors, ostracism has several distinct features that set it apart and point to its unique impact. The key defining feature of ostracism—acts of omission to engage another—serves to reduce rather than increase social interaction. This means ostracism poses a significant threat

to one's fundamental need to belong, and it makes the experience inherently ambiguous, which in turn fuels its impact and makes it difficult to address. In this next section, we examine why this harmful behavior occurs and factors that increase its occurrence in organizations.

Why Does Ostracism Occur?

Although the vast majority of research on ostracism has focused on its consequences, comparatively less research has addressed the antecedents of ostracism. In this section, we discuss both the motives of ostracism as well as develop some propositions regarding potential antecedents of ostracism in organizations.

Motives

The focus of the limited research on the antecedent side of the ostracism equation has primarily addressed motives for ostracism (Sommer et al., 2001; Williams, 1997). We categorize these motives as either purposeful or nonpurposeful.

Purposeful ostracism. We refer to *purposeful ostracism* as that which occurs when an actor is aware of his or her inaction to socially engage another and does so intentionally. Such ostracism serves a function from the actor's perspective: to hurt the target or help the actor. Perhaps the most well-known form of purposeful ostracism is what is commonly referred to as "the silent treatment" (Williams, 1997). The silent treatment is used to intentionally punish, retaliate, or hurt the target. Given that most people have been on the receiving end of the "silent treatment" at some point in their lives, those engaging in this type of ostracism intuitively recognize its power (Faulkner, Williams, Sherman, & Williams, 1997; Williams, 1997).

Purposeful ostracism that helps the actor includes avoiding another for the sake of protecting the self or group. By failing to interact with another, an individual or group may be seeking to avoid conflict, social awkwardness, or unpleasant emotions. For example, one may actively avoid a team member after a conflict until one's own emotions calm down. Similarly, individuals may avoid a particular person or group because they believe that association will be hurtful to them. Research suggests, for example, that humans are evolutionarily predisposed to avoid people who do not contribute fairly in dyadic exchanges (Kurzban & Leary, 2001). Likewise, a group may ostracize particular individuals for the sake of the group's well-being, such as a burdensome group member (Wesselmann, Wirth, Pryor, Reeder, & Williams, 2012), or when they fear a "deviant" may disrupt group functioning (Gruter & Masters, 1986; Pickett & Brewer, 2005).

Nonpurposeful ostracism. Nonpurposeful ostracism occurs when actors are unaware that they are engaging in behaviors that serve to socially exclude another. This form of ostracism may actually be the most common. In some cases, those engaging in ostracism may simply be oblivious of their inaction (Sommer et al., 2001). Actors may be preoccupied, lost in thought, or forgetful of another or may engage in a host of unintended behaviors that result in ostracism. Thus, for example, a group may repeatedly forget to include a coworker on

lunch plans because the excluded coworker works in an out-of-the-way location, or one may forget to include another on an important work memo because that person is new. There is no harmful intention and, in fact, no intention at all.

We posit that another (albeit overlooked) way by which actors inadvertently engage in ostracism is by misreading the social norms of the context. As Goffman (1959) astutely articulated, we follow unspoken norms regarding which individuals should be attended to or ignored in different social contexts. Thus, for example, workplace norms will dictate who is acknowledged with a verbal greeting, who is likely acknowledged with just a smile, and who is entirely ignored as they pass in the hall. When all parties in that context understand these norms, ostracism is less likely to occur, but when there is disagreement about those rules, inadvertent ostracism is more likely. For example, in one particular context it would be normative for a board of executives to continue their confidential meeting unabated while the socially invisible technician servicing the projector works in the room. The technician is ignored, but no one experiences ostracism. In another context, where such behavior is not considered the norm, the technician in the above example would likely experience ostracism.

It is important to note that although ostracism can occur as a result of different or no motives, these motives may be quite distinct from targets' perceptions of the motives. We contend that even though nonpurposeful ostracism may be as common as, if not more common than, purposeful ostracism, and that the motives for ostracism are likely only sometimes malicious, targets will tend to see ostracism as intentional and purposefully harmful. As noted earlier, individuals are especially sensitive to cues of exclusion by others (Spoor & Williams, 2007), and they are also biased toward making more personalized attributions of others' actions, even when there is information to suggest more alternative, benign explanations (Fenigstein & Vanable, 1992; Smith & Williams, 2004; Taylor & Harper, 2003; Vorauer & Ross, 1993). As a result, they may be prone to assuming intentionality and making "sinister attributions" for behavior in the absence of sinister intentions, especially when the behavior is ambiguous (Kramer, 2001). We suggest that a fruitful avenue of future study on workplace ostracism is to systematically examine the frequency of actual ostracism motives and perceived motives in organizations, as well as the factors that can lead to discrepancies between the two.

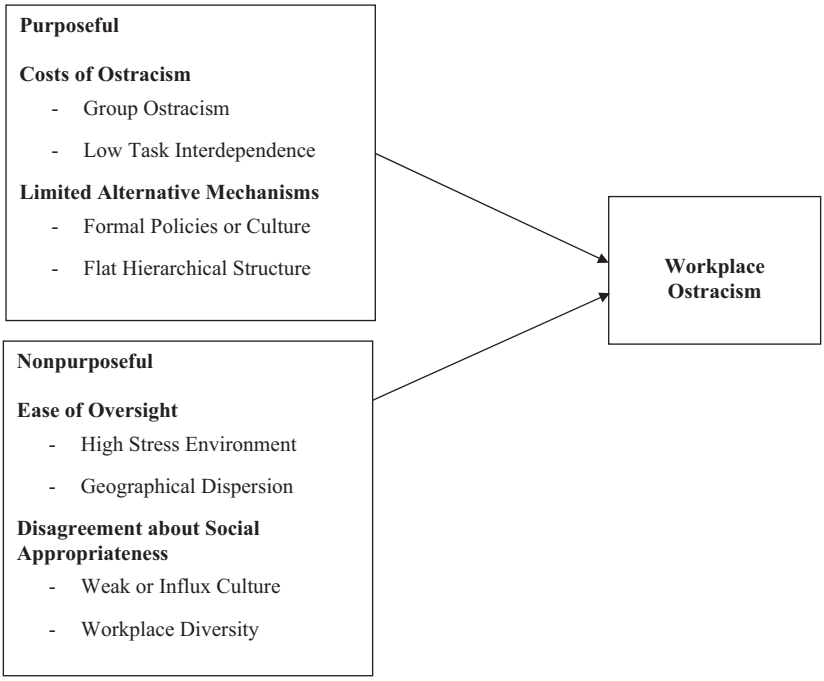
Organizational Antecedents

As we illustrate in Figure 1, there are a number of organizational factors that may increase the occurrence of purposeful and nonpurposeful ostracism. Below, we highlight what we consider to be some of these potential antecedents of workplace ostracism. Given there is very little research on antecedents of ostracism, we encourage future studies to examine where, when, and under what conditions ostracism is most likely to occur in organizations.

Organizational Antecedents of Purposeful Ostracism

We begin with our contention that there are two primary organizational antecedents of purposeful ostracism: low costs associated with engaging in ostracism and limited alternative mechanisms that can serve the same function as ostracism. To the extent that the psychological

Figure 1
Organizational Antecedents of Workplace Ostracism



costs of ostracizing are low and alternative mechanisms are limited, purposeful ostracism will be more likely to occur. Below, we address each of these antecedents and discuss several potential organizational factors that may reflect them.

Prop 1: Purposeful ostracism is more common in workplaces where the costs for engaging in ostracism are low, such as when the actor engages in ostracism along with one's coworkers, or when task interdependence is low.

Purposeful ostracism is more likely in environments where the costs of engaging in ostracism are relatively low. In general, the more subtle, ambiguous, and often invisible nature of ostracism (Williams, 2001) means it is less costly to the actor than other options. This is because ostracism is less likely to be observed and therefore bestows fewer negative consequences on the actor compared to other means by which one can communicate or manage tension, discontent, or conflict with others at work. Despite these generally lower costs of ostracism, it is not without psychological costs to the actor. Factors that reduce those psychological costs will increase its prevalence.

Past research has shown that engaging in ostracism can actually be emotionally painful for the actor, creating feelings of discomfort, guilt, and stress (Baumeister et al., 1993; Ciarocco, Sommer, & Baumeister, 2001; Williams & Sommer, 1997). We contend that organizational factors that reduce these feelings will contribute to a higher prevalence of purposeful ostracism, and one such factor is the extent to which one engages in ostracism along with one's coworkers. Engaging in ostracism along with one's coworkers, rather than alone, can reduce the costs of ostracism in several ways. First, sharing the behavior with coworkers can help one to justify or rationalize the reasons for excluding the target, whether it is to change the target's behavior or protect the group. Moreover, sharing ostracism with others may help to diffuse responsibility for its hurtful impact on the target (Latané & Nida, 1981). Finally, ostracizing others as part of a group may actually bestow psychological benefits to a particular actor by enhancing his or her sense of inclusion and validate his or her own need for belonging as a result.

Past research also shows that ostracism is psychologically uncomfortable because it is mentally effortful and cognitively taxing (Ciarocco et al., 2001; Williams, Bernieri, Faulkner, Gada-Jain, & Grahe, 2000). We are socialized to follow certain social scripts in our everyday interactions (Goffman, 1959), and it takes concentration and self-regulation to violate these norms of interaction and avoid familiar scripts (Ciarocco et al., 2001). Thus, we contend that organizational factors that reduce the degree to which one would normally have to engage in a "social script" will lessen the cognitive load on those engaging in ostracism. Such would be the case when the actor and target share task interdependence. When task interdependence is low, there is less interaction, and coordination between employees is required to complete tasks (Guzzo & Shea, 1992). As such, engaging in purposeful ostracism is much less cognitively taxing when task interdependence is low. When task interdependence is low, there are fewer existing points of social contact, and therefore it is less mentally taxing to engage in giving someone "the silent treatment" or other types of exclusionary behaviors.

Prop 2: Purposeful ostracism is more common in workplaces with limited alternative mechanisms, such as when the organization's culture or formal policies eschew overt conflict or when the organization has a relatively flat hierarchical structure.

In organizations, purposeful ostracism often serves a number of functions, such as helping members to cope with or resolve conflict or to reign in or change behavior that is considered deviant (Williams, 2001). In organizational environments with limited alternative mechanisms by which to resolve conflict, or control coworkers' behavior, employees are more likely to resort to ostracism to achieve the same ends. Although a number of organizational factors may increase or decrease alternative mechanisms, we note two possible examples. One factor limiting alternative mechanisms is the organizational culture. Some cultures are more conflict avoidant than others. Those that are conflict avoidant may reduce the options available for resolving interpersonal tensions, and thus organizational members may be prone to more passive and invisible methods to express disapproval. Likewise, in cultures that have policies against more overt forms of negative behavior, such as aggression, harassment, or bullying, one may find *more* acts of ostracism to fill the void. Given the more subtle and deniable nature of ostracism, it may be an effective way of addressing conflict

with organizational members without fear of the recriminations that would accompany more overt solutions such as verbal arguing (Williams, 2001).

Another organizational factor that may limit alternatives is the degree to which the organization can be characterized as having a flat hierarchical structure. When organizational hierarchy is steep, rather than flat, more organizational members can rely on their higher level of formal power or authority to control or reign in other organizational members' behavior. In flatter organizational structures, however, more organizational members share the same level of formal authority, and thus have to rely on more informal means by which to manage one another. Thus, they may rely on ostracism as a means by which to control or change others' behavior.

Organizational Antecedents of Nonpurposeful Ostracism

In our model, we identify two general factors that may increase the likelihood of nonpurposeful ostracism in organizations: the ease of overlooking others at work and the absence of agreed-on norms regarding socially acceptable interaction behaviors. We discuss each of these below and suggest several examples of their manifestation in organizations.

Prop 3: Nonpurposeful ostracism is more common in workplaces where it is relatively easy to socially overlook others, such as stressful work environments, or when organizational members are geographically dispersed.

Nonpurposeful ostracism should be more common in environments where organizational members can readily overlook one another and thus inadvertently fail to acknowledge, invite, and include one another because the cues to assist doing so are absent. We can think of several organizational features that might capture this tendency for overlooking colleagues. One such factor is the pace and structure of an organizational environment. Adhering to social niceties, such as simply giving an appropriate social greeting to a colleague or double-checking that all team members have been invited to an end-of-term celebration, requires a basic, albeit minimal, amount of consideration and time. Organizational environments that are inherently stressful may deplete personal resources so that employees have little remaining to devote to social niceties. Organizational stress can come from task-related stressors, such as high workloads, tight deadlines, or constraints on employees' ability to do their job, or social-related stressors, such as interpersonal conflict (Spector & Jex, 1998). Dealing with these stressors requires both psychological and personal resources, such as time (Hobfoll, 1989). As a result, employees in such environments are more likely to accidentally overlook others, resulting in nonpurposeful ostracism.

Geographical dispersion is another organizational factor that may contribute to nonpurposeful ostracism because it can increase the ease of overlooking coworkers. When employees are separated in terms of physical space, it may be easier to overlook and inadvertently ostracize when visual and social cues of their membership are absent. Such separation and absence of cues can happen when employees are merely in different parts of the same building, or when they are working in different locations or regions, as is the case with virtual or teleworkers.

For example, Golden, Veiga, and Dino (2008) found that the more employees worked away from their office and core workgroup, the more feelings of isolation and lack of belonging negatively affected their performance. Future research could explore whether such feelings emanate from ostracism, and whether organizations that have more telework employees also have more ostracized employees.

Prop 4: Nonpurposeful ostracism is more common in workplaces where organizational members may differ in their understanding of the norms of social engagement, such as when the culture is inherently weak or in flux because of organizational changes.

An important component of our ostracism definition is that it involves the omission of socially engaging behavior that is considered socially appropriate for the given context. An implication of this part of the definition is that it is possible not everyone in a given social context will agree on what is considered socially appropriate behavior. When members of a group, department, or entire organization share different understandings of what constitutes socially appropriate behavior as it pertains to social engagement, inadvertent ostracism may occur. If one individual perceives an inclusionary act to be socially appropriate for the context and another has a different interpretation, they may experience ostracism when none was intended (e.g., Zuckerman, Miserandino, & Bernieri, 1983). For example, if a new manager ignores the cleaning staff, when the norms of the culture suggest friendly engagement between employees of all levels, that manager will inadvertently ostracize the cleaning staff.

With this in mind, we can identify some organizational factors that may manifest different understandings of appropriate social engagement behavior and thus the likelihood of nonpurposeful ostracism. One organizational factor that may contribute to this effect is a weak or in flux organizational culture. A weak organizational culture, by definition, is when the values, goals, and beliefs of an organization are not strongly shared or understood by all members (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Because of different understandings of normative social engagement, one person might feel slighted by another who is merely acting on a different social script. Related, during times of stark organizational change, organizational norms are in flux (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Examples might include mergers between organizations or an influx of new hires. These changes can lead to conflicting understandings of who should be included or socially responded to and when.

Prop 5: Nonpurposeful ostracism is more common in workplaces characterized by diversity.

Another important organizational factor that can lead to nonpurposeful ostracism is organizational diversity and dissimilarity. People are naturally attracted to forming social bonds with people who are more similar to themselves, and the result can be that the relatively few dissimilar organizational members might be left out simply because they are different, without explicit intentions on the part of the actors to exclude them (e.g., Jackson, Barth, Powell, & Lochman, 2006; Kistner, Metzler, Gatlin, & Risi, 1993). One type of ostracism that speaks directly to the effects of diversity on nonpurposeful ostracism is linguistic

ostracism, which occurs when two or more individuals speak a language that others in the immediate environment cannot understand (Dotan-Eliaz et al., 2009). In this case, people are ostracized simply because they do not share the same language as others in their immediate environment. In addition, O'Reilly and Robinson (2009) found that many employees, when asked why they felt they were excluded at work, responded that they were simply different in either race or age and thus could not relate or connect socially with their dissimilar colleagues.

Impact of Ostracism

The above section addresses general categories of antecedents of ostracism and select organizational factors reflecting each; we now turn our attention to the impact of ostracism. The vast majority of empirical research on ostracism has focused on its consequences, and it is evident that it is far more harmful than its innocuous appearance. Our goal in this section is to create an overarching model of the consequences of ostracism that is based on knowledge from past research and to extend that knowledge in several ways. We extend it by discussing not only the psychological effects of ostracism but also the pragmatic effects, which thus far have been overlooked in the literature yet have particular relevance to ostracism in organizations. We also extend past research on ostracism by proposing specific organizationally relevant factors that may moderate the consequences and reactions to ostracism. This model of consequences of workplace ostracism appears in Figure 2.

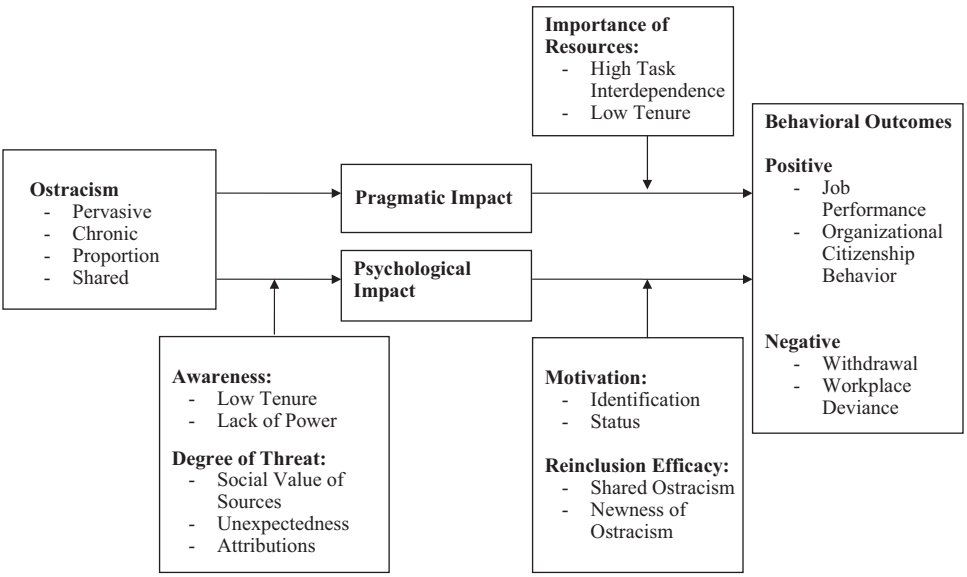
To summarize briefly, we first posit that several factors determine ostracism's intensity and that intensity has a pragmatic impact and/or psychological impact on the target. We also note several organizationally relevant factors that will moderate the psychological impact of ostracism. We then argue that both of the pragmatic and psychological impacts of ostracism lead to organizationally relevant behavioral outcomes. The pragmatic impact of ostracism leads to reduced behavioral contributions to the organization, and this effect is moderated by several organizational factors. The psychological impact of ostracism also leads to reduced behavioral contributions to the organization, except in the presence of several moderators, when it may lead to increased behavioral contributions. We now discuss each of these components in detail.

Intensity of Ostracism

Prop 6: Ostracism will be more intense, having a stronger impact on the employee, to the extent that it is pervasive, chronic, from proportionally many colleagues, and targeting only the individual, than when it is partial, occasional, from proportionally few colleagues, and directed at many.

We start by examining the intensity or degree of ostracism in work organizations, and to do so we can use Latané's social impact theory. According to Latané (1981), the effect of other people on a target is a multiplicative function of the strength, immediacy, and number

Figure 2
Integrated Model of the Consequences of Ostracism



of other people. Applying these components to ostracism, we suggest that the experience of ostracism at work is most intense or impactful when it's pervasive rather than partial, chronic rather than episodic, from proportionally many rather than few, and directed at the individual only rather than many. Latané further argues that when being a target is shared with others, the impact is divided. Thus, to the extent an ostracized individual is ostracized along with others, it will be less intense than when one is singled out for ostracism.

Scholars have theorized that the effects of long-term ostracism, or experiencing ostracism on a relatively consistent basis over a period of time, will have a different impact than episodic ostracism, or ostracism that occurs relatively infrequently over a period of time (Williams, 1997, 2001). There is also some empirical evidence to support certain aspects of Latané's theory in response to ostracism. Applying the latter part of this theory and examining the impact of rejection in an experimental setting, DeWall, Twenge, Bushman, Im, and Williams (2010) found that the more people who accepted a rejected individual, the weaker the sting of ostracism. Similarly, Banki (2012) studied the effects of full versus partial ostracism (e.g., being ostracized by only a subset of group members) on a target's attributions and found that targets of full ostracism experience more internal attributions about the cause of their exclusion. As we discuss below, internal attributions can strengthen the negative psychological impact of ostracism on a target.

Research questions addressing the intensity of ostracism are ideal for examining in an organizational context. This is because one can examine actual ostracism involving different compositions of actors and targets. Thus, one can examine and compare the effects of both

episodic and ongoing ostracism, from partial to complete, by varying proportions of one's coworkers. Likewise, one can examine the extent to which one experiences the ostracism alone or shared with others.

In this next section, we examine two effects of ostracism, pragmatic and psychological. We discuss each of these impacts below.

Pragmatic Impact

Prop 7: The greater the ostracism intensity experienced by an employee, the greater the pragmatic impact on the employee.

One critical effect of ostracism we wish to identify and highlight is its pragmatic or practical consequences, which emerge because the ostracized individual loses out on task-related resources, relationships, and information that comes solely from being connected to others. This effect is independent of the target's awareness of ostracism and the psychological effect of ostracism, which is the focus of almost all past research on ostracism.

To date, the pragmatic effect of ostracism has been essentially overlooked, primarily because most work on ostracism has been conducted in psychology where the focal interest is on psychological effects. We include the pragmatic impact of ostracism in our model because we believe that organizational scholars should give particular attention to this unique but neglected aspect of ostracism for several reasons. First, pragmatic effects have unique significance in organizational settings because, as we address later on in our model, targets sustain important negative work-related outcomes if they are excluded from, or left out of the informational and resource loop at work (Jones et al., 2009; Jones & Kelly, 2010). Research has also shown that power derives in part from the resources one controls (Pfeffer, 1981), and more specifically from one's social connections (Brass, 1984; Pettigrew, 1973), access to information (Kotter, 1985), and influence (Pfeffer, 1981). Related to this, conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) indicates that loss of resources can create a cascade of subsequence resource loss. As such, ostracism may affect organizational members because of missed information or advice, the opportunity to have influence, or the loss of work relationships and functional support necessary to get one's job done.

Second, this pragmatic effect points to a relatively unique aspect of the ostracism experience that is apart from the effects of other "negative behaviors" in the workplace. Although the effects of being the target of harassment, bullying, incivility, and the like may also have a pragmatic effect by creating lost resources, we argue that ostracism, which uniquely reduces social interaction, even when the target may be unaware of it, will have a more direct and substantial pragmatic impact.

Psychological Impact

Prop 8: The greater the ostracism intensity experienced by an employee, the greater the psychological impact on the employee.

To date, the vast majority of studies that have explored the impact of ostracism have focused on its severe psychological impact (for an earlier review, see Williams, 2007). Unlike the pragmatic effects of ostracism, the psychological effects of ostracism require that the target perceive that he or she is being ostracized by others. Countless studies demonstrate that if one perceives ostracism, as measured either by self-report or by manipulation in a laboratory setting, it negatively affects one's psychological needs, affect, and attitudes. As we address later on, this psychological impact creates the motivation to engage in either prosocial or engagement-oriented behaviors, or to engage in withdrawal or other antisocial behavioral responses. Below we provide a succinct review of the literature on ostracism's psychological effects and suggest moderators of these effects that are pertinent in an organizational context and should be explored in future research.

Ostracism's impact on psychological needs. We have already alluded to one important psychological need that is threatened when a person is ostracized—the fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Richman & Leary, 2009; Williams, 1997). Williams and colleagues have extended the impact of ostracism on psychological needs to include three others: one's sense of self, or the self-esteem that is derived in part from the treatment one receives from others; one's sense of control over one's environment; and meaningful existence, the need to believe one's existence matters (Williams, 1997). When threatened by ostracism, targets seek to fortify these needs in the short run; in the long run, sustained psychological need depletion can result in alienation, helplessness, and depression (Williams & Nida, 2011). Meta-analyses by Gerber and Wheeler (2009) and by Blackhart et al. (2009) found that ostracism had moderate effects on self-esteem, especially in studies where the ostracism is not demarcated or signaled. Gerber and Wheeler (2009) also reported that ostracism had moderate effects on sense of belonging and large effects on sense of control, but the effects of meaningful existence emerged only in studies using a particular scale developed by Williams. Gerber and Wheeler (2009) also indicated that ostracism's effect on control explains some of its impact on subsequent antisocial responses, which we later address.

Ostracism's impact on emotions and mood. There is an ongoing debate regarding the nature of ostracism's impact on emotions. On one hand, ostracism has been linked to a number of emotional outcomes, including sadness (Buckley, Winkel, & Leary, 2004), generalized hurt feelings (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998), anger (Chow, Tiedens, & Govan, 2008; Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2004), and shame (Chow et al., 2008). This is consistent with the research in organizational settings, all of which suggest that ostracism leads to negative emotional outcomes. Relationships have been found between ostracism at work and anxiety, depression, and emotional distress (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006; O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009) and, somewhat related, job satisfaction (Ferris et al., 2008).

On the other hand, other scholars have argued that ostracism creates a sense of emotional numbness (Baumeister, 2005; DeWall & Baumeister, 2006), showing that experimental manipulation of rejection leads to dampened predictions of emotional reactions to future events, decreased pain sensitivity, and reduced empathy (e.g., DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001; Twenge et al., 2002). They posit that individuals

may deliberately regulate their emotions (Larsen, 2000; Thayer, 1996) or repress aversive emotions, which will minimize the subsequent effects of ostracism.

Two recent meta-analyses have tried to shed light on this issue. Evidence across 62 studies shows that those who are ostracized experience more arousal, less positive mood, and more negative mood than those who are accepted or in neutral circumstances (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009). The results of a meta-analysis by Blackhart and colleagues (2009: 294) demonstrated some support for the numbness hypothesis; however, the authors also concluded, "Taken together, rejected people feel worse than accepted or neutral ones." Gerber and Wheeler (2009) convincingly argue that studies may find a numbness effect as a result of samples too small to detect the relatively weaker effect for emotion than other outcomes. Together, the bulk of the evidence suggests that ostracism does have an effect on a target's affect, but this effect is less observable than its effect on other types of psychological outcomes and may depend on the intensity of the ostracism experiences.

Moderators of the Ostracism–Psychological Impact Relationship

Given that ostracism has such a negative impact on employees' psychological well-being and that this impact can influence the behavioral outcomes we discuss next, it is important to consider some organizational factors that may attenuate or strengthen the relationship between ostracism and its psychological impact. To date, little research has explored these organizational-relevant moderators, and in so doing, we offer several directions for future research on this issue. We argue that the psychological impact of ostracism will be moderated by two key factors: one's awareness of being ostracized and the degree of threat posed by the perceived ostracism. We discuss each of these in turn.

Prop 9: Ostracism will have a stronger psychological impact to the extent that the individual is aware of its occurrence, such as when he or she is more vigilant because of newness or lack of power.

Factors that influence one's awareness of being ostracized at work are likely to strengthen the psychological impact of those experiences. This proposition follows directly from the assumption that people need to perceive or realize they are being ostracized to experience its psychological effects. In line with this, past research has indicated that ostracism has a stronger impact on those whose personality types lead them to be more vigilant of their social surroundings and interactions (Boyes & French, 2009; Leung, Wu, Chen, & Young, 2011). One benefit of researching the effects of ostracism in a field organizational setting is that we can study both whether targets' perceptions of being ostracized vary as a function of these vigilance factors (consistent with what has been done in past studies) and whether their perceptions are consistent with or greater than actors' reports of ostracism toward them. In other words, we can test not only whether those who are more vigilant toward ostracism will have higher perceptions of ostracism but also whether their perceptions are more accurate or overperceived in comparison to those who are likely to be less vigilant.

In an organizational context, individual factors beyond personality, such as tenure and power, are likely to influence the extent to which one is aware of being ostracized. We contend that awareness of possible ostracism, whether it occurs or not, is going to be more likely with those who are relatively new to an organization because they will be more vigilant (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Those who are new will have far greater uncertainty about their social standing in the organization, and therefore be more vigilant and attuned to others' interactions with them, as these cues provide diagnostic information about their standing (Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Morrison, 1993). In contrast, those with more tenure, who have built up an understanding of their place in the organization's social system and the nature of their relationships with others, will have less need to seek out and interpret how they are treated in their workplace relationships.

Along similar lines, we contend that those with less power are more likely to perceive ostracism by higher ups. Social psychology research suggests that those with less power are more concerned about and cognizant of the behavior of more powerful others (Erber & Fiske, 1984; Fiske, 1993; Kramer, 2001). This is because the actions of more powerful others have greater implications for those with less power than vice versa. Following from this assertion, those with less organizational power are more likely to recognize and perceive more ostracism by higher ups because of their overvigilance. Because ostracism can be ambiguous, those with a strong need to be vigilant against being ostracized are more likely not only to perceive ostracism but also to ruminate about it when any clue emerges, thus further fueling the psychological impact of ostracism.

Prop 10: Ostracism will have a stronger impact to the extent it is perceived as threatening, such as when the source of the ostracism is particularly valuable to the target, the ostracism is unexpected, and one makes internal attributions about its causes.

Factors that render ostracism more threatening will naturally strengthen the psychological impact of ostracism. We contend that several factors play a critical role in determining the degree of threat: the social value of those doing the ostracizing, whether it is unexpected, and one's attributions for the ostracism.

Social value refers to the extent to which one relies on another individual or group to fulfill one's psychological and instrumental needs. Ostracism from highly valued others is likely to be more psychologically impactful. In line with this, past research has found that ostracism is a stronger threat to psychological needs when the ostracizer is someone with whom the target shares a common identity (Bernstein, Sacco, Young, Hugenberg, & Cook, 2010; Gómez, Morales, Hart, Vázquez, & Swann, 2011). In a workplace context, those who strongly identify with their organization or workgroup or rely on their job for a significant amount of self-worth may be more negatively affected by ostracism as a result (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Furthermore, having alternative sources to fulfill one's psychological needs outside of the workplace will likely weaken ostracism's impact. Theory on both the satiation of belongingness needs (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and the conservation of resources (Hobfoll, 1989), for example, suggests that positive relationships with alternative others can supplement the social needs one loses from being ostracized.

Another factor that will influence the degree of threat ostracism poses is whether it is unexpected. Some empirical research supports this assertion. Ostracism is a greater threat to psychological needs when it arrives unexpectedly, or when it follows prior inclusion (Wesselmann, Butler, Williams, & Pickett, 2010). Unexpected ostracism more strongly undermines one's sense of self-esteem and predictive control. In organizational contexts where such behavior is relatively rare, or one has grown accustomed to inclusion, the shock of experiencing exclusion may be particularly unsettling and lead to substantial sense making and sense of threat.

Finally, the attributions one makes concerning why one is ostracized will also influence its degree of threat. People have a strong desire to understand negative events that affect them (Weiner, 1985). When individuals make more internal attributions (i.e., they think the reason they are being ostracized is because of something that is inherently wrong with themselves), they will experience greater pain; and those perceiving the ostracism as the fault of the perpetrators or other external factors should experience less pain (Williams, 1997, 2001). We suggest several factors that may influence the attribution process, including whether there are multiple actors engaging in the ostracism, and whether similar others in one's immediate environment are receiving the same kind of treatment. It is easier to externalize the attribution and discount being ostracized by one coworker; however, it is more difficult to assuage the impact of being ostracized by a group of people. Furthermore, research on stigmatization, when individuals are avoided or excluded as result of the class or social category to which they belong (e.g., Richman & Leary, 2009), has demonstrated some support for the proposition that people will make more external attributions when they are ostracized because of their group membership. Major and Eccleston (2005) found that targets of stigma-based exclusion will not necessarily suffer from lower self-esteem and reduced well-being when they can attribute such treatment to group membership rather than themselves specifically. However, other research suggests that being able to attribute prejudice or discrimination to one's group may be helpful or harmful, depending on one's group identification (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), and laboratory manipulations of group membership have found that it doesn't necessarily buffer against the initial pain of ostracism (Goodwin, Williams, & Carter-Sowell, 2010; Wirth & Williams, 2009). In an organizational setting, group membership is expanded beyond racial categories to departmental and hierarchical categories as well. Thus, we contend that ostracism will be more impactful on an individual when he or she is the only one, or one of a few people, being ostracized, rather than when the individual perceives others share the ostracism experience with him or her. Regardless of the actual reason for the ostracism, when targets perceive that they are singled out for ostracism, they are especially likely to see ostracism as abnormal and attribute it to characteristics about themselves.

Behavioral Outcomes

In our model we are interested in examining the organizationally relevant outcomes of ostracism, as they emerge from both pragmatic and psychological effects. Of interest, past research has identified that ostracism can have paradoxical consequences. On one hand, it

can lead to negative behavioral outcomes in terms of increased interpersonal deviance and withdrawal behaviors and lower performance. On the other hand, it can lead to positive behavioral outcomes, in terms of in-role and extrarole behaviors and prosocial actions. We discuss each of these in turn, along with factors that may determine whether an employee will engage in negative or positive behavior following ostracism.

Negative behavioral outcomes. Many studies have found a relationship between ostracism and negative behavioral responses (e.g., Catanese & Tice, 2005; Seeman & Crimmins, 2006; Williams, 2009). For example, Twenge et al. (2002) found that targets of experimentally manipulated social exclusion were more likely to engage in irrational, risky, and unhealthy behaviors. Other studies have shown that being the target of ostracism may fuel uncooperative or aggressive responses (Chow et al., 2008; Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003; Thau, Aquino, & Poortvliet, 2007; Warburton, Williams, & Cairns, 2006; Wesselmann et al., 2010; Williams, 2009). Craighead, Kimball, and Rehak (1979) found that individuals who imagined being ignored tended to show passivity and disengagement. An organizational study found that those who were ostracized for whistle-blowing were more likely to retaliate against the actors (Faulkner, 1999), and another found ostracism to be negatively related to performance (Kerr, Seok, Poulsen, Harris, & Messé, 2008). The few empirical studies examining ostracism in organizational behavior have also repeatedly reported an association with negative behavioral outcomes, such as greater withdrawal (O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009), less in-role behavior (Balliet & Ferris, in press; Ferris et al., 2008; Kerr et al., 2008; Leung et al., 2011; O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009; Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011), and less extrarole behavior (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006; O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009).

Prop 11: The relationship between ostracism and negative behavioral outcomes is mediated, in part, by ostracism's pragmatic effects.

The negative behavioral outcomes emanating from ostracism, particularly its negative relationships with in-role and extrarole performance, may be in part a result of the pragmatic impact that was discussed earlier. To the best of our knowledge, no research has directly tested this proposition; however, there are theoretical reasons to link ostracism's pragmatic consequences to lower performance. Specifically, the pragmatic resources that are lost because of ostracism are often important for completing one's job effectively. Research shows that employees' performance is undermined to the extent that they miss out on advice in the social network (Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001), do not receive functional social support (Beehr, Jex, Stacy, & Murray, 2000), or lack social connections to other organizational members (Brass, 1981; Castilla, 2005). Research has also shown that lack of social connection, access to information, and control over resources undermines power (Brass, 1984; Kotter, 1985; Pfeffer, 1981), which, in turn, can reduce one's ability to effectively contribute to the organization. Future research examining the effects of ostracism on negative behavioral outcomes should examine lost resources or lack of information as a potential mediator.

Prop 12: The relationship between ostracism's pragmatic impact and negative outcomes is stronger to the extent that the resources deprived by ostracism are important for doing one's job, such as when task interdependence is high, or the target employee has low job or organizational tenure.

We further suggest that the relationship between the pragmatic effects of ostracism and behavioral outcomes, such as performance, will be dependent on how important those resources are for task completion. We can think of several organizational factors that may increase the importance of resources from others for task completion. One such factor is task interdependence. Task interdependence means the sharing of resources and information depends on others with whom one works; thus, when task interdependence is high, employees' ability to engage in in-role contributions to the organization will be reduced because they have reduced or limited access to necessary information and social connections.

Another potential factor that may increase the importance of resources from others and thus strengthen the relationship between the pragmatic effects of ostracism and performance is tenure of the target. When a target is an organizational newcomer, or has limited experience in the role or organization, he or she is likely to depend more on resources and information from coworkers. Such an employee, who cannot rely as much on his or her accumulated knowledge or experience for task completion, is likely to show a stronger relationship between the pragmatic effects of ostracism and behavioral contributions such as performance.

Prop 13: Ostracism will result in a greater pragmatic impact to the extent that the employee is unaware of the ostracism.

Although we have argued that awareness of ostracism can strengthen the psychological effects of ostracism, we believe that awareness can also weaken the relationship between the pragmatic effects of ostracism and behavioral outcomes. This is because if employees are cognizant of when they are being ostracized, they have an opportunity to seek to respond to the lost resources in alternative ways. As previously noted, it may be difficult to confront and resolve ostracism, but the research shows that employees do not always see an opportunity for reinclusion so they do not try (Jamieson, Harkins, & Williams, 2010; Williams & Nida, 2011). Moreover, even if reinclusion is not possible, one may possibly obtain resources by seeking out support or information from neutral or supportive others at work.

Prop 14: The relationship between ostracism and negative behavioral outcomes is mediated, in part, by ostracism's psychological effect.

The psychological effects of ostracism can also mediate the relationship between ostracism and its negative behavioral consequences. Deviant and antisocial behavior can result as an attempt to restore certain psychological needs that ostracism otherwise threatens, particularly when one's need for control is threatened (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009; Williams, 2007). Warburton et al. (2006) found that the participants who were ostracized and also experienced a further loss of control were more than four times more aggressive than any other experimental group. Ostracism has also been found to lead to more aggressive responses when it is unexpected and thus a stronger threat to one's sense of control and self-esteem (Wesselmann

et al., 2010). Ostracism's threat to self-esteem can also be understood as a threat to one's identity, which can produce antisocial responses (Thau et al., 2007).

Second, given that ostracism is known to be a specifically painful experience, ostracism targets may be inclined to reduce contributions to their workplace and withdrawal from work as a means of escaping the source of their social pain. Although many prior studies on ostracism have not found negative affect to mediate between ostracism and behavioral outcomes, O'Reilly and Robinson (2009) found emotional distress to fully mediate between workplace ostracism and performance. Reduced contributions and withdrawal responses may reflect attempts to escape the source of psychological pain.

Positive behavioral outcomes. The above evidence demonstrates that ostracism leads to negative outcomes, not unlike the negative reactions that follow a wide range of negative experiences in the workplace. Yet perhaps unique to ostracism, compared to other negative workplace experiences, is the fact that ostracism sometimes results in positive or prosocial or conciliatory responses. Past research has indicated that targets of ostracism may ingratiate themselves into others' favor (Williams, 2007; Williams & Govan, 2005), increase their compliance (Carter-Sowell, Chen, & Williams, 2008), work harder for the group (Williams & Sommer, 1997), express liking for new groups (Wheaton, 2001), and affiliate with alternative sources (Aydin, Fischer, & Frey, 2010; Badea, Jetten, Iyer, & Er-rafiy, 2011; Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007). Theoretical explanations for these effects focus predominately on the role of restoring thwarted belongingness needs; these positive behaviors reflect efforts to restore belongingness by either reducing future ostracism, regaining acceptance by ostracizers, or seeking substitute belonging with others. Thus, the impact of ostracism on belongingness needs can explain these reactions, and some research has suggested that when restoring belongingness needs takes priority over control or self-esteem needs, a target's reactions will be more positive than negative (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009).

To date, we do not yet have a solid understanding of why ostracism sometimes leads to negative reactions, and other times it leads to positive reactions. Below we seek to explain that, for the most part, ostracism will lead to negative outcomes but under the presence of particular moderators, ostracism will lead to positive outcomes.

Prop 15: Ostracism will be most often related to negative behavioral outcomes, with the exception that it will be related to positive behavioral outcomes when the ostracized employee has both a strong motivation toward reinclusion and efficacy about reinclusion.

When we consider both negative and positive responses to ostracism in organizations, we offer two points. Our first point is that in general, employees will be prone toward engaging in negative behaviors such as reduced contributions, withdrawal, and deviance rather than positive behaviors, such as increased in-role and extrarole performance. Gerber and Wheeler's (2009) meta-analysis results are consistent with this argument in that the evidence they presented suggests that ostracized individuals will seek to restore both belonging and control needs but will prioritize restoring control (by way of antisocial responses) over restoring a sense of belonging (by way of prosocial responses).

Our second point is that targets of ostracism will engage in increased in-role and extrarole performance following ostracism if they have high motivation to gain belonging from those that would be directly influenced by these positive actions (Jamieson et al., 2010; Williams & Govan, 2005; Williams & Nida, 2011) and if they have efficacy that engaging in prosocial efforts will in fact lead to an increased belonging. Below we look at each of these components separately and discuss organization factors that might contribute to each.

Prop 16: Ostracism is more likely to lead to positive, prosocial behaviors when the target has a strong motivation for inclusion, such as when he or she has a strong sense of identification or attachment to the actors or when the target is of lower organizational status.

We can identify a number of organizationally relevant factors that may affect one's motivation for reinclusion and therefore likelihood to attempt prosocial responses. Employees who are ostracized by a group with which they strongly identify will be much more motivated to seek reinclusion and restore their sense of belonging by engaging in positive behaviors. Consistent with this argument, Gómez et al. (2011) found that ostracism led to more positive outcomes, such as following group norms and supporting group initiatives, when the group was seen as important to one's identity. Likewise, the more important the ostracizers to the target, the more ingratiating behaviors occur (Romero-Canyas, Downey, Reddy, Rodriguez, Cavanaugh, & Pelayo, 2010) and motivation to become a group member weakens the negative effects of ostracism on avoidance behavior (Matschke & Sassenberg, 2010).

Another factor influencing one's motivation for reinclusion, and hence likelihood of prosocial responses, is the extent to which the targets are of lower organizational status. If the ostracizing parties have power over the targets, they have much more motivation to not be ostracized by those powerful others and to believe that their increased in-role or extrarole behavior may be observed and rewarded with reinclusion by higher-ups. In contrast, incentives for reinclusion with peers or those of lower status will be less and thus reduce the likelihood of positive behavioral responses. This is consistent with research indicating that targets with higher social status (Bozin & Yoder, 2008), which includes men compared to women, are more likely to avoid the group or engage in free-ride behaviors following ostracism (Hitlan et al., 2006; Williams & Sommer, 1997).

Prop 17: Ostracism is more likely to lead to positive, prosocial responses when the target has efficacy about reinclusion, such as when he or she is ostracized alone, and when the ostracism is relatively new and recent.

Although one needs to feel motivated to seek reinclusion by engaging in prosocial responses following ostracism, one also has to believe that such efforts will be effective. We can think of several factors that may increase the beliefs about one's efficacy to gain reinclusion. One such factor may be whether one feels singled out for ostracism or is experiencing this ostracism as part of a larger membership in a group. If one is ostracized as part of a group, rather than singled out, the experience may be less intense, as noted at the outset, but also one is also less likely to believe that one's individual actions can change the circumstances. This

is because the ostracism is likely seen as emanating from one's membership or group status, and not as a result of individual actions one has taken or can take.

Another factor is the timing of the ostracism. Organizational members who are unsure if ostracism has started, or have reason to believe that ostracism has only recently begun to occur, will perceive they have a greater opportunity to address it and gain reinclusion. In such cases, they may engage in prosocial responses to vie for reinclusion or, at a minimum, use coworkers' responses to their prosocial behavior to gain reassurance or provide evidence that they are, in fact, being ostracized. This is consistent with Derfler-Rozin, Pillutla, and Thau (2010), who contend that if there is a threat of ostracism, but it hasn't actually taken place, one is more likely to engage in inclusionary seeking behaviors. In contrast, employees who experience ostracism over a longer period are less likely to believe that their efforts will lead to reinclusion, and thus they do not engage in positive responses but rather negative ones.

Future research on ostracism in organizations should seek to answer the important question of when or why employees are more likely to engage in prosocial or antisocial behavioral responses. Thus far, most of the empirical work has identified moderators only that buffer the relationship between ostracism and negative outcomes, and the search for moderators that actually determine prosocial versus antisocial responses has yet to be uncovered.

Conclusion

We believe it is important for us to give more research attention to ostracism in the workplace, given its powerful influence and likely common occurrence in organizations. With this review and extension to the literature we have sought to bring the concept of workplace ostracism into a brighter light, and we hope it will encourage future research as a result. Our model provides both an overview of existing findings as well as ideas about research yet to be done on workplace ostracism. Organizations offer a unique context to study this social phenomenon. Organizations are rich with complex interpersonal interactions, and these relational dynamics coupled with uniquely organizational factors can help us better understand the motives behind workplace ostracism. Furthermore, as we suggest in our model, the effects of ostracism in organizations can extend beyond the psychological ones that have been well documented in the psychology literature to include pragmatic costs that to date have gone relatively unrecognized. Also, by empirically examining ostracism within organizations, we can greatly expand and enrich our understanding of its nature more broadly. The organizational-based factors we identify, including norms, tenure, interdependence, group identification, status, and power, are all likely to influence how targets experience ostracism and their behavioral reactions as a result. Studying these effects will help us to further understand why ostracism is so detrimental. This review and extension lays a foundation for exploring these and other research questions surrounding workplace ostracism.

Note

1. That specific forms of ostracism will share considerable overlapping variance with the same antecedents and consequences does not preclude specific forms of ostracism also having somewhat different variance shared with specific antecedents and consequences.

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